

JUDGMENT OF JUSTICE OF QUOTAS IN THE UNIVERSITY AND ITS RELATION WITH THE MORAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between the fairness of quota judgment and the level of moral competency of students and professors. This work was conducted with 317 college students and 15 professors from a base course for engineering at a Public University. We use a structured questionnaire to collect data, composed of a dilemma of quotas and eight arguments related to justice and eight to injustice of quotas. We still apply the Moral Competence Test (MCT_xt), which considers affective and cognitive aspects of the judgment and gives rise to score - C. The results indicated the low C index of the participants, conflict of interest in the judgment of the fairness of quota and the racial issue as the main disagreement factor. Among non-quota students, the higher the C index, the more they considered quotas like unfairness and among quota students, the lower the C score, the greater the choice for fairness. For judgments based on equity, as in the case of affirmative actions, higher levels of moral development would be necessary. Education has an essential role in developing students' moral competence and, consequently, in promoting their participation in social, civic and professional life.

Keywords: affirmative action, moral development, distributive justice

Juzgamiento de justicia de cotas en la universidad y su relación con el desarrollo moral

RESUMEN

El objetivo del estudio es investigar la relación entre el juzgamiento de la justicia de cotas y el nivel de competencia moral de estudiantes y profesores. Participaron de la investigación 317 universitarios y 15 docentes de un curso base para ingenieros de una Universidad Federal. Para recolecta de datos se ha utilizado un cuestionario estructurado compuesto por un dilema sobre cotas y ocho argumentos relacionados a la justicia y ocho a la injusticia de las cotas. Aplicamos aún la prueba de Competencia Moral (MCT_xt), que considera aspectos afectivos y cognitivos del juzgamiento y remete al escore de competencia - C. Los resultados indicaron el bajo índice C de los participantes, conflicto de interés en el juzgamiento de la justicia de las cotas y la cuestión racial como principal factor de discordancia. Demostraron aún que, entre los alumnos no cotizantes, cuanto mayor el índice C, más consideraban las cotas injustas y entre los cotizantes, cuanto menor el escore C, mayor la escoja por la justicia. Para juzgamientos pautados en la justicia por equidad, como en el caso de las acciones afirmativas, serían necesarios niveles superiores de desarrollo moral. La educación tiene un papel esencial en el desarrollo de la competencia moral de los estudiantes y, en consecuencia, en la promoción de su participación en la vida social, cívica y profesional.

Palabras clave: acción afirmativa; desarrollo moral; justicia

Julgamento de justiça de cotas na universidade e sua relação com o desenvolvimento moral

RESUMO

O objetivo do estudo é investigar a relação entre o julgamento da justiça de cotas e o nível de competência moral de estudantes e professores. Participaram da pesquisa 317 universitários e 15 docentes de um curso base para engenharias de uma Universidade Federal. Para coleta de dados foi utilizado um questionário estruturado composto por um dilema sobre cotas e oito argumentos relacionados à justiça e oito à injustiça das cotas. Aplicamos ainda o Teste de Competência Moral (MCT_xt), que considera aspectos afetivos e cognitivos do julgamento e remete ao escore de competência - C. Os resultados indicaram o baixo índice C dos participantes, conflito de interesse no julgamento da justiça das cotas e a questão racial como principal fator de discordância. Demonstraram ainda que entre os alunos não cotistas, quanto maior o índice C, mais consideravam as cotas injustas e entre os cotistas, quanto menor o escore C, maior a escolha pela justiça. Para julgamentos pautados na justiça por equidade, como no caso das ações afirmativas, seriam necessários níveis superiores de desenvolvimento moral. A educação tem um papel essencial no desenvolvimento da competência moral dos estudantes e em consequência, na promoção da sua participação na vida social, cívica e profissional.

Palavras-chave: ação afirmativa; desenvolvimento moral; justiça

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INTRODUCTION

Law No. 12,711/2012, known as the Quota Law, established rules for admission to federal universities and federal high-level technical education institutions. In that law, there is a requirement to reserve enrollments, per course and shift, at least 50% (fifty percent) for students who have completed high school in public schools. The remaining 50% of the vacancies remain for wide competition.

The vacancies reserved for quotas (50% of the institution's total vacancies) are subdivided and 50% of them must be allocated to students with a family income equal to or less than 1.5 minimum wages per capita; ethnic/racial criteria are taken into account and these reserves will be filled by self-declared black, brown and indigenous people and by people with disabilities, according to the latest demographic census of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics – IBGE (Brasil, 2012).

Affirmative actions, in general, aim to offer differentiated treatment to historically discriminated and excluded groups, in order to make up for the disadvantages due to their situation as victims of racism and other forms of discrimination. They are called positive action, positive discrimination or compensatory policies and are intended to offer the excluded chances to participate in the dynamics of growing social mobility (Munanga, 2003). As the same as any other policy of a social nature, the Quota Law has been promoting discussions, which is not surprising, since the university has been, for a long time, a space for the reproduction of Brazilian elites, that is, keeping the prestige and power, as pointed out by Moehlecke (2004).

The main criticisms of the use of quotas relate to the lack of investment in public basic education (Durham, 2005; Leite, 2011; Menezes, 2015), possible decrease in the quality of teaching and research due to the performance of the quota student (Garcia & de Jesus, 2015), difficulty of permanence of quota students (Leite, 2012a; Maggie & Fry, 2004), lack of equality in the criteria, which should consider only merit (Bayma, 2012; Cunha, 2017), lack of the biological concept of race, with difficulties in identifying the beneficiaries of the quotas (Lewgoy, 2005; Medeiros, Neto, & Gomes, 2016; Schwartzman, 2009) and that social inclusion would be sufficient for racial inclusion (Haas & Linhares, 2012; Leite, 2011, 2012b). There are also positions that indicate the difficulty of acceptance and discrimination in the academic environment that quota holders could face (Jesus, 2013; Nery & Costa, 2009; Silva & Silva, 2012).

On the other hand, in pioneering institutions, which adopted quotas before the Federal Law, some studies had already showed that the objective of social and racial inclusion of quotas was being achieved,

as quota holders had low evasion rates and good academic performance (Bezerra & Gurgel, 2012; Bittar & Almeida, 2006; Darity, Deshpande, & Weisskopf, 2011; Moehlecke, 2004; Tessler, 2006; Velloso, 2009; Vieira, Del'Agli, & Caetano, 2019).

In research after the implementation of the Quota Law, which highlighted positive aspects of the widespread use of quotas, the good academic performance of quota students and their low dropout were confirmed (Campos, Machado, Miranda, & Costa, 2017; Queiroz, Miranda, Tavares, & Freitas, 2015). They also highlighted the fulfillment of their objective of social inclusion (Ristoff, 2014; Rodrigues, Matos, & Ferreira, 2017; Trevisol & Nierotka, 2016) and especially racial inclusion (Feres & Daflon, 2015; Feres Júnior, Daflon, Ramos, & Miguel Júnior, 2013; Guarnieri & Melo-Silva, 2017; Guerrini, Piconi, Sturion, & Mata, 2018; Silveira, 2018). Some studies pointed out that merit was presented as a factor in the constitution of social and racial inequalities (Souza & Barbosa, 2016; Santos & Scopinho, 2016). Finally, studies indicating the positive perception, both of quota students and non-quota students, in coexistence in the academic environment (Lemos, 2017; Wickbold & Siqueira, 2018).

After several legal disputes regarding the use of affirmative actions, especially quotas, the Federal Supreme Court ruled about its constitutionality on April 26, 2012, unanimously. For the decision, it was supported by the principle of material equality (in fact), which aims to equalize individuals who are essentially unequal (Sabadell, 2017). In Brazil, miscegenation has produced the myth that discrimination is the result of social stratification and not of color differences, and that black people are discriminated not because they are black, but because they are poor (Freyre, 1933/2003; Marques & Sanches, 2010).

Reserves of vacancies in Higher Education Institutions can enable Brazilians to emancipate and climb the social pyramid (Cesar, 2003). Therefore, affirmative actions are presented as instruments for transforming social relations and personal identification, allowing a portion of the population previously excluded to enter the university (Guimarães, 1999). This changes the relations in the academic environment and in the society, providing perspectives for social change through education.

In addition to the inclusion and social advancement of some groups, the benefit of human, moral and social development is of importance. In this regard, we agree with Piaget (1932/1994) that coexistence, even if forced, may result in more autonomous subjects through relations of cooperation and interaction.

For this interaction to really take shape, the perception of the fairness of quotas becomes essential, as the recognition of this policy as a measure of equity

and compensation for historical inequalities favors cooperative relations. For Piaget (1932/1994), the feeling of justice is a moral notion, the most rational of all, which is gradually constructed by mutual respect and solidarity among individuals, as an immanent condition or law of balance in social relations. The rule of justice stands out “almost in total autonomy, as solidarity grows” among individuals (Piaget, 1932/1994, p. 156). In the same sense, Kohlberg (1992) states that the center of morality is justice or its principles. Based on the agreement that the feeling of justice is the central theme for morality, we chose to investigate this dimension in the context of affirmative policies.

For Piaget (1932/1994), the development of justice follows that of morality and, consequently, that of relationships. Morality develops from anomie, in which there is an absence of morals, to heteronomy, which considers unconditional respect for authority figures, the group or society, and finally to autonomy, represented by overcoming this obedience to something outside the subject, to be guided by values and principles of appreciation of the other. The difference between heteronomy and autonomy lies in “why” we obey, or not. Relationships also develop from coercion to mutual respect, one being superior to the other.

The same happens with the notion of justice, which presents itself with three tendencies. Immanent justice, in which individuals believe they will be automatically punished by nature or a superior force. Retributive justice, characterized by the idea that there must be proportionality between transgression and punishment, starting with expiatory sanctions, which are foreign to the crime, and moving on to sanctions by reciprocity, with punishment directly linked to the transgression and to the rules of equality. When judgments are guided by principles of equity, we can call it distributive justice, with the willingness to recognize the right of each and apply the fairest sanction in a given situation (Piaget, 1932/1994).

In this way, with this same interactionist approach, Kohlberg (1984), starting from the notions of anomie, heteronomy and autonomy proposed by Piaget, proposed the existence of successive stages of moral development, with the apex of morality being reached when the subject is based on principles of justice and dissociates itself from non-moral considerations, presenting a model of thought structure. The author describes six types of moral reasoning that are combined at three levels: pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional. Thus, for the author, moral reasoning is conceived as hierarchically organized into structures, with an invariant sequential order.

Like leading cognitive-developmental moral theorists, Piaget (Piaget, 1932/1994) and later Kohlberg (1984), were convinced that affect and cognition, morality

and intelligence were closely related in behavior and a moral act or attitude could not be defined by purely cognitive or purely motivational criteria. Based on these theoretical assumptions, Lind (1984, 1993, 2000) defends the assumption of parallel development of affective and cognitive aspects of moral behavior and proposes his theory of the double aspect. In it, the affective aspect has the role of informing about the direction or orientation of behavior and the cognitive aspect is attributed to its structure and organization.

Lind (2000) starts from the method of evaluating moral development proposed by Piaget and Kohlberg, which was based on interviews with instructions and encodings, often very elaborate and time-consuming, and develops an objective test to measure moral competence, called the Moral Competence Test. – MCT (Lind, 2012). In this proposal, moral competence is defined as the ability we need to apply our moral ideals in everyday life to resolve moral conflicts, that is, moral principles that a person has and how competently he applies them in his decision-making. Its use and evaluation require little time and it has already been translated into almost 40 languages. In Brazil, it was adapted and validated by Bataglia (2010), being called the extended Moral Competence Test – MCT_xt.

Several studies using the MCT have shown an association between moral competence indices and democratic and prosocial behaviors and this test has also been used to assess the effectiveness of teaching methods (Lind, 1993, 2012, 2019; Lind et al., 2019). Research in Brazil has shown that university students have low and medium scores of moral competence (Feitosa et al., 2013; Landim, Silva, Feitosa, & Nuto, 2015; Lepre et al., 2013). These levels are an indication that in their judgments of concrete moral situations, they may not use principles of social justice and equity.

We understand that quotas present themselves as a social moral dilemma of great importance. In this sense, the level of moral competence of students and professors, directly involved with the policy, is an important measure for understanding their judgments regarding the use of this affirmative action. Our main hypothesis is that the judgment of quotas as fair is positively related to moral development.

Although different aspects related to university quotas have been investigated, little attention has been paid to the dimension of moral development of quota and non-quota students and university professors directly involved in politics. This aspect of moral development, seen as an important construct in decision-making, it can be a significant component in the manifestation of judgments in relation to politics. Thus, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between the judgment of quota justice and the level of moral competence of quota and non-quota students

and university professors.

METHOD

Participants

The research was carried out at a Federal University in the interior of Minas Gerais, with a sample of 317 quota and non-quota students (sampling error 4% and 95% confidence), of which 144 were female and 176 were male. All newcomers after 2013, the year of implementation of quotas at the Institution, in the first cycle higher education course, Interdisciplinary Bachelor of Science and Technology (BCT), for which the second cycle is Engineering. In addition, 15 professors from the same course also participated (sample of convenience).

These participants were divided into three groups for comparative analysis:

1) Group 1: 186 non-quota students (5% sample error and 95% confidence), 96 female and 90 male, aged between 18 and 36 years ($M= 20.13$; $SD = 2.75$);

2) Group 2: 131 quota students (sampling error 5.40% and 90% confidence), 48 female and 86 male, aged between 18 and 36 years ($M= 20.63$; $SD = 3.54$);

3) Group 3: 15 professors, 07 female and 08 male, aged between 33 and 49 years ($M= 39.73$; $SD = 5.81$).

Instruments

In order to identify the fairness judgment of the participants on the use of quotas, we prepared the "Quota Questionnaire" that contained:

a) Questions for characterizing the sample such as name (for later identification as a quota or non-quota), sex and age;

b) The following dilemma¹: "João, who studied all his life in public schools, managed to obtain a sufficient grade in the ENEM to enter the course of his choice, using the quota resource. Pedro, another competitor, studied all his life in a private school with a view to entering the public university and would have enough grade to enter the course of his interest, if it were not for the quotas."

After reading the dilemma, participants were asked how fair or unfair they considered it, using a six-point *Likert* scale (1- Totally Unfair to 6 - Totally Fair), for forced choice. This assessment resulted in the "Fair Situation" score, for correlation analysis with the other study variables.

c) 16 (sixteen) questions, divided into 08 (eight) arguments that discussed the fairness of quotas and 08 (eight) about their injustice. In the block of arguments for justice, the statements referred to: Social inclusion and the opportunity given to the excluded in public

Higher Education - HE (questions 1 and 2); small number of this population in public Higher Education - HE (question 3); assessment system currently used would not measure student competence at the university (question 4 and 5); importance of living with diversity in order to be more socially tolerant (question 6); difficulty in entering competitive courses (question 7) and; the inefficiency of Basic Public Education (question 8). In the block of arguments for the injustice of quotas, the statements were about: The protection of quota holders who could suffer discrimination in the environment, due to insufficient capacity (question 1); quotas should only be of a social and non-racial nature (question 2); the fact of violating the principle of equality (question 3); the only requirement for admission should be merit (question 4); difficulty of the quota student in following the content (question 5); universities would have to reduce the level of education (question 6); the incentive should be on the quality of Basic Education (question 7) and; that there was difficulty in distinguishing who is black, brown, indigenous or white (question 8).

After each question, the subjects were asked about the agreement or disagreement of the statements using a six-point *Likert* scale (1- Strongly Disagree and 6- Strongly Agree). For the analyses, we defined scores for the answers, establishing the following scores: "Pro Justice", which is the average of the points obtained in the questions about the justice of quotas; "Against Justice" for the average of arguments dealing with injustice; and "Sense of Justice" which represents the difference between *Pro Justice* and *Against Justice*.

In order to obtain the moral competence "C" score, we used the Extended Moral Competence Test - MCT_xt, developed by Georg Lind (2000) and validated and adapted to the Brazilian reality by Bataglia (2010). The original MCT proposed by Lind, presents two moral dilemmas and requires test participants to judge a series of arguments for and against the decisions made in the stories. The arguments are chosen so that each one represents a certain moral orientation. The pattern of responses to the MCT allows us to recognize whether and to what extent respondents are able to judge arguments according to their moral quality rather than their agreement with personal opinions (Lind, 2000). In the Brazilian version, this test has one more dilemma with the same evaluation format, being called MCT_xt and counting on: a) workers' dilemma, about conflict between workers and management and a judgment is requested regarding the conduct of workers (robbery); b) doctor's dilemma, which deals with euthanasia and the respondents judge the doctor's conduct; c) judge's dilemma, inserted in the Brazilian version, whose theme is a possible attack by a terrorist group and in which the judge allows the torture of a woman to obtain information in order to save other lives and, in this case,

² Dilemma analyzed by expert judges, with 78.2% agreement, an acceptable Fleiss Kappa coefficient ($\kappa = 0.658$) and an acceptable Krippendorff Alpha coefficient ($\alpha = 0.662$).

participants are asked to judge the judge's conduct.

After each dilemma, the competence of the participant's moral judgment is evaluated, presenting 06 (six) favorable arguments and 06 (six) contrary to the behaviors presented in each situation. The result of the average of answers expresses the coherence of the subjects to value equally, both the contrary arguments, as the ones favorable to the position they defended in the dilemma. The classification of MCT_xt scores is as follows: Low, for scores from 1 to 9; medium, from 10 to 29; high, from 30 to 49; and very high, above 50. Such objectivity in the measure eliminates intuition or the clinical analysis of protocols for assessment instruments of moral judgment that were previously used (Bataglia, 2010).

Procedure

The research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of UNIFAE - Faculdades Associadas de Ensino with opinion nº 1,089,724. The Free and Informed Consent Form, the Quota Questionnaire and the MCT_xt were built on *Google Forms* on *Google Drive* and sent by email. This procedure was repeated weekly for 03 months, to reach the representative sample. It was not asked whether the participant was a quota holder or not and this data was collected, from the name placed in the questionnaire, in the Academic Control and Registration sector of the Higher Institution.

Descriptive analyzes were performed for all variables, respecting the characteristics of each variable (metric or categorical), calculating measures of frequency, percentage, central tendency (mean) and dispersion/variation (standard deviation). Chi-Square tests were performed to investigate the association between categorical variables. Independent sample t tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to compare the average of the Moral Competence Indexes - C, *Sense of Justice* and other metric variables in relation to the groups to which the participant belonged (G1, G2 and G3). When comparing groups with large discrepancies in sample size, we chose to use the Welch Test with traditional ANOVA, due to its greater robustness for these cases, following indications from the literature (Field, 2009). At this stage, Pearson's Correlation analyzes were also carried out, in order to investigate the relationships between the components of the various scales. In the analyses, we performed the calculation of the respective effect size, based on Cramer's V measurements, η^2 , d and r . A p-value (significance) < 0.05 was considered significant.

RESULT

In the Quota Dilemma, the participants had, in general, a *Fair Situation* score of average 3.78, representing a fairer than unfair assessment. It is important to remember that the Likert scale used is 06

points, with an average value of 3.5. However, when we observed the responses of the groups separately, the group of non-quota students considered the dilemma more unfair ($M=3.37$), and the groups of quota students and professors more fair ($M=4.37$; $M=3.8$, respectively).

As for the arguments that dealt with the fairness of the quotas, the evaluation of the participants, in general, was in agreement, with an average *Pro Justice* score of 3.93. However, the group of quota students presented more favorable judgments ($M=4.38$), when compared to the non-quota students ($M=3.60$) and professors ($M=4.13$). In the group of non-quota students, the issues with the greatest disagreement regarding their justice were those that dealt with the racial issue of quotas (questions 01 and 03) and the one that showed that the quota student would hardly enter competitive courses if it were not for the quotas (question 07) as seen in Table 1. In all arguments, we found that non-quota students had a lower *Pro Justice* score, followed by professors and quota students.

As for the arguments that discussed the injustice of quotas, we found that, in general, the participants showed greater disagreement, with an average score *Against Justice* of 3.24. However, as we can see in Table 2, both quota participants, non-quota students and professors agreed with the injustice of 02 arguments in the questionnaire. In the question that referred to the injustice of quotas due to their racial character, which should be only social (question 10) and in question 15, which deals with the injustice of quotas, since the quality of Basic Education should be prioritized, so that no need to use quotas.

Analyzing all the questions, we found differences between the groups of participants and the non-quota students presented, in most questions, a higher *Against Justice* score, followed by professors and quota students, meaning greater agreement with the injustice of the statements. Among the divergences in the judgment, the group of non-quota holders had an average of 3.79, showing agreement with question 11, which deals with the injustice of quotas for not guaranteeing equal rights for all and with question 12, which proposes its injustice, providing that Merit should be the only criterion for admission. In the group of professors, alternative 16, which deals with the lack of objective criteria to distinguish racial quota students, presented a score of agreement with its injustice.

In the analysis of the average scores of the Quota Questionnaire, presented in Table 3, we can observe that even with a positive *Sense of Justice* in all groups, in the G1 group – non-quota holders, the difference was very small. This indicates that although they agree with the fairness of some arguments, they also agree with arguments that deal with the unfairness of the use of quotas. We also note that non-quota holders considered

Table 1 Average of Responses to Arguments in Favor of the Justice of Quotas at the University.

Arguments used for the JUSTICE of quotas	Average of answers (1 a 6)			
	Non- quotas	Quota	Prof	General
1 - It is fair, as it corresponds to the attempt to include students who have attended high school in public schools and especially blacks, browns and indigenous people, who otherwise might not be able to enter the university.	3,32	4,19	4,13	3,7
2 - The quota law is fair, as it provides opportunities for a part of the population historically left out of Higher Education	3,71	4,56	4,13	4,07
3 - The quotas are fair, since the majority of the Brazilian population is black and poor and in Higher Education its representation is very small.	3,29	4,15	3,93	3,66
4 - It is fair, because the possible lower grades obtained by the quota student in the National High School Exam (ENEM) do not translate into low grades during the course.	3,69	4,51	4,6	4,05
5 - It is fair, as the quota students present an academic performance similar to the non-quota students after entering the university.	3,67	4,46	4,13	4
6 - It is fair since coexistence with diversity through quotas is necessary for the formation of more socially tolerant individuals	3,92	4,66	4,07	4,22
7 - It is fair, as quota students would hardly be able to enter the most popular courses if it were not for the quotas.	3,11	3,96	4	3,48
8 - It is fair because both investment in the quality of Public Basic Education and the inclusion of quota holders in Higher Education are urgent.	4,04	4,56	4	4,24

Note: Research data.

Table 2 Average of Responses to Arguments Against the Justice of Quotas at the University.

Arguments used for the INJUSTICE of the quotas	Average answers (1 a 6)			
	Non-quota	Quota	Prof	General
1 - It is unfair to quota students who may not be accepted and suffer discrimination in the university environment.	2,21	2,28	2,2	2,24
2 - They are unfair, as quotas should only be of a social nature (for the poorest) and not racial (black, brown and indigenous).	4,28	3,79	3,93	4,07
3 - Quotas are unfair because they guarantee special rights to some students, breaking on the equal rights of all.	3,79	2,67	3,2	3,32
4 - It is unfair, as merit (note in ENEM) should be the only requirement observed for admission to the University.	3,46	2,41	2,67	3,01
5 - It is unfair, as quota students will have difficulties to follow the contents at the University.	2,74	2,1	2,47	2,47
6 - It is unfair to prepared students, as the level of universities may be lowered to meet quota students.	3,03	2,23	3	2,71
7 - It is unfair, as there should be policies to expand the quality of elementary and secondary education so that everyone has the conditions to enter higher education.	5,32	4,63	4,87	5,03
8 - They are unfair, because in Brazil, it is not possible to distinguish who is black, brown, indigenous or white.	3,22	2,66	3,87	3,03

Note: Research data.

Table 3 Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) of the Scores of the “Quotas Questionnaire”.

Group	Measure	Fair Situation	Pro Justice	Against Justice	Sense of Justice
G1- Non-quotas	M	3,37	3,60	3,51	0,09
	SD	1,34	1,07	0,90	1,84
G2 - Quotas	M	4,37	4,38	2,85	1,54
	SD	1,35	0,91	0,86	1,62
G3 - Professors	M	3,80	4,13	3,28	0,85
	SD	1,32	1,53	1,18	2,63
General	M	3,78	3,93	3,24	0,69
	SD	1,42	1,10	0,95	1,93

Note: Research data.

the Quota Dilemma unfair on average.

In the observation of the assessment scores of the Quota Dilemma and the questions that dealt with the justice and injustice of the quotas, we noticed that the position that the participants of all the groups initially assumed was maintained in the judgment of the affirmatives. That is, the higher the Fair Situation score, the higher the Pro Justice score and the lower the *Fair Situation* score, the higher the *Against Justice* score.

In the analysis of means comparison, quota holders presented higher averages than non-quota holders regarding the *Fair Situation* score (Games-Howell, $p < 0.001$), *Pro Justice* (Games-Howell, $p < 0.001$) and *Sense of Justice* (Games-Howell, $p < 0.001$). Non-quota students showed higher averages than quota students regarding the *Against Justice* score (Games-Howell, $p < 0.001$).

In the Moral Competence Test (MCT_xt) the participants, in general, had a C index, considered low, with an average of 8.25 ($SD= 6.13$), with non-quota students having an average of 8.51, quota students 8, 12 and professors 6,14. There was no statistically significant difference in mean among the participants of the different groups in relation to the C index score ($Fw(2,39,640) = 1.287$; $p = 0.287$; $\eta^2 = 0.006$).

In the analysis of the MCT_xt dilemmas, we verified a segmentation in the dilemma scores when analyzed separately. As observed in other studies that used this instrument in Brazil (Bataglia, 2010; Landim et al., 2015), we found better performance for the Judge’s Dilemma ($M=30.15$; $SD=21.499$), followed by the Worker’s Dilemma ($M=28.48$; $SD=19.046$) and the Doctor’s Dilemma ($M=23.43$; $SD=19.228$). This low score in the physician’s dilemma score, possibly for cultural and religious reasons, as it is euthanasia, was responsible for the inclusion of the Judge’s Dilemma in the Brazilian version of the instrument (Bataglia, 2010).

When comparing the mean with sociodemographic data, a statistically significant difference was found in the age variable ($t(326) = 2.070$; $p = 0.039$; $d = 0.239$)

and participants with a lower C score were older. A non-random association ($\chi^2(1) = 6.905$; $p = 0.008$; *Cramer’s V* = 0.148) was also observed in the gender variable (quota students and being female).

In order to verify the relationships between the judgments of justice of quotas and the Moral Competence of the research participants, correlation matrices were prepared and their analyzes were carried out separately by the groups G1 - non-quota, G2 - quota students and G3 - professors:

a) In the G1 group - non-quota holders, we found that the higher the *Against Justice*, the higher the C index ($N = 186$; $r = .160$; $p < .029$). That is, the more this group agreed with arguments proposing injustice, the higher their moral competence score.

b) In the G2 group - quota students, there was a negative correlation between age and the C index, meaning that the older the age, the lower the C index ($N = 131$; $r = -.180$; $p < .040$). Still in this group, we found that the higher the *Pro Justice*, the lower the C index ($N = 131$; $r = -.257$; $p < .003$), meaning that the more they agreed with the arguments that dealt with the justice of quotas, the lower was your C index.

c) In the G3 group, we observed that the higher the age, the higher the C index ($N = 15$; $r = .481$; $p < .069$).

DISCUSSION

As we assumed, the judgments of quota students on the arguments of quotas were more favorable to the fairness of their use than those of non-quota students and professors. In the same sense, non-quota students judged the arguments related to the unfairness of quotas more favorably. Such a position leads us to personal and social interest, presenting itself as an affective and motivating dimension, regulating judgment (Lind, 2000; Piaget, 1977/2005).

When we observe the main divergences in the judgments of the questions presented in the questionnaire, we find the manifestation of disagreement regarding the justice of racial quotas, even among quota

holders. It is worth mentioning here that not every quota holder is included in the category of reserved vacancies for blacks (blacks and browns) and indigenous people and that all reserved vacancies are accompanied by the requirement to have studied in public schools and, therefore, also include social criteria. We verified the expression of the myth of “racial democracy” pointed out by Freyre (1933/2003) as a result of the miscegenation of the Brazilian population. However, skin color is central to the exclusion and constitution of social inequalities (Munanga, 2003). Black men and women receive lower wages, have greater difficulties in finding formal employment and their representation at the university is still low, especially in more popular courses (Cesar, 2003; Marques & Sanches, 2010). In addition, institutions that only adopted social quotas found it ineffective to include discriminated ethnic groups (Darity et al., 2011; Feres Júnior et al., 2013).

Regarding the perception of injustice in quotas due to the lack of investment in Basic Education, which should be prioritized, as pointed out by Guimarães (1999), we agree that there should not be an opposition between these policies, but a combination of them. In this respect, quotas do not dispense with, but above all require, a broader policy of equal opportunities implemented jointly. In the case of Higher Education, due to the evident inequality, there is a need for measures that guarantee the admission of certain groups that are systematically excluded from it, not exclusively on merit, but demonstrably by racial and social criteria (Moehlecke, 2004).

The tendency of the participants to maintain the position initially expressed in the Quotas Dilemma in the judgment of the questions, leads us to question the extent to which they are able to give up their assumptions. It is important to emphasize that this task is complex, as it requires that the questions be analyzed without taking into account one's own opinion, and the strength of each argument must be observed. As Piaget (1932/1994) points out, the task of leaving one's own point of view in decision-making requires the coordination of affective and cognitive dimensions.

We were surprised by the low scores of Moral Competence identified in the participants, including the professors, since moral development is positively linked to the time and quality of education. As university students and professors, we expected average levels of competence, as identified in other studies, also with university students (Feitosa et al., 2013; Lepre et al., 2013). As Lind (2012) points out, moral competence needs to be developed through use, like muscles. In this context, the quantity and nature of the opportunities that we find in our environment play a decisive role in the growing development of moral competence. To reach this level of development, however, most people

depend on a good and sufficiently long schooling (Lind, 2012).

We found in the results evidence of erosion of moral competence, indicated by the identification of the relationship between being older and having a lower Competence score. As was also observed in other studies (Bužgová & Sikorová, 2013; Feitosa et al., 2013), this situation can be explained by the longer exposure to social and environmental factors that are unfavorable to moral development, such as coercion and educational deficits.

Our hypothesis in the study was that the more positively a person judges the fairness of quotas, taking into account the social value they represent, the more they would evaluate them according to the hierarchy of moral orientations (Kohlberg, 1984; Lind, 2019b); Lind et al., 2019) and, as a consequence, would present a higher level of moral competence. This assumption was due to the hierarchical strength of values and goals, which is reflected in high consistency of judgment, since moral competence means the ability to deal with moral conflicts. However, we found in the group of non-quota holders - G1, that the more contrary to the fairness of quotas, the higher the competence index. Still contrary to our hypothesis, in the group of quota holders - G2, the more favorable, the lower the C index.

Regarding this contradiction, it is necessary to emphasize that the participants had a low C index, meaning predominance of heteronomous characteristics in their decision making. For the judgment of a policy of positive discrimination, which demands principles of justice for equity, the participants would need to present higher levels of moral competence.

We agree with Lind (2019b), when he points out that the core of moral competence is the ability to participate in social, civic and professional life. Being able to deal with people from different social and cultural backgrounds, building the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to be active as a citizen. Be able to constructively deal with conflicts. In this sense, the role of education is essential, in building citizens who really make use of their voice in the process and are in a position to listen to the opinions of others (Lind, 2012, 2019; Lind et al., 2019).

This study brings important contributions to the understanding of the judgment of quotas from a moral point of view. However, its limitations need to be considered. As the study is quantitative, we will need further investigations regarding the justifications for the judgments. For future studies, it is also necessary to investigate coexistence in the academic environment, to verify the real integration of quota and non-quota groups and verify discrimination or prejudice experienced in the academic environment. In addition to the individual, we also need to think about how

universities present themselves in structural and cultural conditions and how much they have mobilized to meet academic, developmental and social needs.

In summary, our results indicated the low level of moral competence of the participants, the conflict of interest in the judgment of the justice of quotas and the racial issue as the main factor of disagreement. We understand the complexity of affirmative actions and how much they mobilize the individual and society in their judgments. Quotas undoubtedly represent a major social moral dilemma, because we need to have cognitive and affective developmental conditions to place ourselves in the other's point of view. We still need to access our hierarchical scale of values, coordinating it with all the social, personal and moral variables that present themselves. Finally, we agree that the fact that living with diversity allows us to think of a more just and, who knows, equitable society.

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