

# *Dialogues between the Research Questions that Guide Bernard Charlot's Theory of the Relationship with Knowledge and Christine Delory-Momberger's Biographical Research in Education*

*Diálogos entre Questões de Pesquisa que Orientam a Teoria da Relação com o Saber de Bernard Charlot e a Pesquisa Biográfica em Educação de Christine Delory-Momberger*

*Dialogues entre les Questions de Recherche qui Guident la Théorie du Rapport au Savoir de Bernard Charlot et la Recherche Biographique en Éducation de Christine Delory-Momberger*

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**ABSTRACT:** *This article aims to present research questions and theoretical assumptions that underlie Bernard Charlot's theory of the relationship with knowledge and Christine Delory-Momberger's biographical research in education. To do so, it resorts to documentary analysis of books and articles by the authors. The configuration of theoretical and methodological fields of research with their specificities is identified, but also the points of dialogue concerning their research questions and, in particular by the reciprocal theoretical and epistemological interest in studying the construction of individuals as singular and social, from socio-anthropological approaches.*

**RELATIONSHIP WITH KNOWLEDGE. BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH IN EDUCATION. NARRATIVES OF SELF**

**RESUMO:** *Esse artigo tem como objetivos apresentar questões de pesquisa e pressupostos teóricos que fundamentam a teoria da relação com o saber, de Bernard Charlot e a teoria da pesquisa biográfica em educação de Christine Delory-Momberger e suas contribuições para estudar a relação com o aprender de jovens/estudantes. Para tanto, recorre à análise documental de livros e de artigos dos autores. Identifica-se a configuração de campos teórico-metodológicos de pesquisa com suas especificidades, mas também os pontos de diálogo concernentes às suas questões de pesquisa e, em especial, pelo interesse recíproco teórico-epistemológico em estudar a construção dos indivíduos como sujeitos singulares/sociais, a partir de abordagens socioantropológicas.*

**RELAÇÃO COM O SABER. PESQUISA BIOGRÁFICA EM EDUCAÇÃO. NARRATIVAS DE SI.**

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**RÉSUMÉ:** Cet article vise à présenter les questions de recherche et les approches théoriques de la théorie du rapport au savoir, de Bernard Charlot et de la théorie de la recherche biographique en éducation, de Christine Delory-Momberger et leurs contributions à l'étude du rapport à l'apprendre des jeunes / étudiants. Pour ce faire, elle recourt à l'analyse documentaire des livres et des articles des auteurs. La configuration et les spécificités des champs théoriques et méthodologiques des recherches sont identifiées, mais aussi les points de dialogue concernant leurs questions de recherche et, en particulier, par l'intérêt théorique et épistémologique réciproque d'étudier la construction des individus comme sujets singuliers/ sociaux, à partir d'approches socio-anthropologiques.

**RAPPORT AU SAVOIR: RECHERCHE BIOGRAPHIQUE EN ÉDUCATION. RÉCITS DE SOI.**

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This article aims to present the research questions and some theoretical assumptions that support the theory of the "relationship with knowledge", theorized by Bernard Charlot, and of "biographical research in education", theorized by Christine Delory-Momberger, with their respective specific theoretical and epistemological references, their approximations and contributions to the study of the relationship with the learning of young people/students<sup>2</sup>.

The theory of the relationship with knowledge, according to Bernard Charlot, "is based on a socio-anthropological perspective" from the notion of unfinishedness of subjects who need to learn in order to enter a world that already exists. It is based on the assumption that subjects become humans as a result of a set of social relations (Sève, Marx). Another assumption is that subjects appropriate the world by engaging in sociocultural activities, according to Vygotsky and Leontiev. The desire to learn is mobilized from motives and reasons created in the social world.

Biographical research in education, according to Christine Delory-Momberger, studies the biographical as a constitutive dimension of the individuation, socialization, and education process, based on the social-historical configuration of the individual's relationship with the social<sup>3</sup>. According to the author, "the category of the biographical gives access to the work of socio-individual genesis (or process of biographization) by which individuals fabricate the world the social and historical world and produce themselves as social and historical beings" (Delory-Momberger, 2019, p. 47) For this, the author articulates, among other studies, the references of Alfred Schütz's social phenomenology with Ricoeur's hermeneutics.

Methodologically, this article is the result of a qualitative approach and a documentary analysis, in the sense presented by Lüdke and André (2014). Readings of articles and books by Bernard Charlot (1997, 2000, 2005, 2013, 2021) and Christine Delory-Momberger (2014, 2017, 2019, 2021) are conducted to analyze the theoretical assumptions built by the authors and their research questions. Such approximations are part of an ongoing study.

The theory of the relationship with knowledge has its own history, with its own strands, clashes and dilemmas, explained in the studies of Cavalcanti (2015); Vercellino, (2020, 2021), among others. Such clashes are not the focus of this text. In this article I focus on the theory of the relationship with

<sup>1</sup> All the quotes are translated by the author.

<sup>2</sup> Among the researches I carry out, the relationship with knowledge and biographical research in education are articulated with the studies of Young people in the school, from the Youth Sociology perspective, which I could not talk about in this paper.

<sup>3</sup> In some of her productions, such as "Biografia em Educação: figuras do indivíduo projeto", from 2008 (translated version of the original, published by Anthropos, in Paris, 2004), Delory-Momberger discusses Bernard Charlot's notion of relationship with knowledge to deal with learning at school. However, in the definition of biographical research in education, according to the "Vocabulaire des Histoires de Vie et de la recherche biographique" (2019, p. 250) she does not refer to the dialogue with the notion of the theory of the relationship with knowledge.

knowledge presented by Bernard Charlot. I focus on the notion of activity as a central point to the theory of the relationship with knowledge. It is about understanding "activity" (Leontiev, 198; Charlot, 2000; Rochex, 1995) as a mobile that incites the subject to act, configured through action or a set of actions. Such activity can be defined by the goal that guides it and the meaning of this goal, which is the relationship between the motive of the activity and the immediate goal of the action. The meaning, in this way, refers to the place that the activity occupies in the singular history of each person.

The paradigm of the biographical, with its aspects in oral history, life history in adult education, (auto)biographical research, and biographical research also has its complex field, with its specificities and similarities, which I will not discuss in this article. I will focus on biographical research according to Delory-Momberger's theoretical production, which has been consolidated since the 2000s.

I observed, in the theory of biographical research in education, the notion of experience as its core, also considered by Delory-Momberger. Experience is understood as the way in which "we appropriate what we live, taste, know" (Delory-Momberger, 2019, p.81). It is about processes of reflexive appropriation of the lived, by the attribution of meanings, from the self-narrative. The narratives are constructed by the configuration of the fragments of the lived that produce the motives for each one in the present. Therefore, in biographical research in education, the participants "realize experiences" by giving new meaning to what they have lived.

Thus, next I highlight research questions and some aspects of Bernard Charlot's theoretical and methodological bases. Subsequently, I focus on Christine Delory-Momberger's theoretical and methodological assumptions. In the final considerations I identify preliminary approximations between these two theories and their contributions to the studies of youth and school.

## **I- Bernard Charlot and the relationship with knowledge theory**

Using the articles by Rego and Bruno (2010) and Giolo (2011) as reference, I present some aspects of Bernard Charlot's education. He is a well-known French researcher, living in Brazil since the 2000s. During his undergraduate studies in Philosophy, he studied the epistemology of knowledge with Georges Canguilhem. He affirms that this experience marked his formation as a researcher, contributing to the construction of his reasons to study the relationship of people with school and with studies. His doctoral thesis, for example, defended in 1985 at the University of Paris 10, is called "On the relationship with knowledge".

He worked for a period as a professor at the University of Tunis in Tunisia and then, back in France, at the Ecole Normale (Teacher Training Institute) in Le Mans. These experiences significantly marked his training as an educator and researcher in the field of education. From his life and research path his studies are developed in the field of Sociology of Education.

He became a professor at the University Paris 8 where he worked for 16 years. At this university he founded a research team of great international projection, ESCOL (Education, Socialization and Local Communities). This team was interested in the investigation of relations with knowledge and social inequalities, as well as other "themes related to education, such as violence at school, territorialization of educational policies and globalization.

In Brazil Bernard Charlot began his work as a visiting professor at the Federal University of Mato Grosso. Since 2006 he is visiting professor at the Federal University of Sergipe and affiliated professor at the University of Porto (Portugal). He is coordinator of the Research Network on the Relationship with Knowledge (REPERES) and his latest book, "Educação ou Barbárie", was released in 2020.

The notion of the relationship with knowledge in its psychoanalytic aspects, Beillerot, socio-anthropological, by Bernard Charlot, and "didactic", with Chevallard, are debated and deepened by studies by several theorists, in different countries, as for example: by "Broitman and Charlot, Cavalcanti,

2015; Charlot, 1999, 2005, 2013; Terriault, Baillet, Carnus Vincent, 201, Vercellino, 2020, Vincent and Carnus, 2015" (Charlot, 2021, p. 2).

Charlot reiterates that in the last thirty years "the heuristic value of the notion of relation with knowledge to shed light on unique situations, practices and histories of confrontation with knowledge, empirically identified" (Charlot, 2021, p. 2). The author adds that in order to understand these situations, practices, and unique histories, it is necessary to study "the meaning that the subject who learns gives them" (Charlot, 2021, p. 2), based on a positive reading of the students' relationship with their learning activities at school. It is not the purpose of this article to present the debate held in the different schools around the "relationship with knowledge", but to present some elements of the theory of the relationship with knowledge, based on Bernard Charlot's socio-anthropological approach.

According to Charlot, the theory of the relationship with knowledge is simultaneously "singular and social, it is a relationship with the world, with others, and with yourself, and it has an epistemic, identity, and social dimension – so that education is, inextricably, humanization, socialization, and singularization" (Charlot, 2021, p. 1).

I highlight aspects that I identify as the main assumptions of this theory: its anthropological perspective on becoming a singular/social subject through education; the positive reading of the learning process; the human praxis through work/activity.

### *1.1 Anthropological perspective on becoming a singular/social subject through education*

Bernard Charlot's theory starts from the anthropological question about "the meaning that students from popular communities attribute to school and to what they are taught and, ultimately, to the meaning that a human beings give to the many things they must learn in their lives" (Charlot, 2021, p. 3), which from 2016 unfolds into another "the return to contemporary society of old forms of barbarism and the emergence of new forms" (Charlot, 2020, p. 3), developed in his book "Educação ou Barbárie" (Charlot, 2020).

A central axis of the anthropological assumptions of the theory of the relationship with knowledge refers to the need for the human beings to "become", from education and the activities they perform. In his book "Du rapport au savoir: éléments pour une théorie" (Relação com o saber: elementos para uma teoria), translated in Brazil in 2000, Bernard Charlot quotes Kant's work "Réflexions sur l'éducation" (Reflections on Education), from the end of the 18th century: "man is the only creature that needs to be educated [...] he must use his own reason [...]. Man is not, he must become what he must be; for this he must be educated [...]" (Kant in Charlot, 2000, p. 51 and 52). Therefore, the theory of the relationship with knowledge starts from the premise that "to be born is to be subjected to the obligation of learning" (Charlot, 1997, p. 57).

Bernard Charlot adds another dimension to this anthropological assumption of the need to become human, based on the studies of Lucien Sève, who analyzes this process as a praxis, based on the contributions of Marx. Sève and Charlot start, therefore, from the assumption of Marx's VI Thesis on Feuerbach: "the human essence is not an abstraction inherent in the individual taken apart. In reality, it is the set of social relations" (Sève, 1968, in Charlot, 1997, p. 58). In this sense, each individual "becomes human by hominizing themselves through their life process within social relations [...]" (Charlot, 1997, p. 57-58).

In a book released in 2013, called "Da relação com o saber às práticas educativas" Bernard Charlot states that Marx's studies advance the analysis of the processes of construction of singular/social subjects by bringing up the concepts of work, social relations and praxis. Human beings survive and construct the world by work through praxis: "the process by which humans transform nature and, by transforming it, transform themselves" (Marx in Charlot, 2013, p. 169). Leontiev emphasizes the importance of Marx in building a theory of the social genesis of human beings and their process of historical construction. According to Marx: the human relations with the world: "sight, eye, smell, taste, touch, thought,

contemplation, feeling, will, activity, love: in short taken the organs of your individuality are also social organs; they are an objective behavior or in relation to the object, the appropriation of the object, the appropriation of human reality. (Marx in Leontiev, 1984, p. 74).

Bernard Charlot explains that from these assumptions Vygotsky and Leontiev develop their studies, which deal with the emergence of language, cultural meanings and processes of significations. According to Vygotsky, human beings collectively create "material and conceptual instruments, because communication is necessary for collective work" (Charlot, 2013, p. 169). For the appropriation of cultural meanings, conceptual material instruments human beings need to enter into learning processes. These processes occur uninterruptedly and articulated in three dimensions: 1) the individual is built collectively as a human species (a process he calls hominization); 2) the individuals build themselves as members of a society, with cultural references that are built over time (I would add that this process is permeated by tensions, power relations) and, also, 3) the individuals build themselves as a singular subject. In other words, Bernard Charlot states that through education the human being is inextricably built in a "triple process: of humanization, of socialization, of subjectivation/singularization" (Charlot, 2013, p. 167).

## 1.2 *Positive reading of the learning process*

The theory of the relationship with knowledge is based on the deconstruction of determinist and reproductivist theories about the possibilities of learning, based on the social position of the subject and with explanations of external reasons for difficulties in studies. I agree with the author in questioning the negative readings of classical sociological theories in relation to students from economically less favored social classes. His thesis questions the constructed explanations that seek external causes to the subjects, such as social origin, to explain in a deterministic way the difficulties experienced at school, which would be the reasons for "school failure". The author believes that the social origin of the student, by itself, is not enough to understand the difficulties at school.

According to the author, the theory of habitus, developed by Bourdieu, for example, contributes to the understanding of social inequalities, but does not make it possible to explain the process. "The notion of internalization by subjects of social inequalities is important to emphasize the psychic effects of social position" (Charlot, 2021, p. 5) and the notion of cultural capital transmitted from parents to children also explains the cultural forms of family transmission, however, does not problematize how such transmission occurs. Cultural transmission occurs by social position, but mainly by the activities in which individuals are inserted. They allow the appropriation of the cultural references of a certain social group. Regarding the transmission of cultural capital in society, the author argues that

One does not inherit a taste for *nouvelle cuisine*, for abstract art or for theater in the same way that one inherits a bank account and daddy's car or mommy's house. It takes activity, on the part of parents and on the part of children: to travel, to go to the museum, to the theater, to take their children to dance, to judo, to piano lessons, to correct their grammatical mistakes, and even, simply, to help them with their homework on a daily basis. Transmitting or receiving this cultural capital is, in fact, a lot of work (Charlot, 2021, p. 5).

In this way, the theory of the relationship with knowledge deconstructs the dominant meritocratic liberal explanations, which blame individuals in isolation for failure or success in life and school, without taking into account both their place in society and the activities experienced and respective encounters with the knowledge to which they have access. If the ability to learn is not a prior essence of the individual, it also is not marked only by his or her social origin, even though this may limit access to different activities and learning. Through the interpretations of the activities experienced in the different social spaces and at school, the students find or not the possibilities of engagement and the reasons or not to mobilize themselves to learn.

### 1.3 Human praxis through work/activity

According to Charlot, to mobilize is to gather strength to use yourself as a resource and, also, is to engage in an activity. (1997, p. 62). He draws on Leontiev's concept of activity: "activity is a set of actions carried by a mobile aimed at a goal (Leontiev, 1975; Charlot, 1997, 2000, 2021; Reis, 2012). According to Leontiev, "the object of activity is its true motive. It is understood that this can be both material and ideal, both given by perception and existing only in the imagination, in thought" (Leontiev, 1984, p. 82). The author adds that "behind the motive there is always a need, which always responds to another need" (Leontiev, 1984, p. 82).

I am interested in studying the students' motives and needs, considering that they are constructed in the relationship of individuals with others through activities and interpretation of the experiences lived in different social spaces. The activities, experiences, and the learning that is apprehended from them are involved in formative processes in dispute, in relation to the possibility of imposing certain ways of understanding and organizing the world. They are crossed by class, gender, and race relations, as well as by certain ways of thinking, doing, and knowing how to do that are dominant at a certain time. If we are in a society where work aims at profit and exploitation, these social relations are permeated by economic and symbolic disputes. Not everyone has access to the same activities in our society and to the same conditions of school education. Moreover, as Charlot explains, in different social spaces such activities, socio-historical constructions, demand specific logics of learning.

Through the activities we perform we learn how to do something (epistemic relationship with knowledge); we learn ways to share the world with others, inserted in a social relationship, in a society with social positions and tensions of power relations (social relationship with knowledge) and we learn to build ourselves (identity relationship with knowledge). (Charlot, 2021). These three dimensions: epistemic, social, and identity articulate and influence each other, building the relationship of each one with the world, with others, and with themselves.

If the activities experienced in the relations with the world, with others and with oneself enable the construction of reasons for the engagement in certain activities, to the detriment of others, on the other hand, people who have access to the same activities interpret them in a unique way, from the articulations or re-significations of their previous references.

Bernard Charlot also explains that the engagement in learning activities at school demands, among other aspects, the entry into intellectual activity. School knowledge is organized in an abstract way and presents the world as ways of thinking. The mobilization to learn at school is constructed by the articulation between activity, meaning, and desire. How is it possible that the activities dialog and articulate with the students' motives for learning, or construct or redefine motives for such an engagement in the intellectual effort to learn at school? I believe that this fundamental question can be problematized by the theory of the relationship with knowledge.

In summary, the central question that mobilizes my studies nowadays is how to carry out research on the social/singular construction of subjects in their learning processes in different social spaces and, in particular at school, and on how the motives for learning that arise from the interpretations they make of their experiences in different spheres of the social world are constructed.

I share with Cavalcanti (2015), the questions he presents in his thesis regarding the contributions of Bernard Charlot and the ESCOL team to the theory of the relationship with knowledge. The author points out that "the formula on which Charlot and the ESCOL team is based claims the place of the singularity of the history of individuals in the school system" (Cavalcanti, 2015, p. 105). By deconstructing the deterministic classical sociological explanations of social reproduction and social deprivation the author proposes a positive reading, which "establishes, therefore, the link between the experience of students, their ways of interpreting the world and their activity" (Cavalcanti, 2015, p. 106).

"The subjects need to carry out activities of appropriation of cultural meanings, which will be covered by the personal meanings attributed to these meanings. This process is not homogeneous: it depends on the quality of the encounters with the knowledge experienced and, more specifically, with

the challenges provided" (Reis, 2021, p. 81). In this sense, I consider that the theory of biographical research, by focusing on the study of self-narratives by the subjects, contributes to the study of the interpretations that the students attribute to their experiences, to the activities with which they engage in different social spaces and at school. I focus on these issues in the next topic of this article.

Before the discussion about the theoretical and epistemological assumptions of biographical research, I consider it important to briefly describe my encounters with the theory of the relation with knowledge, which started during my doctoral research in education. My first approach to the author's studies occurred in 2001 when I read the 1996 article "Relação com o saber e com a escola entre estudantes de periferia" (Charlot, 1996). This reading was the reference for the construction of the doctorate project, which questioned the meaning of studies for the students.

Thus, Bernard Charlot's works have been and still are central references in my research. From 2003 to 2004, I participated in the Seminars of the ESCOL team, coordinated by Jean Yves-Rochex and Elisabeth Bautier, at the University Paris 8, Sorbonne Paris Nord.

The research in France and in Brazil resulted in the doctoral thesis<sup>[ii]</sup>. The objective was to analyze these students as young people, the construction of these subjects as students, their relationship with their studies, their relationship with knowledge and with the types of knowledge". The main point of the thesis was that the cultural references of young people from different social spaces were articulated, confronted, and re-signified in the experiences lived in high school, and that there were mismatches between "the personal knowledge of the young people and the school knowledge" and, therefore, it would be of utmost importance to conduct research and redefine the work at school with activities that would consider the cultural and social references of young people, their ways of expression and their construction as students at school. Thus, the theory of the relationship with knowledge was and is a central axis for my problematizations, questionings, theoretical and methodological constructions as a researcher.

The doctoral study presents the principles that continue to guide my research on youth and school, based on the theory of the relationship with knowledge. In this research, I methodologically carry out a qualitative, longitudinal analysis that crosses research procedures: knowledge inventories (Charlot, 1996; 1999; 2000) with first year students; interviews with second year students and then more interviews (Charlot, 1996, 1999; 2000) with five young people in the third year, who participated in the knowledge inventories and the first interviews. In addition, I follow the work of an Art teacher for three months with young students in a second-grade class<sup>4</sup>.

In continuity to this research about the relationship with knowledge and skills, I coordinate a broad research, called "Estudantes da escola pública estadual do ensino médio em Maceió: quem são, os sentidos que atribuem aos estudos, as possíveis relações entre a experiência escolar e seus planos de futuro" (2010-2012)<sup>5</sup>. To deepen the analysis about the relationship with knowledge and about the mobilization or demobilization to learn in high school, I make a cut from this larger study, which is configured as post-doctoral research. In this qualitative study, the students produce inventories of knowledge and participate in discussion groups. Some students who write the inventories of knowledge, participate in the discussion group, and also conduct interviews (Charlot, 1996; 1999; 2009). Both in the doctorate<sup>vi</sup> and in this first post-doctoral research the research methodology is longitudinal, that is, the same participants engage in multiple research procedures, in a given time and space in which I accompany

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<sup>4</sup> Check out the book published: "Relação com o saber de jovens no Ensino Médio: modos de aprender que se encontram e se confrontam" (Reis, 2021).

<sup>5</sup> After taking over as university professor and as leader of the research group, created in 2010, I coordinate and guide research that focuses on the dialogues between Alagoas youth cultures with school culture and the meanings of learning at school. These studies focus on how young people construct themselves as students, especially in high school and university.

them, which allows me to analyze and put into dialogue the meanings they attribute to the activities and experiences at school, which are articulated and re-signified with those of other social spaces.

Later, with the same team I conducted another research study with high school students, called "Desafios enfrentados por jovens do ensino médio: um olhar sobre aprendizagens exigidas, modos de aprender e sobre seus planos de futuro" (2012-2014). In this study, dialogical group meetings take place with third year high school students and also with teachers who work with these students. The focus was to confront the ways in which a group of teachers analyzed the challenges to teach young people in a high school and how the young people/students, their students, express these challenges, not only in relation to their studies, but also to the knowledge conveyed by the school and to other aspects that these young people would like to be taken into account in their relationship with the school experience.

If the studies carried out allow us to research the question of the relationship with knowledge, with the knowledge of high school youths, their interpretations about the meaning of learning in different social spaces and in school in a socio-anthropological approach, I consider that it is possible to insert improvements, based on the contributions of biographical research, whose assumptions I present below.

## 2. Christine Delory-Momberger and the biographical research in education

In my research and training work, I dedicate myself, mainly, to the theme of the relationship with the learning of young people, in a broad sense, in different social spaces and, in particular, to the development between such learning and those conveyed in school to study, among other aspects, the indications of the types of training it provides. It is important to understand the challenges that the school has to deal with in terms of providing "significant encounters of young people with school knowledge" and, to this end, I believe that the theory of biographical research in education, based on Christine Delory-Momberger's assumptions, has much to contribute.

Passeggi's article presents an important description of the aspects and the intersections of studies with the "biographical paradigm" and helps to locate me in this complex paradigm. The author presents a cartography of the forty years that she calls the "narrative-autobiographical paradigm in qualitative research in education" (Passeggi, 2020), with its respective epistemological principles. She points out three narrative approaches that interconnect: "the life stories in education (Pineau and Le Grand, 2012; Nóvoa and Finger, 2010; Dominicé, 2000), the biographical research in education (Delory-Momberger, 2000, 2005, 2014; Alheit; Daussien, 2006), and the (auto)biographical research (Passeggi, Souza, 2017; Abrahão, 2004)." (2020, p. 60).

According to the author, research as a life story movement is an approach that emerged in the 1980s in Europe (France, Belgium, Switzerland, Portugal) and North America (Canada), focusing on adult continuing education and becoming institutionalized in the 1970s (Passeggi, 2020, p. 61). The author explains that central to the perspective is the idea that the person in training is the social actor who reflects on his or her life path and researches his or her experience. Important references of this approach are Pineau (2005), Dominicé (2000), Josso (2010), and Passeggi (2016). In this sense, as Passeggi explains, one of the primary concepts of this approach is the research-training, in which the articulation between the two terms makes the formation of reflection by research inseparable (Pineau, 2005; Dominicé, 2000; Josso, 2010; Passeggi, 2016). "This epistemological point of view, allows us to differentiate the use of life stories as a research technique or instrument, differently from what is done in other sciences" (Passeggi, 2020, p. 63). The author explains that this epistemological approach is inserted in Brazilian research from Nóvoa's studies, specially thanks to the book "As histórias de vida em formação". It is a book "written by António Nóvoa and Matthias Finger, published in 1988 in Portugal, and reprinted in Brazil in 2010, 2014" (Passeggi, p. 63).

I identify that my experience with (auto)biographical research is inserted in the movement of research-training by life history, from the interpretations made by the group of the Teaching, Memory



and Gender Group (GEDOMGE-FEUSP), coordinated by Denice B. Catani, Bemira O. Bueno and Cynthia P. de Souza, in the 1990<sup>6</sup>.

As explained by Belmira O. Bueno, Cynthia P. Sousa, Helena Chamlian and Denice B. Catani (2006, p. 392), the group was created in 1994. It was influenced by the studies of Gaston Pineau, Pierre Dominicé and Marie-Christine Josso, developed at the University of Geneva, with a wide network with researchers from other countries. The coordinators of GEDOMGE explain that in the group the (auto)biographical method was used in a "double perspective: to operate as a training device and, at the same time, as a research instrument" (Bueno et al, 2006, p. 392). By participating at the time as a history teacher of basic education, in this training research device I read an autobiographical novel by Elias Canetti, "A Língua Absolvida", and produced reports, readings and reflections about the teaching profession. At the same time, I became part of the master's degree program at FEUSP and joined another group with (auto)biographical research, coordinated by Helena Chamlian, which had Josso's and Nóvoa's studies as reference.

According to Passeggi, the other epistemological approach is biographical research in education or "Recherche biographique en Éducation" (Biographical Research in Education), proposed by Delory-Momberger in France in the early 2000s. Passeggi explains that Christine Delory-Momberger's studies is an investment to demarcate biographical research in education as a "type of qualitative research, a biographical pedagogy or a biographical paradigm, in the elaboration of a theoretical and conceptual framework to translate the anthropological capacity by which humans perceive and organize their lives according to a narrative reason" (Passeggi, 2020, p. 64). Passeggi adds that the work of "biographization is the way that humans become who they are. It becomes a major focus of Christine Delory-Momberger's studies" (2020, p. 64). In my doctoral research I studied the relationship with knowledge of young people in high school and presented the problem of the importance of personal knowledge for learning school knowledge. In this research I resort to Delory-Momberger's study, according to which the learning of school knowledge and biographical learning are in a complementary and reciprocal relationship (Delory-Momberger, 2005). Passeggi also presents a third branch, to which she is affiliated: (auto)biographical research. According to her, this branch originated in Brazil with this name in 2004, on the occasion of the first International Congress of (Auto)Biographical Research (I CIPA, Porto Alegre), conceived by Maria Helena Menna-Barreto Abrahão (Abrahão, 2004), which brought together researchers from Europe, Canada, Asia, the United States and Brazil around the biographical and autobiographical. (Passeggi, 2020, p. 64).

CIPA is constituted as an "inaugural milestone and forum of debates of the biographical movement in Brazil, which has been under the leadership of Elizeu Clementino de Souza since 2006, when it was held in Salvador, the II CIPA" (2020, p. 64). In 2006 I participated in the II Congress of (Auto)biographical Research, in which I attended a course with Delory-Momberger on "Project Biographical Workshops" (2008, p. 96). At that time, I was building a postdoctoral research project to work with "biographical ateliers" with young high school graduates. However, due to personal and professional circumstances this research project was aborted.

The re-encounter with the research and theoretical-methodological assumptions of Christine Delory-Momberger is consolidated between 2016 and 2017, during the post-doctorate under her supervision at the Sorbonne University Paris Nord<sup>7</sup>, with the realization of a study with young people of the Parisian university on the relations between their educational paths, their future projects and their own future. Since then, a gradual and necessary process of articulation and dialogue between the theoretical and methodological assumptions of the "biographical paradigm" (2017, p. 11) and the theory of the relationship with knowledge (Charlot, 2021) emerges. Thus, it is possible to state that in current

<sup>6</sup> The work of the GEDOMGE research group resulted in the book "Vida e Ofício de professores", in which I wrote an article analyzing the research experience training.

<sup>7</sup> Information obtained from the author's website, available at <http://www.christine-delory.com/>. Accessed in Sept. 2021.

research I resort to the studies of Delory-Momberger, which are situated in the second branch presented by Passeggi: the biographical research in education.

It is important to note that Christine Delory-Momberger is Franco-German. Her theoretical construction articulates, therefore, the references of scholars of the Geneva School on the European movement of "Life Histories with adult education" to the references of German phenomenology and hermeneutics. Her doctorate in education was done under the guidance of Remi Hess. In 2003 she obtained her habilitation to direct research, with the title "Issues and perspectives of biographical research: biography, socialization and education". She later worked as a professor of Educational Sciences at the Sorbonne Paris Nord<sup>viii</sup>. Her production is based "on the hermeneutic (Dilthey, Gadamer and Ricoeur) and phenomenological (Schapp, Schutz, Berger and Luckmann) tradition" (2018, p. 786) and seeks to understand "the place of the biographical in the construction of the subject through the process of education, formation and socialization and to explore the forms and meanings of these biographical constructions in different historical moments".

Although I cannot go further in the analysis on her theoretical production, I highlight four aspects that I consider fundamental in her theory: the socio-anthropological perspective of biographical research, the notions of biographization, experience and narrative of experience.

### *2.1 Socio-anthropological perspective of biographical research in education: biographization, time and narrative*

According to Delory-Momberger the "founding project of biographical research falls within the framework of one of the central questions of social anthropology, which is the question of individual constitution" (2018, p. 785). Biographical research is concerned with how individuals "give a form to their existence" (Delory-Momberger, 2017, p. 48). It studies the operations of biographization, by which individuals develop their cultural and social languages "in a broad sense, as codes, repertoires, figures of discourse: schemes, scripts of action that contribute to making social life exist and reproduce it" (2013, p. 48; 2018, p. 785). Thus, the object of biographical research "is the process of socio-individual genesis of the constitution of the concomitantly singular and social individual" (2013; 2018, p. 786).

In this way, to the author, the biographical is not simply a succession of moments of your life, but it is part of our anthropological capacity to order existence in terms of a narrative reason (2018, p.786). According to her, what differentiates biographical research from other qualitative research is the introduction of the dimension "of time and more precisely of biographical temporality in its approach to processes of individual construction" (2017, p. 15).

The author explains that the narratives elaborated by the subjects inscribe themselves in an anthropological status because they are constituted from the temporality of experience. The reports or stories told by the research participants show a dimension of self-learning in relation to the learning of the social world (2005, p. 136). It is through the language of the story and its logic of narrative configuration that all spaces/time of human experience are built and written. Because of it we remember the past and project the future. It is fundamental to understand her conception of narrative, because it configures a specificity in relation to other uses of narrative in research. For the author the report

is not only a symbolic system in which human beings can express their experiences and their existence [...] It is not only about discourse [...] it is more focused on a mental and behavioral attitude, a way of understanding and structuring experience and action" (2017, p.30). "It is the place where the *mise en forme* (Gestalt) and thus the formation (Bildung) of the self is elaborated, and is also a place of learning" (Delory-Momberger, 2005, p. 136)

To focus on how the processes of biographization occur, which are mediated by individuals' narratives, Delory-Momberger draws on Ricoeur's studies. He explains that time becomes humanized by articulating itself in a narrative way and that reports reproduce the human experiences through symbolic

systems. The actions of individuals and their ways of thinking are inscribed in "stories that organize and construct experience according to the logic of the report (Delory-Momberger, 2017, p. 15). Individuals construct stories about themselves from interpretations of social experiences.

Ricoeur (1983) calls this process a *weft* ("mise en intrigue"), which occurs in and through language. Narratives, according to Ricoeur, are not disconnected events. The production of narratives or stories by the subjects occurs through a process of remembering heterogeneous events and the construction of an intelligible totality. Ricoeur explains: "the *mise en intrigue*" is the operation which produces from a simple succession a configuration" (1983, p. 102). Therefore, according to Delory-Momberger "through the narratives produced we structure and interpret what we are experiencing, privileging what we consider relevant in our experience and giving us our own form" (2019, p. 49).

## *2.2 From the lived experience to the realised experience*

As Delory-Momberger explains, biographical research in education bases its approach on the reciprocal relationship "between formation and biography, between learning and experience: every life journey is a journey of formation, in the sense that such a relationship temporally and structurally organizes the experiences of existence in the shaping of our histories" (2018, p.787).

Therefore, understanding her conception of experience is fundamental. For Delory-Momberger experience "lies at the heart of the processes according to which we biographize the situations and events of our existence, so we put them into shape and signify them, thus constituting the resources of our biographical capital" (2019, p. 81). According to the author, by experiencing we realize our biographical learnings. Her studies throw up some questions:

how is the reserve of experiences constituted and the nature of the knowledge that individuals acquire throughout their existence? How are the reserves of experience accumulated throughout life constituted? What is the nature of biographical knowledge and how is it stored? How do we perceive and integrate new experiences? How are successive experiences ordered and what is their relation to individual biography? (2021a, p. 342-343).

Further Delory-Momberger explains that in German there are terms with different senses for three dimensions of experience. She considers such differentiation important for biographical research. The term "*Erlebnis*" refers to the most immediate experience, the experience lived in everyday life. The term "*Erfahrung*" means learning. It describes another sense of experience, as the experience we have, that we acquire throughout life. There is also a third dimension to experience, as "a set of knowledge, of know-how, of skills linked to the exercise of an art or a job or more broadly as the exercise of life, a set that is not finalized, that is in perpetual recomposition and evolution" (Delory-Momberger, 2019, p. 82, 2021a, p. 342).

Delory-Momberger argues that the passage from this immediate experience to acquired experience constitutes our experiential resources, which Schütz calls the "biography of experience" (*Erfahrungsbiographie*). Using Schütz's studies, the author explains that such resources produce our reserve of available knowledge or biographical capital, which provide the structures of generalizable action, shaped according to the logics of previous experiences or by transmitted knowledge. Acquired experiences are "biographical resources that organize and structure the perception of the surrounding world" (2021<sup>a</sup>, p. 341) and the ways in which we understand the present and envision the future.

Still making use of Schütz's studies the author explains our processes of constructing ourselves as social/singular subjects. In everyday life each person gradually builds up "a stock of knowledge that serves as a code for interpreting their past and present experiences and also determines the anticipation of things to come" (Schütz, 1979, p. 74). This process occurs in the relationship of individuals to different social spaces and the stock of available knowledge is mobilized to interpret new experiences. Schütz adds that "the ongoing experience can, for example, be identified as a previous equal but modified experience or a

similar type experience [...]. Or, alternatively, the ongoing experience appears as strange, in the case where it does not even refer to a similar previous experience" (1974, p. 75). According to Schütz in such situations "it is the stock of knowledge we have that serves as the code for interpreting the current ongoing experience" (1979, p. 74).

Delory-Momberger adds the knowledge that are part of this stock of available knowledge are of various orders (objectified, behavioral, procedural knowledge) and are not presented in the same way in consciousness to respond to such situations. In order to appropriate learning objects, subjects need to interpret and integrate them with previous knowledge, which are heterogeneous and in relation to each other, as part of the biography of experience.

Each new learning object, states Delory-Momberger, enters in a unique process, related to its learning history of appropriation and reconfiguration of previously acquired knowledge. Learning appears as the transformation of experiences, of structures of knowledge and action in a particular biographical configuration. Therefore, in order to be apprehended and not rejected as foreign to the "subject's biographical learning repertoire" it must be "a self-referential activity: the new knowledge, found in a learning history, must first be translated into the code of acquired knowledge" (2021a, p. 349).

The author explains that, for the most part, the situations in which we live, we recognize as familiar and automatically integrate the lived experiences into our biographical capital. We do not request the conscious activation of our knowledge of experience. However, other lived situations demand interpretations, resist entry in our biographical capital, because they do not correspond to the interpretation schemes already constituted. "To integrate as experience, they require a reconfiguration of the pool of available knowledge" (2019, p. 83).

I consider that in the different moments of life and, among them, in the school experience, we are mobilized to enter into certain activities, projects, actions by the questions made in our relationship with the world, with others, that at each moment they acquire certain nuances and configurations.

It is worth remembering that when we construct our narratives, we set out to answer the questions formulated from our experiences in the world. Biographical research enhances this exercise of reflexivity about our biographical learning. The narratives are mobilized by a question of the present, prompted by the researcher, who incites the research collaborators to build their narratives. According to Ricoeur (2010), the engine of narrative construction by the individual is the search for meaning in the present time. The report produced "is not the past, nor the future, nor even the present, but a triple present, which configures the intertemporal aspect of the construction of the narrative" (Ricoeur, 2010, in Reis, 2020, p. 398). Hermeneutics presupposes the movement of interpreting that combines the processes of explaining and understanding (Ricoeur, 1990). "It is a history constructed by individuals to give meaning to different elements, towards a temporal totality" (Reis, 2020, p. 398), with the mediation of the symbols that articulates norms, signs and rules. A story is configured "more than an enumeration of events in a serial order, it must be organized in an intelligible totality, in such a way that one can always ask what is the subject of the story (Ricoeur, 2010, p. 114). This process produces a space for reflexivity of greater or lesser intensity, depending on the engagement between those involved and the space for dialogue built in the research process.

Biographical reports contribute to the constitution of situational knowledge, an understanding of the most intimate part of human experience. They provide access to how individuals live as actors/actresses in their own lives, how they think and act in the contexts in which they find themselves. Unlike dominant discourses and hegemonic knowledge, they bring into existence "the subject's point of view" and the kinds of knowledge they develop in the course of their experience: knowledge that is always constructed in a historically, socially, and semiotically situated (Delory-Momberger, 2021b, p. 56).

The experience of producing the report, therefore, is at the heart of the research process. It also has the potential to constitute itself as a formative process. By providing the realization of an experience, it can contribute to the formation of the individual, and also an exercise in reflection that can also produce learning (Delory-Momberger, 2005, p. 136).

Souza argues that "narrating personal and collective experiences, subjects elaborate knowledge about themselves and their social worlds enabling, through their experiences, the construction of a singular knowledge" (SOUZA, 2018, p. 289). As Valerie Melin (2020) explains "interpretive work allows us to put in evidence how the experienced moments and its representations build the relationship with learning and knowledge (Melin, p. 291). She adds that such experience contributes to the biographical configuration of each student and to understanding the image they have of themselves, drawing the contours of their subjective logic in relation to the social practices in which they are inserted (Melin, 2020, p. 291). I would add that the self-narratives can also allow a reflexive detachment from other perspectives of understanding and the world.

In the scope of this second post-doctorate in education, I carried out biographical research in education with students from a French university, which aimed to identify the meanings they attribute to "future perspectives" and "projects of themselves", having as reference their training paths<sup>8</sup>. Upon my return to Brazil, I introduced these theoretical and methodological references in my research. My current research analyzes the challenges young people face to become students in a Brazilian public university<sup>9</sup>. In this paper I propose to articulate dimensions of understanding between the theory of the relation with knowledge and biographical research in education.

## Final Considerations

From my research path emerges the need to understand the theoretical and methodological references between the "research questions" of the theory of the relationship with knowledge and biographical research in education, which justifies this paper<sup>10</sup>. It is worth pointing out that it is from my biographical knowledge reserve that I identify important approximations between biographical research and the theory of the relationship with knowledge for the studies of the relationship with the learning of young students, even if such theories are based on theoretical and methodological assumptions whose specificities must be deepened.

Without going further into such specifics, I share with Gamboa (2015) that both the critical-dialectical approaches, Charlot (2013), and the phenomenology-hermeneutic approach, Delory-Momberger (2019, 2021), "share the principle of contextualization", which means the events should be studied by considering their surroundings, their natural environments the contexts in which they develop and have meaning" (Gamboa, 2015, p. 126). Both theories, starting from the same question, about how we become subjects, submerge into the context of power relations and social inequality in which we are inserted and seek their answers in critical approaches to education.

From the presentation of notions previously focused on in the respective theories I highlight some of the proximities identified. Both the theory of the relationship with knowledge and biographical research start out from the assumption that the human being is born unfinished and in the relationship with the world, with others and with themselves "becomes, singularizes, constitutes themselves" as a singular/social subject. If Bernard Charlot draws on the assumption presented in Karl Marx's VI Thesis on Feuerbach, according to which "the essence of man does not lie within each individual who is born, but is the ensemble of social relations" (Sève, 1979, Marx, 1982, Charlot, 2013, 2021), Delory-Momberger similarly cites Lucien Sève to explain that the human establishment "is the ensemble of biographical

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<sup>8</sup> Under the supervision of Christine Delory-Momberger.

<sup>9</sup> Among the research groups I coordinate.

<sup>10</sup> This integrated research dialogues with others ongoing PhD studies, scientific initiation and graduation thesis, and counts on the partnership of Valérie Melin, who also conducts research on the challenges of university students at the University of Lille (France).

processes through which the individual of the human species becomes psychologically societal of the human genus" (Sévè, 2008, p. 105 in Delory-Momberger, 2018, p. 255).

They agree with the anthropological sense of "becoming", through the appropriation of the world from the learnings and interpretations of what is experienced. To explain this process Bernard Charlot resorts to the Marxist notion of activity and Christine Delory-Momberger to the notion of experience from German social phenomenology and the concept of self-narrative, from the hermeneutics of Ricoeur.

Therefore, we can identify that, for both authors, the relationship with learning and human formation, in a broad sense, is built by the meanings given to what is experienced in different social spaces. Through activities we build our relationship with the world, with others, and with ourselves, which are articulated as an epistemic, social, and identity relationship with knowledge. Through biographical research, the meanings of the experience are interpreted from the narratives that allow us to realize the experience, that is, to go through a work of reflection about what was experienced. It is assumed that to experience biography allows the construction of a reserve of available knowledge, which are the references for new learning. This is always a process of biography, in which each one shapes his or her existence, based on languages, understood as socio-historical symbolic constructions. However, I reiterate that the possible references to carry out this process are given by the social, historical, cultural possibilities of access to certain activities in the social world.

In other words, through biographical research, interpretations about what we live produce our experiences, taking shape in oral, written, body narratives, from images, etc. Therefore, our life is apprehended by the stories we construct about the world, about others, and about ourselves. The construction of these stories occurs from the motives, from the questions of the present that are elaborated by the interpretations and articulation of the dimensions of our experience. When narrating, we produce senses to the heterogeneous aspects of what is lived, which produces for us a coherent configuration of our history. It is possible to infer that such a configuration occurs by the integration and re-signification of the learnings in our reserve of available knowledge.

I understand that such a process presupposes the confrontation with activities (corporeal, objective, symbolic, sensorial, manual), in the sense of Leontiev. In this way, research with narratives of experience focuses on the "realization of experiences", with reflexive processes through languages. The biographical activity of narrating updates our experience in the world, as ways of re-signifying what we have lived.

However, the dimensions of activity, lived experience, and experience realized by narratives are dialectically imbricated. We can only interpret our lived experiences because they are permeated by lived activities, as social, cultural, and economic processes that are differentially shared due to economic, political, and symbolic disputes.

I consider that self-narratives are privileged ways to study and seek approximations with the reasons built inside and outside the school environment for each one to engage in certain learning activities at school, which allows a better understanding of their mobilization processes in different dimensions in life and in those activities that require intellectual effort to enter into abstract modes of learning. It is in this sense that I am interested in the articulation between the theory of biographical research in education and the relationship with knowledge.

I should point out biographical research allows concomitant moments of "research and formation for those who are part of it, including the one who is conducting the research, who is formed as a person, as a researcher and trainer" (Reis, 2020, p. 299), a process that Delory-Momberger calls heterobiography (Delory-Momberger, 2014; Reis, 2020). The study participant or collaborator enters a space of dialogue to construct narratives of experience, and the experience of the narrative is shared with the researcher, which enables for both the construction or re-signification of biographical learnings about the world, about others, and about themselves.

Regarding research I carry out, the construction of the narrative of self by the students is a central axis. In the process of conducting the biographical research interviews there are several meetings with

each research participant. To this end, I construct the procedure of shared reflective restitution<sup>11</sup>. Both the researcher and the collaborator meet to talk about the interviews transcribed and previously read. The objective of these meetings is to make possible intense processes of biography and realization of experiences, based on shared reflections about the narratives constructed. They are moments of deepening reflections, of new questions, and spaces to "realize experiences" and "biographical learning", becoming new and important stages of the research. In this way, a shared process of collaboration between researcher and subject is made possible. I also consider that such research allows a positive reading of the relationship of the students with their school experiences and their relationship with their studies.

From these preliminary approaches, it can be inferred that both the theory of the relationship with knowledge and the biographical research in education are concerned with valuing the dimension of human formation, not restricted to the scientific perspective, but also in its ethical and political dimensions (Delory-Momberger, 2021; Charlot, 2020) and can contribute to studies about the relationship of young people with learning in different social and learning environments.

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<sup>11</sup> The theoretical and methodological deepening of the approximations and distances between biographical research in education and the theory of the relationship with knowledge is part of a larger research project in progress.

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