

Juan LaLave

The acceptability of arguments in favour of and against the Iraq War

Kurzfassung: Der vorliegende Aufsatz stellt eine Studie vor, in der ein experimenteller Fragebogen verwendet wurde, der auf der Logik und der Grundstruktur des Moral Judgment Tests (MJT) von Lind (1982) basiert. Ziel der Studie ist es, ein Verständnis dafür zu entwickeln, wie die Akzeptanz politischer Argumente dazu beigetragen haben könnte, dass es einerseits an internationaler Unterstützung für den Irak Krieg gemangelt hat, sowie andererseits ein Präventiv-Angriffs nicht verhindert werden konnte.

Die Studie untersucht einige der Einflussfaktoren, auf welche sich die Öffentlichkeit bei der Bewertung der vorgebrachten Argumente gestützt haben mag.

Das verwendete Messinstrument bestand aus 3 Teilen: (1) Einer kurzen Skizze des erklärten Anfangs (19. März 2003) und Endes (1. Mai 2003) der militärischen Operationen im Irak; (2) der Erhebung der Zustimmung der Befragten zur Notwendigkeit des Krieges, sowie (3) aus zwölf Argumenten aus politischen Reden: sechs Argumenten von Bush und Blair "für", und sechs Argumenten von Chirac und Schröder "gegen" die Notwendigkeit des Irak-Krieges. Wir bewerteten jedes Argument anhand der Stufentheorie von Kohlberg (1984) und des Hierarchical Complexity Scoring Systems (HCSS) von Commons et al. (2004). Anhand des kognitiven eskalations- und deeskalations-Modells nach Kempf (2003) wurde jedes Argument für Satz in Hinblick auf die darin enthaltenen eskalations- vs. deeskalationsorientierten Details bewertet.

Unsere Stichprobe bestand aus (n = 397) Befragten, von denen 56,4% weiblich und 24,2% männlich waren, 19,4% machten keine Angabe zum Geschlecht. Die größte der Gruppen waren Deutsche (71%), Katholiken (37,2%) und 18-20jährige mit Hochschulreife (74,3%). Eine andere Gruppe bestand aus 8,6% Amerikanern mit einer größeren Bandbreite bzgl. des Alters und höherem Bildungsgrad.

Auf 7-stufigen Likert-Skalen beurteilten die Befragten, ob sie die Hauptaussage jedes Argumentes abgelehnt oder akzeptiert hätten, ob ihnen die Hauptaussage des Argumentes als illusorisch oder realistisch erschien und ob die von dem Argument hervorgerufene Emotion destruktiv oder konstruktiv war.

Die Datenanalyse zielte darauf ab, zu bestimmen, welche Within-Subject- und Between-Subject-Faktoren für die Vorhersage der Akzeptanz der Argumente seitens der Befragten relevant sind. Zu diesem Zwecke wurden Kovarianz-Parameter-Schätzungen für Hierarchische Lineare Modelle nach Bryk & Raudenbush (1992) durchgeführt. Unter Anwendung der Standardkriterien von Cohen & Cohen (1983) betrachteten wir ein Modell als relevant, wenn es mehr als 10% der Varianz erklärt. Chi-Quadrat-Tests für gemischte lineare Modelle identifizierten relevante Prädiktoren mit einer Signifikanz von $p < .001$.

Als relevante Design-Faktoren erwiesen sich u.a. "War das Argument realistisch?" "Hat es konstruktive Gefühle hervorgerufen?" und waren die Details des Arguments eher eskalations- oder deeskalationsorientiert?"

Abstract: This paper reports on research based on an experimental questionnaire designed using the logic and the basic structure of the Moral Judgment Test (MJT) by Lind (1982). The study aims at understanding how respondents' acceptance of political arguments may have contributed to the lack of international support for the Iraq war and/or to the failure to prevent a preemptive attack.

It examines factors, which respondents may have relied on in their acceptance of the arguments. The instrument consisted of three components: (1) A brief vignette on the declared beginning (March 19, 2003) and ending (May 1, 2003) of major operations in Iraq. (2) Respondents' own agreement with the need for the war. (3) Twelve arguments from political speeches: Six arguments by Bush and Blair "in favor of" (pro), and six arguments by Chirac and Schroeder "against" (con) the need for the Iraq war. We scored each argument using Kohlberg's (1984) stage theory and Commons' Hierarchical Complexity Scoring System (HCSS) (Commons et al., 2004), which identifies hierarchical features in the structure. Using Kempf's (2003) Cognitive Escalation and De-Escalation Model (CEDM) we scored each argument sentence for details.

Our sample consists of (N = 397) respondents of which were 56.4% women, 24.2% men, and 19.4% did not specify. The largest groups consisted of 71% Germans, 37.2% Catholics, 74.3% between the ages of 18-20 with high school education. Another group consisted of 8.6% Americans with a broader spectrum in age and higher educational level.

Using 7 point Likert scales, respondents rated whether they would have rejected or accepted the main point of each argument, whether the main point of the argument seemed illusory or realistic, and whether the emotion evoked by the argument was destructive or constructive.

The analysis of the data aimed at determining which within subject and between subject design factors were relevant in predicting respondents' acceptance of arguments and the probability that these factors were significant and valid. We performed tests for Covariance Parameter Estimates for Hierarchical Linear Models proposed by Bryk & Raudenbush (1992) with estimation of Maximum Likelihood (ML), by applying the equation (1 – model covariance/intercept covariance). Applying the standard criteria by Cohen & Cohen (1983), we consider a model as relevant, if it accounts for more than 10% of the proportion reduction in error (PRE).

Mixed linear model tests identified relevant predictors with chi square significance of $p < .001$. Design factors, which were relevant included: "Was the argument realistic? Did it evoke constructive feelings? Did argument details offer beneficent considerations?"

He who lives to see the day when the majority vote destroys the democratic institutions, then this sad experience will tell him only that there does not exist a foolproof method of avoiding tyranny. But, it need not weaken his decision to fight tyranny.

Popper "The open society"

1. Introduction

This paper presents research pertinent toward the prevention and constructive transformation of conflicts. It proposes models that have external validity in the fields of political argumentation, expert evaluation and testimony, psychological assessment and journalistic reporting. This paper focuses on the implications of this modeling for the training of journalists on reporting about escalation or de-escalation toward the constructive transformation of conflicts. This implies a transition from traditional to journalism of attachment to constructive conflict coverage.

The predominant myth in traditional journalism is that journalists must be objective and refrain from taking sides in a conflict because they must not influence the political event. Simultaneously at the basis of traditional journalism is the utility construct that violence sells news. This represents an implicit bias that serves to influence political events in favor of conflict escalation. "In warding off an attack, defensive violence can be seen as the effect of the aggressor's violence" Gilligan (1977). This bias has caused journalists to fail in meeting their anticipated professional norm of "objective reporting," by siding with conflict escalation in support of "good guys". "Good winning conflict over evil" is central to moral justifications that benign violence in the political economy of traditional mass media.

Journalism of attachment (Bell, 1997) or advocacy journalism emerged as a reaction to this failure in the professional norm of "objective reporting". Journalism of attachment uses beneficent principles and maintains that journalists *must not* be neutral reporters but they have a moral duty to influence political events. Atrocities in warfare require that journalists must side with the victims of the war and explicitly insist that something be done. This view has led to a complete embracing of advocacy as explicit bias in reporting, which replaces one myth by another.

Journalism of attachment does not question the notion that there are good guys and bad guys and that the aim is to protect the good victims while the good guys win the war against the bad guys. Instead, it advocates for that view, which represents the better interest of protecting the victims. In this case, conflict escalation still predominates as a means of protecting the victims. In advocacy reporting, conflict-escalation news still sells papers better than conflict de-escalation news.

Both tendencies, the media's interest in conflict-escalation news, and the moral imperative of restrictive justice and beneficence allow journalists to abandon their professional rules and standards of truthfulness. Both forego conflict analysis, see war as moral antagonism between 'good' and 'evil', and they both result in putting moral pressure on the international community of nations to take sides using military means (Hume, 1997) – either willingly or not.

Opposing these tendencies in modern journalism, Galtung (2002) maintains that the influence of the media can be used for the prevention and constructive transformation of conflicts. At the core of this view is the responsibility of the journalist, which we define as one that empowers the public in making responsible decisions. In this case, journalists must actively promote de-escalation over escalation and bring "truth-telling" back into the media. The goal of the journalist would be to help prevent conflict escalation by symmetrically transforming our understanding of the conflict field. Journalists would advocate for beneficent responsibilities to protect all life and all victims. Their task would be to provide information and analysis that enable the public to make up its own mind in a responsible way and not simply to advocate for a position, but to promote moral agency and expose moral disengagement (Bandura, 1999). Where moral agency aims to promote the prevention of violence, moral disengagement promotes defensive and retaliatory violence.

Journalists would have to provide that information and analysis which would enable the audience to evaluate whether or not an argument is actually realistic; whether the arguments have sufficient symmetry and clarity (cf. Kohlberg, 1984; Commons et al., 2004); and whether the details (cf. Kempf, 2003) include aspects of beneficence. This would provide better understanding of events by accentuating and revealing the truth about failures of political speakers to introduce, to explain, to acknowledge, to consider or to complete a competent argument that blends beneficence with justice considerations. It would help correct the misconception exemplified by a motto promoted by *Fox News* „we report you decide“, which correctly represents "we report bias and misinformation and you decide incorrectly".

In order to understand better the sort of information and analysis that journalists might use, we examined the basis for respondents' acceptance of arguments by political speakers.

2. Design of the study

The official version of the Iraq war is: It began on March 19, 2003 and ended on May 1, 2003, lasting for six weeks. Before March 19, proponents in favor of and against the need for the war promoted their position in political speeches. President

Bush and Prime Minister Blair in an extensive effort spoke *in favor of* the need for war, but failed to achieve the support of the majority of the international community. Chancellor Schroeder and President Chirac spoke *against* the need for war, but were not effective in preventing the war. How can we account for these failures? Were both sets of arguments weak in their representation of the violence in the conflict field, lacking credibly balanced view, or necessary effective symmetry?

In this paper, the aim is to assess the effect of five within subject and two between subjects design factors in accounting for the acceptability of arguments in favor of and against the Iraq war. The design factors using definitions described by Popper & Eccles (1977) are classified in three groups. The first group includes factors with manifest properties such as the aim of the argument, the stage of the argument and the frequency of escalation and de-escalation details. The second group includes factors involving psychic reactions, thoughts and feelings such as whether an argument seems realistic or illusory, or whether it provokes constructive or destructive feelings. The third group includes latent factors involving interactions between manifest properties and psychic representations.

The within subject factors investigated in this study are:

Manifest Properties

- The *aim of an argument* in favor of or against the need for war –
 - Arguments in favor of the war attempt to increase the tension in a conflict by restricting justice and justifying moral disengagement.
 - Arguments against the war attempt to reduce the tension in a conflict by beneficent considerations and justifying moral agency.
- The *Stage of the argument* representing the symmetry of its structure –
 - Stronger structurally balanced arguments represent higher stages.
 - Weaker structurally less balanced arguments represent lower stages.
- The relative *frequency of details* –
 - The density of escalation oriented details in pro-arguments.
 - The density of de-escalation oriented details in con-arguments.

Psychic Representations

- The *perception of arguments as realistic or illusory* –
 - Acceptance of arguments perceived to be realistic.
 - Rejection of arguments perceived to be illusory.
- *Constructive or destructive feelings* evoked by the argument –
 - Acceptance of arguments felt to evoke constructive feelings.
 - Rejection of arguments felt to evoke destructive feelings.

The between subjects factors are:

Psychic Representations

- *Attitude bias* –
 - Categorical acceptance of argument's aims consistent with respondents' agreement with the need for war.
 - Categorical rejection of argument's aims not consistent with respondents' agreement with the need for war.
- *Moral Judgment Competence (MJC)* –
 - The degree to which respondents relied on moral principles.
 - The degree to which respondents will rely on moral principles in a similar context.

2.1 Hypotheses

1. There is a relationship between beneficence vs. restrictive justice considerations and the acceptability of arguments.
2. There is a relationship between attitude bias and the acceptability of arguments.
3. There is a relationship between respondents' capacity to rely on internal principles and the acceptability of arguments.
4. There is a relationship between the relative frequency of escalation / de-escalation details in arguments and their acceptability.
5. There is a relationship between the perceived realism of the main point of an argument and its acceptability.
6. There is a relationship between constructive feelings evoked by the main point of an argument and its acceptability.

2.2 Instruments

We constructed an experimental instrument to address the need for methods, which take into account the relevance of the subjective standpoint and the enmeshed dynamics of a real international event in respondents' lives. The primary structure and logic of the experimental instrument derives directly from the moral judgment test design developed by Lind (1982), but the actual content differs from Lind's Moral Judgment Test (MJT). Our instrument derives its content from political speeches. Retaining the identical structure and logic of the MJT, we extended the design to include a measure of influence by two types of intuitions about each argument: A perception of its realism and an evoked felt emotion.

We combined this instrument with the Cognitive Escalation and De-Escalation Model (CEDM) by Kempf (2003). The CEDM, used for analysis in current literature on Peace Psychology and the Media, focuses on the details in the news. We employed it to measure the details in the arguments.

Combining this model with our moral judgment competence instrument enables for comparisons of respondents' acceptance of arguments based on the effect of the design factors.

Instrument of moral judgment competence

First, we compare our instrument of moral judgment competence and the Moral Judgment Test. Lind's (1982) MJT consists of a moral dilemma followed by six arguments endorsing the outcome and six arguments opposing it. Each of the six arguments represents one of Kohlberg's moral judgment stages.

Our moral dilemma concerns the Iraq war. We used a statement about the beginning and ending of the war as the dilemma.

Vignette

The war against Iraq began on March 19th 2003. A discussion of the reasons for the war, the role of the UN weapons inspectors, Saddam's cooperation, and the question of a UN resolution required to back the war had been going on for months before March 19th, when fighting began anyway. The process and the results are different than most persons had anticipated. On May 1st 2003, President Bush declared that the major combat operations had ended in Iraq.

We added the qualifier that "The process and the results are different than most persons had anticipated," as a reminder that there are perceived discrepancies at the time of this study – one year later. If the person had anticipated a long war they might think this means that the war was short, or vice versa. If they favoured the war, they might think that war was unfavourable, or vice versa. Thus, we maintain that the qualifier addressed some of the obvious discrepancies without biasing one view more than the other view.

Lind's MJT formulates arguments using moral constructs that correspond with Kohlberg's moral stages; we selected twelve quotes from political speeches before the war to serve as arguments. Six arguments by G.W Bush and T. Blair represented the position "in favor of" war and six arguments by J. Chirac and G. Schroeder represented the position "against".

The MJT uses arguments representative of Kohlberg's six stages of moral judgment; we were able to find arguments representing the four higher stages. We used the hierarchical complexity scoring system (HCSS) by Commons et al., 2004, which derives from Kohlberg's stages of moral judgment and corresponds highly with argument structure rather than with content, to score each argument.

Each argument was scored within one of the four higher stages that focus on the transition between conventional and post-conventional reasoning. We found no arguments below the conventional stages. Stages assign each argument a discrete and invariant position within a structural and meaningful hierarchy. Based on the research design this produced an estimate of the probability that moral judgment competence accounts for the acceptance of the structure of the arguments. We used hierarchical stages comparable to Kohlberg's moral stages (3, 4, 5, 6) to score the structure of each argument. The sequence of stage from the most to the least advanced element is shown below (cf. Table 1).

Stages	Kohlberg	Elements of Argument Structure
5	6	Integration of multiple systems
4	5	Integration of a single system
3/4	4	Presence of formal properties without integration of a system
3	3	Presence of abstract elements without formal properties

Table 1: Stages of moral judgment in the arguments

These four stages represent the transition from abstract thinking to multiple systems thinking. Similarly, they represent the developmental transition from interpersonal choice, through choice by rule, then choice by a system of rules, to choice by

multiple systems. The stage for any argument represents the presence of the highest aspect found among abstract elements, formal properties, whole systems, or multiple systems.

Increases in stage are empirically and theoretically associated with better respondent acceptance of the reasoning and of the argument. Conversely, decreases in the stage are empirically and theoretically associated with lower respondent acceptance of the reasoning and the argument. The use of hierarchical stages enabled the selection of pro and con arguments comparable in structure, as the score is relatively independent of content.

Density of escalation and de-escalation details

Using Kempf's (2003) Cognitive Escalation and De-Escalation Model (CEDM) we obtained a measure of the relative frequency of escalation and de-escalation details in each argument by scoring each sentence in an argument. The model served to score arguments with the relative frequency of its details. Thus, we obtained a measure of the density of pro and con details in the arguments.

	Cooperation	Perspective divergence	Competition	Confrontation	War
Conceptualization of conflict	Win-win orientation	Bias towards win-lose but win-win still possible	Win-lose (possibly defused by rules of fairness)	Win-lose (increased by threat strategies)	Zero sum orientation, Force as the appropriate means of solving conflict, emphasis on military values, transfer from win-lose to lose-lose
Valuation of rights and aims	Mutual respect of all participants and emphasis on common interests	Focus on own rights and needs (including common interests), the rights of others, however, vanish from the field of vision	Focus on own rights and needs; common interests however vanish from the field of vision	Emphasis on own rights and needs combined with questioning the rights of the opponent and condemning his intentions	Idealization of own rights and needs, at the same time contesting the rights of opponent, demonization of his intentions and denial of common interests
Evaluation of actions	Consideration of the benefits of each of the parties	Focus on own benefits (also those resulting from the mutual relationship)	Focus on own benefits	Justification of own actions and condemnation of those of the opponent	Idealization of own actions demonization of the actions of opponent
Emotional involvement	Empathy and mutual trust	Conflict between threat and trust	Focus on own threat, that of the opponent disappears from the field of vision, mutual trust is lost	Emphasis on own threat and the danger from the opponent creates a delicate balance between threat and confidence in victory; the threat to the opponent is actively denied; mistrust exists	Balance between threat and confidence in victory continues to exist, mistrust directed also against neutral third parties who attempt to mediate in the conflict, indignation against the war turns into indignation against opponent

Table 2: The Cognitive Escalation De-Escalation Model (CEDM)

The Model represents two sides of a conflict, one side is escalation oriented and the other side is de-escalation oriented. Each sentence is scored for details that represent: conceptualizations of the conflict situation, war parties rights and intentions, war parties actions and emotional involvement or identification (cf. Table 2).

2.3 Sample Subjects

The total number of respondents sampled was 397. Over 50 (56.4) percent were women, 23.9 percent were men and 19.6 did not specify gender; (74.3) percent were between the ages of 18 and 20 years. Seventy-one (71) percent were German. Eight (8.6) percent were American. Thirteen (13.6) percent did not specify.

Administration

The administration of the instrument is comprised of two primary groups, which differ in the following ways. The first group represents 86.9% of the total sample, while the second represents 13.1%.

Subject samples

The first group is comprised of students, 57.7% women, 20.9% men, & 21.4% of unspecified gender; 84.9% were between the ages of 18-20 years. Eighty - (80.9) percent of the first group were of German nationality.

The second group was comprised of 48.1% women, 46.2% men & 5.8% of unspecified gender; 44.2% were over 50 years, 23.1% were between the ages of 40-49 years; 61.5% of the second group were of American nationality.

Procedure

The first group was administered a beamed Image of the Instrument in an auditorium setting accompanied with a pencil answer sheet. This group is comprised of seven different sessions, a morning and an afternoon session on three consecutive days in March 2004. German Gymnasiums and the University of Konstanz in Germany arranged the sessions in the context of a yearly visit by Pre Abitur students for orientation to the studies in psychology.

The second group consisted of professional persons who completed a web instrument. Persons responded to a notice sent through several discussion lists, which included Program of Psychiatry and the Law, American Moral Education Society, Society for Adult Development, and Piaget List. Eighty-five - (85) percent responded between May 12 and May 20, 2004. Fifteen (15) percent responded in June and later in the summer of 2004.

Forty four percent of respondents did not indicate their level of education. The largest group reporting a High School or Abitur level consisted of 41.3%; 11.3% held BA, Master or doctorate degree. Three percent were below high school.

Twenty eight percent did not specify a religious affiliation. Catholic and Roman Catholic represented 37.2%; Evangelical consisted of 16.9%.

2.4 Methods of data analysis

We performed parametric mixed model tests for maximum likelihood using SPSS to test the significance of the individual models.

Using the estimation method for Maximum Likelihood (ML), we performed tests for the covariance of parameter estimates proposed by Bryk & Raudenbush (1992) for hierarchical linear modeling to approximate the relevance of a model in accounting for the proportion of reduction in error (PRE) in respondents' acceptance of arguments. Cohen & Cohen (1983), consider a model relevant if it accounts for over 10% of the PRE. We tested individual factors, and two and three factor models for relevance using these criteria.

3. Results

The results focus on two questions:

1. To which qualities of the arguments may we best attribute respondents' acceptance of the arguments?
2. What is the contribution of details to the interaction of beneficence vs. restrictive justice considerations with stage, moral judgment competence and attitude?

3.1 Argument qualities

Our first question asks to which argument qualities may we best attribute respondents' acceptance of arguments in favor of and against the Iraq war.



Figure 1: The relevance of five within subjects factors

	PRE	-2 Log Likelihood Ratio	df	Sig.
Respondents' perception of argument as illusory or realistic	0.44	2756.021478	1	0.000000
Destructive or constructive feelings evoked by argument	0.39	2223.432202	1	0.000000
Benficence vs. restrictive justice considerations in argument	0.23	1115.374793	1	0.000000
Escalation / de-escalation details in argument	0.10	466.246884	1	0.000000
Stage structure of argument	0.01	39.608496	1	0.000000

Table 3: The relevance of five within subject factors, and their significance

Figure 1 & Table 3 compare the individual effect of five within subject factors. This comparison shows that all, but one factor account for more than 10% of the PRE. Respondents' perception of the argument as illusory or realistic accounted for 44% of PRE. Destructive or constructive feelings evoked accounted for 39%. The aim of the arguments (in favor of or against) the need for war, as a basis for beneficent and restrictive justice considerations accounted for 23%. The relative frequency of escalation details in pro arguments and of de-escalation details in con arguments, accounted for 10%. Stage, however, accounted for 1% of the PRE only.

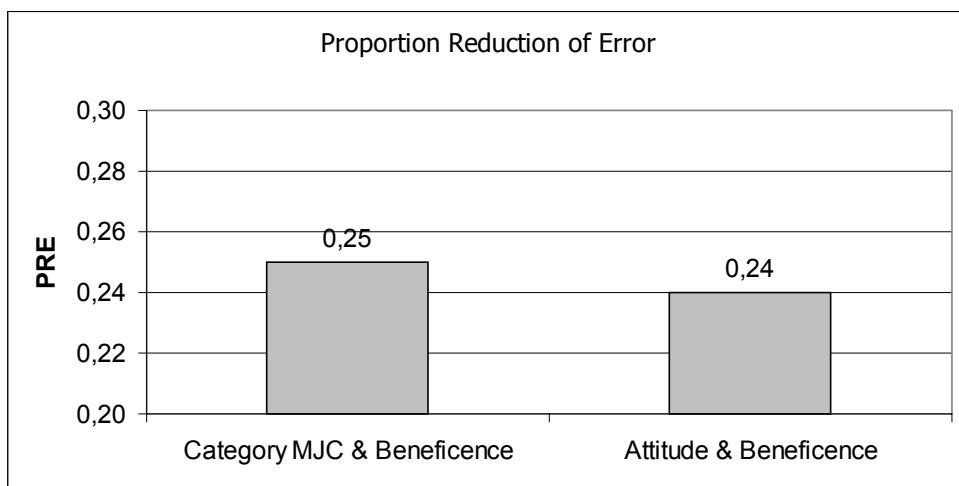


Figure 2: The relevance of the interactions of beneficence vs. restrictive justice considerations with moral judgment competence and attitude

		PRE	-2 Log Likelihood Ratio	df	Sig.
Category MJC & Beneficence	Interaction	0.23	155.733182	1	0.000000
	Main	0.23	1125.731643	2	0.000000
	All	0.25	1281.464826	3	0.000000
Attitude & Beneficence	Interaction	0.23	51.368585	1	0.000000
	Main	0.23	1122.162116	2	0.000000
	All	0.24	1173.530701	3	0.000000

Table 4: The relevance of the interactions of beneficence vs. restrictive justice considerations with moral judgment competence and attitude, and their significance

Figure 2 & Table 4 compare the effect of the interactions of beneficence vs. restrictive justice considerations with moral judgment competence and attitude bias. In this comparison, we find that both moral judgment competence and attitude show a significant and relevant interaction with beneficence vs. restrictive justice.

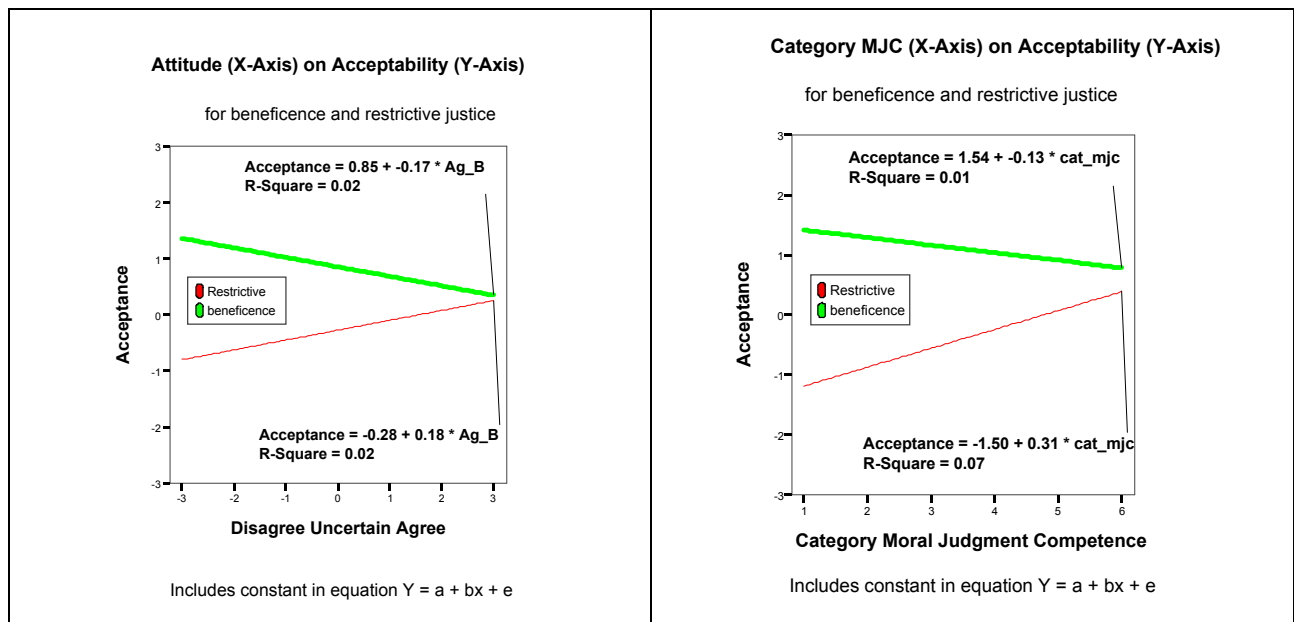


Figure 3: The effect of the interaction of beneficence vs. restrictive justice with moral judgment competence and attitude

Figure 3 portrays these interaction effects. Here we evidence for the first time the preference of beneficence over restrictive justice considerations. In both frames, it is quite clear that arguments were better acceptable if they represented beneficent considerations (thick line) than if they represented restrictive justice considerations (thin line). This effect is reduced, however, the more respondents agreed with the need for the war (left frame) and the higher their capacity was to rely on internal principles of moral judgment (right frame).

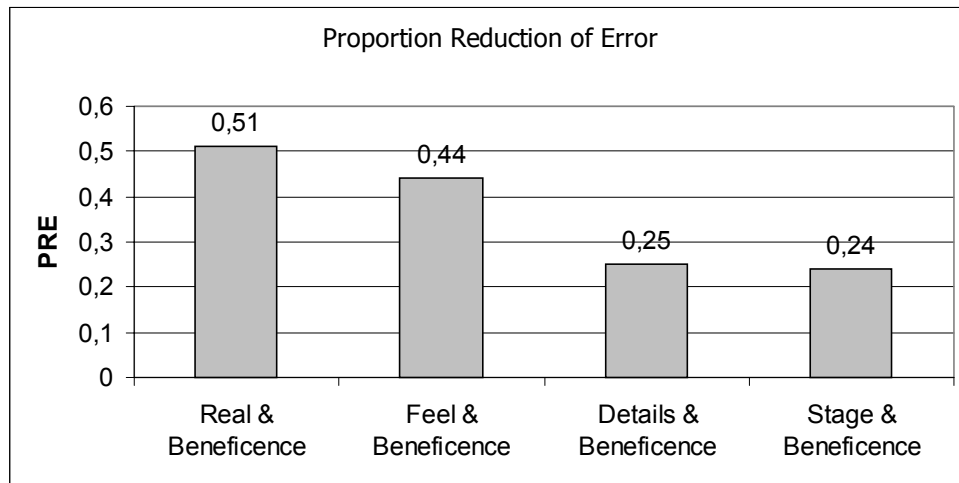


Figure 4: The relevance of the interactions of beneficence vs. restrictive justice with four other within subject factors

		PRE	-2 Log Likelihood Ratio	df	Sig.
Real & Beneficence	Interactions	0.51	27.024854	1	0.000000
	Main	0.51	3288.485375	2	0.000000
	All	0.51	3315.510229	3	0.000000
Feel & Beneficence	Interactions	0.43	0.017001	1	0.896261
	Main	0.43	2574.878050	2	0.000000
	All	0.44	2611.344154	3	0.000000
Details & Beneficence	Interactions	0.24	0.047461	1	0.827542
	Main	0.24	1191.066009	2	0.000000
	All	0.25	1257.604795	3	0.000000
Stage & Beneficence	Interactions	0.23	14.306554	1	0.000155
	Main	0.23	1167.002214	2	0.000000
	All	0.24	1181.308768	3	0.000000

Table 5: The relevance of the interactions of beneficence vs. restrictive justice with four other within subject factors, and their significance

Figure 4 & Table 5 compare the interaction effects of beneficence vs. restrictive justice considerations with realistic, feelings, details and stage. This comparison shows that all interactions account for more than 10% of the PRE. Interaction of beneficence with illusory or realistic perceptions accounts for 51%, destructive/constructive feelings account for 44%, relative frequency of details accounts for 25% and stage accounts for 24%.

The interaction of beneficence vs. restrictive justice considerations and whether an argument seemed illusory or realistic provides evidence that arguments are better acceptable when they seem realistic than when they seem illusory, while simultaneously beneficent considerations are more acceptable than restrictive justice (cf. Figure 5).

Respondents rated their perception of the main point of each argument from illusory (-3) to realistic (+3). Arguments seeming realistic were acceptable, while arguments seeming illusory were not. The slopes produced by beneficent consideration increases by (+ .69), while the slope produced by restrictive justice considerations increases at about (+ .57). Con-arguments are better acceptable than pro-arguments and as perceptions of realistic increase; the con-arguments are even better acceptable than pro-arguments. Like freedom, peace maybe commonly considered more romantic and not so realistic. Arguments for peace must prove that they are realistic and not simply good intentions. Beneficent considerations show their dominance over restrictive justice considerations.

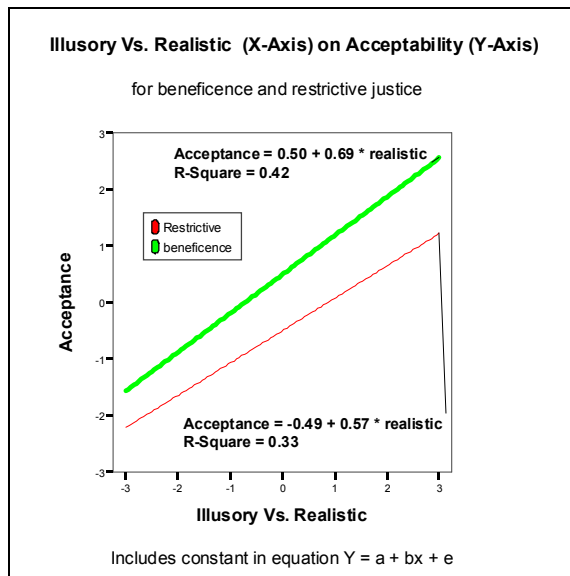


Figure 5: The effect of the interaction between perceived realism and considerations of beneficence vs. restrictive justice

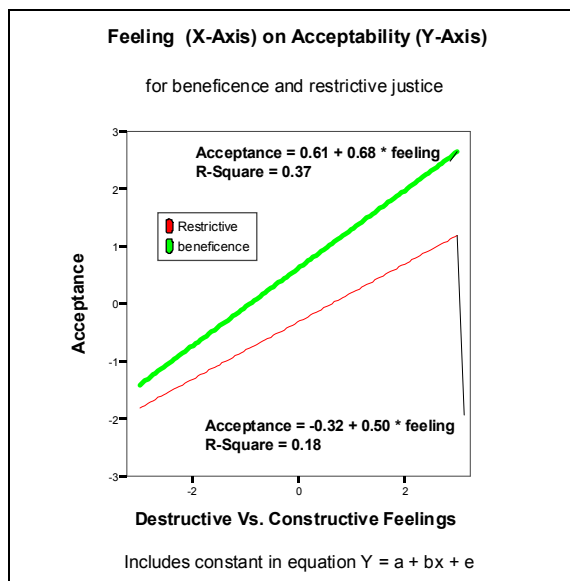


Figure 6: The effect of the interaction between evoked feelings and considerations of beneficence vs. restrictive justice

Figure 6 shows the interaction of beneficence vs. restrictive justice considerations and whether the argument evoked destructive or constructive feelings. It provides evidence that arguments are better acceptable when they evoke constructive feelings than when they evoke destructive feelings, while simultaneously beneficent considerations are more acceptable than restrictive justice is. Respondents rated whether the main point of an argument evoked from destructive (-3) to constructive (+3) feelings. Arguments evoking constructive feelings were acceptable, arguments evoking destructive feelings were not. The slope produced by beneficent considerations increases by (+ .68), while the slope produced by restrictive justice considerations increases by (+ .50). This suggests that con-arguments are better acceptable than pro-arguments and that con-arguments are even better acceptable than pro-arguments as the feeling evoked is more constructive. Beneficent considerations retain their dominance over restrictive justice considerations.

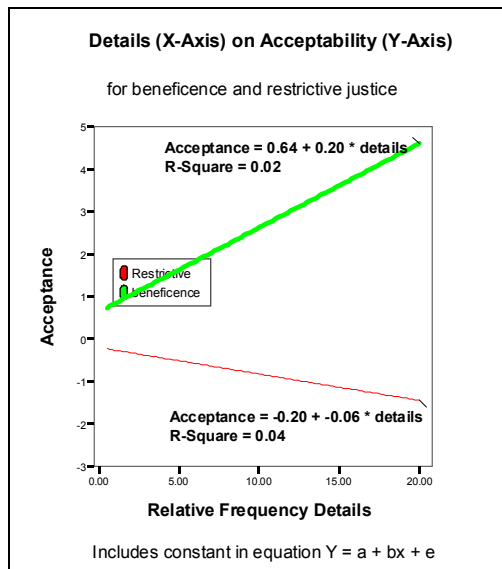


Figure 7: The effect of the interaction between the relative frequency of escalation / de-escalation details and considerations of beneficence vs. restrictive justice

The interaction of beneficence vs. restrictive justice considerations and the relative frequency of escalation / de-escalation details provides evidence that arguments with higher frequency of de-escalation details are better acceptable than arguments with lower frequency, while the reverse is partly true for the relative frequency of escalation details. The more escalation details the less acceptable the argument (cf. Figure 7).

As the frequency of escalation / de-escalation details increases along the X-axis, there is a corresponding increase for beneficent considerations (thick line), and a decrease for restrictive justice considerations (thin line). The acceptability of con-arguments increases by (+ .20), while the acceptability of pro-arguments decreases by (-0.06). Respondents seem to utilize increases in beneficent details, while they reject increases in restrictive justice details more.

Taking into account that most of the subjects in the sample disagreed with the need for war it can be assumed that the stressing of pro escalation details does not convince them, but produces a boomerang effect in the sense that the more details that do not correspond with their own attitude the more the argument is rejected. "I am against the war, you are Bush, you come with details and I say forget it, enough with all that stuff".

Increasing details can make an argument acceptable when it is in accordance with persons' attitude, but if it is inconsistent with their attitude it may have the opposite effect and the argument becomes less acceptable.

Having evidence that respondents' acceptance of arguments occurred as predicted for illusory vs. realistic and destructive vs. constructive feelings, but not exactly for the frequency of escalation details, we turn our attention to the interaction between escalation / de-escalation details and beneficence vs. restrictive considerations with stage, moral judgment competence and attitude (cf. Figure 9 and Table 7).

3.2 Interaction of details and beneficence with stage, moral judgment competence and attitude

Our second question asks what is the contribution of interaction of escalation / de-escalation details and beneficence vs. restrictive justice considerations with stage, moral judgment competence and attitude.

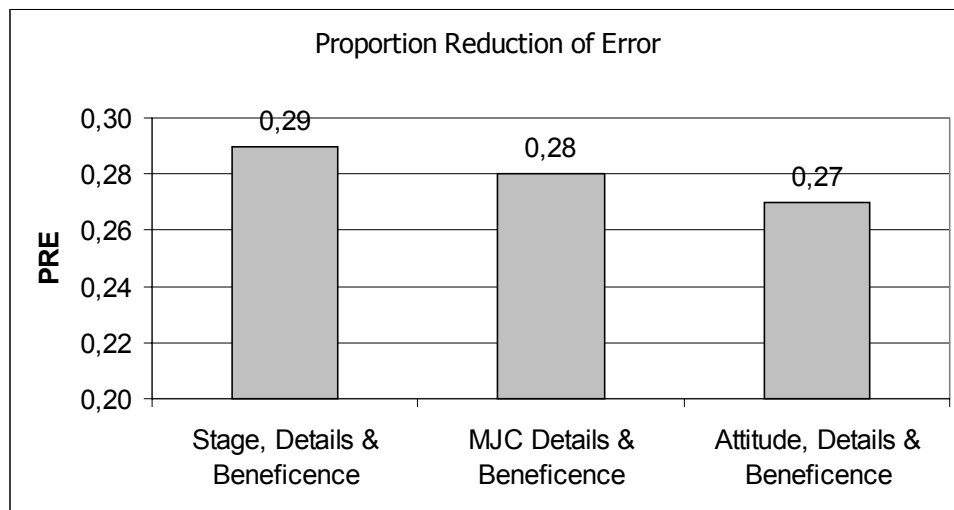


Figure 8: The relevance of the interaction of beneficence and details with stage, moral judgment competence and attitude

		PRE	-2 Log Likelihood Ratio	df	Sig.
Stage, Details & Beneficence	Interactions	0.29	28.929862	3	0.000002
	Main	0.29	1473.858959	3	0.000000
	All	0.29	1502.788821	6	0.000000
MJC, Details & Beneficence	Interactions	0.34	254.541724	3	0.000000
	Main	0.24	19131.773137	3	0.000000
	All	0.28	1455.335205	6	0.000000
Attitude, Details & Beneficence	Interactions	0.24	167.399910	3	0.000000
	Main	0.24	1196.953913	3	0.000000
	All	0.27	1364.353823	6	0.000000

Table 6: The relevance of interactions of beneficence and details with stage, moral judgment considerations and attitude, and their significance

The interaction effect of beneficence vs. restrictive justice considerations and frequency of details with stage, moral judgment competence and attitude shows that all interactions account for more than 10% of the PRE. Interaction of beneficence and details with stage accounts for 29%, interaction with moral judgment competence accounts for 28% and attitude accounts for 27%.

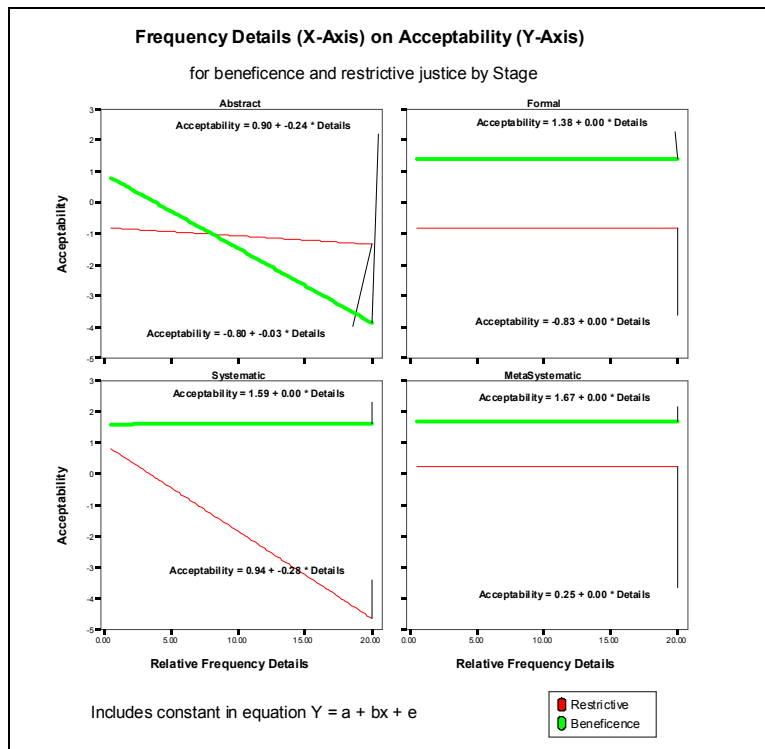


Figure 9: The effect of interaction between beneficence vs. restrictive justice considerations and details with stage

Figure 9 displays the effect of interaction between beneficent principles and details with stage. This comparison shows that increases in the frequency of de-escalation details decreases respondents' acceptance by (-0.24) for arguments at the abstract stage. There is a corresponding but minor decrease in the acceptability of increasing escalation details (top left). Arguments at the formal & meta-systematic stages show no change in the acceptability of beneficence considerations over restrictive justice with increases in de-escalation and escalation details (top & bottom right). However pro-arguments at the systematic stage, decrease in acceptability as escalation details increase, while acceptability of con arguments is not affected by increasing de-escalation details (bottom left).

A categorical preference for beneficent considerations over restrictive justice is challenged by increasing details in arguments at the abstract stage. At this stage, arguments deal with absolutisms, stereotypes, and categorical assertions.

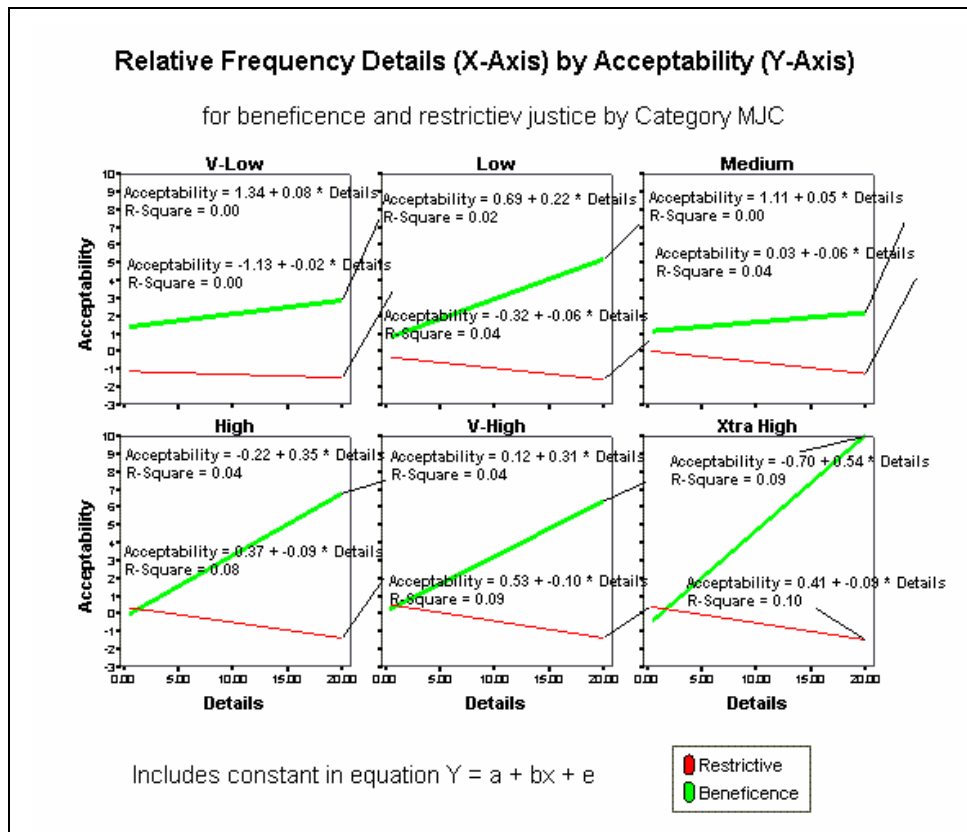


Figure 10: The effect of the interaction between beneficence vs. restrictive justice considerations, details and moral judgment competence

Figure 10 portrays the effect of the interaction between beneficence vs. restrictive justice considerations, details and moral judgment competence. It shows that both, the positive effect of de-escalation details and the negative effect of escalation details become stronger at higher levels of moral judgment competence. The more competent the respondents are, the less is the effect of war propaganda and the more do they rely on their intuition to agree with beneficence principles.

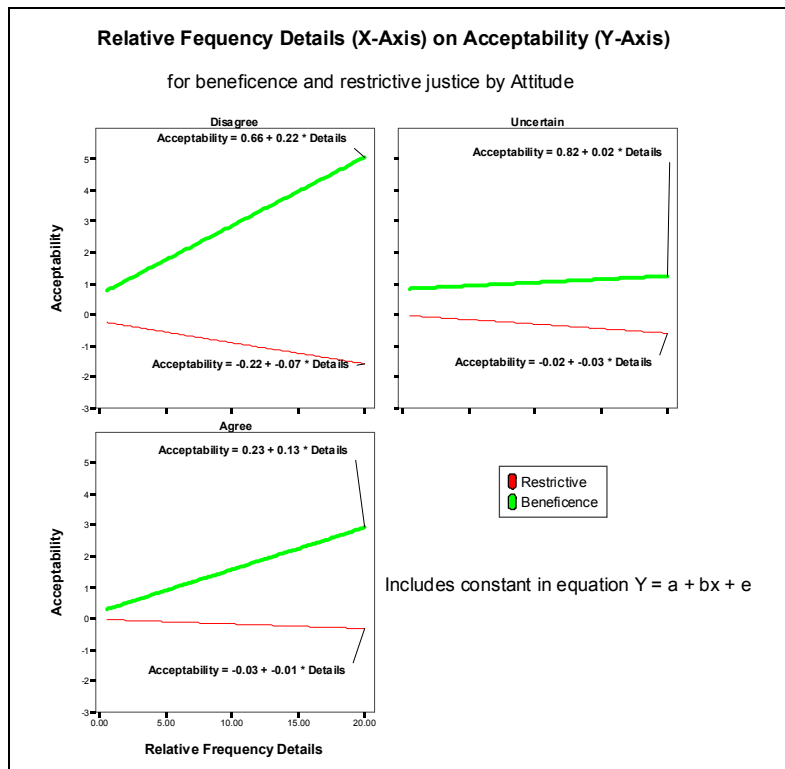


Figure 11: The effect of the interaction between beneficence vs. restrictive justice considerations, details and attitude

Figure 11 portrays the effect of the interaction between beneficence vs. restrictive justice considerations, details and attitude.

Respondents who are uncertain about the need for war (upper right) display a pattern where the details have very little effect on the acceptance of the arguments. However, beneficence considerations are more acceptable than restrictive justice considerations.

Respondents who agree and respondents who disagree with the need for war show mainly the same pattern: De-escalation details improve the acceptability of arguments and escalation details decrease acceptability. However, this effect is much weaker with persons who agree with the need for war, which means that the boomerang effect mentioned before is reduced if respondents have a pro war attitude.

4. Summary

The most pervasive relationship evident in all the figures above is between beneficence vs. restrictive justice considerations and the acceptability of arguments. This relationship can be best characterised by a preference for beneficence principles over restrictive justice considerations (cf. Figure 3).

In looking at the quality of the arguments (cf. Figure 4 & Table 5); it is no surprise to find a preference for arguments perceived as realistic over those perceived to be illusory (cf. Figure 5) and for arguments that evoke constructive feelings over those that evoke destructive feelings (cf. Figure 6). These are consistent with our expectations; both are relevant and significant as the strongest predictors of respondents' acceptance. Stage however is significant, but not relevant (cf. Figure 4. Table 5).

The next truly interesting significant and relevant relationship is between the relative frequency of the escalation details in pro arguments and de-escalation details in con arguments. De-escalation details improve the acceptability of con arguments, while escalation details slightly decrease, or have no effect on, the acceptability of pro arguments (cf. Figure 7). When we consider that most respondents in the sample disagreed with the need for war we observe that increasing details enhance the acceptability of arguments that correspond with respondents' attitude, but can cause a boomerang effect in their acceptance of arguments that fail to correspond with their attitude.

Finally, we compared the interaction effect of beneficence vs. restrictive justice considerations and escalation / de-escalation details with stage, moral judgment competence and attitude.

We find that there is a difference in the acceptability of beneficence considerations produced by stage (cf. Figure 9). For arguments at the abstract stage, increasing de-escalation details decrease the acceptability of beneficence considerations. For arguments at the formal & meta-systematic stages, increasing details have no effect on the acceptability of arguments, neither pro nor con. For arguments at the systematic stage, finally, the effect of increasing details is the reverse of the effect at the abstract stage: they decrease the acceptability of restrictive justice considerations and have no effect on the acceptability of beneficence considerations. Here we find evidence that challenges the categorical preference for beneficence over restrictive justice considerations.

In combination with moral judgement competence (cf. Figure 10), we observe a pattern where increasing de-escalation details increase respondents' acceptance of beneficence and decrease their acceptance of restrictive justice. This effect gets stronger as respondents' capacity to rely on moral principles increases. As respondents' competence increases, they are affected less by war propaganda and rely more on their intuition in favour of general categorical principles of beneficence.

In combination with attitude (cf. Figure 11), we observe a pattern, where details have very little effect on the acceptance of the arguments by respondents who are uncertain about the need for war.

Respondents who agree or disagree with the need for war show the same pattern: Increasing de-escalation details enhance their acceptance of con arguments, while increasing escalation details lower their acceptance of pro arguments. However, this effect is much weaker for persons who agree with the need for war, which reduces the boomerang effect mentioned earlier in a manner consistent with respondents' pro war attitude.

We conclude that beneficence considerations remain more acceptable than restrictive justice considerations. This highlights intuitive processes over attitude or higher moral reasoning.

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On the author: Juan LaLlave, Researcher, Harvard Medical School, Massachusetts Mental Health Center, The Program in Psychiatry and the Law; Doktorand, University Konstanz, Germany, Peace and political Psychology. His discipline includes Clinical and Forensic Psychology. The focus of his research interests includes: The role and boundaries in clinical and forensic practice; the application of stage theory in adult and moral development; the contribution of role, attitude, emotions and reasoning in rational decision-making and cumulative prospect theory; the role of moral judgment in understanding terrorism and the Iraq war toward peace-oriented-constructive-transformation of journalism and the media.

Address: Fachbereich Psychologie, Universität Konstanz, D-78457 Konstanz. eMail: juan.lallave@uni-konstanz.de