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UPDATING THE PROPOSAL OF "JUST COMMUNITIES" FOR DEMOCRATIC CIVIL EDUCATION

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Abstract: This article examines Kohlberg's proposal of the "just community" from a current perspective in line with a post-conventional morality grounded on the democratization of schools. A type of teacher training is proposed that uses up-to-date methods to approach just communities. By taking the critical interpretation of the model of moral development, the article also concludes that schools today have integrated some of the cutting-edge advances to the just communities' program, and that this approach reciprocally calls for updating the idea of moral education by incorporating a broader view of morality. Such an update also includes families in the joint process of stimulating moral development and resolving conflicts of action. Lastly, it has been explained that Kohlberg did not give the family a role in their children's moral education, stating that the specific way to develop moral reasoning is through the relationships among equals at school. It is unclear whether there is a particular moral family environment that best fosters the development of the child's moral reasoning. Nevertheless, data provided from some studies confirm that there is a relationship between the moral reasoning of the parents and that of their children. Indeed, parents may even use teaching strategies to improve their children's moral development through dialog and the use of inductive strategies.

Keywords: *Just community, moral reasoning, democratic school, family.*

1. INTRODUCTION: THE ROAD FROM THE INDIVIDUAL TO THE COMMUNITY

Kohlberg was an American psychologist who pioneered the formulation of Moral Education based on the development of moral judgment (Althof, 2015). His proposal gained wide acceptance largely because it responded to public education's yearnings to have a positive influence on the moral life of its students without imposing specific values on them (Ryan, 1992). However, Kohlberg revised this theory on various occasions from the time he presented his doctoral dissertation at Harvard. As a result, Kohlberg's perspective on moral growth can be divided into two sweeping stages. In the first one he presented his theory of moral development, and in the second one he revised his initial considerations seeing an ontogenetic reconstruction of moral reasoning, following suggestions from Habermas and other authors that had a marked influence on a critical revision of the earlier model (Gozálvez, 2000). It was during this second stage of revision and broadening of the earlier theoretical underpinnings that the educational formulation of just communities took place. In it, more cognitive aspects of morality were joined by other key dimensions, such as attention to conduct, practical fulfilment, attitudes, and emotions, and, of course, the decisive role of the moral atmosphere (i.e., the moral context) in how people configure their real moral life (Power, Higgins & Kohlberg, 1991). This is the theoretical context in which his idea of "community" appears in Kohlberg's pedagogical deliberations, which until then had been relegated or ignored by the more cognitive and individual dimension of moral development.

The just community makes sense in Kohlberg's moral theory because the community is necessary to develop responsible moral actions and thereby increase moral reasoning (Kohlberg & Higgins, 1987). The profound meaning of this lies in that the moral climate in the classroom is decisive to moral development, which underscores that the best program for achieving that moral atmosphere is the just community (Kohlberg, Kauffman, Scharf & Hickey, 1975). Therefore, moral growth requires an atmosphere in which interpersonal relations permit respect for human rights (Lazarte, 2005) by drawing on the dignity of the people involved in a conflict of action.

Kohlberg (1980) argues that the just community is the model of moral education that can avoid a possible individualism of the theory of moral development. Regarding this, Reed (1997) affirms that the pro-

posal of the just community does not explain properly this aim. Kohlberg saw that the just community was the way to reconcile the individual and the community, an aspect he discovered in an experience during his visit to a kibbutz in 1969 (Power, 2014). What caught his eye so much? According to Linde (2009), a kibbutz is a place where the collective is established along with the individual because the experience of belonging to the community causes moral feelings and actions in the individual, such as the importance of following shared rules, the feeling of connection with the group, and the responsibility for the actions of each of its members. This visit led him to carry out a longitudinal study in which he showed that the youth at the kibbutz achieved a more meaningful level of moral reasoning than the urban Israeli youth (Kohlberg, 1971). According to Reimer (1997a), that difference was due to the fact that at the kibbutz one learned that the questions of daily life: What will I eat? Where will I live? How much should I earn? were answered according to the needs and demands of the society rather than in terms of the wishes of the self. In the end, the just community model should respond to the question: how should schools be restructured to promote student participation so that they can learn to reconcile their interests with society's? (Kohlberg, 1997).

Continuing with these experiences and reflections, Kohlberg (2012) points out that the first institution to adopt the just community concept was the Connecticut Women's Penitentiary, with a program initially designed for 10 years but cut short in 1969 after only four years. Later, in 1974, Kohlberg began a just community program at an Alternative Secondary School in Cambridge, committed to democratic decision-making, where he worked as a consultant. Later still, Kohlberg began another consultancy at the Scarsdale Alternative School in New York by setting up the same program. Power (2014) tells of him setting up a just community experience in South Bend, with students who had serious behavior problems. The teachers at this school worried about discipline and began with a highly discipline-centered paternalistic approach, but turned to Power for help when it failed, who advised them to adopt the democratic approach.

Frisancho (1998) notes that community is a group of people who are "socially interdependent, who participate together in discussions and decision-making and share certain community-defining practices" (p. 237). Dialog and discussion are the tools with which to establish the norms and rules governing the community. In this way, the moral climate of the just

community is grounded on acknowledging and respecting the rules and on the principle of collective responsibility and the participation of every student (Lazarte, 2005).

Yáñez and Fonseca (2003) point out that, based on the education experiences told, the aims of the just community are:

- To establish justified rules to be accepted by the members of the school community.
- To stimulate the competency of moral judgment.
- To achieve greater consistency in students between moral judgment and moral action.
- To train students in moral empathy while strengthening pro-social commitment.
- To develop a values system based on tolerance and human rights.

Power (2014) states that just communities help students to be apprentices of democracy because within them they follow the Golden Rule of listening, voting, and responding to other people. Thus, Kohlberg (2012) affirms that the just community is based on the conviction that democracy brings students closer to the post-conventional level of moral development because it encourages each student to issue moral judgments based on autonomous moral principles whose validity is independent from the authority of the individuals and the community. However, paradoxically and at the same time, they take form in the heart of community relations when everyone works together seriously to find a just solution to interpersonal conflicts. As Kohlberg (2012) himself states

> For students to take reflection or discussion of moral issues seriously, this discussion had to have some impact on real decisions in the institutional area. To me this means a community governed by democratic participation (p.75).

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF KOHLBERG'S JUST COMMUNITY

As regards its theoretical antecedents, in the 1960s Kohlberg took two basic questions from Hare (1963) (Yáñez-Canal, Fonseca & Perdomo, 2012): the separation of the subjects' actions and moral judgments, and the proposal to classify moral judgments in terms of their prescriptiveness

and their degree of universality. Kohlberg (1975) affirms that moral principles are universal guidelines for making a decision; they provide the foundation for subsequent norms and rules to be adopted in social relations. Kohlberg and Candee (1984) thus noted that moral action is objectively just when it fits universal principles and is subjectively just when it is guided by a moral judgment and there is a high degree of consistency between the moral judgment and the human action undertaken.

Kohlberg must give a consistent explanation of how moral judgment develops, which is why he takes Piaget's distinction between conventional morality and the morality from a rational moral code and the trust in the relationship between the child's moral development and cognitive development (Pérez-Delgado, Frías & Pons, 1988). Nevertheless, Kohlberg added to Piaget's theory in two ways: firstly, he proposed three levels of moral development, each one divided into two states, in contrast to Piaget's schematic structure reduced to a heteronymous morality and an autonomous morality, with an ill-defined intermediate phase; secondly, he established a stronger correlation between intellectual development and moral maturity.

Linde (2009) points out that Kohlberg took the project of democratic community as moral education from Dewey, who was the first to present the cognitive evolution approach. Consequently, Kohlberg's theory is founded on the cognitive development postulated by Dewey and shown by Piaget in his research. However, Kohlberg's merit lies in having achieved a systematization of the development of moral judgment by indicating that this process is universal in nature.

In the 1980s, Kohlberg broadly brought together his research and his point of view in two volumes published under the title *Essays on Moral Development*, respectively dedicated to the Philosophy of moral development (Kohlberg, 1981, vol. 1) and to the Psychology of moral development (Kohlberg, 1984, vol. 2). In these two essays, the American theorist joined previous publications with new reflections and, especially, he paved the way for the third volume, dedicated to moral education, a publication that was never materialized. This now mature Kohlberg rethinks the meaning of moral education, and in the light of that reflection, he incorporates new perspectives or orientations needed to fully understand morality: for example, at Gilligan (1982)'s request, Kohlberg acknowledges the need to incorporate the perspective of caring and attention to the particularity of close interpersonal relations (family, friends, daily relations, etc.). This perspective is complementary to that of justice in

universal terms, although he recognizes that there is a single moral core that, depending on the conflict of action at play, will swing more towards the side of caring or of justice (Gozálvez, 2000). In truth, there are no two separate moralities, since "in our opinion, the special obligations of care presuppose, but go beyond, the general duties of justice, which are necessary but not sufficient for them" (Kohlberg, Levine & Hewer, 1992, p. 235).

The philosophical reformulation that can be interpreted as "moral growth" in fact obeys educational motives, as Kohlberg (1992) explains:

> Educational motives were what first pushed me to write [the first volume on philosophy]. If one of the purposes of education is development in stages, as I believe, then one must give a philosophical reason why a higher stage or level is a better level (p.19).

After collaboration with Blatt, Power or Higgins, this mature Kohlberg's interest in education crystallizes in the proposal of just communities as a space for Socratic dialog, consensus, and the acceptance of personal responsibilities and universal human rights within the framework of collective collaboration and the creation of a moral atmosphere that is already educational in and of itself.

3. HOW TO GET JUST COMMUNITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE DEMOCRATIC APPROACH

Frisancho (1998) asserts that the Kohlbergian position on the just community is based on a concept of *good* understood as altruism and solidarity among members. It is a concept of *collective solidarity* since the universality of judgment is based on feelings of brotherhood. Frisancho (1998) holds that it is impossible to find the group solidarity just communities need in today's liberal society.

According to Power, Higgins, and Kohlberg (1989), democracy is a characteristic virtue of the just school that contributes to moral development. This implies that it is necessary to generate the moral atmosphere of the democratic school, which according to Linde (2009) requires several different aspects:

- Generating spaces for open discussion on moral and justice-related issues.
- Establishing a cognitive conflict to value other points of view of moral reasoning.
- Allowing participation in creating rules and exercising power and responsibility.
- Helping the community develop toward a higher stage of moral education.

Thus, Kohlberg (1975) points out that the effectiveness of the democratic approach and implementation of his theory is based on the requirement that the topics for discussion must be on morals and justice. Moreover, it is advisable that any large meetings of the democratic community be preceded by discussions in small groups, which would help achieve a higher level of moral reasoning. In that regard, Reimer (1997b) spells out what principles should underlie the new school based on the democratic approach:

> The school would be governed by direct democracy. Every major issue would be discussed and decided at a weekly community meeting where every member (students and teachers) would have a vote. There would also be standing committees made up of students, teachers, and parents. A social contract would be drawn up among the members that would set out each person's responsibilities and rights. Students and teachers would have the same basic rights, including freedom of expression, respect of others, and freedom from physical or verbal harm (p. 82).

Jennings and Kohlberg (1983) pointed out that the core of the just community was the community's weekly meeting, where they discuss the roles and solutions to the moral conflicts arisen from interpersonal relationships. However, implementation of the democratic approach requires the educational institution to have other organisms as well. Power (2014) notes that the early just community experiences put into practice the following:

- The community assembly: the main democratic structure of the school for setting rules and policies.
- Community meetings, prior to the community assembly, called advisory group meetings.

- Court or jury made up mainly of students to decide on matters of morality or justice.

Reimer (1997b) adds the disciplinary committee whose three functions are "to apply fair/just punishments, mediate in disputes among individuals of the community and advice students with discipline problems" (p. 112). Therefore, the teacher's classroom discipline is fundamental to applying Kohlberg's proposal appropriately.

Reimer (1997a) notes that to achieve the just community approach, educational institutions must be restructured to promote student participation for them to be able to reconcile their interests with society's interests. Therefore, it is utterly important for the students in the Community to have a say, vote and responsibilities (Delgado-Salazar & Lara-Salcedo, 2008). Oser (1995) points out that the strength of the just community approach lies on the fact that self-criticism and self-reflexive conduct must accompany moral education. Kohlberg did not want votes to be behind closed doors because the students needed to defend their opinions in public, without feeling intimidated, and because transparency and honesty are essential in the just community (Reimer, 1997b). As a result, moral reasoning is developed in the just community, but based on moral responsibility (Power, 2014).

Kohlberg insists on educating in favor of achieving democracy at schools as a path toward implementation of the just community. At the heart of such a community, moral education is civic education for democracy from a participatory, deliberative conception, and here Kohlberg recovers the idea of democracy from theorists such as John Dewey (Power, Higgins & Kohlberg, 1991; Dewey, 1927/2004) in contrast to a more elitist version such as the one represented by Walter Lippmann (1922/2004). Today, Oser, Althof & Higgins (2008) affirm that recent just community programs focus on developing competencies, in detriment of the democratic focus they had when Kohlberg conceived them.

4. A PROPOSAL ON TRAINING TEACHERS ON HOW TO SET UP A DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL

Power (2014) notes that there is a major problem in that schoolteachers are not trained on putting the democratic approach into practice. Moreover, universities teach moral education as a content rather than

from a formal or cognitive point of view (in Socratic and more philosophical terms). As a result, they rely completely on the common sense of the teaching staff, professing that if someone knows how something should be done because it is a good deed, it is assumed that they will be able to carry it out (Power, 2014). Is this training enough to implement a democratic atmosphere as a stepping-stone to justice? On that point, Jennings & Kohlberg (1983) say that the just community program provides a significantly better moral atmosphere than either of the alternative programs studied do.

Kohlberg (1975) affirms that teachers do not need to be moral role models, since they do not transmit morality only by example that calls for a mechanical imitation of certain models of conduct, given that the move from one stage of moral development to another comes about through interacting with the environment. Therefore, the teacher does not have to live according to the post-conventional level to guide his students to attaining it because it is not something that can (or should) be learned only by acritical experience, but rather by appealing to other, more cognitive faculties (at least if we aim at moral education, not moral manipulation). In this sense, Lazarte (2005) states that the teacher's job is to "foster the moral development of his students by different methodologies: clarifying dialogs, discussing real moral dilemmas, role-playing, procedures for active neutrality, simulations, conflict resolution, etc." (p. 140). Thus, the teacher helps each student to issue moral judgment and reasoning, but stripped of any specific content, since learning whether one particular action is good or bad would be irrelevant. Rather, the aim is to stimulate the appearance of moral judgments that approximate a universal principle of justice.

Just communities constantly apply dialog as a means for growth in the students' development of moral judgment. Any teacher wishing to apply this model should learn to ask questions in accordance with the just community approach, i.e., considering the participants as a community: "How could this have happened to us?" and "What should we do about it?" (Reimer, 1997b, p. 96), given that responsibility is not partial but is rather attributed to everyone. Therefore, the just community goes beyond individual approaches because there is a feeling of togetherness, since when one person suffers, everyone suffers (Power, 2014).

The democratic approach is not only a change in contents regarding the conventional morality, but also a different way of solving problems (Power, 2014). The starting point of the democratic approach is the feel-

ing of community that lies on the desire to feel part of a community, the desire to be cared for and to care for one another (Power, 2014). Accordingly, this approach aims to complement two traditionally separate moral approaches: justice and caring, approaches that in fact are mutually involved (Gozálvez and Jover, 2016).

The key question for teacher training is how to teach each student to take the moral point of view, a post-conventional perspective that does not give up communities' ties. There are several different objectives to work on with teachers:

1. Learning to teach in accordance with a post-conventionalism rooted in the community is conjugating "we". Before any action can be taken, the question must first be asked of what is best for the community, because that is how to be guided by the universal principle of justice.
2. Teaching them to be able to present dilemmas to students in the classroom and ask them questions in accordance with the democratic approach (Elorrieta-Grimalt, 2012).
3. Knowing what moral and judgment questions should be handled in the just community that would help improve social harmony.
4. Learning how to deal with classroom discipline not as a form of control, as is done habitually, but by helping the teacher to enforce it through consensus and reflection (Power, 2014).
5. Learning how to discuss conflicts in the school community and resolve them to activate the conduct of the subjects and link them to their moral judgments, which is something difficult to achieve only by discussing dilemmas, according to Puig (2012).
6. Assimilating how to hold discussions without forgetting that democracy is more than counting ballots; a message Kohlberg wanted to convey from experience with just communities (Power, 2014).
7. Knowing how to resolve cognitive conflicts because moral reasoning grows by resolving cognitive conflicts and assimilating the other's perspective (Pérez-Delgado, Frías and Pons, 1988).
8. Teaching the students how to continuously face the consequences of their own conduct, even if it is mistaken (Oser, 1995).

Ultimately, the democratic approach consists of offering "students' situations in which they have a moral responsibility, opportunities to experience democracy and to think critically" (Power, 2014, p. 210).

The moral educator must help students acquire a *moral point of view* or ability to reason in different situations (Adell, 1999). This can be achieved if the teacher helps each student see that his or her point of view is not the only one that can resolve a cognitive conflict (Oser, 2001).

5. THE NECESSARY INCLUSION OF FAMILIES IN THE PROCESS OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

The stimulation of moral development and, in parallel order, the construction of an ethos or dialogical and democratic nature in tune with a post-conventional personality, supposes and demands a broad integrating vision of moral growth in the terms stated above. Addressing this phenomenon in any comprehensive way almost of itself solicits reconsideration of the role of the family in this whole process.

Following Durkheim (1925/1973), Kohlberg seems to exclude the family or at least relegate it to a secondary level as an agent of moral education. He understands that authentic socialization and authentic moral learning take place outside, on another plane, almost outside the private space that is the family, which space of freedom in which the subject neither assimilates nor fully participates in the relations of reciprocity and adjustment to norms. In fact, in his work devoted expressly to moral education, no allusion is made to the role of the family and its importance in this aspect. If anything, the very brief references seem instead to reinforce the opposition between school and family rather than to insist on the necessary complementarity between the two institutions for the child's moral growth. Thus, Power, Higgins & Kohlberg (1991) understand that coming from a home, where he/she is accustomed to being the center of attention of adults who are personally dedicated to his/her care and well-being, the child must learn a lot to adapt to school life, which is necessarily very different from home life.

The question is, why did Kohlberg not consider family an agent in moral education and, as Speicher (1992) points out, underestimate family relationships as a factor in moral development. To explain this, one must first understand the inheritance Kohlberg received from Piaget. In this regard, Piaget (1932) held that a greater degree of moral development is achieved in conversations with classmates at school than in the heart of the family. According to Piaget (1932), discussions among classmates are more symmetrical in competence and influence and less directive than in

parent-child relationships. In that respect, some studies still confirm Piaget's thesis that symmetric relations among peers facilitate greater growth in moral reasoning (Kruger, 1992).

Kohlberg (1969) accepted Piaget's thesis, especially since he found no evidence that parents had a decisive influence on the moral reasoning of their children, so he did not find family participation necessary to moral development. Kohlberg's argument is that no direct relationship can be found between a specific parental figure in the educational action and moral development. Nor is there any reason to believe that the type of affection received from the family is somehow necessary for greater moral development. Furthermore, Kohlberg thought that, during early childhood, children have a heteronomous morality, and the step to autonomous morality should be achieved without parental guidance. Nevertheless, this does not mean the role of the family is completely annulled, since he did accept that it was one of the many valid social institutions for promoting moral development.

Power, Higgins, and Kohlberg (1989) note that Kohlberg's theory evolved from a classroom discussion on hypothetical moral dilemmas to solving real moral and political problems through student self-governance and building communities. This evolution in Kohlberg's theories can also be seen in an aspect of moral education. Kohlberg's theory initially claimed that the teacher was not a socializer or facilitator of moral behavior since that would require teaching moral contents and orienting moral education to guide action. However, Kohlberg (1978) changed his initial stance, which stripped the family of its role in moral education. The reason behind this change in theory is that, to prevent negative conducts such as robbery and assault, an orientation in action is required. Kohlberg accepts this shift because it clarifies that orientation of behavior does necessarily mean indoctrination. Rather, he believes it is not indoctrination if the child's rights are respected and the child's free, democratic participation is not violated.

Kohlberg's philosophy also undergoes an evolution regarding the relationship between moral reasoning and human action. At first, Kohlberg stated that human action followed moral reasoning automatically, which justified the convenience of moral education focusing exclusively on the development of moral reasoning. However, he himself saw how young people with high moral reasoning performed negative actions such as stealing or fighting. This prompted his later writings to assert that the relationship between moral reasoning and action was not as simple as he had assumed in his earlier writings (Sanderse, 2012). Therefore, in what

can be called his "second-phase" philosophy or reconstruction of his theory (Gozálvez, 2000), Kohlberg (1983) stated that moral education should directly concern action and not just reasoning. This means an opening to giving the family a more decisive role in moral education, although it is true, nevertheless, that Kohlberg never roundly advocated giving the family the leading role.

The first studies that acknowledged an influence between the parents' moral reasoning and that of their children appeared in the 1970s. A study done by Haan, Langer, and Kohlberg (1976) confirms that measures of moral reasoning in very young children show a significant relation with their parents' scores, but also that the effects do not last. In another study, Parikh (1980) checked the influence of three factors on the development of moral reasoning in children: the parents' level of moral reasoning, the type of family relationships, and how much the parents used induction as a technique for bringing up their children. Speicher (1992) also noticed a significant correlation between the moral reasoning of teenagers and the variables that measure the quality of family relationships, concluding that the latter had more influence on the development of moral reasoning than did decision-making or obeying the rules in the family. Speicher (1992) concluded that family relationships are more important in early teen years, whereas more cognitive dimensions and dimensions involving gaining perspective in the family moral environment can have greater influence in late adolescence and early adulthood. Similarly, Berkowitz (1992) recognized family influence on the development of moral reasoning, especially when the parents have a high level of development of moral reasoning and they explain to their children how to act morally, engaging in family discussions on moral topics.

As Peters (1984) points out, another reason why Kohlberg dismissed the role of family in moral education is that his theory fails to value the emotional aspects of moral actions. This undervaluing of emotion also shows why Kohlberg forgot the family's specific task of affective education. Schools traditionally focus on a more technical education, more attentive to the development of intellect-based knowledge and skills. In contrast, socio-affective education based on developing self-assuredness, respect for others, following the rules, and acquiring skills that can be applied efficiently to work has been considered a task best left to parents (Gervilla, 2008).

Nowadays, a more relevant role of the family is accepted in moral education because of the evolution of character education since family is

where virtues are learned (Arthur, 2020). A child's first moral values are learned in the family through vocabulary, by learning how to interpret facts and events, and learning how to answer questions about right and wrong (Gervilla, 2003). Today, moral education underscores the role of parental guidance since the answers to the meaning of the whys of a moral nature are never neutral. Apropos here is Donati (2014), whose thesis regarding the role of the family in the children's moral education asserts that the family is not a projection of the individuals nor a reality that exists beyond its members. Rather, it is a supra-functional social relationship that differs from other types of relationships, even primary ones such as friendship, because in the family each person is more than the social function he or she carries out. This implies the need to understand the true role of the family as a moral actor, since parents are more concerned about the moral development of their children than are their classmates, teachers, or any other agents of socialization (Walker and Taylor, 1991).

Berkowitz (1992) provides another important aspect by proposing that parents should be taught to talk more openly to the children about moral topics. Parents can stimulate moral reasoning by engaging in interactive communication with their children and facilitating egalitarian family discussions on moral subjects. In that regard, Berkowitz and Gibbs (1983) have shown that transactional discussions, i.e., ones in which each participant paraphrases or analyzes and broadens the reasoning of a partner in the debate, are the ones that most benefit the development of moral reasoning. Similarly, Walker, Henning, and Krettenaur (2000) advocate parents' influence on the moral development of their children, especially since moral reasoning improves by discussing real cases rather than hypothetical moral dilemmas.

Equally important is the matter of how the family environment influences the development of moral reasoning in children. In that regard, Powers (1988) wondered what kind of family environment contributed most to the development of moral reasoning. Powers concluded that it was impossible to generalize about this aspect of education, since for example one specific type of environment may help a teen who is at that stage of passage on the conventional level but may not be of much help to a younger child. Furthermore, it must be made clear that an analysis of how family context affects moral reasoning cannot be performed with the same assessment used to analyze social interactions at school because family relationships are different in that they are permanent and affective.

Consequently, additional factors need to be considered when evaluating how family environment can stimulate moral growth (Powers, 1988).

How can parents stimulate the development of moral reasoning? Although Kohlberg does not answer this question explicitly, his theory does lay the foundations for subsequent approaches. Speicher (1992) underscores that a suitable analysis of family influence on moral development requires examining different variables, especially the level of moral development in both the child and the parents. With respect to the parents, Powers (1988) asserted that it is important to know what their level of moral development is because those with advanced levels of moral reasoning might be better able to clear up their children's confusions and contradictions. Moreover, this greater level of moral reasoning in the parents also implies greater ability to accept the role of other people, and thus, parents may better perceive the child's point of view and provide help accordingly.

Along this line, Berkowitz (1992) stated that highly developed moral reasoning in the parents, the use of inductive strategies, dialogue and experience, and the fact of supporting their children, all of them are elements that help children improve their moral reasoning, even though it may be impossible to ascertain which variable is the most influential one. In this way, some studies confirm that parents at higher levels of moral reasoning usually use more inductive strategies. The use of inductive strategies to teach entails not being authoritarian, but instead, using active listening to consider the child's own interests and needs. In short, the development of moral reasoning in the family environment lies on giving the children reasons about what adult behavior is (Berkowitz, 1992). This requires the complement of reviewing the type of authority and discipline used by the parents as well as the specific type of paternal stimulation of their children's moral reasoning (Speicher, 1987).

However, the project of an updated just community, which in fact is already being applied partially in many pedagogical initiatives today (learning communities, commissions of harmony, protocols for school mediation, violence prevention plans, etc.) requires the inclusion and participation of families in school lifeinsofar as the family is a space for learning values and norms with future projection in the public sphere (García, Pérez and Escámez, 2009). From that elementary notion of the child adapting to the moral world, it is indispensable, educationally speaking, to have complicity, not opposition, between the values and moral orientations of the family and those of the school. Berkowitz (1992)

points out that those parent-child conversations about moral issues affect the moral development of their children.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Kohlberg divides moral development into three levels. To reach the last level, post-conventionality, one must live in a just community. However, we have wondered to what extent the just community helps each student achieve moral post-conventionality (even if it is rooted in the community), since if the effectiveness of the democratic approach in schools is not really proven, this could be the main criticism that can be made against Kohlberg's proposal. Is it worth the effort to apply a democratic approach in schools for students to learn to be responsible and more just? It has already been pointed out how Kohlberg affirms the need for a just community. The program of just communities seems only suitable to small educational institutions that, in addition, have a high motivation to carry out the democratic approach (Mesa, 2003).

Kohlberg argues that the higher the level of moral reasoning, the more *likely* it is for people to act more consistently with that judgment because of how they see the relationship between moral judgment and moral action. He does not state that there is a determination of action. Blasi (1980), who pointed out that there is a meaningful relationship between moral judgment and moral action at the most advanced stages of moral development, answered this question. Kohlberg and Candee (1984) speak of a consistency between moral judgment and moral action that increases when the level of moral reasoning increases. This is because people in post-conventional stages are guided by more stable, more objective, and more balanced principles (García Alandate, 2008). The consistency between moral judgment and action depends above all on each subject's specific setting, according to Reimer, Paolitto & Hersh (1990).

Rest (1979) points out that Kohlberg identifies the relationship between action and conduct from the development of the moral judgment of justice, but there are other factors that also influence human action. Moral reasoning is not the only factor influencing human behavior, but it is the most important as it is the best way to measure moral rationality (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987), although we must include the practical, contextual, and sentimental dimension of morality (Gozálvez, 2000) and attend to the psychodynamic aspects of the action (Habermas, 1985).

Despite objections, a critical analysis shows that Kohlberg's proposal has positive aspects, as Kohlberg's legacy is broad. Accordingly, the process he proposes is positive and correct because it is based on dialogue and the use of moral dilemmas to help develop moral competence, understood as the ability to reason according to the moral reasoning of judgment. This model of moral development with a democratic approach in schools would probably be welcome today with more enthusiasm because today's society is more prepared to institute a just community (Linde, 2009). Indeed, this is something that happens whenever mediation programs are implemented in schools, or when plans for harmony are developed based on dialogical participation, or even when the school becomes a learning community, for which the commitment of every stakeholder in a dialogue relationship is key to success in every sense, both purely academic and moral (appropriate treatment of heterogeneity, intercultural coexistence, equality by drastically reducing school drop-out, etc.) (Díez-Palomar and Flecha-García, 2010).

McDonough (2005) says that "further research is required to determine whether the change in moral reasoning resulting from the just community programme leads to any reduction of outside recidivism or antisocial behaviour after leaving the programme" (p. 48). Consequently, in our view, the just communities' approach can be updated by redefining moral development from a broader perspective. This would reinforce a communitarian-based post-conventionality that recognizes the moral value of extra-logical elements (affections, attitudes, and conducts), thereby achieving a moral development that overcomes the contradiction between habit (virtue, character trait) and reason. In addition, certainly, it would include the family as the driving force behind moral education, attending to the close interpersonal relations, as Habermas himself (1985) hinted at in relation with the development of moral personality. The schools have now opened to new forms of education based on participation, dialogue, and commitment for the good of the community, without relinquishing the personal dignity and individual rights that underpin a universal morality at the height of the twenty-first century.

Several reasons have been given to clarify why Kohlberg did not include the role of the family in moral education. The main reason is that Kohlberg never conceived it would be necessary to provide guidance in moral education, since that would be tantamount to indoctrination. Moreover, he had found no evidence of the real influence of family environment on the development of moral reasoning, nor did he find any correlation between

the parents' degree of moral reasoning and that of their children. From the outset, Kohlberg maintains that conversations among peers are what improve moral reasoning, and these conversations occur at school rather than at home with the family. Nevertheless, authors such as Berkowitz have advocated the relevance of family as an agent in moral education and, drawing on several studies, note that there is in fact a relationship between the moral reasoning of parents and that of their children. Furthermore, these authors also highlight the fact that there are teaching strategies, such as inductive ones, that can foster moral reasoning in children.

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