INTEGRATING PERSPECTIVES ON THE MANAGEMENT OF JUSTICE IN ORGANIZATIONS

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2 ABSTRACT

The main objective of this paper is to provide an overview of how Justice applies to organizational settings. Different concepts of justice are studied and different stages of theory development are shown.

Next, a research agenda of the field is provided by focusing on the current controversies and caveats, to provide an integration of theories coming from many different fields. Finally, I put forward a proposal of how to apply a more integrated theory of justice for use in organizational settings.
3 INTRODUCTION

Justice in business organizations has been studied under the label of ‘Organizational Justice’ by using mainly sociological and psychological approaches. In law studies, justice is obviously a substantive part of the purpose of the field. The application of laws has the main objective of finding ‘a just solution for litigation processes’.

There are two main approaches to justice. A first approach is using philosophical theories in which the main concern is arguing what is justice based on what justice must be, thus, the underlying logic is that one must look to those actions that are truly just (Rawls, 1971, Aristotle, 1985, Sandel, 1982, Sen, 1992, Pieper, 1972, Rawls, 2003). This view is considering justice as something objective and prescriptive. A second approach is looking at justice from the individual point of view. In this regard the main objective is to understand what people believe to be just. This second approach is subjective and descriptive. In here it is placed mainly all literature concerning the concept of organizational justice applied. Of course integrating in different ways those two approaches have been the basis for theories in organizational justice (Adams, 1963, Kohlberg, 1984, Thibaut and Walker, 1975, Adams, 1965).

In organizational settings, the psychological approach has been the most often used. Most of the studies were focused in the concept of perceptions of fairness from the individual point of view. In fact in organizational studies the concepts of fairness and justice were used interchangeably to express the same ‘perception of justice’.

The paper proceeds as follows. First I explain which theories of justice are actually applied separating them into both approaches, philosophical (objective/prescriptive) or psychological (subjective/descriptive). In this second part I
provide an overview of the Organizational Justice field (OJ). Of course fundamental theories in Organizational Justice have built upon concepts coming from philosophy, but we are including them in the psychological approach as the focus is on perceptions. This OJ field has been one of the most prolific fields in organizational studies. It has generated knowledge, interest and interdisciplinary approaches, and posing the future challenges the actual managerial field has. Second I analyze why justice is of great importance concerning the development of a science of management. Finally a possible way of developing the field is shown and justified as well as possible answers of why this development is important as useful for the science of management, including ways of integrating both approaches.

4 JUSTICE THEORIES

Justice has been seen as a crucial concept for many politicians aiming at creating a just society for all members. In this vein, all initial theories were founded to explain how a thing truly just must look like, and which norms of justice must govern to achieve this truly just state. First scholars in management to incorporate Justice as a separate field of study were coming from the Organizational Behavior field. They built on studies in law settings and in social psychology findings.

When developing theories of Justice, Management researchers have tried to explain a theory of justice Perceptions. Justice Norms and Concepts are in people’s minds used precisely as a benchmark of comparison to help them to build a fair/unfair perception (Colquitt et al., 2005a). Justice Perceptions theories were heavily drawn upon concepts of justice coming from philosophy, to explain how people assess an event to be just or not. Afterwards descriptive concerns were included as the main ones to see how people really use those theories or not, and to and how they compare
perceptions of situations with their mental benchmark of what must be justice and finally decide that injustice was there for them.

Specifically, I am going to define justice following these two main traditions: the classics more concerned with general approaches to Objective and Prescriptive Justice and the Organizational Justice Scholars more concerned with Perceptions of Justice, so Justice as Subjective and Descriptive.

4.1 The philosophical tradition of Justice

Following Aristotle in his fifth book of Nicomachean Ethics, he distinguished between justice and equity, and also between their opposites: injustice and inequity. In the case of justice, there is a sense of objectiveness; following the law. Law in this case is supposed to be enacted for the goodness of people. Equity differs a little bit, as adapts legal justice to specific particular situations. Aristotle described justice also as virtue that imposes a concern ‘to give every individual what is his by right and to use power justly’.

Most of researchers have followed Aristotle view, and recent scholars have considered that Aristotle’s framework includes at least two sorts of human relationship to be subject to the requirements of justice: the exchange of goods and the distribution of responsibilities (Spaemann, 1989). Finnis (1980) offered another interpretation of Aristotle by saying that Justice is considered to be the best way to achieve the flourishing of human beings in any type of activity they might be involved. This recognizes that Justice is the necessary link to recognize others’ rights and respect them. This respect goes beyond following only the written law, but recognizing a natural law that informs some rights that go beyond human will.
Classic Theories of Justice have considered the process leading to distribution cannot be separated conceptually when considering something to be just (Spaemann, 1989, Hervada, 2007). Rules applying to outcomes and process need to act jointly to account for just distribution.

Other scholars have distinguished justice types depending on different types of relationships. In this vein, Pieper (1972) found three possible types of relationships in society, and hence three types of justice: 1) Commutative Justice refers to the justice between the parties of a relationship, recognizing what one owes to another party, and giving exactly what is owed, 2) Distributive Justice refers to what the community owes to the participant, 3) General Justice or legal justice refers to what the individual owes to the community, contributing to the common good.

Integrating classics the following common elements can be found: 1) What is debited, 2) The relationship, 3) Just Process, 4) Repairing injustice, and 5) The strength of the will to act following just criteria.

A more recent and very influential approach to justice has been that of Rawls. With Rawls’ major work, *A Theory of Justice* (Rawls, 1971), the resurgence of Justice among philosophers was reactivated. Rawls built on the theory of social contracts, associated with Locke, Rousseau and Kant. Equality and duty placed a significant role in Rawls’ theory, specifically the duty to help those with special needs.

Rawls’ concern was Social Justice. He defined Social Justice as the “standard whereby the distributive aspects of the basic structure of society are to be assessed” (Rawls, 1971, page 9). The rationale behind is that there is a kind of human agreement that assigns the principles of basic rights and duties. Originally there is an equality position and everyone chooses the principles of justice behind the veil of ignorance, which then puts aside social status and individual psychological propensities. In this
vein, Rawls presupposed that since personal differences are unknown and everyone is rational and similar positioned this “veil of ignorance makes possible a unanimous choice of a particular conception of justice” (Rawls, 1971, page 140).

According to Rawls there are two principles of justice: “1) Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty of other, and 2) Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: a) Reasonably expected to be to everyone’s advantage and, b) Attatched to positions and offices open to all”

These principles were changed slightly in the next revised version of John Rawls’ Theory of Justice, in more recent book Fairness as Justice (Rawls, 2003): “1) Each person has the same indefeasible claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme of liberties for all; and 2) Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: a) They are to be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity and, b) They are to be the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society (the difference principle)”.

The first principle is emphasizing equality: equality of rights, liberties and opportunities. The second principle is labeled “difference principle”, and stresses the importance of the need criterion. Strengths of Rawls theory are twofold: 1) attention to impartiality and 2) the attention to the need criterion.

4.2 Justice in classic Management text books

Following also prescriptive approaches, some pioneers in management have included Justice in their formulations. In Fayol’s seminal book General and Industrial Management (Fayol, 1949, page 13), we found references to Justice, when talking about the managerial elements such as “authority and responsibility”. Fayol said that “the
need for sanction has its origin in a sense of justice” (Fayol, 1949, page 21), and continues by saying that “judgment demands high moral character, impartiality and firmness”. When explaining the principle of management, labeled “discipline”, Fayol emphasizes agreements to be “as clear and fair as possible”, and sanctions (penalties) “judiciously applied” (Fayol, 1949, pages 23-24). Fayol also considered another principle of management, “equity”. Fayol wondered himself, why he has considered equity instead of justice. The response he proposed seems to go along in the same lines as the one Aristotle provided. He expressed that equity is better, because it is a combination of kindness and justice.

We have also found references to justice when talking about conflict resolution. It was Mary Parker Follet who said that in general to solve conflicts it is necessary to involve individuals in the problem (Parker Follett, 1997). This involvement is clear a concept of justice, in which people is affected by decisions and processes leading to outcomes.

Looking at concepts of participation and information sharing, that are crucial to understand both, procedural and informational justice, also Mayo, with his Hawthorne experiments and Drucker, in his seminal book *The practice of management*, have been pioneers. Mayo was concerned on how participation affects people, and Drucker stressed the point that information sharing is crucial in management practices. Even if the term of procedural justice and informational justice were coined respectively by Thibaut and Walker (1975) and Bies (1987), they have been practiced far ago.

### 4.3 The psychological tradition of Justice: Organizational Justice

Organizational Justice Theories have a socio psychological approach that is they situate themselves in the individual and how establishes relationships in a social context. For this, theories in organizational justice have focused on answering basic
questions about 1) what justice is, 2) why people care about justice, and 3) how people make fairness judgments (Fortin, 2008).

### 4.3.1 What is Organizational Justice?

The term Organizational Justice was first used by French (1964) to refer in general to fairness issues in Managing people. It was Greenberg who first use the term referring to people’s perceptions. This concept is based on people’s perceptions. Hence, by definition, something is “just” when people perceive it to be so (Greenberg, 1987).

The contribution that Organizational Justice does is how people related themselves to a variety and complex number of employment relationships (Fortin, 2008). Many dimensions of justice were introduced in the field accounting for different possible aspects people could perceive related to justice: outcomes, procedures, personal treatment and information (Colquitt et al., 2005b).

#### Distributive Justice

In the beginning, Organizational Justice studies were focused on the distribution of outcomes. According to Distributive Justice Research, an outcome is perceived to be fair if it is consistent with the norm that the person chooses in that type of relationship.

The first conceptualization of distributive justice was done by Homans (1961), with his notion of relative deprivation. Homans explained justice in terms of social exchange. Over time Homans noted that people develop exchange relationships that create normative expectations for future exchanges. Later on it was Blau (1964) who noted than satisfaction with exchange relationships depend in large degree on the benefits received related to the expectations the parts have. Finally it was Adams who set up his equity theory, based on Aristotle logic of merit (Adams, 1963, Adams, 1965). According to Adams, each person has her own ratio of fair perception by putting in
place the own contribution and the own outcome received and compare this ratio with
the same ratio of the others. If a person has a greater ratio than the others feels guilty
and if receives a lower ratio feels angry. Those inequitable states were an insight fight
that people resolve by changing the inputs or outcomes, distorting cognitively those
inputs or outcomes, leaving the relationship, by altering cognitively other’s outcomes or
inputs or finally by changing what they compare (Adams, 1965). There are other criteria
to distribute that are following need or equality. Each relationship deserves a different
rule of decision (Lerner, 1974).

To distribute outcomes the most widely used criteria were equality, merit or
equity and need. The first one, equality has been considered tightly linked to justice
since the beginning of political science, and the first principle of Rawls’ theories of
justice and fairness (Rawls, 1971, Rawls, 2003). To establish social justice, a sense of
equality of something, rights or conditions has been posed as the main ethicality to
justify a system (Dahl, 1989), even if later one, and necessarily other inequalities appear
for other resources (Sen, 1992). Other ways of seeing equality are “proportional equality
between merit and reward” (Aristotle, 1985) and absolute equality (Scott et al., 2001).

The second norm, equity, started with the Aristotle’s proportional equality. This
can be linked to motivate people and to efficiency (Scott et al., 2001). The idea behind
is that there is a psychological link between deserving and motivation: if people do not
receive more if they think they actually “deserve” more they are not motivated to put
efforts in improving.

The third norm is need. It is symmetric of equity and justifies departing from
equality but for a different reason. In general need criterion is invoked to limit
inequalities. This criterion has been included in Rawls’ Justice as Fairness (Rawls,
2003) as the difference principle. It is very closed to equality, as equal need deserves
equal outcome (Scott et al., 2001, Sen, 1992). We can also divide need into the relative and the absolute need. The relative need is a criterion that equal need deserves equal outcome, and the absolute criterion is more closed to a minimum level of social goods necessary as a minimum standard of living.

**Procedural Justice**

After studying how outcomes are perceived to be fair or not, some scholars started to realize that the process leading to the outcomes can affect the distributive judgment. This type of justice emerged in law settings, in which litigants were monitored with two types of control: control over the final decision (outcome) and control over the process (Thibaut and Walker, 1975, Thibaut and Walker, 1978). They found that even if processes lead to unfair outcomes, if control over the process is guaranteed litigants have higher perceptions of overall justice. This type of justice perceptions was labeled ‘procedural justice’, defined as the “perceived fairness of the policies and procedures used to make decisions” (Lind and Tyler, 1988).

Procedural justice criteria was studied firstly by Leventhal and colleagues (1980) and were, 1) consistency (across persons and over time), 2) bias Supression, 3) accuracy (information truthful and correct), 4) correctability (of wrong decisions), 5) ethicality, and 6) representation (take into account opinions of all groups affected). Then, Colquitt et al. (2001), included in the Leventhal and colleagues criteria those established by Thibaut and Walker such of voice and decision control, as substitutes of representation.

Empirical studies were focused on seeing how giving voice (or inputs) in the performance evaluation processes lead to an increasing of the perceived fairness of the evaluation process and performance appraisals (Greenberg, 1986).
**Interactional Justice**

Bies and colleagues started studying the content of procedures (Bies and Moag, 1986, Bies and Shapiro, 1987). The content was more related to the decision-maker using the procedures, and it was labeled as ‘interactional justice’. First research suggests concern in four main themes: 1) truthfulness, 2) justifications, 3) respect and 4) avoiding prejudices (Bies, 1987). Those elements have been studied in organizational contexts, and also in law settings (Tyler, 1988). It was Greenberg who first proposed to split this interactional justice into two new forms of justice: ‘interpersonal’, concerned with quality of treatment, and ‘informational’, concerned with information delivered (Greenberg, 1993). A meta-analytical review studied which type of accounts were more appropriated after some unfavorable outcome was perceived to exist (Shaw et al., 2003).

### 4.3.2 What (or who) is being judged?

A way of moving on from previous model of components of justice has been found to be the multifoci approach to justice. Justice or injustice can come from different sources. In fact it has been seen that workers could distinguish between those who treat them fairly and those who do not. Following this source approach many researchers started to incorporate what they called source effects: relating sources of (in)justice to organizational or personal effects (Cropanzano et al., 2001). Two main sources could be organization and supervisor, but they could be many others. Even if all three components of justice (distributive, procedural and interactional) could arise from every source it has been shown that usually procedural justice judgments come from the organization as a whole and interactional justice judgments come from the behavior of supervisors, even if some scholars think that any source of injustice could lead to any injustice type (Masterson et al., 2000).
4.3.3 Why do people care about justice?

Organizational Justice Researchers have early cared on explanations regarding motives behind justice. Many motives have been studied, instrumental, relational, moral, and some theories have tried to integrate those previous motives into a single model, because they argue all of them appear at the same time (Cropanzano et al., 2001).

Instrumental Model

Instrumental motivation is the ground of a self-interest or instrumental model. This view address control over the process that lead to higher perceptions of justice, because people looks for long term favorability (Tyler, 1987). We have also found in Thibaut and Walker, that controlling procedures can serve to maximize the favorability of outcomes, this favorability is a synonym of perceived fairness (Thibaut and Walker, 1975).

The Group-Value Model or Relational Model

Opposing the former self-interest model was the group-value model. According to his model, individuals care about justice because they desire to belong as full members into a valued group. An extension of this model was the Group Engagement Model. In this model it was argued that identity judgments have a primary role in shaping engagement, through the mediation of identity variables, and resource judgments also affect engagement indirectly trough identity judgments (Tyler and Blader, 2003, Tyler, 1989).

The Moral Virtues Model

Some scholars started to claim that virtues are valuable for themselves, and argue that people value justice for moral motivations (Folger, 1998). In this approach people are interested in finding a meaning for their lives. People care about justice even
when doing so offers no apparent personal benefit and involves strangers (Folger, 1998).

In other stream of research, transcendental motivations are studied as the ones governing behavior (Pérez López, 1993). Managers encompass a learning of virtues following transcendental motives. This learning can increase or decrease virtues depending in how those transcendental motives appear or not.

**A Multiple Needs Model of Justice**

We can fully summarize that fairness is germane to long-term economic benefits (instrumental model), achieving status and esteem from others (the relational model) and living a virtuous life (moral virtues model) (Cropanzano et al., 2001).

Those motives can also be seen as linked to needs. Williams (1997) argued that humans have four basic needs: the need of control, the need of belonging, the need of self-esteem and the need of meaningful existence. All four are interrelated, and are necessary to coexist. Needs and motives can be nicely linked. Need for control is usually linked to instrumental model, need for belonging and self-esteem are linked to the relational models, and need for a meaningful life to the moral virtues model. Also, control need can be seen as some type of internal control necessary for a meaningful life, so liked to moral models (Lerner, 1977).

### 4.3.4 How were justice judgments formed?

Justice can be viewed as a class of motivated behavior (Cropanzano et al., 2001). Justice perceptions are created following specific ways, and also following motivation theories, in this case focused on the process, as process theories provide cognitive steps that are necessary to guide motivated behavior (Campbell and Pritchard, 1976).
Equity theory

Equity theory started with Adams (1965, 1963), and was mainly concerned with perceptions of distribution of outcomes. The process started examining the ratio of their inputs (efforts, time, and other cognitive resources) relevant to their outcome (pay, opportunities, promotions) and then compared it to a referent other. In this regard, outcomes of others relative to inputs of others are important evidence when individuals form justice judgments (Kulik and Ambrose, 1992). This theory was mainly focusing on material benefits or outputs (Folger and Cropanzano, 1998), and it has not considered how procedures affect fairness evaluations.

Referent Cognitions Theory

Folger (1986) accounted for drawbacks found in the former equity theory. Folger said the referent to be any possible awareness of different alternative courses of action that could have been seen as potentially more beneficial for the one who is judging, and not simply a ratio. Following this, an unfair judgment is created when people believe that a more favorable outcome would have resulted from an alternative procedure that it should have been used. Following this argument, individuals aware of possible alternative procedures leading to better outcomes (high referent), are more likely to perceive injustice than others who are not aware of them.

Fairness theory

Fairness Theory comes as an evolution of the previous Referent Cognitions Theory. Fairness Theory is based on presupposing people assign blame after an unjust situation happening if unfavorable condition has occurred, by analyzing three counterfactuals, 1) Would it be better otherwise? 2) Could she have acted in a different manner? , and, 3) Should she have acted in a different way? (Folger and Cropanzano, 1998) and (Folger and Cropanzano, 2001). Here the latest part of this reasoning is called
moral or deontic reasoning. This type of reasoning explains how people make fairness judgments using moral standards as a benchmark of comparison (Folger et al., 2005).

**Fairness Heuristic Theory**

Lind and colleagues (1993, 2001) suggested that overall fairness judgments depend more on evaluating the processes rather than evaluating outcome. Lind and colleagues suggested (1993, 2001) that people usually are exposed to a main social dilemma of being potentially exploited by others who hold authority, while trying to secure one’s social identity and one’s goals. To solve this dilemma people make judgments about how trustworthy and impartial the authority is. People use cognitive shortcuts to evaluate the fairness of this authority.

**Uncertainty Management Model**

Evolving from Fairness Heuristics model, in Uncertainty Management model other types of uncertainties apart from trust were included. This model helps to describe how information related to fairness can remove a certain amount of uncertainty, also in cases where uncertainty is not created through unfairness (Lind and Van den Bos, 2002).

5 MANAGEMENT OF JUSTICE IN ORGANIZATIONS

Justice is the glue that allows organizations to survive in the long run, as allows people to work together effectively (Cropanzano et al., 2007). Studies applying justice in organizations have followed mainly a psychological tradition, in which organizational and personal variables such as structures, procedures and personal treatment have been found to be the possible causes of perceived injustice, and those perceptions have been studied to lead to many effects, such as increasing litigation, stress, counterproductive behavior in many forms, and so on. What this research has
suggested to manage are the perceptions of injustice. Those perceptions of injustice were not managed directly but acknowledging ways of creating justice perceptions.

Regarding benefits directed to the organization, perceptions of injustice have been found to lead to many effects, and some scholars have concluded that Justice builds trust (Colquitt et al., 2001) and commitment (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001, Folger and Konovsky, 1989). Justice perceptions can improve job performance (Colquitt et al., 2001), seen as the effectiveness with which workers display job duties, and decrease the levels of absenteeism (Lam et al., 2002). There is also a clear link between justice and quality of relationships between supervisors and subordinates, and those stronger relationships were motivators to higher job performance (Cropanzano et al., 2002, Rupp and Cropanzano, 2002). Justice researchers have also found links between justice and employee organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs). Those OCBs are employee behaviors that go beyond the simple duty. Findings suggest that employees that have been treated justly tend to show those types of behaviors, for instance behaving altruistically towards other people (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001, Fassina et al., 2008). Justice have also been linked to customer satisfaction and loyalty, in fact those two types of behaviors are really consequences of creating OCBs, and translating those OCBs to customers (Bowen, 1999, Simons and Roberson, 2003).

There are other benefits regarding employees, even if it is unclear if managers take them into account when designing policies to promote justice (Greenberg, 2009). In general, early literature suggests that when authorities behave fairly, people are more prompt to see it as a signal that organization values them (Lind and Tyler, 1988). Other variables addressed suggest that employee satisfaction in a first step can lead to organizational indirectly benefiting from it, one example of this is founding employee pay satisfaction following perceptions of justice (Folger and Konovsky, 1989). And it is
argued that when implementing policies around benefiting employees, employers need to explicitly state the intentions they pursue, to lead to real benefits coming out of those improvements (Greenberg, 1990). Some important contributions have shown that promoting organizational justice lowered feelings of discrimination (Cropanzano et al., 2005) and reduced stress levels (Judge and Colquitt, 2004).

The findings above represent strong instrumental or utilitarian reasons for improving fairness perceptions in organizations. But beyond this, justice can be promoted and thoroughly managed for moral motivations. Many researchers, and in general those concerned with ‘what justice truly is’, through ‘what justice must be’, are motivated to embrace justice as a moral virtue or a moral characteristic that formal policies must embody. Folger (1998) argued that people like to promote justice because they find it virtuous to do so. Instrumental and moral motivations from promoters of justice are coexistent and sometimes difficult to separate. They are interlinked in a way that both cooperate to motivate implementing justice perceptions, and they are difficult to disentangle when serving those justice policies (Gillespie and Greenberg, 2005).

Justice can be managed in two ways: 1) creating perceptions of justice, and 2) repairing the injustices created. So far, the most prolific work has been done in the first category that is trying to manage perceptions of justice. This work includes studies of selection procedures, reward systems, conflict management, layoffs, and performance appraisals (see Cropanzano et al. (2007). This attention needs to be enhanced, as studies that talk about policies to increase fairness perceptions are only few, and the majority of them have only a final section of managerial implications of findings (Greenberg, 2009). For a recent revision of how justice research has addressed managerial issues and how to include different types of methods to find better ways of implementing improvements on justice perceptions see Greenberg (2009).
The second group is now emerging as a subfield of Organizational Justice, in organizational settings, even though it has been the main objective of any legal system so far: restituting, compensating and remedying injustices (Zehr, 1998). Inside the organizational justice scholars there have been starting claims that favor a deeper understanding and application of interventions to repair fairness violations, so centering research from a victim’s point of view (Barclay et al., 2009), and research about this has just started, so our focus in the future needs to be surely also on this type of research. We quote Barclay et al. (2009) when saying, “the time has come for organizational justice researchers to develop and test interventions that are focused on helping employees and organizations recover from fairness violations” (Barclay et al., 2009, page 201).

6 INTEGRATION OF DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON JUSTICE

Some organizational justice researchers have been starting to worry about the impact of their theories on managerial practice. The different streams of literature presented above could lead to an integrative individual model of Organizational Justice, which could better explain organizational settings and be more applicable in practice. This integration could also include the repairing injustice issue, as justice state needs a necessary reparation process to be implemented to guarantee long lasting effects.

To begin with, there is scope for more integration within the empirical domain of justice, and specifically inside Organizational Justice. Some researchers have argued that justice could only be examined through Local Justice Theories, because contexts and reasons behind the resources being distributed are so many that no single theory could embrace all possible explanations (Walzer, 1983); others argue that conceptions of justice held by the ones in position of deciding over the criteria to allocate scarce
resources are too many (Elster, 1992). But they are not considering that integration can be conceptually done because even if there are cultural differences, those can also be addressed using cross cultural samples, and some studies have shown similarities between cultures and inside cultures that make integration attempts possible (Skarlicki, 2001). And regarding criteria over deciding, some studies are addressing that even norms’ choice are individual and context dependent, commonalities exist, because the most often used norms are not too many as Elster has alleged.

To address a possible integration in the empirical domain, we are going to put an example regarding conceptual integration between trustworthiness and fairness. Some existent and well-known definitions of trustworthiness include aspects of fairness. Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) identified three dimensions of trustworthiness: 1) ability, as the competence and characteristics that enable to function reliably and effectively to meet goals and responsibilities, 2) benevolence, as the action indicating genuine care and concern for the well-being if stakeholders, and 3) integrity, as the action which consistently adheres to moral principles and a code of conduct acceptable, such are honesty and fairness.

But beyond integrating only empirical findings from different areas of social science research, the integration of prescriptive and descriptive inquiries is more challenging. A theoretical approach of how such integration could be achieved is presented inside the field of business ethics: Weaver and Treviño (1994) explained that there are three possible degrees of integration: ‘parallel’, in which integration is not possible, ‘symbiotic’, in which integration is instrumental, and finally ‘integrative’, in which there is a need of deeper merging “prima facie distinct forms of inquiry, involving alterations or combinations of theory, metatheoretical assumptions and methodology” (Weaver and Treviño, 1994).
For the ‘integrative’, Weaver and Treviño (1994), have come with three possible ways this integration may occur: 1) conceptual importation, in which some field invokes basic concepts of another for feeding the framework of its theorizing; 2) theoretical reciprocity, where an explanatory framework incorporates both empirical and normative issues; and 3) theoretical unity, where the distinction between the normative and empirical is rejected as methodologically and metatheoretically unstable (see Weaver and Treviño, 1994). One example of conceptual importation can be found in Adam’s equity theory. He draws on prescriptive arguments following Aristotle’s work in Nicomachean Ethics, in the empirical arena of relative deprivation theory.

Another example of integration can be found between prescriptive economic theories and organizational justice. Husted and Folger (2004) tried to integrate organizational justice and Transaction Costs Economics. Following the frame of Ouchi (1980), they say that perceptions of unfairness create transaction costs, and that governance designs need to take into account the relationship between formal structures and informal norms like justice perceptions. They argue that Ouchi’s theory is very close to Adams’ equity theory, in the sense that attempts to achieve perceptions of equity in an exchange create transaction costs. So following Ouchi’s analysis, Husted and Folger argue, that it is precisely the demand for those perceptions of equity that generates transaction costs. Value of the exchange is related to the perceived equity of an exchange. In both cases, Husted and Folger argue that even if both theories started from different perspectives, both, justice theories and transaction-cost economists are concerned with fair exchanges (Husted and Folger, 2004, page 721). They argue that justice can include the dimension of implementation, because transaction costs economics only take into account the design of the governance system, and this is not sufficient to create fairness perceptions. One crucial aspect of this integration is
accounting for the importance that justice is to people. Governance mechanisms can be wrong or right, but even in cases they are right, they can be used for the wrong reason or in the wrong way. And in those latest cases they can generate perceptions of unfairness that increases transactions costs for the next exchange.

Other possible example of integration in the conceptual domain, between philosophical arguments and empirical research has been found when connecting concepts of distributive and procedural justice. Philosophical arguments have claimed that unfair processes cannot lead to fair outcomes. In fact one outcome is only considered just if it is achieved through a just process. Regarding this, attempts to do empirical work to find a necessary relationship between distributive and procedural justice have been done also in the perceptional domain. In a recent study, Hartmann and Slapnicar (2007) showed that perceptions of procedural justice are a necessary condition to get to perceptions of distributive justice. In fact this shows that even if people are concerned for both, procedures and outcomes, it is not clear that we can say outcomes are just if procedures are not.

The focus of this paper is to show possible ways of the necessity to start integrative efforts between objective/prescriptive arguments and subjective/descriptive ones. Some authors have said that we know intuitively that people have intrinsically ways of perceiving justice that does not differ from possible normative approaches that they could have in their minds (Greenberg and Bies, 1992), both, perceptions and normative standards are more closed that we apparently think they are. Also regarding managers, they cannot escape from choosing among possible questions from an ethical point of view (Fortin and Fellenz, 2007). The problem of structuring decisions is an ethical problem, so choosing among alternatives given is different than deciding which
are the alternatives someone decides to include in the decision, what is called framing
the decision, which it is fundamentally an ethical concern (Bastons, 2008).

A possible model including morals within the domain of actual organizational
justice is shown in figure 1, to account for how two levels, objective/prescriptive and
subjective/descriptive, assess in the individual level the link between ‘what it is’ and
‘what it must be’. The first one, ‘what it is’ (a situation), seen within the
descriptive/subjective approach generates perceptions. The same ‘what it is’ can be
linked to ‘what it must be’, in the prescriptive/objective approach to inform about that
situation of ‘what it is truly just’. The ‘what it must be’, feeds the individual framework
of ‘what it is believed to be just’. Individuals grasp normative theories and engage in a
process of 1) by recognizing a moral problem, 2) by the application of moral reasoning,
and 3) by acting following their will in accordance to their decision (Hosmer, 1994).

Then individuals start comparing their perceptions with what they believe must
be, and if there is a mismatch, perceptions of injustice appear to be. Discussion in the
domain of what it is truly just, need to exist, as in fact, when doing empirical research
and assessing perceptions, people have in mind their own benchmark of comparison.
There is a need to discuss about “which notion of ‘justice’ should prevail?”, and
arguments are to be made against and in favor of every specific notion we could have in
mind about how objective and real justice needs to look like. It is only after this
discussion when we could find ways of implementing real improvements of justice in
organizations, if not we are only giving tips here and there of how justice perceptions
might be improved in specific situations, but there is no real underlying justice objective
to be achieved. The role of perceptions is taken into account in the model, because
implementation effects are shown following perceptions logic (see also figure 1). So,
we need to touch reality to see how far those implementations are really perceived to be,
and to exist, even if not existing does not jump into saying the justice theory is wrong in
its affirmations, but shows something needs to be done with those perceptions and with
the implementation.

But apart from acknowledging that normative arguments are necessary when
studying justice, we cannot preclude moral commitments also as researchers. The way
we frame those studies is embedded also in our own morality. We can study perceptions
with the intention of controlling behaviors, so to create perceptions of fairness that help
managers to take advantage of them (Fortin and Fellenz, 2007). Or we can study
perceptions with the intention of enhancing justice in organizations, even if our way of
doing so is using perceptions. We should be thinking about the right purpose for doing
research, and how to improve it. We cannot preclude the necessary moral discussion in
any step of our theory development and theory testing, and we need to know explicitly
which are our moral commitments and our assumptions.
Mechanisms of generating injustice perceptions: integrating prescriptive and objective perspectives

**WHAT IT IS**

- (FACTS, SITUATIONS, ACTIONS)

**WHAT IT MUST BE**

- Which actions are TRULY just
- Which actions are believed to be just

**WHAT IT IS PERCEIVED TO BE**

- Perception of those facts, situations, actions, from individuals

**Perception of INJUSTICE**

**EFFECTS**

- Addressing the effects:
  - Reparation.
  - Creating perceptions of justice.

**Perspective framework used by the individual**

**OBJECTIVE & PRESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH**

**SUBJECTIVE & DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH**
7 CONCLUSIONS

The main conclusions of this article are twofold. The first one is within the organizational justice domain; we argue that theories of justice need to include reparation of injustices. Small injustices may always occur as no governance mechanism is perfect and no one implementing is neither to be; those injustices accumulate and create effects if they are not properly solved (Husted and Folger, 2004). The second conclusion is considering management justice as crucial for management practices. And we are arguing the way of doing so is acknowledging this concept as one deeply rooted in the business ethics field. So, this poses to the previously descriptively oriented field of organizational justice, those challenges the business ethics field is facing. One of those challenges we have addressed here is how normative and descriptive enquiries could be integrated in a way that makes justice better applicable to organizations, and a more fruitful aspect to be included in general management theories.

Looking at this second conclusion, we argue that full integration of descriptive and empirical claims for justice in organizations is possible. People are affected by perceptions of ‘what it is’ and at the same time have in mind normative standards of what it is believed as truly just (see figure 1). Those normative standards are learned and actualized by experience, and ingrained in every individual. We opt for a view in which perceptions need to be addressed as they are the ones generating the effects. But perceptions are generated by people, that hold at the same time three types of motives; instrumental, social and ethical (Cropanzano et al., 2001), and are concerned about ways of behaving more justly, in a learning process, in which ethical learning is involved (Rosanas, 2008).
The question is, are we ethical beings? If the answer is yes, then we care about justice in those three dimensional motives and we can grasp a sense of what is truly just, using concepts coming from existing theories and also by experiencing ourselves. But if we deny moral objective facts to exist, this search is relative to the individual, then, integrating both psychological and philosophical inquiries can only be done creating high level of relativism in the philosophical one, and centering ourselves in perceptions of ‘what it is’ and in relative and personal conceptions of ‘what it is truly just’ (‘what it is believed to be just’, in our model). The only way to avoid this is, then, by believing in a system of philosophy that allows for objective moral facts, and to try finding sound theories that can show why those aspects have been or have not been found in the real world so far. Empirical inquiries can help us to avoid naïve dogmatism in doing so, while philosophical inquiries can help us to make us aware of our ingrained normative commitments in our empirical inquiries.

Justice theories need to include moral commitments, and empirical research can investigate in how far implementation of those theories leads to perceptions of justice. I argue that organizational justice scholars need to be interested in both: creating more just organizations for everybody, and assess how far implementing those concepts have been done and how to improve their implementation. And finally, researchers should not shy away from reflecting on their own moral motives behind those two objectives.
8 REFERENCES


