Moral educational conceptions of children and adolescents: dialogue between the moral judgment theory of Piaget and the social domain theory of Turiel[1]*

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Abstract

The main objective of this research was to investigate the moral educational conceptions of children and adolescents, focusing on their understanding of the role of parents as educators and character formers. It is an exploratory, descriptive research of qualitative and quantitative analysis. The data were collected through structured interviews, using an instrument based on social domain theory and Piaget's theory, with participation of 45 persons aged 10 to 13 years, students of a public school in a peripheral neighborhood of a municipality in the São Paulo Metropolitan Region. The results indicated: little presence of moral justifications and the large proportion of conventional justifications; obedience even when not legitimizing parental authority; little claim for autonomy; it was noted that the legitimacy of parental authority, the binding character of a rule and rule compliance predominate to a greater degree in situations that have previously been classified as being of moral, prudential and conventional domains, different from situations of personal domain. Considering the results it can be said that, from the point of view of the participants in this sample, the role of the parents is strongly related to the establishment of rules about all the contents of the children's social interactions. In addition, their authority is often legitimized, except on matters perceived as personal domain. In consulting the

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literature of the area, it is observed that parents and children have different perceptions about justice, obedience, autonomy and respect in their relationships. We suggest new researches with diversification of the samples and the insertion of the variable "religion", given the amount of justifications referring to it.

Keywords

Moral educational conceptions – Social domain theory – Jean Piaget.

The main objective of this research was to investigate the moral educational conceptions of children and adolescents, focusing on their understanding of the role of parents as educators and character formers. The proposal of the study was a dialogue between two theoretical perspectives: Jean Piaget's Theory of Moral Judgment (PIAGET, 1994 [1932]) – considered as a landmark and starting point for great thinkers of moral psychology, such as Lawrence Kohlberg, and the social domain theory, a contemporary approach with consistent empirical basis (TURIEL, 1983, 1989).

These two theoretical perspectives are constructivist and assume the epistemological assumption of interactionism as the starting point for their investigations. So, even though they had different study objects and research questions, they both reflected about the child's moral development. Thus, it is possible to think of a dialogue between the two approaches. Piaget was interested in the study of the epistemic subject, and in one of his early books (PIAGET, 1994 [1932]) he presented his study on the construction and development of moral normativity by children. The social domain theory deepened its focus by investigating aspects of the psychological subject who judges and acts, coordinating the different domains of social knowledge that coexist in his or her attitudes and decisions, being the moral domain one of these aspects constructed by the child when interpreting, imitating and establishing relations with people, all integrated into the social world (TURIEL, 1989).

According to Turiel and Gingo (2017), the great divergence between the two theories concerns whether moral development is improved with the passing of time, that is, whether it varies with age, or if each domain of social knowledge among them the moral domain, has a specific development pattern. On the other hand, authors such as Sokol and Chapman (2004) or Carpendale (2006) do not accentuate the divergence between the two theoretical perspectives, but, on the contrary, claim that they are complementary theories with a greater number of convergent aspects.

According to Piaget (1994 [1932]), human beings are born without any knowledge of the normative world (anomy), so that they begin to learn the rules throughout their development and socialization. The author's great contribution to the area was to affirm the existence of two morals inside the child – heteronomous and autonomous. According to Piaget (1994 [1932]), the types of relationships experienced by the child are responsible for whether or not giving opportunity to autonomous morality which, for him, is a form of equilibrium superior to heteronomous morality.

Coercion is a type of social relationship characterized by the child's unilateral respect for the adult. It tends to consolidate the heteronomy moral, which implies obeying people. Thus, adult authority and its rules are legitimated by the child and must be fulfilled as proposed. In turn, cooperative relations characterized by mutual respect and reciprocity allow the child to develop the moral autonomy, which consists in obeying rules and norms legitimized as fair and conducive to the maintenance of human dignity (PIAGET, 1994 [1932], 1986 [1964]; CARPENDALE, 2006; LA TAILLE, 2006).

Thinking about the context of the relations between parents and children, Caetano (2009) affirms that relations based solely on mutual respect are not possible, given the hierarchical structure of the relationship. Caetano (2009) studied the relationship between parents and children and, based on Piagetian theory, formulated the scale of educational conceptions (CAETANO; SOUZA; SILVA, 2016) using four constructs relevant to the understanding of the process of moral education, namely: obedience, respect, justice and autonomy.

Obedience is pointed out by Piaget (1994 [1932]) as the genesis of child's moral. Caetano's studies (2005) have shown that many parents believe that the best way to make their children obey is to impose their authority, with shouting, threats and physical punishment, because thus children understand who is in command, become afraid and fulfill their duties. This excessively coercive practice of Brazilian parents tends to promote obedience among children, and therefore favors heteronomous moral. This obedience can be overcome, according to Piaget (1932/1994), if relations between children and adults change their coercive character to forms of cooperation.

Another relevant construct for understanding the relations between parents and children is the respect, described by Piaget (1932/1994) as the feeling of moral obligation. According to La Taille (2006), it is a functional invariant of the construction of the human being's consciousness in order to act well. For Piaget (1994 [1932]), the fulfillment of the rule exists on the condition that there is respect for the issuer of the order and that this respect derives from the combination of feelings of love and fear. However, for Piaget (1994 [1932]), fear is at the basis of unilateral respect, and hence of heteronomous moral development.

Justice, in turn, called by Piaget (1994 [1932]) the immanent condition and the law of equilibrium of social relations, is considered by the author as the most rational of the virtues. Justice is an inherent feeling of the child and accompanies his or her cognitive development. In Piagetian studies, the small child has shown a justice tied to punishments, called by the author a "retributive justice". This is later surpassed by a more evolved form of justice, entitled "justice by equality", which tends towards a higher equilibrium when applied beyond egalitarian distribution, taking into account the specificities of each one's need, so that it is entitled "justice by equity" (PIAGET, 1994 [1932]), 1986 [1964]; LA TAILLE, 2006).

Finally, autonomy is understood as a construction of the subject himself or herself, but is only possible through the experience of cooperative relations, based on mutual respect and which often require the submission of particular desires and interests to the collective good (PIAGET, 1994 [1932]).

Social domain theory: contemporary contributions on the legitimacy of parental authority

The theory of the social domain starts from the assumption that a child's moral and social knowledge is constructed through interactions between the individual and the environment. Aspects of these interactions lead to the variations and the concordances in moral and social judgments (TURIEL, 1983). According to this perspective, moral development is best understood by the psychological analysis of moral judgments, which can be classified in domains or conceptual structures. This theoretical model initially proposes the existence of three social domains: moral, conventional and personal (SMETANA, 2013).

The moral domain is related to the concern for rights, justice and well-being. Its criteria are generalization (with respect to social contexts), obligatoriness (of executing / not executing an action, following / not following a rule), inalterability and independence of rules and authority (it is not necessary to have a rule or authority stipulate if the action is certain or not) (TURIEL, 1983, 1989; SMETANA, 2006; TURIEL, GINGO, 2017). Justifications of moral domain refer to the intrinsic consequences of the act for the welfare or right of others.

On the other hand, the criteria for the conventional domain are: contextual relativity, alterability, and dependence on rules or authorities. The conventional domain is justified based on references to authority, to social expectations, to arguments for maintaining the organization and social order (TURIEL, 1983, 1989; SMETANA, 2006).

The personal domain, in turn, refers to the understanding of people as psychological systems, including knowledge about one's own behavior and that of others; the construction of conceptions of self, personality and identity, as well as attempts to understand psychological causes and infer meanings (SMETANA, 2013). It encompasses actions considered to be outside the scope of social regulation and moral concern, because as it encompasses questions of preference and whose consequences only affect primarily its executor (NUCCI, 1981). Rules about issues assessed as personal domain are not recognized by individuals, so their violations are judged as "not wrong" or as "less wrong" than violations of rules of the moral or social domains (NUCCI, 2013).

In addition to the three core domains, more recent research also addresses prudential and multifaceted issues. Multifaceted issues present aspects of more than one domain. People may have discordant judgments because they have different information about the issues or because they attribute different weights to elements of the situation (NUCCI, 2000). For Smetana (2013), it is the multifaceted nature of many social facts that produces contextual and developmental variability and the inconsistencies of judgments. On the other hand, prudential issues involve acts that have immediate, negative and perceived consequences directly on oneself, relating to concerns about safety, danger, comfort and health (SMETANA; ASQUITH, 1994; SMETANA, 2010).

When sharing this theoretical foundation, Smetana and Asquith (1994), focusing on the relationship between parents and children, found that the hypothetical situations involving the moral, conventional and prudential domains were considered as legitimate

to parental authority. Thus, the points of disagreement between parents and children are classified within a personal domain. More recent studies indicate that other variables may influence this relationship, for example, young people of higher socioeconomic levels legitimize less the parental authority on issues considered a personal domain issue (NUCCI; CAMINO; SAPIRO, 1996). The parents' level of education (SMETANA; AHMAD; WRAY-LAKE, 2015) and different sociocultural contexts are other variables that can produce changes in the legitimation of parental authority (SMETANA; CREAN; CAMPIONE BARR, 2005; ZHANG; FULIGNI, 2006; SMETANA; AHMAD; WRAY-LAKE, 2015), but the different domains are always identified. That is, the change of context seems to generate changes in the scope of each domain and in the interpretations on parental practices, but the existence of the domains and their differentiation seem proven by a significant number of empirical studies (SMETANA; JANBOM; BALL, 2014; ROTE; SMETANA, 2016).

One of the results of the researches based on the social domain theory, especially those investigating the family as a context of development and moral education (TURIEL, 1983, 1998), is that conflicts between parents and adolescents often do not occur in the moral domain, since the children agree that matters relating to that domain should be subject of parental authority (NUCCI; HASEBE; LINS-DYER, 2005; SMETANA, 2010; ROTE; SMETANA, 2016).

However, Caetano (2009), using the theory of moral judgment, identified the difficulty of parents in building with their children relationships based on respect, justice and autonomy, as well as differentiating moral judgment from moral action. The four constructs used as parameters to analyze the educational conceptions in the study indicated moral conflicts in the relations between parents and children, which is in disagreement with the results of the social domain theory.

In face of this discrepancy in results, the present study aimed to discuss the relationship between parents and children regarding the influence of those responsible for the moral development of children and adolescents, using instruments from both theoretical perspectives mentioned, in order to verify if the instruments produce contradictory results, as suggested by previous research.

Thus, the present research investigated what children and adolescents think about the role of parents as educators; the conceptions of children and adolescents about the independence and the contingency of parental authority in acts of different social domains; compared the moral educational conceptions of children and adolescents in relation to the moral educational conceptions of parents found in the study of Caetano (2009) and established the correlations between the educational and moral conceptions and the conceptions of parental legitimacy expressed by children and adolescents.

Method

Participants

Participants were 45 children and adolescents, 31 female (69%) and 14 male (31%), from the 6th to the 9th grade of elementary school. 1 student was from the 6th grade (2.2%),

21 of the 7th (46.7%), 13 of the 8th (28.9%) and 10 of the 9th (22.2%). The participants' ages ranged from 10 to 13 years of age, being 1 of 10 years (2.2%), 20 of 11 (44.4%), 14 of 12 (31.1%) and 10 of 13 (22.2%). Of the 45 participants, 14 (31.1%) live with their father and their mother, and 7 (15.6%) with their parents and their siblings, 5 (11.1%) live only with their mother, 4 (8.9%) with their mother and their siblings, 2 (4.4%) with their father and their siblings, 2 (4.4%) with their mother, stepfather and siblings, 1 (2.2%) with the grandparents, and 10 (22.2%) were classified in the category "Other". All the participants study in a public school in a peripheral neighborhood of a municipality in the São Paulo Metropolitan Region.

Instruments

Two instruments were used: the *Stimuli Items for the Parental Authority Questionnaire* (*Stimuli Test*) (SMETANA; ASQUITH, 1994), translated and adapted to the Brazilian context; and the *Escala de Concepções Educativas* (Educational Concepts Scale, *ECEM*) (CAETANO; SOUZA; SILVA, 2016), adapted to the younger audience.

The instrument derived from the social domain theory, *Stimuli Items for the Parental Authority Questionnaire*, investigates the conceptions of the legitimacy of parental authority in the different domains. It presents situations previously classified in domains (moral, conventional, personal, multifaceted and prudential). In total, the instrument has 16 situations, namely: taking money from parents without permission; beating brothers or sisters; lying to parents; breaking a promise given to the parents; speaking bad words; leaving home in pajamas; open-mouth eating; laughing aloud at a wake; choosing one's profession; choose one's clothes; having a tattoo made; choosing friends; getting a piercing; smoking cigarettes; eating unhealthy food and drinking alcohol.

For each of the 16 items questions were raised in order to investigate, first, the legitimacy of parental authority, as well as the obligatoriness, the obedience to the rule and the contingency of the act to the parents' authority. Next were investigated the justifications given by the participants regarding the reason for each item being right or wrong. Based on these justifications, the answers were classified according to the domains of the social domain theory. To this aim, seven questions were asked: 1) Do you think it right or wrong for parents to make a rule about (the item)?; 2) Do you think parents should make a rule about (the item)?; 3) If the parents make this rule about (the item), do you have to agree with it and follow it? Why?; 4) Do you think (the item) is right or wrong? Why (the item) is right or wrong ?; 5) Choose from the options: I. This is always wrong, even when parents say it is not wrong; II. This is wrong only if the parents say so; and III. This is not a question of right or wrong. It is an individual choice.

The adapted ECEM (CAETANO; SOUZA; SILVA, 2016) presents 23 items that were evaluated on a 7-point concordance Likert scale ranging from "I totally disagree" to "I totally agree", having at the center a neutral of "I do not agree or disagree". These 23 items were divided according to the Piagetian constructs described above. The justice construct was represented by 8 items; obedience was verified based on the average of 4 items; the same number of items of the respect construct; autonomy with 7 items.

Proceeding

The two instruments used for data collection were applied through individual interviews which lasted an average of 50 minutes. The convenience sample was composed of children who agreed to voluntarily participate in the project and whose parents signed the Informed Consent Form, authorizing the participation of the children. The project was submitted and approved (CAE: 57269816.0.00005561) by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Institute of Psychology of the University of São Paulo, what means that all ethical procedures for human research were fulfilled. The site of the application of the instruments was a public school located in a peripheral district of a municipality in the São Paulo Metropolitan Region

The data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The answers presented in the *Stimuli Items for the Parental Authority Questionnaire* were analyzed by descriptive statistics, presenting the percentage of legitimacy of parental authority, contingency, obligatoriness and obedience to the rules. In addition, a comparison was made between the domains chosen by the subjects – classified from the participants' justifications in relation to the theoretical criteria – and the domains previously classified. In relation to the data collected by *ECEM*, the mean of the score of each construct was presented. Finally, inferential statistics tests were performed: the correlation between *ECEM* scores and sociodemographic variables; and the t-test for the comparison of mean *ECEM* scores between subjects who legitimize or not the parental authority investigated in the *Stimuli Items for the Parental Authority Questionnaire.*

Results

Initially, the participants' justifications were classified based on the theoretical criteria for defining the different domains of social knowledge: moral, conventional, personal, prudential and multifaceted. The following justifications were observed among the answers:

(1) Moral: harming the other, hurting the feelings of others, breaking mutual trust, hurting physically and psychologically;

(2) Conventional: having problems with authority ("scolding", "punishment"), being against the law ("become a thief"), keeping order ("this is wrong"), acting as expected by family members, following family norms, corresponding to social expectations ("going down the wrong path"), following one's religion ("my religion does not allow this"), following the law of God ("this it is not according to the law of God");

(3) Personal: having or allowing individual choice ("the person chooses", "this is an individual choice", "this is not right or wrong, but depends on the person");

(4) Prudential: allowing physical damage to the subject ("this makes ill", "this can do harm", "this can lead to death", "this is unsafe or harmful to me");

(5) Multifaceted: answers that in themselves contained criteria of two or more domains;

(5) Other: depending on context, specificity of the issue of the bad word, not knowing, vocation.

The instrument "Stimuli Items for the Parental Authority Questionnaire" indicated that, in general, there was a low number of moral responses, with no situation with judgment predominantly of the same scope, since even the most prototypical item, which represented causing physical damage to the other (beat brothers or sisters), was judged based on the conventional domain. Because of this high number of conventional responses, the justifications given by the participants are not in line with the previously defined domains. These data can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 – Prior classification of the items according to social domains of the social domain theory and percentages of participants' answers

Situations / Answer Percentage	Prior classification	Moral	Conv.*	Pers.*	Prud.*	Mult.*	Other
Taking money from parents without permission	Moral	9%	82%	-	-	7%	2%
Beating brothers or sisters	Moral	29%	64%	-	-	4%	2%
Lying to parents	Moral	16%	78%	2%	-	-	4%
Breaking a promise given to the parents	Moral	18%	78%	-	-	-	4%
Speaking bad words	Conventional	33%	66%	-	-	2%	2%
Leaving home in pajamas	Conventional	-	86%	7%	-	2%	4%
Open-mouth eating	Conventional	-	93%	4%	-	-	2%
Laughing at a wake	Conventional	44%	51%	-	-	-	4%
Choosing one's profession	Personal	-	-	98%	-	-	2%
Choosing one's clothes	Personal	-	18%	76%	-	2%	4%
Having a tattoo made	Multifaceted	2%	36%	42%	11%	-	9%
Choosing friends	Multifaceted	-	27%	60%	-	4%	9%
Getting a piercing	Multifaceted	-	31%	44%	13%	7%	4%
Smoking cigarettes	Prudential	2%	2%	11%	78%	4%	2%
Eating unhealthy food	Prudential	-	16%	22%	53%	2%	7%
Drinking alcohol	Prudential	4%	20%	11%	53%	9%	2%

* Note: Conv. = Conventional; Pers. = Personal; Prud. = Prudential; Mult. = Multifaceted
Source: authors' elaboration, based on the research data.

It is worth mentioning that the situation of laughing at the wake, previously classified as a conventional domain because of the cultural characteristics that determine this moment, presented more moral responses (44%) than taking money from parents without permission (9%), beat brothers or sisters (29%), lie to parents (16%) and break a promise given to the parents (18%). However, even with this higher percentage, this item presented a higher percentage of conventional justifications than moral justifications,

allowing to observe the predominance of conventionality in the educational conception of the participants.

In addition, there is congruence between the answers given by the participants with the prior classifications of the domains in personal and prudential situations, namely: choosing one's own profession, one's own clothes and in the situation about smoking cigarettes, presenting respectively 98%, 76% and 78% of this congruence and consistency between the mentioned elements.

The instrument *Stimuli Items for the Parental Authority Questionnaire* has not only for the purpose of presenting the responses described in Table 1. It also investigates legitimacy of parental authority, obligatoriness, obedience to rule and contingency. Legitimacy is linked to the legitimate rules established by the parents, and obligatoriness to the need of parents to make certain rules, while obedience is linked to the fulfilling of the rules by the children and, finally, contingency is related to the possibility of changes in the child's conception by personal jurisdiction or parental authority. Thus, the participants' answers about these concepts are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Percentages of participants' responses that represent legitimacy of parental authority, contingency, obligatoriness and rule obedience according to each situation presented to the participants

Answer	L of A*	O R*	O to R*	C – A w*	C – O Par*	C – Ind Ch*
Taking money from parents without permission	89%	87%	100%	68%	16%	16%
Beating brothers or sisters	91%	91%	87%	73%	13%	13%
Lying to parents	93%	84%	89%	71%	16%	13%
Breaking a promise given to the parents	71%	64%	82%	58%	20%	22%
Speaking bad words	93%	91%	82%	71%	16%	13%
Leaving home in pajamas	58%	60%	80%	49%	13%	36%
Open-mouth eating	80%	80%	78%	73%	20%	7%
Laughing at a wake	73%	76%	78%	77%	7%	16%
Choosing one's profession	9%	11%	22%	-	-	100%
Choosing one's clothes	27%	27%	51%	2%	7%	91%
Having a tattoo made	67%	67%	71%	44%	12%	44%
Choosing friends	38%	36%	56%	7%	14%	80%
Getting a piercing	67%	69%	78%	39%	11%	50%
Smoking cigarettes	89%	93%	87%	67%	7%	26%
Eating unhealthy food	52%	57%	69%	35%	12%	54%
Drinking alcohol	93%	91%	87%	56%	13%	31%

Note: *L of A = Legitimacy of the Authority; O R = Obligatoriness of the Rule; O to R = Obedience to the Rule; C – A w = Contingency – Always wrong; C – O Par = Contingency – Only if parents say it is wrong; C – Ind Ch = Contingency – Individual Choice.*
Source: authors' elaboration, based on the research data.

It is noted that the legitimacy of parental authority, the obligatoriness of the rule and obedience to the rule predominate to a greater degree in situations that were

Educ. Pesqui., São Paulo, v. 45, e193129, 2019.

9

previously classified as being of moral, prudential and conventional domains, different from situations involving personal domain. The moral situations: taking money from parents without permission, beating brothers or sisters, lying to parents, and breaking promises given to the parents showed high agreement among adolescents, being, respectively, 89%, 91%, 93% and 71% for the legitimacy of the authority parental; 87%, 91%, 84% e 64% for the obligatoriness of the rule, and 100%, 87%, 89% e 82% for the obedience to the rule. This result is considerably different from situations involving the personal domain (choosing one's own profession and choosing one's own clothes), which presented respectively 9% and 27% for the legitimacy of parental authority, 11% and 27% for the obligatoriness of the rule, and 22% and 51% for the obedience to the rule.

Regarding the abscense of contingency to authority associated to the individual choice, the personal domain presents a higher percentages of responses, resulting in 100% and 91% respectively for the situations of choosing one's profession and choosing one's clothes. However, the contingency linked to the parents' authority and to the response "always wrong" is more prevalent in the moral and conventional domains.

Regarding the Piagetian constructs of Respect, Autonomy, Justice and Obedience, verified through the *ECEM*, the results could vary between 1 and 7, and higher means signalize greater agreement of the participants with situations involving the construct, whereas the lower averages demonstrate the opposite. It is worth mentioning that this calculation was made possible by changing the score of the inverted items so that they followed this same standardization.

In this analysis, it was observed that the concept of justice obtained the highest mean (5.1), indicating the children's demand for fairness in the relationship with their parents. In agreement with the data shown above, obedience was also explicit in this instrument and obtained the second highest mean (4.9), close to the mean of respect (4.8). Finally, autonomy obtained the lowest score in this sample (3.9), which is close to four, which represents the choice of "neither agree nor disagree" on the seven-point *ECEM* scale. The other constructs come close to the average 5, which is related to the "I agree" alternative.

Based on the Pearson correlation test, we sought to investigate the association between the scores in each of these constructs evaluated by *ECEM* and the variables of age and schooling. Among the constructs of Autonomy, Justice and Obedience there was no significant correlation with the variables of age and schooling ($p > 0.05$), however, both variables had a significant and positive correlation with Respect. This data indicates that the greater the age and the grade, the more the participants tend to agree on respect in the relationship between parents and children (Age: $r = 0.357$; $p < 0.005$; and schooling: $r = 0,377$; $p < 0.05$).

Relating the two instruments, we made a test of comparison of the scores of respect, autonomy, justice and obedience between those subjects who legitimize or not parental authority. This analysis was done on all 16 items of the *Stimuli Items for the Parental Authority Questionnaire*, however, statistically significant differences were only observed between those who legitimized and did not legitimize parental authority in items 4, 5 and 9, the first two being perceived as of conventional domain by the participants, and 9 as a personal domain. These data are described in Table 3 below.

Table 3 – Statistically significant differences in the scores of the Respect, Autonomy and Justice constructs in the comparison between the participants who legitimize or not the parental authority in the items 4, 5 e 9 of the *Stimuli Items for the Parental Authority Questionnaire*

		Respect	Autonomy	Justice
4) Breaking a promise given to the parents	Legitimate	4,65*		
	Do not legitimate	5,25*		
5) Speaking bad words	Legitimate	4,76*		5,05*
	Do not legitimate	5,58*		5,79*
9) Choosing one's profession	Legitimate		3,39*	
	Do not legitimate		4,01*	

Note: * p < 0.05.
Source: authors' elaboration, based on the research data.

As can be seen from the data in Table 3, in all cases cited above, adolescents who did not legitimize parental authority had higher scores than those who legitimized that authority, i.e., the participants who do not legitimize authority tend to demand more respect, justice and autonomy in the situations presented. Another point that deserves to be highlighted is that autonomy was only associated with the personal domain, while respect and justice were demanded in the other domains. It is worth noting that there was no difference in the way of assessing the construct of obedience, demonstrating that both those who legitimize and those who do not legitimize agree with this construct, that is, even if you do not legitimize it, you have to obey.

Therefore, considering the results, it may be argued that, from the point of view of the participants in this sample, the role of parents is closely related to the establishment of rules about all the contents of the children's social interactions, and their authority is frequently legitimized, except matters perceived as personal domain.

Discussion

Comparing the justifications given by Brazilian children and adolescents with young Americans (SMETANA and ASQUITH, 1994), some similarities are observed between these groups in the personal domain, however, it is worth noting that the most relevant difference was present in the conventional domains because the Brazilian justifications often referred to obedience to religion, God or priest or pastor. This data may be directly associated with the profile of the sample and the Brazilian culture, since only 13.3% of the participants in this study have no religion and 86.7% consider themselves followers of Christianity, Spiritism or other religions.

Setton and Valente (2016) affirm that the religiosity of the Brazilian people presents a strong circulation as an instrument of identity, even though conflicts between the secular and religious order are present. For Sanchis (2008), this interrelation between Brazilian culture and religion is consistent since the country's past shows a great religious bond with politics (PIERUCCI, 2008), making possible the formation of a religious worldview. These

Educ. Pesqui., São Paulo, v. 45, e193129, 2019.

11

questions relate to what social domain theory calls informational assumptions (WAINRYB, 1991), that is, sometimes, the descriptive understanding of events is constructed on the basis of factual beliefs based on scientific and / or religious aspects, or even opinions of common sense widely disseminated, to the point of becoming concepts that will guide the execution of judgements (SMETANA, 2013).

In the research by Smetana and Asquith (1994), 90%, 87%, and 86% of the American participants judged respectively on the legitimacy of parental authority, obligatoriness and obedience of the rule about the moral domain, perceiving a valorization of questions of this scope. However, Brazilian participants gave conventional justifications for most items, focusing on obedience and fear of punishment. Parental practices in Brazil may be an explanation for these data, since coercion has shown to be one of the strategies typically used by Brazilian parents (CAETANO, 2009), recalling the relations of unilateral respect, characteristics of a moral of obedience or heteronomous moral (1994 [1932]).

This low presence of moral justifications among the Brazilian participants is striking, and to the detriment of prototypical questions of the social domain theory (beat brothers or sisters), in Brazil, a situation previously classified as conventional, "laughing at a wake", presented the highest number of moral responses among the participants. This may be due to the "second-order" event, explained by the social domain theory. Second-order events, present in multifaceted issues, are associated with a violation of a convention or social order that produces psychological harm to other individuals (SMETANA; JAMBON; BALL, 2014). This explanation justifies, therefore, the fact that the participants judged the situation "laughing at a wake" with a focus on the moral conception, even if the situation is linked to a social tradition, a form of behavior previously established by good manners or postulated by a religion.

Regarding questions about the use of cigarettes, alcoholic beverages and tattoos, young Americans consider these issues to be of personal domain and therefore independent of external control (SMETANA; ASQUITH, 1994). However, Brazilians believe that these issues are of prudential domain because they understand that such situations can harm one's health. We often find this difference of domains when comparing the judgment of parents and children (SMETANA, 2011). The children judge these matters as being of personal domain, and the parents consider it a prudential domain, what generates conflicts, since the children consider that the parents are not legitimated to establish any type of control on such aspects (ROTE; SMETANA, 2016). On the other hand, the adolescents who participated in our study believe that parents also have the right and obligation to make about these rules which must be obeyed by the children.

It is interesting to note that the situation regarding cigarette smoking presented more prudential responses (78%) than other situations classified by the same domain (53% eating unhealthy foods and 53% drinking alcohol). We believe that this result can be linked to government programs and awareness campaigns in different media that aim to reduce the number of smokers through educational, communication and health-related actions. In addition, it may be related to the adoption of legislative and economic measures which achieved a decrease in the per capita consumption of cigarettes by around 32% during the years 1989 to 2005(KUHNEN et al., 2009).

In addition, more than 50% of the Brazilian participants in this study respond in favor of obligatoriness and obedience to the rule and the legitimacy of parental authority in the 16 situations presented by the Stimuli Items for the Parental Authority Questionnaire. The average of the participants' answers and justifications for these three elements mentioned above is respectively 68.12%, 67.75%, and 74.8%. The adolescents of the American research (SMETANA; ASQUITH, 1994) present the average of 63.5%, 51%, and 59.5% for legitimacy, for obligatoriness and for obedience. That is, we can affirm that the Brazilian participants revealed a profile far more obedient to the parental figure than the Americans.

However, it is worth noting that although Brazilians presented high averages for legitimacy, obligatoriness and obedience with respect to personal domain items, this pattern of response was altered, and many of these averages were less than 50%, as indicated in Table 1 in the results section (choosing one's profession, clothes and friends). We highlight the item about the choice of one's profession, which presented the lowest average (22%) regarding obedience to the rule. Still in this item, the legitimacy (9%) and obligatoriness (11%) to this rule also presented the lowest frequencies.

In the comparison between Brazilians and Americans, it is observed that US participants present averages on the contingencies unrelated to parental authority (23.8%), related to parental authority (29.8%) and associated with personal jurisdiction (46.3%); while Brazilian participants presented 49.3%, 12.3% and 38.2%, respectively. However, it is worth noting that this difference between Brazilians and Americans may be based on the difference of age groups, since Brazilian respondents are between 10 and 13 years old while the American participants are 6, 8 and 10 years old.

In addition, according to the data from the *Stimuli Items for Parental Authority Questionnaire* and from *ECEM* there is an agreement between autonomy and personal domain. Table 2 shows that 100% and 91% of participants classified the situations of choosing their own profession and clothes as of personal jurisdiction. This is due to a connection that Nucci, Camino and Sapiro (1996) establish between the personal issues and autonomy as described by Piaget (1994 [1932]), since the role of personal control is to provide identity, the concept of freedom and mutual respect in cooperation between dialogue exchanges (NUCCI, 2001).

The data show that the participants have a profile of obedient children, however, their higher scores for the justice construct reveal the demand for more reciprocal and less coercive sanctions. In addition, the averages obtained in the constructs of respect and of obedience indicate a tendency towards unilateral respect that is linked with heteronomy and moral realism (a concept that comes from imposition and presents a consideration of values and duties as perennial aspects).

According to Piaget (1994 [1932]), one of the characteristics of moral realism is the interaction between duty and heteronomy, resulting in obedience to rules by unconscious thinking, the possibility that the rule itself is not moral and the difficulty to believe in and claim autonomy conditions. The research by Villalobos Solis, Smetana, Taspoulos-Chan (2016) investigated the desires for autonomy and the values of Latino and Puerto

Rican adolescents and the results revealed the dependence between the judgments and reasonings and the types of autonomy required by the youth.

Comparing the results presented here with the research conducted by Caetano (2009) with parents, we observed that the adolescents who participated in this research tend to moral conceptions with less autonomy (3.9) than in the parents' conception (4.3) investigated by Caetano (2009). In addition, parents demand to a greater degree that their children have respect for them (5.0) than their own children offer (4.8). Moreover, the constructs of justice and obedience also differ in comparison with the responses of parents and children, that is, the adolescents now investigated have a higher score of justice (5.1) than the parents investigated by Caetano (2009). However, the same parents feel that their children should be more obedient (5.2) than the adolescents in this study (4.9). Thus, we see that there are differences between the moral educational conceptions of parents as well of children and adolescents.

However, the measure provided by *ECEM* is consistent with the results found with the *Stimuli Items for the Parental Authority Questionnaire*. The predominance of the conventional domain in the justifications of the participants and the legitimation of parental authority, as well as obligatoriness and obedience to the rules, demonstrate what *ECEM* confirmed, that is, a profile of obedient children subjected to coercion of parental authority, even with the typical adolescent's search for fairer relationships. This relationship between obedience (*ECEM*) and the legitimacy of parental authority (*Stimuli Items for the Parental Authority Questionnaire*) is in agreement with the study of Cumsille et al. (2009). This research states that adolescents who legitimize their parents' rules tend to obey them more, in general situations, on the other hand, the study by Barbosa and Wagner (2014), using an instrument similar to the *Stimuli Test* used in this research, revealed that while adolescent participants confirm controlling parental practices, they also fight for spaces of greater personal autonomy.

Thus, it is confirmed that the general objective of the research was achieved, since it was possible to observe that the moral educational conceptions of children and adolescents are based on obedience and legitimacy of parental authority, demonstrating a high concentration of justifications in the conventional domain and a relatively low number in the moral domain regarding the situations presented to children and adolescents. However, the present study investigated only children and adolescents from a single public school and a single Brazilian region. Therefore, studies in other Brazilian cities and with students from private schools would be interesting in order to verify if the answers are similar. In addition, another important aspect that could not be investigated and would be interesting for future studies to do so, concerns the dimension of the participants' religiosity, as many answers involved this issue of obedience related to the religious doctrine that the adolescents said to follow.

Final considerations

Firstly, it should be clarified that, as regards the issues linked to the discussions of the two different theoretical proposals that underpinned this research, the social

domain theory maintains epistemological assumptions that are central in Piaget's theory of moral judgment, so the theories are not contradictory or exclusionary. The concept of moral domain for social domain theory is characterized by the fact that the aspects that constitute this domain are independent of authority. They are inherent to social relations and, therefore, are defined by the guarantee of the other's welfare and fair interpersonal relations that do no harm to anyone. Thus, the US results do not really find conflicts between parents and children in the moral domain, for the situations assessed as belonging to the moral domain are thus justified and belong to this domain precisely by non-contingency and independence from authority.

The obedient and submissive profile of the adolescents, found in the present study, with the tendency to conventional justifications for all the questions elaborated, was the aspect that most stuck out due to the contrast with international studies. This finding raises the need for further research with diversification of samplings.

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