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COGNITIVE PERCEPTUAL DISSONANCE THEORY ON THE MORAL RELATIVISM FIELD

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ABSTRACT

This presentation is based on an research that it intends to verify the work hypothesis that supposes that the people emit judgments about facts and circumstances with an ethical relativismo, showing a "cognitive dissonance" in the perception of the consequences of the human conduct on social life

The research must be considered provisory. It is will continued analyzing and still obtaining conclusions. Have been found ranks of measurement in the ethical relativism. This relativism is it in the judgments that the people emit and we denominated "Sanctionary Judgments", because they are truly sanctions or penalties that people applies over the subjects that carry out the reproachable facts.

In order to make possible to obtain "Sanctionary Judgments", we has resorted to 1000 (thousands) "Critical Incidents". This C. I. were extracted of many news of several newspapers referred to divers fields; family, education, government, police, etc. This C. I. were grouped in lists on forms distributed in groups of 50 (fifty) separated: 25 (twenty-five) "SLIGHTS" and 25 (twenty-five) "SERIOUS". This qualification was done by the investigator previously by other processes of universal measurement.

This research, has allowed to establish an inconsistency between the sanctionaries judgments of people and the universal qualifications that could the facts deserve. The judgments of people always are precarious, emotional and irrational. They are due to a perception problem, for that reason we denominated to this end "PERCEPTIVE CONGITIVA DISSONANCE; ". Also we has detected the people behave with two degrees of ethics; a LAX ETHICS and a STRICT ETHICS, which, combined with the previous qualification of SLIGHT EFFECT and SERIOUS EFFECT; it produces four types of conduct in which it is possible classify the people

"Levels of Evidence"

The concept of "EVIDENCE LEVELS"¹; new in the scientific field, appeared in Medicine and forces the investigators to display the results of their own verifications based on concrete cases, that corroborate their conclusions by "evidence levels". The Statistic Science, for example, reinforces the theoretical affirmations, but, how many cases and types of experiments can confirm an asseveration in Medicine?. Several medical institutions have made tables with categories and levels of scientific evidence. One of the definitions of Medicine based on evidences, says "*it is the conscious, explicit and judicious concern of the best available evidence when taking decisions on the care of a particular patient.*"²

As it refers to medical decisions on the treatment of patients it is necessary to make sure that the experience of the professionals offered in their scientific works and papers, assures certain trustworthiness degree. On the Business Management case, the great majority of the applications, either to individuals or to groups and organizations, are based on theoretical assumptions that, according to

¹ The Medicine based on evidences concept (MBE), was developed by a group of clinical epidemiologists led by Gordon Guyatt. of the MedicineSchool of the Canadian Mc Masters University and after continued there by David Sackett.

² Miguel Pascual Gonzalez Carbajal and Ludmila Martinez Leyva, both specialists in Gastroenterology of the Institute of this specialty of Habana-Cuba. Published in Internet (Wikipedia)

whom formulate them, can be constituted in credible affirmations, as the case of Peter Drucker, or even more; be applied in policies and programs and be fashionable in the corporate world.³

LEVELS OF EVIDENCE OF THIS COMMUNICATION	
E.L.-I	Statistical tests based on a mathematical sampling, taking into account the total population to consider; its stratification, the quality of his opinion and repeated later verifications that reinforce the theoretical affirmation.
E.L.-II	Random controls without mathematical application to the design of experiments, but with a noticeable empirical verification applied to certain typology of individuals, which does not prevent to investigate a greater statistical population.
E.L.-III	Customized controls to different types from cohorts, Provisory conclusions that serve as experience to perfect the planning of the investigation before continuing it until obtaining more reliable results..
E.L.-IV	Empirical theoretical essay of the authors waiting for later investigations. It leaves the other authors adhesion of those who would share the affirmations of the author.

LEVEL OF EVIDENCE OF THIS COMMUNICATION

This work has arrived until now at a LEVEL OF EVIDENCE III. (LE-III) Therefore one warns readers that this investigation, will continue until reaching to greater level of evidence. The author presents/displays the conclusions which corroborates the work hypothesis. Therefore it appears a certain optimism about arriving to the end, having verified the primary conjectures that motivated the investigation, Still more, during the development of this work, interesting discoveries have arisen, as the case of the detected that the people act and think with ethical relativism, also that they can be classified in a typology of four categories of incongruities, according to their express judgment: A). Strict ethics for a sligth effect. B). Strict ethics for a serious effect. C). Lax ethics for a sligth effect and D). Lax ethics for a serious effect. All of this is developed in this communication.

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

This communication, has the purpose to offer the results provided by the pilot test, carried out to try to test the planning designed for this research. This test has allowed to verify the work hypothesis that gave rise to him. This hypothesis says the people express judgments about facts and circumstances with a certain degree of ethical relativism, revealing a *cognitive dissonance* in the consequences perception of the human conduct about the others.

The work hypothesis that has given beginning to this investigation, has considered the following three situations within the called "moral relativism".

- a) Ethical relativism degrees of the express judgment of people refering to facts and blameworthy conducts (including the criminal ones). This communication is based on this assumption. It has allowed us to formulate the "*Theory of the perceptive cognitive dissonance*"

³Two authors have treated the subject Management based on evidences: PFEFFER, Jeffrey/SUTTON, Robert: in your book: Hard Facts; Dangerous Half - Truths and total non sense. Ed.HarvardUniversity Press. Boston. Mass. 2006. Also they have published on several articles in magazines; "*Management based on evidences*". Harvard Business Review - N° 84. January, "*a question in fact*". (28-9-06) and "the real puzzle "(20-4-06), both in Management of People Review, "the dangers to imitate to the best practices. Canada HR-Reporter (10-4-06) and other so many.

- b) Incongruity between the express judgment of an individual on a certain situation observed in the others and the conduct that really he would adopt in a similar situation.
- c) c. The difference of opinion between the judgment referring to the conduct of others deserves and the own conduct when it has been involved.

This work concentrates in the case a). Situations b). and c). they will be investigated in the future.

Commentary on case b).

From the ideal point of view, a judgment on a reprobable conduct, should express that it is generally accepted in the culture where the individual that emits the judgment is inserted. As a rule, people know the prevailing morality. It could be applied the well-known apothegm with which are qualified at popular level the awareness admonishers, *"you do what I say, but not what I do"*.

If it is asked to a citizen about the conduct of another one who has transgressed a traffic light in red, surely he will judge it like illicit and reprobable, nevertheless, it is possible that he himself has transgressed sometimes too or it will transgress it in the future. The incongruity is placed between those people who judge as unacceptable in others although their conduct is the same. On the unethical conducts nobody is free, it can be serious or slight, frequent or sporadic, systematic or timeless, forced or self determined; all of us sometimes we will be involved.

In this case, the expressed judgments of people, are in an ideal level. They are independent of the likely conducts that the individuals could assume when they are in similar situations.

A government official - for example - could express a severe judgment on an act of corruption committed by third parties, but it does not assure that he would not act in the same way. Emotional factors could influence as the *ambition* and the *greed* before maintaining its principles intact.

Commentary on case c).

This situation appears when judging others severely and not accept that our conduct may be dependent to the same judging of value. Here prevails another popular affirmation: *"to see the straw in the other people's eye and not the beam in own's one"*.

THEORY OF THE PERCEPTIVE COGNITIVE DISSONANCE ⁴

In this investigation, it has been detected a variant of the well-known Theory of the *Cognitive Dissonance* (Festinger-1957) that it is not referring to the taking of consciousness on the part of an individual; of a state of mix-up with a situation which affects its principles, as it is the case of the theory of Festinger but an incongruity between what the individual says and what it does, between which judges like conduct impropria in the others but that surely he also would adopt. Of course, that this occurs in an unconscious and irrational level. It does not meditate and it does not submit the questions of the form-survey to a reflection. Not even this individual considers dilemmas.

It has become evident that the people perceive the morals values and the own conduct and the one of the others with a noticeable relativism. When emitting a sanctionary judgment ⁵ on the conduct of others, not only it differs and is incoherent with his same opinion before similar facts, but also the one of the others and also, of a rational logical judgment before simple facts that society maintains in level of censorship.

⁴ El concept of "Cognitive Dissonance" must to the Psychologist of EE.UU. Leon Festinger in its theory of Cognitive Dissonance. Stanford University Press. U.S.A. 1957. The concept makes reference to the internal tension or disharmony perceived of the system of ideas, beliefs and emotions (cognition) of a person when maintaining at the same time two thoughts that are in conflict, or by a behavior that enters conflict with its beliefs. Also the perception of the mutual incompatibility of two simultaneous cognitions, everything what surely it will hit in his future attitudes. An aspect of the Cognitive Dissonance is the conscious mix-up with values and morals beliefs that a person has been instilled from his childhood, which they have been incorporated in his familiar educative development. In this state of dissonance, it takes place a "tension" and search of change. That is to say, an attempt to reduce the Cognitive Dissonance.

⁵We have denominated "sanctionary Judgment" to the qualifications that the individual subject of the investigation expresses when it is requiring him its opinion through the "form-survey". Its Judgment is a qualification, whose graduation is really a type of moral sanction.

The perception about the reality of the facts, is subject to judgement sometimes simple and others very strict. But the incongruity of its opinion, is founded in which its sensorial perception indicates a degree of *cognitive dissonance* that modifies the right judgment and relativizes the qualification that is asked to him in this investigation. Some times he judges with a strict ethics and others with a lax ethics. This relativism is in the dissonance between the judgment not always congruent with the effects or consequences that the human conduct produces on third parties.

This investigation has as methodology to ask for somewhat immediate answers. It is appealed to his spontaneity. This places us before the presumption of which the results could no be absolutely reliable. But even then, it reveals a probable human behavior to us before unexpected situations, and to the taking decisions without the filter of the reason.

Herbert Simon, Economy Nobel Prize (1978) ⁶, said "... *It is impossible that the behavior of an individual, alone and isolated reaches a high degree of rationality. The number of alternatives is so great that needs to explore and the information is so vast that it would have to value, that is difficult to at least conceive an approach to the objective rationality...*". And ahead it adds: "*the rationality demands an election between all the possible alternative behaviors. In the real behavior we can only think about a few of them*".

In a case of ordinary *Cognitive Dissonance*, it could happen that a person who has carried out a purchase thinking that he chose well, later falls in the doubt. He will ask himself: *Have I chosen well? Will there be another better product?*. No person in a purchase decision composes a matrix of decisions to compare prices, quality, durability, after sale services, etc. We give another example; an applicant for a job has hoped to get a certain one and then when he performs it he realized that isn't what he had expected.

Ethics Relativism

Ethical relativism argues that there is no absolute truth but provisional or relative ones, given the inability of man to achieve ultimate or absolute truth it is somehow, a skeptical concept. They are truths for some and not others. If we value the judgments that people give off it is because we are at a leading position over the truth. But if we doubt the value of the ideas of others is because we ourselves are relativistic. To give legitimacy to an unanimous thought we should create a measurement system, that is to say a pattern that is based on universal grounds, which are accepted by all within a culture or within a particular social stratum.

Relativism posits the legitimacy of positive and negative moral evaluations of those who share the same ideologies. What's more, a community' people live according to these shared values; it is the case of the religions.

The affirmations about which the people are in such a way lack of certain superficiality. In this instance in which the emitted judgments are emotional and therefore irrational, they could ask us; Where is the legitimacy of this substantial work and all their argumentation?. We answer; the people always act this way emotionally, without assess the reason of the human acts. Its ethical judgment is not only a slight thought; it is his customary propensity to act always like this.

In the rite of the Christian mass, We can read "I confess before all-powerful God and before you brother that I have much sinned of thought, word, acts and omission" ⁷. It is saying to us that our reprobable conduct is polymorphous. Having a bad thought is inevitable. It comes to us and it is difficult to dissipate it. However, it is a Christian obligation to avoid it. As far as the word, yes; it can be subjected to one of two attitudes; a) *spontaneous* (emotional) and b) *studied (brain)*. The spontaneity takes rationality, it is submitted to emotionality, for that reason when judging a fact the sudden thought prevails. But how much legitimate is that decision? If by legitimacy we understand a definitive and absolute decision; this decision will not have it.

⁶SIMON, Herbert. The administrative Behavior. Ed. Aguilar Argentina S.A. Buenos Aires. 1984.

⁷ ABAD, José A. / GUTIERREZ, José L. Popular new missal. Volume 1. Ed. EUNSA. Navarra University. Pamplona. Spain. 1995.

Herbert Simon (mentioned up supra), was invited to visit Argentina in 1971 by SADOI (ex--Society Argentina of Industrial Organization), occasion in which he anticipated to Jorge Luis Borges ⁸ his desire to maintain an interview with him ⁹. When they met in Buenos Aires, they maintained an intelligent colloquy of which we extract the following dialogue:

Borges: *"... If my right hand is leaning in my left hand it is because it necessary had to be that way. I think that there are many things that we do in a certain way, would say unthinkable.*

Simon:*Things that happen in the subconscious mind. If it is true. If it wasn't this way we could not tie cords of the shoes. The majority of the things happen like this. But that is because we have many programmed things.*

Borges:*But the things are inevitable also in that sense?*

Simon:*They could be different, but always based on their programs. It could have some determinant that causes its program to indicate him another action. .*

In the case of the investigated ethic judgements the individual must make them with certain promptitude there is no time for conscientious reflections, no even to ask dilemmas. It is the spontaneity where its dissonance is shown.

This cognitive dissonance is of a perceptive type. The understanding of reality by the investigated individual is according to a rational and equable one. For this we have named this kind of dissonance; **"Perceptive Cognitive Dissonance"**.

The perception can be deceitful. There are many factors that back this statement perception which builds mental models. A model is a transference between a real world and a symbolic world. So the symbolic world (mental) that we introject has been nourished on what we have learnt (cognition). In the moment of taking sudden decisions emotional factors prevail before the rational ones. The mental patterns that we have built, are always provisory ones. They are subjected to modifications obliged by the social interaction. For example, in the religious feelings (the converts), in politics (the turn-coats), in the social field (modification of gender prejudices), etc.

INVESTIGATION METHODOLOGY

Verifications in the pilot test

This Planning has been verified by means of a carried out pilot test in a population composed by cohorts of professors, university professionals and postgrade students of, chosen by their qualified opinion. This test has allowed:

- a) To verify the legitimacy of the use of Critical Incidents as means of induction that the people showed their degree of ethnicity.
- b) To qualify the human acts by means of a method that allows to establish a pattern measurement on which they could analyze and compare the judgments of the investigated subjects. and then to separate them in two categories of "effects": SLIGHT EFFECTS and SERIOUS EFFECTS.
- c) To verify the practicability of the methodology of survey by means of the design of a list that we denominated "list-survey" in which the investigated subject must at the moment, emit his sanctionary judgment and his reason for that.
- d) To verify that the sanctionary judgments respond to the circumstantial perception, and that this maintains certain incongruity with already built-in mental models and with reality. It is because the investigated ones were invited to answer the form-survey, with immediacy and therefore had to respond with spontaneity and, this condition, far from invalidating the investigation, it legitimates it,

⁸ Argentinien writer (1899-1986. author of Tales, Novels, and poesy. Books: *The library of Babel*, *The aleph*, and others.

⁹ This meeting was originally published in the Journal of Argentine Organization Industrial Society (now nonexistent) and reprinted years later in the journal "Ciencias Administrativas" (Special Issue Vol XXXI - 1989), Faculty of Economics, La Plata National University.

since it is considered that it is like this how human beings generally act. The rationality is directly proportional to the time one takes to decide. On the contrary, the immediacy promotes the emotionality.

e) To detect two classes of ethicicity arisen from the relativity of the sanctionary judgments, we can also separate in two categories: **Strict** and **Lax Ethics** which crossed with the “**Slight Effects**” and **Serious Effects**” determine four types of conduct:

LAX ETHICS - SLIGHT EFFECTS
STRICT ETHICS - SLIGHT EFFECTS
LAX ETHICS - SERIOUS EFFECTS
STRICT ETHICS - SERIOUS EFFECTS

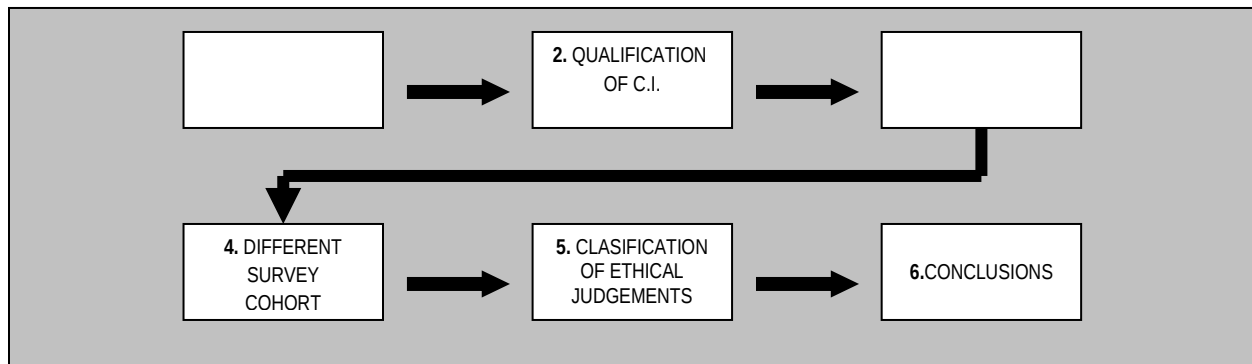


Fig. 1. Phases of the methodology used

1	COMPILATION AND SELECTION OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS 10
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In order to carry out the investigations, they have compiled 1000 (thousands) Critical Incident extracted from the news, generally police news from major newspapers of Buenos Aires according to the necessity of this work, referring to fields of diverse organizations: Banks, Companies, Family, Transport, public universities, Cities, Offices and others.

Criterion of selection

A. They have been taken into account I.C with protagonists who transgress the generally accepted thing, because it allows the investigated subject, to make an observation and direct judgment on any cause that affects third parties. They are facts that disturb the social balance; for this they are interesting.

B. One has tried to choose C. I. choiced by their effects and the type of protagonists. It was interesting to observe the following peculiar fact in the pilot test; that before similar facts and with identical personages, the judgments of the same investigated subject, differ. That is to say; they lack coherence.

C. Each used I.C has a reference on the source and the date of publication in order that the investigated subject trusts its legitimacy and maintains its credibility.

D. The typography in bold that appears in the original news has been taken off and as it corresponds to a personal in the own opinion of the newspaper which publishes it, in order not to influence the person who has the survey and in this way to is is able to emit his own judgement.

E. Some proper names in the news that constitute the C.I. have been hidden in order to avoid any animosity versus against well-know people except when some protagonist of the C.I. gives a testimony because in this case he is considered as a trustworthy information source.

10. A critical incident is a relatively brief narrative about human behavior, individual or collective, happened to a person or many, individually or interpersonal, which can be used to analyze causes and effects of the consequences into distinct social fields. Have been collected C,I, relating different organizations in various disciplines, Medicine - Nursing - Psychology - Army - Marketing - business Administration, etc.. Its origin is attributed to Sir Francis Dalton (1930). The first studies that led to develop a "Critical Incident Technique", are of the Colonel John C. Flanagan in 1954 as part of their studies on Aviation Psychology in the U.S. Air Force during the 2 nd. World War and whose original publication appeared on Psychological Bulletin - Vol 51, No. 4 (July 1954).

2

PREVIOUS QUALIFICATION OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

The Incidents compiled Critics, are described in this phase according to the masterful model based on factors that are observed down, like previous step to the separation in a dichotomy of effects: SLIGHT AND SERIOUS. (Annex 2)

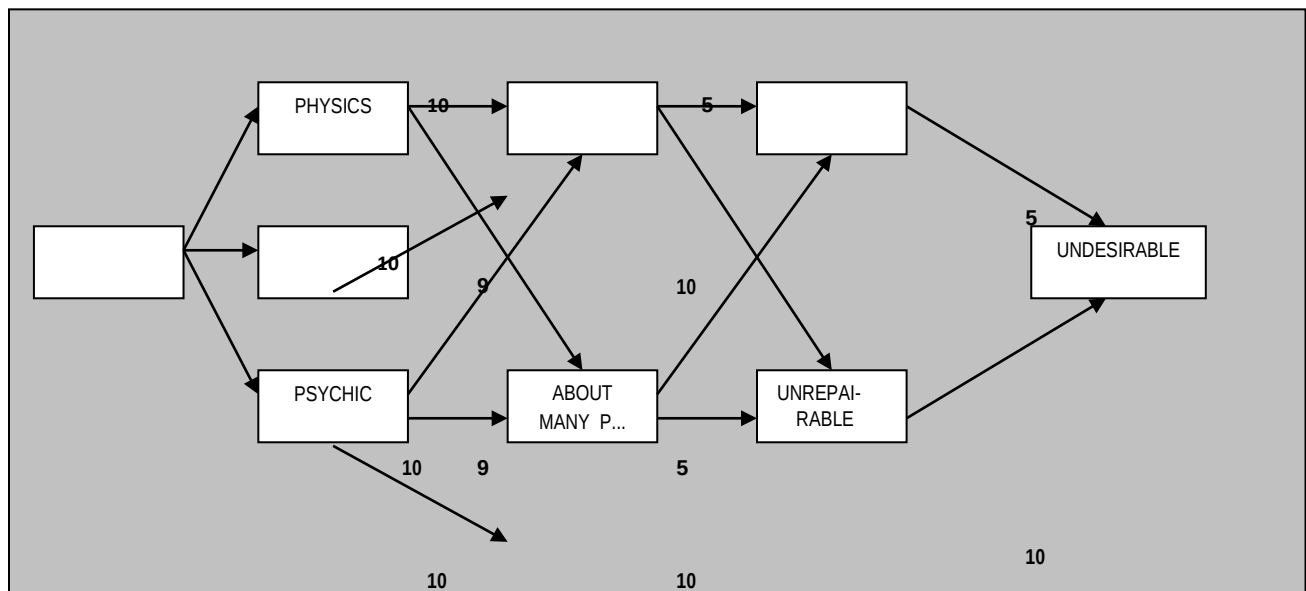


Fig. 2. Master model. The numbers correspond to the qualifications of the C.I.

The qualification of the C.I. as a previous step to the separation in two types of effects, has been carried out according to arbitrary rules shown in Figure 2. Also; in order to contribute to one but effective qualification, one selected to qualified people (university professors and professionals) so that they gave their opinion. It, has allowed:

a) To choose the "factors" with which the C. I. would be qualified.

b) To describe 1000 (thousands) C. I. which were grouped (according to their degree in the following phase in: 50 (fifty) by list-survey, equitably mixed between 25 of SLIGHT EFFECT and 25 of SERIOUS EFFECT.

All these factors, as well as their qualifications, are taken with a provisory character. We consider that this investigation must be perfected in the search of a high level of evidence but (according to it was said at the beginning of this document). In the future and definitive investigations other factors could be used, like; effects collaterals - avoidable effects - effects by accident - constant or systematic effects - sporadic effects - intermittent effects - unpredictable effects - risky effects, etc.

3	GROUPING OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS IN TWO GROUPS OF EFFECTS “SLIGHT EFFECT” AND “SERIOUS EFFECT”
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In this phase the thousand C. I. are grouped in two categories denominated SLIGHT EFFECTS (values between 1 and 5) and SERIOUS EFFECTS (values between 6 and 10), transcribing them in the “Form-survey”. In each list 50 (fifty) C. I. distributed equitably will be included that is to say; 25 by each effect. In the pilot test it was considered that fifty was an appropriate number. To place more C. I. would unnecessarily delay the investigated one making him lose the interest. Perhaps less I.C could get to be insufficient. (model in Annex 1.)

4	SURVEY TO DIFFERENT COHORTS
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Pilot test results

For the pilot test, opinion was requested to several cohorts that more or less totalized 300 students of posgrade of Argentine universities by means of the list-survey. (Annex 4.)

To the person surveyed a white sheet was give (without qualifications) so that he describes to the I.C without any type of induction. The original list with the qualification, was in the hands of the investigator. (Annex 3.)

In the blanks of each .C. I. numbers had been placed to facilitate him the qualification and it was also given a greater free space in which he could set out his reasons. One hoped that this helped the later analysis of each survey. It really that was.

5	CLASSIFICATION OF THE SANCTIONARY JUDGMENTS OF THE SURVEY ONES
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In this phase:

a) The qualifications that each survey gave each C: I. were computed and analyzed (Annexes 5 and 6)

b) The best qualified judgments whith their reasons were compared. They many times they appear like incongruous. (Annex 7.)

PROVISORY CONCLUSIONS OF THE PILOT TEST

- More frequent judgments for each I.C. (Annex 6.)
- Gap of judgment in the minimum values (qualifications of the people surveyed).
- Gap of judgment in the high values (idem)

FOUR TYPES OF PERCEPTIVE COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

The sanctionary judgments have been grouped in four types of

Perceptive Cognitive Dissonance.

This typology has been placed on a matrix as follows

		EFFECTS	
		SLIGHT	SERIOUS
ETHICS	LAX	SLIGHT EFFECT LAX ETHICS	SERIOUS EFFECT LAX ETHICS
	STRICT	SLIGHT EFFECT STRICT ETHICS	SERIOUS EFFECT ESTRICT ETHICS