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The Ontogenesis of Social Representation of Justice: Personal Conceptualization and Social Constraints

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This paper analyzes the relations between the ontogenesis of social representations (SR) of justice and the individual's conceptualization activity. A study was carried out with 216 children and adolescents from Buenos Aires, Argentina, aged between 6 and 17 years old, with different socioeconomic backgrounds. The instrument used for data collection was an interview, in search for participants' narratives about justice in their everyday life. In the responses of the interviewees three representations of justice could be distinguished: utilitarian, retributive and distributive. Approximately from 9-10 years old onward, these basic representations become intertwined with each other by a dialectical movement of integration and differentiation, which is an expression of a developmental process. It is concluded that the conceptualization process, within the ontogenesis of SR of justice, implies the construction of novelties under social and cognitive constraints that enable the construction of specific meanings about this social object and disable other possible meanings.

THE ONTOGENESIS OF SOCIAL REPRESENTATION OF JUSTICE: PERSONAL CONCEPTUALIZATION AND SOCIAL CONSTRAINTS

The notion of justice does not have a univocal meaning. Its polysemy that initially was pointed out by Aristotle (1970), is still present in debates on Ethics. Nowadays, it's impossible to establish an unique definition of what *justice* means, since this notion only acquires full sense when it is utilized as an adjective, referring to something or someone considered to be just or unjust (Bobbio, Matteucci & Pasquino, 2005). Thus, different ways of understanding justice coexist and correspond to different ideologies of various social orientations (e.g. socialism, feminism, and liberalism). Those appeal to justice to legitimize their interests and criticize the existing power relations in confronting other social groups (Campbell, 2001; Camps, 2008; Gargarella, 1999). Despite the pluralism of meanings of justice, in everyday life people use a specific meaning. This regulates their social interaction and communication, depending on the individual engagements to an ideology, ontology, and to a particular group membership (Moscovici, 1961).

According to Social Representations (SR) Theory, social groups organize their environment by a meaning-making process. Hence one specific object can acquire different meanings depending on the whole interactive social situation (Moscovici 1961; 2001a). In Moscovici's (1961) definition, SR are systems of values, ideas and practices. Their main function is establishing a code of social exchange in the dialogical interaction between the members of a community. They refer to a practical knowledge that links individuals to objects in a triple sense (Jodelet, 1986). Firstly, SR emerge from dialogical interactions framed by specific institutions. Secondly, they are constructed in everyday social practices, when new meanings become necessary for coping with unexpected contextual demands. Thirdly, they are used by individuals to react to other society members or to adjust their behavior to social expectations or situational requirements. SR emerge in everyday interactions and are determined neither by clear perceptions nor by rational inferences, but by the meanings individuals and groups give to phenomena (Moscovici, 2001b; Jodelet, 1989). In other words, SR do not refer to real objects or phenomena but to socially shared constructions, and that way there are many realities (Marková, 2012).

Therefore the epistemic force of such representations arises from the strength of people's beliefs in them and from the efficacy they have in group communication (Marková, 2000; 2003). The continuous adjustments and negotiations that occur in social relations involve the development of shared meanings that function as action patterns. Such collectively constructed meanings do not depend on the effect that persons have on others, since they depend on the system that frames their interactions (Moscovici, 1988). Individuals live in a symbolical order that is taken for granted because they were born in it. They consider it as the natural world that is only questioned when something unexpected happens and a new meaning making process is necessary to reestablish the balance with the environment (Duveen, 2007; Moscovici, 2001b). As Wagner and Hayes (2005) pointed out: "Common sense is our spontaneously available background knowledge. It is largely used without thinking, and is subject to our everyday practice" (p.18).

On a psychological level of analysis (Doise, 1982), SR guide the meaning-making process about objects and actions related to them, since they are semiotic mediating devices with a pre-adaptational function to the future (Valsiner, 2003). Indeed, those social mediational resources available in particular contexts constrain the semiotic construction in the irreversibility of time, stabilizing past-future movements. "As structured semiotic mediators, social representations are multi-level meaning complex, which are constantly in the process of innovation, created in and through conflict and tension" (Valsiner, 2003, p.7.3). In other words, SR limit the range of available meanings for one object, in turn determining possible behaviors regarding it.

It is important to understand the relation between the ontogenesis of social representations and the person's conceptualization. Individuals become social actors during socialization, but this is a process of construction and re-construction in which novelty emerges, that is, the development of new understandings about the objects as well as transformation in psychological structures (Duveen & Lloyd, 1990). SR theory is a constructivist theory based on the relational interaction between subject and representational object. Both are co-constructed in a developmental process: "from this perspective the world which is known is the product of the set of socio-psychological structures through which it has been constructed" (Duveen, 2002, p. 140). However, there's only novelty for the actor, as a construction of a new understanding of his world, and not for his culture or social group (Duveen, 2007). Socialization, understood as a

process that enables novelties, requires the study of the relation between the appropriation and the conceptualization of SR, as well as the social and psychological constraints on these processes.

SOCIAL REPRESENTATION'S ONTOGENESIS: A DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS

SR can be described as genetic structures, because they result from developmental processes (Duveen & Lloyd, 1990). Three different analytical levels in SR transformation process can be distinguished: sociogenesis, microgenesis, and ontogenesis. The latter refers specifically to the process by which individuals –not only children- appropriate their group's cultural knowledge in order to become social actors (Duveen & De Rosa, 1992). In Duveen and Lloyd's (1990) words, "a process through which individuals re-construct social representations and in doing so they elaborate particular social identities" (p. 7).

There are few empirical studies focusing on the appropriation of SR during childhood. An explanation to this lack of research in social psychology might be found in Moscovici's (1990) view on the particular scopes of social and developmental psychology. According to his proposal, the social nature of the conformation of human conscience needs to be explained. However, it must be studied through the comprehension of the individual internalization of social experience. In the course of this internalization process it is possible to distinguish moments and specific operations through which the different consciences are articulated with each other and with culture. Although Moscovici (1990) emphasizes this developmental process, he suggests that it is outside social psychology's main focus, as it is the object of study of developmental psychology.

Nevertheless, Duveen (1994) points out that the challenge is for a social psychologist to adopt a developmental perspective about the genesis of social representation, and for a developmental psychologist to explain how children become social actors. In other words, both disciplines study the same phenomena, but developmental psychology uses an individual perspective whereas the social psychology applies a collective or societal perspective (Doise, 1982). Even though research would be enhanced by complementing both perspectives, this has been the exception rather than the rule (e.g. Barreiro, 2009, 2012; Lloyd & Duveen, 1990; Leman & Duveen, 1996; Psaltis & Duveen, 2006; Psaltis, Duveen & Perret-Clermont, 2009)

Developmental psychology has a long tradition of studying the psychogenetic process of the notion of justice, starting with Piaget's (1932) research about children's moral judgment. This empirical research indicates that individuals have to get over moral heteronomy, based on obedience to adults and group traditions, in order to develop moral autonomy. As a consequence he considers distributive justice as the most rational moral notion. It represents the end point of moral development, since it is based on reciprocity, one of the main properties of operational thought.

In Piaget's theory moral development is conceived as a non-stop development from less to more equilibrium in the stages of thought, because rationality is seen as the ideal equilibrium (Marková, 2012; Psaltis, Duveen & Perret-Clermont, 2009; Faigenbaum, Castorina, Helman & Clemente, 2003). This process is never completed, as people remain heteronomous depending on the social relation that they are involved in (Piaget, 1932, 1965). Piaget's (1965) sociological perspective rejects the split between individual and society. It considers that social interactions are not separable from individual actions (Castorina, 2010). In discussing Durkheim's (2002) assumptions about moral development, Piaget (1932) establishes a differentiation within the relational system that constitutes society. He distinguishes relations of constraint and cooperation, that is, between symmetrical and asymmetrical relations in terms of power distribution. These two types of social relations allow different forms of understanding. Constraint relations establish an atmosphere of obedience to authority legitimized by existing social structures. Therefore individual judgments that are constructed within their frame are based on social influence and compliance. In cooperative relations children's judgments are based on consensus with peers, thus allowing forms of conversion or innovation (Duveen, 2002). Peer interactions not only result in a cognitive decentration from a subjective viewpoint but can also modify the structure of social relations. They enable the development of autonomous individuals aware of their own self and their role in society, thus making a more egalitarian society possible.

Researchers who continued Piaget's work did not take into account his differentiation between types of social relations and their effects on moral development. Their work about the notion of justice is based on the assumption of an isomorphism between the development of operational thought and justice conceptions (Damon, 1975, 1977, 1990; Kohlberg, 1976; 1981;

Thorkildsen, 1991), without considering commonsense knowledge, because it responds to “irrational” logic.

It is well known that in Piagetian theory the different logical and mathematical notions, constructed by individuals in the course of their cognitive development, indicate the existence of specific thought structures (Piaget & Inhelder, 1941). Therefore, researchers of moral development presented problematic situations to children and asked them to figure out a solution that would manifest operational thought (Damon, 1990; Kohlberg, 1976; Thorkildsen, 1991). They analyzed the criteria that individuals used to solve such situations, as they were not moral but logical problems, without considering how subjects think and experience justice in their everyday life.

One of the most important critiques of these studies is that the presented problems were far removed from a person’s moral experience. Also the simplistic understanding of thought in moral development was criticized, since it only considered the development of operational thought as correlative to the achievement of an ethic of principles (Emler, 1982; Tarry & Emler, 2007; Flanagan 1996; Haidt, 2008; Hauser, 2006, Shweder & Much, 1987). In this line, a group of social psychologists (Darly & Pittman, 2003; Hogan & Emler, 1981) pointed out that modernity’s ideals about liberty and equality lead developmental psychologists to underestimate the importance of retributive justice in everyday interactions. People need the members of their social groups to respect norms; otherwise their world will become unpredictable.

Apart from the mentioned critiques it should also be noted that the assumption about progressive rationality in moral judgments is in contradiction with empirical findings about the development of social domain knowledge. These results show that different forms of thought, that had been conceptualized as childish, stick around in adults constituting a state of *cognitive polyphasia* (Jovchelovitch, 2006; Moscovici, 1961; Wagner, Duveen, Verma, & Themel, 2006). According to SR theory thought does not necessarily progress from a naïve to an expert point of view, from pre-logic to logic forms, but the different types of thinking coexist. In everyday life there are contradictory cultural meanings that, when using, sustaining, or appropriating them, reveal different logics or thought systems. The cognitive polyphasia thesis proposes that there is an adequacy in the relationship between different situations and different logics of thinking. Such coexistence enables the same person to give different meanings to the same phenomenon,

corresponding to different -even contradictory- beliefs and values that have been established by his or her social groups during collective and historical experiences (Duveen, 2007; Marková, 2012).

HOW IS JUSTICE REPRESENTED BY CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN EVERYDAY SITUATIONS ?

A study was carried out with a convenience sample of children and adolescents (N=216) from Buenos Aires, Argentina. Subjects were between 6 and 17 years old (18 participants for each age group), 48% were female and 52% were male. The distribution of the sample according to family educational level was: 34% primary studies, 22% secondary studies, and 34% university studies. All children attend public schools in different urban areas of the city. According to recent studies both people from Buenos Aires and the most widely read newspaper in Argentina represent justice hegemonically (Moscovici, 1988), based on a retributive meaning. The most important newspaper of the country mentions *justice* mainly in an institutional sense with a negative valorization, demanding harder penalties to fight the increase of crime that places the population in a continuous position of so called "insecurity" (Barreiro, et al., in press). The same representation could be found in young people and adolescents, since they associate the term "justice" to laws, trials, delinquency, judges and impunity (Barreiro, et al., in press; Morais Shimizu & Stefano Menin, 2004).

For data collection 10 minutes individual interviews were performed according to the Piagetian *méthode clinique* (Delval, 2001; Duveen & Gilligan, 2013; Honey, 1987; Piaget, 1926). The previously established interventions of the interviewer were: 1) Please tell me something that has to do with justice that happened to you, or that you have seen, heard or whatever. And after the participants constructed a narrative in answer to this question, the interviewer asked 2): Why do you think that this situation was just (or unjust, depending on the narrative constructed by the participant)? Then, the interviewer would formulate all the necessary questions to understand the participant's justifications.

It was decided to use this methodological approach for two main reasons. On the one hand, this research attempts to study the representation of justice as it is experienced by children

and adolescents in their everyday life. The *personal experience* constitutes a root to analyze the developing relation between the individual and social environment (Hedegaard, 2012; Hviid, 2012). The individual participating in this research may have narrated about a situation that did not involve them directly, but all situations described had affective and cognitive connotations for them, because their cultural moral order is expressed (Miller, 2006; Shweder & Munch, 1987). For example, if they learned from the news on television that a criminal got out of prison and decided to take this situation as an example of injustice, they had been affected at some point by it, reflecting the presence of justice in their social environments. On the other hand, this methodological strategy ruled out spontaneous associations about justice, similar to the data collection technique most used by social psychologists to study SR: the word association method (Wagner & Hayes, 2005). Indeed, this non reflexive strategy is complemented in this study by the argumentative process enabled by the dialogical structure of the interview. This way, analyzing the arguments the interviewees expressed by answering questions about the meaning of justice in the situations they decided to narrate a hypothesis can be elaborated about their thinking coherence. This is the main purpose of developmental psychology from a Piagetian perspective (Killen & Smetana, 2007).

Moreover, the interviewees' arguments constituted a way to grasp the level of ownership of such representations that could be present in the discourse (Tappan, 2005, 2006; Wertsch, 1998). Wertsch (1998) explains the cognitive processes through which individuals appropriate the cultural mediation tools (ideology, values, social representations, etc.). One dimension of this process consists of the mastering of the object by the agent. This is understood as a "knowing-how" competence to use a mediating tool with a relatively high degree of expertise. The second dimension of this process refers to a sense of "ownership", that is, how an agent takes a cultural tool that belongs to others and makes it his or her own. In many cases, levels of mastering coincide with levels of ownership. Nevertheless, it can also happen that a high mastering level does not correspond with a similar level of ownership. The agent can use the tool without considering it as his or her own, so that it remains in the subject as someone else's voice, probably due to a feeling of conflict or resistance towards the object.

Only 13 participants (all of them aged between 6 to 9) said they did not know what "justice" means and could not give any example of it. The analysis of the rest of the collected

data was made according to the assumption of the grounded theory recommendations to interpret qualitative information (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). Analyzing similarities, differences, and recurrences in participants' arguments, 8 analytical categories were constructed to describe the different representations of justice identified. To construct the categories, the prominent positions in current ethical debates have been taken into account as a heuristic guide to orient the interpretations of participant's narratives and to give the categories a name (Campbell, 2001). The validity of these analytical categories was determined by randomly selecting 24 of the transcribed interviews (11%; 2 from each age group) and having them tested by two independent expert judges. The percentage of agreement in their coding was 85%. In the following the categories identified will be presented, each followed by some illustrative examples.

A) *Utilitarian representation*: In this category the answers included considered justice as “*something that enables everyone to be happy*”. Justice is understood in terms of “*what does good to people*”, “*good*” being synonymous to happiness. This is very similar to what utilitarian ethics postulates (Bentham, 1789/2008). According to this ethical theory, justice is the *greatest* happiness for the *greatest* number of individuals.

Victoria (6;05)¹: *Just is going to my aunt's house on Saturdays*². [¿And why is it just?] *Because I like it.*

Lorena (16;01): *Something that an individual wants or something that we want society to become.* [Could you give an example?] *For example what is being done about justice influences all problems that we have, justice must be done to solve the problems.* [¿Which problems are you referring to?] *Poor people... Everything that is being done to make their situation better. It is unjust that nobody takes care of making their situation better so that all people can be well.* [¿Who has to take care of them?] *Ah... the Government and the organizations, to correct things.*

¹ Indicates participants' age in years and months.

² The following notations were used in the transcripts: “[]” indicate interviewer's observations and words, *italics* indicate interviewees' words.

Victoria (6;05) defines justice as something that brings happiness to her while Lorena (16;01) considers that justice would solve social problems and assures everybody to be fine. The interviewees think justice as something that is good for people and enables them to live happily. Yet the youngest children focus their narratives only on themselves or things they like to do. Age 9 and onward these egocentric narratives start to include a social perspective by considering collective or other people's happiness and including different social settings or institutions (e.g. school, sports club). It seems that children from 9 to 10 years old are capable of thinking of justice as a social relation system that includes them. Probably this change is produced, on the one hand, by cognitive decentration that enables individuals to assume other perspectives or to understand others' mental states (Muller & Carpendale, 2011; Perner, 1991; Piaget, 1924, 1932). On the other hand, it can be a result of the increase in the social world complexity related to the children growing up, their more frequent participation in different social situations or institutions with more complex organization, that allows them to include in their narratives the personal and social perspective (Duveen, 2013; Hviid, 2012; Piaget, 1932). There's a permanence of utilitarian justice represented by a high percentage in all age groups (as a basic representation or integrated with the other representations). This indicates that, contrary to Piagetian assumptions (Piaget 1926; Delval, 1994), the conception of the world as ruled by a natural order that guarantees the satisfaction of humanity needs will not be abandoned during the cognitive development. Moreover, such an order ensuring everybody's happiness, is the most frequent meaning attributed to justice.

B) Retributive representation: This category includes the answers that indicate an understanding of justice as a relation between actions performed or individual merits and punishments or rewards received. From this perspective justice is conceived in punitive terms, similar to Aristotle's corrective justice (1970) or the retributive ethic represented by Kant or Hegel (Garland, 1999; Villacañas, 2008), since it has the function of correcting past action without considering the future consequences of the outcomes of that action.

Daniela (8;06): *For example, it is unjust if he was fired from his job for nothing. [And how it would be just?] It would be just if he was fired because he did something wrong.*

Clearly Daniela (8;06) thinks of justice as situations in which the persons involved get what they deserve. In contrast, outcomes that are not deserved are unjust. Justice is understood as a balance between what's deserved and what comes out. This representation tends to appear in narratives constructed by children from 9 years old onward, due to the necessary cognitive capacity to consider the social perspective and include others who administer punishment. This necessarily a decentration process from the own perspective to the other's point of view. Also the participation in more complex social situations has been described before in relation to the transformations of utilitarian representation. In contrast to Piaget (1932), the retributive conception of justice is not the first to appear in moral development and does not disappear with the achievement of moral autonomy and the participation in social relations of mutual respect.

C) Distributive Representation: This category refers to justice as a distribution based on the equality of norms applied to all people implicated, without any favoritism or preference. This is the meaning that Rawls (1971) has given to the notion of justice: fairness.

Agustin (16;07): For example, when a teacher evaluates the exam results, it is just because she takes the same basis to evaluate us all, almost always, she applies the same criteria. For me justice is a synonym of equality, that everybody has the same conditions, possibilities and could get to the same point. It is unjust for example that some people are born with everything and others with nothing. Some people are very wealthy while others are very poor, I think that is unjust.

Agustin's narrative manifests the thought of justice in terms of the egalitarian treatment that some teachers give to their students. The opposite "injustice" refers to inequality because we all are equal and deserve to have the same possibilities.

In the course of cognitive development those basic representations, that are differentiated in the beginning, integrate with each other to form a dialectical movement of differentiation-integration (Piaget, 1980). The latter refers to one modality of an inferential (not deductive) dialectic that Piaget postulated as a cognitive instrument of psychological development. According to his theory about the emergency of new possible meanings of objects, the

development of their representation follows a movement from an initial indifferentiation of their features and properties to a differentiation and a final integration. This dynamic explains the process that allows individuals to have a more complex and abstract comprehension of the representational object, in this case justice. Consequently, four new categories could be identified: D) Utilitarian representation within a distribution situation; E) Distributive representation within a retribution situation; F) Utilitarian representation within a retribution situation; G) Utilitarian representation within a retributive distribution situation.

D) *Utilitarian representation within a distribution situation*: The narrative related by participants was about distributions of goods, but those distributive actions were considered just because they were the best way to achieve happiness for all persons involved.

Laura (17;01): *For example, there are little children trying to buy something to eat at the school buffet during lunch time, and the seller can't see them because of the bigger guys. So, the seller decides to organize them in a queue. [Why do you think that this situation is about justice?] Because she organizes all, so everybody can buy during lunch time. [Ok, but why do you think that to organize the queue was just?] Because that was good for everyone, all of us have the same chance to buy. Before the little children couldn't buy food, so they are hungry all day. [Ok, I understand now. So, what do you think justice means?] It means that everybody can live happily, having the same rights and all that.*

E) *Distributive representation within a retribution situation*: The situations narrated were about retribution (punishment or reward), but in order to be just the retribution had to follow egalitarian rules for everybody involved. In other words, these narratives are about the just distribution of rewards and punishments, ensuring the equality between all members of a group of people.

Florencia (14;06): *When the teacher gives us the mark that we deserve in proportion to how much we studied [¿Why do you think that is just?] Because all of us have the same rights and she has to evaluate us according to how much we*

studied. [¿What do you think justice means?] Something like what maintains, or better said, what controls that each one has the same rights. It is like... I don't know... when you do something that is not equal for everybody... For example, a girl that I know received a better grade than me in an exam, but not because she had studied more than me, but because the teacher likes her more than me, so she gives her a better grade.

F) *Utilitarian representation within a retribution situation:* The narratives described situations of punishment or reward, but both were conceived merely as methods to achieve happiness for everyone, which is the actual meaning of justice for these subjects.

Juan (11;03): *When you fight with a guy and he says 'No, no, no, he hit me', the people in charge of justice, in this case the teacher, must seek for the truth ... so your name will be clean while the name of the other becomes spoiled (...) [What do you think justice means?] Justice is a way to bring order, (...) is a way to make things right and people who are committed to justice try to promote good over evil, to make people live better.*

G) *Utilitarian representation within a retributive distribution situation:* These narratives presented justice as a way to live better provided that the retributive situations are governed by equalitarian rules for everybody relating outcomes with personal merits or behaviors.

Martin (15; 07): *Justice... that people have work, housing, food... I am thinking about politicians. They have to care about the people and not do things only under obligation. Here people need help and anyone notices that. The politicians should realize that we are people with necessities. [¿Why do you think that is just that people have work...?] (Interrupts) Because we are all human beings and we deserve a good life, with dignity. We all deserve a happy life without unnecessary problems. [What do you think that justice means?] It's what protects us and makes*

that bad people are where they have to be, and good people too. It's unjust that good people have nothing and bad people, such as politicians, have everything.

Table 1 shows the distribution of each category according to age. The three age groups have been determined considering shifts in the cognitive comprehension of the social world of children and adolescents (see Delval & Kohen, 2012). Different studies show that from 6 to 9 years old children base their explanations of the social world in the more concrete and perceptible features of the situation. Furthermore they tend to be centered in their own experience, unable to consider different perspectives of the same situation. Between 10 and 13 years the subjects are capable of taking the difference between social, personal and institutional relations into account, and start to consider the invisible figures of social interactions. Finally, from 14 to 17 years old the inference of implicit social regulations has a major role in adolescent's explanations about the social world, as they can coordinate different perspectives on the same phenomena and think about many possibilities to solve a social conflict.

Table 1: Distribution of representations according to age groups (N=216)

		Representations of justice									
		Doesn't Know	Utilitarian	Retributive	Distributive	Utilitarian within distribution	Distributive within retribution	Utilitarian within retribution	Utilitarian within distributive retribution	Total	
Age	6-9	<i>n</i>	13	41	2	4	7	1	2	2	72
		%	18,1%	56,9%	2,8%	5,6%	9,7%	1,4%	2,8%	2,8%	100%
	10-13	<i>n</i>	-	21	14	3	8	2	22	2	72
		%	-	29,2%	19,4%	4,2%	11,1%	2,8%	30,6%	2,8%	100%
	14-17	<i>n</i>	-	7	6	4	7	13	25	10	72
		%	-	9,7%	8,3%	5,6%	9,7%	18,1%	34,7%	13,9%	100%
Total		<i>n</i>	13	69	22	11	22	16	49	14	216
		%	6,0%	31,9%	10,2%	5,1%	10,2%	10,2%	22,7%	6,5%	100%

According to Table 1 the utilitarian representation of justice is present in all age groups. The results also suggest that retributive representation increments its frequency along with age. It becomes the most frequent representation in the age group between 10 to 17 years old, when it is integrated with utilitarian representation. Justice is something that enables everyone to live happy and retribution is the method to achieve it. Finally, the distributive representation of justices has a low frequency in the different age groups compared to other representations. There are very few individuals who expressed this meaning of justice. Only 11 mentioned it in its basic form and 49 mentioned it integrated with other representations. These results confront the assumption of the developmental psychology that distributive justice corresponds to the most rational moral thinking and emerges as a consequence of the access to autonomous thought (Kohlberg, 1976; Piaget, 1932).

SOCIAL AND INDIVIDUAL CONSTRAINTS ON THE MEANING-MAKING PROCESS

According to the empirical data presented before the ontogenesis of social representations of justice implies a developmental process, which is manifested mainly by a differentiation-integration dialectical process of the representations (Piaget, 1980). It can be argued that the four integrated representations (D, E, F and G) express the development of novelties, in the sense of the construction of a new way to represent justice that includes and overcomes the three basic representations (utilitarian, retributive and distributive). Those more complex representations provide not only a definition of justice (e.g. justice is people living happily), but also a method to achieve it (e.g. administrating punishments or rewards according to personal merits). Moreover such integrated representations refer to a broader field of the phenomenon, since they refer to social systems in general or institutional functioning and involve different individual and social roles beyond the direct personal experience.

Despite the fact that the three basic representations can be integrated with each other, none is abandoned across this developmental process, as they remain recognizable in individual's narratives. In this sense, contrary to many studies about cognitive development in social domain (Damon, 1990; Delval, 1994; Kohlberg, 1981), the results suggest that the meaning making process does not occur due to a conflict between contradictory representations, but could be a

result of the coexistence of different meanings that are not opposite. In Piaget's terms (1982) it can be considered as a dialectical movement explained as the inferential process from an already constructed meaning to more complex new meanings. This process is not about replacing previous representations that are less epistemologically valid than others closer to "reality", or the "right" understanding of justice. Also, there are no criteria to establish such a judgment about the epistemic validity of justice representations, since justice is not a physical object with specific properties that can be approached by thought. Justice is a social object, which had been constructed and transformed in the course of a social group's history legitimizing different social practices (Campbell, 2001). Moreover, as has been explained in the introduction of this paper, there is no consensus on the most adequate sense of justice among philosophers.

Probably the integration-differentiation process of the justice representation ontogenesis occurs simultaneously to the cognitive decentration that enables subjects to include different social and personal perspectives in their representations about justice (at about 9-10 years old). Such transformation is the result of both a cognitive development and the participation of the children in more complex social institutions and relations, away from their parents. This is manifested in the different social interactions and institutions that young adolescents mention in their narratives about justice. The increasing complexity expresses that in the moral domain –as in other domains of thought- conceptualization processes move from concrete to more abstract (e.g., Castorina & Lenzi, 2000; Delval, 1994; Duveen 2013; Faigenbaum, 2005; Kohlberg, 1976; Piaget, 1924).

In addition, considering the most frequent representation of justice in adolescents, retribution appears as the method to achieve social welfare. This could be explained taking into account the different empirical studies realized with Argentine samples. Those have revealed that the hegemonic SR (Moscovici, 1988) of justice has a retributive and institutional meaning (Morais Shimizu & Stefano Menin, 2004; Barreiro, et al., in press). What's more, the Argentine press tends to diffuse retributive meanings of justice, demanding harder punishments for criminals to re-establish social order (Barreiro, et al., in press). Thus, it could be concluded that such a retributive social representation of justice is appropriated, during the socialization process, by children and adolescents. It is important to remark that the retributive representation of justice does not correlate to any specific general stage of thought development, since it is present

in all age groups. Rather, retributive representation is enabled by its enactment in specific interactions and discussions, making its particular meaning more salient than other possible meanings of justice.

However, the aforementioned integration-differentiation process shows that individuals are active agents reconstructing the hegemonic representation in accordance with their cognitive possibilities. More specifically, the retributive representations of justice are not only appropriated by compliance in a frame of constraint relations, because they become more abstract and complex in relation with the participant's age. Therefore, such hegemonic representation would not simply impose upon the agents by social constraints, as the agents play an active and reconstructive role in the appropriation process.

From this perspective, moral judgments are not transmitted from one generation to another by adults, as already constructed solutions to everyday problems (Shweder & Much, 1987; Emler, 1987; Emler & Ohana, 1993). Is it true that specific representation of justice are not individual constructions, they are meaning complexes constructed in the course of a historical meaning-making process across generations (sociogenesis) (Duveen & Lloyd, 1990). Nevertheless, while individuals reconstruct this social knowledge during socialization something novel emerges (Duveen, 2007). The latter is exhibited both in the increasing complexity of the situations related to justice in everyday life in the participants' narratives, and in the integration-differentiation dialectical process. In other words, individuals reconstruct the collectively constructed meanings about justice to understand them, depending on their cognitive possibilities and their personal experiences with this object. As Duveen pointed out: "The knowledge of the social world is limited by the structures we have availed for apprehending it" (Duveen, 2002, p. 141).

Another interesting point to remark about the obtained results is the low frequency of distributive justice in all age groups. That seems to contradict research assuming this sort of justice as an expression of progressive unfolding of intellectual operations (Piaget 1932; Damon, 1990; Kohlberg, 1976). However, this low frequency could be explained appealing to the collective meaning-making process. Societies not only produce active meanings about the world, but also absences of meaning or nothingness. In Bang's words (2009):

... this absence is not a real absence but a presence of an absence. That which is 'not there' and that which is 'invisible' are -from the present point of view- the relational and dynamics processes out of which meaning grow as Gestalt qualities which at the same time belong to individual and to the cultural and environmental transformation they produce. (p. 376)

From this perspective the nothingness is itself a construction. Low appearance of distributive justice could be a way to cope - collectively and individually - with social injustice, as this is something particularly frightening (Lerner, 1998; Lerner & Clayton, 2011). Additionally, it is plausible to hypothesize that the distributive justice is an *emancipated representation* (Moscovici, 1988), resulting from the circulation of knowledge in a minority group, with the potentiality to challenge the retributive hegemonic representations that legitimize social order (Augoustinos, 1999; Jost & Hunyady, 2002).

Summing up, the conceptualization process within the ontogenesis of SR of justice implies construction of novelties conditioned by two different types of constraints (Castorina & Faigenbaum, 2002). One of such refers to the social guidance of the person's meaning-making process (Bang, 2009; Valsiner, 2003), that enables to think justice in retributive terms, disabling other possible meanings such as distribution. The other constraint is cognitive, because individuals reconstruct or understand the SR of justice according to their thought possibilities (Castorina, 2010; Lloyd & Duveen, 1990).

Those dialectic relations between developmental process and social or personal constraints, highlight the need to carry out empirical research that considers both developmental and social psychology theoretical and methodological frameworks. The convergence of both disciplines allows studying the link between collective meaning-making processes and person's conceptualization, without considering the former as Platonic abstractions and the latter as the result of a cognitive construction disembodied from the personal experience with social environment.

Nevertheless, there is a limitation to the present study. The scope of the data collected and their analysis concerned only a discursive take on SR of justice. This focus on discourse and conversation give relevant information, but don't consider forms to socially enact SR (Jodelet,

1989; Zittoun et al., 2003) and, moreover, there are zones of SR that can't be verbally explicated (Flamment, Guimelly & Abric, 2006). This suggests a possible line for future research. It would be relevant to investigate whether the forms to enact social representations of justice are others forms of the social representation process involved in the ontogenesis of SR. In this vein it would be enriching to analyze the SR of justice in the interactions of Argentine children and adolescents with their families, peers, in school, etc. In other words, in "patterns of interaction or customs that encapsulate meanings or experiences for people" (Zittoun, et. al., p. 417). There is a different non-reflective use of symbolical recourses that position individuals into different forms of interaction with justice, like books, movies, storytelling, etc. Their study will shed new light on the data and conclusions presented, as they can reinforce or challenge SR of justice.

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