

## Autobiographical Narrative as a Methodological Instrument of the Network of Meanings

Ligia Ribeiro Ferreira<sup>1</sup> 

Renata Lira dos Santos Aléssio<sup>1</sup> 

Maria Isabel Pedrosa<sup>1</sup> 

**Abstract:** This article briefly presents the theoretical-methodological perspective of the Network of Meanings and its methodological implications. The aim is to question the use of autobiographical narratives as a possible methodological tool to approach the study of development, with the specificity of understanding processes of constitutive transformations in human ontogenesis, from an interactional perspective, as is the case of the Network of Meanings. We revisit a study based on autobiographical narratives with five adult drag queens, aged between 20 and 39 years old, exploring personal and artistic experiences. Their narratives were analyzed microgenetically and some central concepts of the Network of Meanings were raised - dialogic interactive fields, socio-historical matrix, and temporalities. The autobiographical narrative of the participants constitutes a fruitful field of qualitative analysis, allowing us to approach the processes of change and transformation throughout life. As a result, a dialogue between Developmental Psychology and Social and Cultural Psychology is promoted.

**Keywords:** methodology, autobiography, qualitative research, human development, gender

## A Narrativa Autobiográfica como Instrumento Metodológico da Rede de Significações

**Resumo:** O estudo apresenta brevemente a perspectiva teórico-metodológica da Rede de Significações (RedSig) e suas implicações metodológicas. O presente estudo teve como objetivo problematizar a narrativa autobiográfica como ferramenta metodológica possível para abordar o estudo do desenvolvimento com a especificidade de compreender processos de transformações constitutivos da ontogênese humana, em uma perspectiva interacional como é o caso da RedSig. Retoma-se um estudo realizado a partir de narrativas autobiográficas com cinco *drag queens* adultas, com idade entre 20 e 39 anos, explorando experiências pessoais e artísticas. Suas narrativas foram analisadas microgeneticamente e são alçados alguns conceitos centrais da Rede de Significações – campos interativos dialógicos, matriz sócio-histórica e temporalidades. A narrativa autobiográfica das participantes se constitui como um campo profícuo de análise qualitativa, permitindo abordar os processos de mudança e transformação ao longo da vida. Em decorrência, promove-se um diálogo entre a Psicologia do Desenvolvimento e a Psicologia Social e Cultural.

**Palavras-chave:** metodologia, autobiografia, pesquisa qualitativa, desenvolvimento humano, gênero

## La Narrativa Autobiográfica como Instrumento Metodológico de la Red de Significados

**Resumen:** El artículo presenta brevemente la perspectiva teórico-metodológica de la Red de Sentidos y sus implicaciones metodológicas. El objetivo es problematizar el uso de la narrativa autobiográfica como posible herramienta metodológica para abordar el estudio del desarrollo, con la especificidad de comprender procesos de transformaciones constitutivas de la ontogénesis humana. Retomamos un estudio realizado con cinco *drag queens* adultas, con edades entre 20 y 39 años, a partir de narrativas autobiográficas, explorando experiencias personales y artísticas. Sus narrativas fueron analizadas microgenéticamente y se plantean algunos conceptos centrales de la Red de Sentidos: campos interactivos dialógicos, matriz sociohistórica y temporalidades. La narrativa autobiográfica de los participantes constituye un campo fecundo de análisis cualitativo, que permite abordar los procesos de cambio y transformación a lo largo de la vida. Como resultado, se promueve un diálogo entre la Psicología del Desarrollo y la Psicología Social y Cultural.

**Palabras clave:** metodología, autobiografía, investigación cualitativa, desarrollo humano, género

<sup>1</sup>Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife-PE, Brazil

Correspondence address: Ligia Ribeiro Ferreira. Universidade Federal de Pernambuco. Av. Prof. Moraes Rego, 1235, Recife-PE, Brazil. CEP 50.670-901. Email: ligia.rferreira@ufpe.br

The Network of Meanings (*RedSig*) perspective understands human development, i.e. the transformations that occur throughout the life cycle, as a complex process that

takes place in and through social interactions, emphasizing its interactive, procedural, and situational nature. Imagetically, the authors behind this perspective (Rossetti-Ferreira, Amorim, & Silva, 2004) evoke the metaphor of a network, made up of a mesh of semiotic elements that are constituted and influence each other dynamically and continuously. Oliveira and Rego (2006) and Rego (2022) argue that this image is an alternative to the linear perspectives and individualizing approaches to human development present in the history of psychology.

Based on the notion that person and environment are interdependent instances, it is understood that these are co-constructed, with the person being immersed in a semiotic network and subject to it, but actively contributing to the composition of their developmental trajectory. The continuous movement of the network, caused by interactions, i.e. negotiations, resistance, innovations, cooperation, etc., allows it to be reconfigured, enabling new paths and meanings (Rossetti-Ferreira, Amorim, & Silva, 2004). The authors characterize *RedSig* not as an entity external to the person, but as part of them - a set of meanings that constitutes them. An investigation into human development therefore seeks to understand the person and their relationship with the environment, and their social surroundings, as a way of understanding the development process underway, based on the articulation of the elements observed. In this sense, from a socio-interactionist perspective such as that of *RedSig*, it is pertinent to question whether the use of autobiographical accounts is appropriate for investigating human development, since these accounts are singular, highlighting individual and subjective protagonism - a methodological tool that is supposedly not incited by the participant's interaction with other subjects.

Among the elements of the network are the dialogical interactive fields, which highlight the fundamentally relational nature of the person. Relationships specify roles and positions, which are dynamically assumed, negotiated, denied, or transformed throughout life in specific situations and contexts. The authors define a role as a culturally defined way of behaving, whether it be social roles or "psychological" roles related to attitudes. In this sense, they are close to Harré and collaborators' criticism of the crystallization of the role concept, and for this reason, they also use the term positioning, proposed by Positioning Theory, which is characterized in a dynamic way, linked to the construction of a self that is also dynamic (Oliveira et al., 2004). The person is understood as multiple, constituted in the play of relationships and inseparably from the context; the latter is understood not only as a physical space or as a "backdrop", but as a component of social relationships, with concrete and imaginary supports, circumscribing the relationships themselves (Rossetti-Ferreira, Amorim, & Silva, 2004). Thus, even if a person is alone, they are interacting with others, present or absent, in a dialogical understanding of their psychological constitution.

It is clear that people, interactions, and contexts are immersed in a socio-historical matrix, thought of as a

dynamic structure of a semiotic nature, made up of historical, political, cultural, and socio-economic aspects. Endowed with heterogeneity and plasticity, the matrix guides the organization of spaces, effective discourses, and social practices, which can be diverse and even contradictory. Linked to it are also the temporal dimensions: lived time, present time, future time, and historical time. It is considered that there is a "temporal fullness" in the present, in which the past is revisited and reworked, and the future is projected, while these are dimensions crossed by historical time.

From the *RedSig*'s perspective, although all these aspects are explained didactically, it is understood that they all act together, transforming each other continuously over time (Rossetti-Ferreira et al., 2008). Although this separation may present a challenge to research, it is also a way of helping to visualize the processes of change and transformation. Initially, *RedSig* was developed with the aim of deepening the process of adaptation of babies to daycare, seeking to analyze the interactions they established in concrete contexts (Rossetti-Ferreira et al., 2021). Since then, it has been consolidated as a contribution to the study of development throughout life. To this end, it mobilizes various reflections and theoretical and methodological propositions, highlighting the creative role of researchers in articulating different fields and perspectives of psychology (Rossetti-Ferreira et al., 2008).

The aim of this study was to question the autobiographical narrative as a possible methodological tool for approaching the study of development with the specificity of understanding processes of constitutive transformations in human ontogenesis, from an interactional perspective, as is the case with the *RedSig*.

### **Microgenetic Analysis and *RedSig*: Reflections on Data Development**

In methodological terms, this approach to development has a number of implications, including sustaining the systemic nature of the processes being investigated - the person as part of systems - in other words, not an isolated being, but constituted and constituting the environment, making it necessary to consider contexts and their multiplicity of people, voices, interactions, and phenomena. In addition, the multicausality of development processes is accepted (Rossetti-Ferreira et al., 2008). The authors point out the importance of thinking of the network metaphor through the paradigm of complexity, understanding development processes as being woven together by diverse elements. The reality, therefore, is a continuous spinning, which occurs through the interweaving of events, interactions, determinations, and chance. This paradigm subverts the "domination of reality" logic, which seeks to eliminate contradiction and imprecision, proposing an alternative model in which ambiguities and uncertainties are understood as part of the phenomena studied, thus integrating them into reality.

Taking into account the large number and complexity of the factors involved in developmental processes, Rossetti-

Ferreira et al. (2008) propose an investigation based on the selection of episodes or thematic clippings, as also suggested by Carvalho (2021) when discussing the need to go beyond the focus on the individual and consider the tangible situation in which the phenomenon occurs, as well as the ongoing interactions and relationships built in the group's microculture. In order to prevent these cut-outs from becoming too simplistic, it is suggested that the researcher should first approach the field acting as an ethnographer (Rossetti-Ferreira, Amorim, & Silva, 2004). This allows them to identify elements present in the configuration of networks of meanings, such as interactions, specific language systems, contextual configuration, among others, as well as to experience affects. This experience is relevant for consolidating or reformulating the question and objectives more precisely.

Next, it is necessary to think about which "collection" instruments are best suited to the research objectives. As Rossetti-Ferreira, Amorim, and Silva (2004) point out, interviews, video recordings, observational records, documentary analysis, diary analysis, etc. may be carried out. The authors encourage researchers to choose or create means that are relevant to the research objectives (Rossetti-Ferreira, Amorim, & Silva, 2004). This thought takes up the methodological discussions of Vigotski (1998), who developed different methodological and analytical procedures, emphasizing the important relationship between the issue under investigation and the research method (Smolka et al., 2021). This implies identifying the process of interest and developing coherent ways of approaching it - a "toolbox" approach, according to Rossetti-Ferreira et al. (2008). In this way, it is inappropriate to call the researchers' actions "neutral", since there is a continuous and active research development. It should also be noted that videotaped observation sessions, interviews, questionnaires, autobiographical accounts, etc. are not analyzed in their entirety, but rather excerpts are cut from any of these records that are supposed to be of interest in order to raise questions about what is being discussed. This is why it is said that the "data" is built: it is selected and cut from a continuum, transcribed and interpreted according to the support offered by the theoretical perspective that feeds it, a perspective chosen by the researchers according to their epistemological affiliation - it is they who choose the selected cut to the category of data (Carvalho et al., 1999). Thus, it is necessary to consider the researchers' position throughout the investigation, taking a "meta-look" at the process, and locating limits, possibilities, and implications (Rossetti-Ferreira et al., 2008).

With regard to analysis, characterized as the third stage, RedSig's perspective guides an in-depth study of how the processes of change take place, which are considered to be the central axes of the investigation. This is in line with the propositions of Vigotski (1998), who advocates the study of processes rather than products, seeking to reconstruct development paths. In this sense, it is understood that the microgenetic approach supports these objectives, making it

possible to identify different feelings and behaviors that may be linked to new senses and meanings (Rossetti-Ferreira, Amorim, & Silva, 2004). Microgenetic analysis can be associated with different theoretical approaches. In this work, an analysis of micro-events is linked to a cultural-historical and semiotic interpretation, based on what has already been said by Vigotski (1998). In addition to the focus on processes, the following are central points for the study of development: the investigation of the dynamic relationships of processes in their stages of development, from their social genesis; the importance of encompassing the historical dimension; as well as the different temporalities: from the events of the present, it is possible to perceive past conditions and future projections (Góes, 2000; Vigotski, 1998).

Microgenetic analysis is a procedure that aims to follow the course of a psychological process as closely as possible based on the clues that can be obtained, such as actions, movements, occupation of space, babbling, speech, shouts, looks, laughter, crying, mumbling, in other words, any behavior that serves as an indicator for capturing information about the phenomenon under analysis. A look at a partner, for example, defines the status of a behavior: is it an imitation? Or is the equal behavior of the two children an action incited by the object? If a child looks at another child before doing the same action as them, then there is an increased chance that it is an imitation; if they don't look, it is likely that they are both reacting coincidentally to the same object. If the gaze can be linked to other micro-events - if the action with the object is different from what is expected to be done with it, for example, sitting on a ball instead of kicking it - the interpretative strength of the imitation increases. Microgenetic analysis is used to identify the emergence and transformation of behaviors, actions, and meanings, prioritizing chains and aspects concerning the situation and context. Identifying a turning point in a process, for example, makes it possible to look for new threads, new paths, and new adjustments in the sequence already underway; it makes it possible to point out changes and transformations, even if they are subtle. In short, micro genetic analysis seeks to construct a micro-history of processes, because it is in the course of processes - associated with the historical-cultural field in which they are inserted (Góes, 2000) - that it is possible to scrutinize movement, and it is "only in movement that a body shows what it is" (Vigotski, 1998, p. 86).

To consolidate the methodological rigor of the research in the face of the dynamism of the phenomena, it is suggested that a robust contextualization be developed and that the movement back and forth in the research corpus be maintained. In this way, it is possible to avoid excessively inferential interpretations, as well as absolute relativism. Once situated in a theoretical framework, the bases that guide the interpretations and arguments made in the research are established (Rossetti-Ferreira, Amorim, & Silva, 2004).

In this context, the impossibility of total knowledge is recognized (Rossetti-Ferreira et al., 2008). It is admitted that it is impossible to grasp all the elements of the networks, as the process is circumscribed by theoretical-methodological,

biographical, sociocultural, institutional, and scientific limitations, among others. When researchers come into contact with the focus of the investigation, they are inserted into the dynamics of the Network of Meanings, which permeates their view and at the same time is continually transformed by them. The investigation is therefore situated in the researcher/participant relationship, in the discursive crossings, and in the fragments of the various temporalities; in this way, meanings emerge that guide the clippings and interpretations made.

### **Autobiographical Narratives: A Methodological Tool for the Study of Human Development**

According to Pereira et al. (2017), there are many ways of producing knowledge based on biographies, such as testimonies, life history, and narrative research. For the authors, the first unites biographical study with social intervention by preserving popular cultural history. For its part, life history is a narrative of the past from the present, in which the narrator reconstructs the events lived. In this way, it has historical and epistemological differences, but also similarities with narrative research, which, as Breton (2020) points out, aims to understand the subject's experience from their perspective. A narrative is a discursive form in which the subject talks about themselves and society, organizing and giving meaning to their experience, marked by an important interactional dimension (Pereira et al., 2017).

From a cultural perspective of psychology, Bruner (2004) looks at autobiographical narratives, understanding that they are characterized as a continuous reinterpretation of experiences from the present. Therefore, when using autobiographical narratives as a methodological tool, the aim is not to verify the facts or whether the person speaking told the "truth", but rather to reflect on and analyze what was remembered and chosen to make up the story that the narrator decided to tell the listener at that specific moment (Bruner, 2004; Oliveira & Rego, 2006; Rego, 2022).

The moment the narrator talks about him/herself to someone else, who listens attentively, the story is composed as a figure-ground game, in which certain situations, experiences, and speeches gain prominence, weaving the story depending on what the listener wants to know and what the narrator wants to show. The autobiographical narrative is not the same if there is a spectator. Correlations can even emerge between facts that didn't seem interconnected before, as explained by Ferreira and Aléssio's (2020) interlocutors, who recall elements from different temporalities during the narrative, provoked by the researcher. The narrative woven by the participant, therefore, differs from an everyday social interaction, since it is referenced by the researcher's propositions and the research objectives. There is an intersubjective interlocution in which both are enriched by the encounter (Minayo, 2021), which enables the production of new senses and meanings.

According to Bruner (2004), during development, the linguistic and cognitive processes outlined by culture

begin to structure perceptual experience, such as organizing memory, classifying, and constructing life events. Both self-narrative and life are constructions, and this relationship is mutually constitutive. According to the author, the life told is inseparable from the life lived, and vice versa. What we tell ourselves and others becomes our life story since it's not just a matter of reciting obvious facts, but rather a selective and interpretative process. Even if the facts are put in sequential order, there is an undertaking to tie them together in a way that makes sense in a narrative.

The instability of autobiographies, in the sense that they change all the time, is a central aspect, as this makes them susceptible to cultural, interpersonal, and linguistic influences (Bruner, 2004). Cultural frameworks outline developmental models, providing some basis for the ways in which subjects will narrate their stories. Therefore, what is considered memorable and the way in which these experiences are organized stem from this intricacy of personal and sociocultural aspects (Oliveira & Rego, 2006; Rego, 2022). Self-narratives, therefore, are correlated to the socio-historical matrix, as they are a discursive strategy stemming from a historical-cultural context that values the continuity and coherence of the subject. However, the process of narrating is crossed by the processes of subjectivization, which refers to the unique way in which one apprehends, interprets, elaborates, and re-elaborates socio-cultural clippings of one's surroundings. It is, in fact, a process of intersubjectivization. In *RedSig*, these reflections are analogous to the notion that the person and the socio-historical matrix are co-constituted (Rossetti-Ferreira, Amorim, & Silva, 2004).

Self-narrative, therefore, takes place in the midst of the inseparability of person and context. In an idiosyncratic way, people negotiate these values, models, and norms. Thus, it is necessary to understand the person as inserted in historical and concrete conditions, which are apprehended in multiple ways (Oliveira & Rego, 2006; Rego, 2022). In an autobiographical narrative, the person's view of their own development is mixed with theoretical discourses and common sense elaborations (Oliveira & Rego, 2006), incorporating other voices into their speech. It is argued that starting from the interlocutor's narrative, it is possible to configure dialogic interactive fields, as well as to apprehend discourses present in the socio-historical matrix, and to perceive certain influences of temporalities, which makes this method a fruitful path for a micro genetic analysis, highlighting "micro" and "macro" social aspects. We then sought to reconstruct microhistories of processes through the autobiographical narratives of the participants. The article briefly presents the theoretical-methodological perspective of the Network of Meanings (*RedSig*) and its methodological implications. Based on this summary, the use of autobiographical narratives as a possible methodological tool to approach the study of development is problematized, with the specificity of understanding processes of transformations that are constitutive of human ontogenesis.

## Method

### **Introducing Yourself and Others: Autobiographical Narratives that Construct and Reconstruct Paths of Transformations.**

The autobiographical narrative is seen as a fertile research tool that allows us to scrutinize a process of self-construction in conjunction with interpersonal, temporal, and historical-cultural contexts. It is a sensitive and productive tool for studying human development.

The potential for using these narratives in a methodological approach is illustrated by a study carried out on the experience of being a drag queen (Ferreira & Aléssio, 2020). According to the authors, the drag queen has come to be understood as an artist who personifies the feminine in an exaggerated and stereotyped way through multiple body transformations, involving techniques and tricks, including make-up, the use of clothes and accessories, body modulation, among others. It should be noted, however, that this performance takes place in a plural way and can have diverse possibilities that are not restricted to this conceptualization. In this way, doing drag, that is, the process of putting on drag queen, plays with the dimensions of gender, mixing and subverting the notions of masculine and feminine (Bragança, 2019). According to Santana and Carvalho (2019), assembling a drag queen body is a discursive, political, educational, and transgressive phenomenon. We understand doing drag as an artistic manifestation, and it is therefore possible for anyone, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. Nevertheless, Bragança (2019) recalls drag queens' long historical relationship with the LGBTQIA+ social movement.

In order to recruit research participants, the snowball technique was used, in which a key informant, the seed, is invited to indicate possible interlocutors from their own personal network. Through this mediation, the researchers can expand their contacts and potentially reduce the strangeness on the part of the participants (Oliveira et al., 2021). In order to delve deeper into the stories of the interlocutors, a qualitative approach was chosen, in line with Minayo (2021). As a methodological stance, the author suggests getting as close as possible to the other person, focusing on their experience in its singularity and complexity, as well as emphasizing the importance of understanding the context and history of what is being researched.

The research was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee, under CAAE protocol no. 72651517.5.0000.5208, and followed all the requirements indicated by the Resolutions in force. The participants were five people aged between 20 and 39, four cisgender gay men - including two black men, one white man, and one mixed race man - and one cisgender, white, heterosexual woman. Gender identity, sexual orientation, and racial/ethnic identity were self-declared. The meetings took place in 2018. The names used here are fictitious to protect the identity of the participants. Autobiographical narratives were used as a collection tool, seeking to investigate the meanings and

senses associated with living as a drag queen in adulthood. During the meeting, other temporal dimensions were evoked in addition to the present, here-now dimension, based on the construction of an auto narrative that linked the participants' story to the research objectives. After signing the Free and Informed Consent Term, they were asked to record on a sheet of A3 paper and colored pencils some important moments from their trajectories that somehow connected with their drag queen. This strategy was used to start the narrative more playfully, but this material was not analyzed. The records were intended to circumscribe the theme of the meeting - the story of their drag queen - and to instigate the participants' memories, preparing them for the next stage, which was to ask them to tell a little of the story of their lives, bringing the drawn or written elements into their narrative. At times, the researcher asked questions to bring up or deepen certain themes. The stories were audio-recorded and fully transcribed for analysis. In total, there were five meetings, one with each participant, lasting an average of one hour.

From the microgenetic analysis, it was possible to select segments of the participants' narratives that supposedly provided relevant evidence to examine the making of a drag queen, here considered to be the constitution of the person in their multiple versions, meeting the objectives of this research. These segments of the accounts are called episodes; they are snippets of a continuum selected by the researcher, taken as indications of a phenomenon under analysis. The choice of the segment to be interpreted is guided by the theoretical support that feeds the analysis. Theory provides constructs that are interpretative tools for reflecting on the phenomenon; it offers search paths for the investigation; it suggests indications of articulation between aspects that seem unsystematic; etc. Thus, an articulation was made between the personal stories of the research participants and aspects of *RedSig*, which helped to visualize the meanings related to the drag queen persona. The concept of persona, used here, comes from theater and is associated with performance, referring more to the state of the artist than a character to be represented. The persona arises from an idea and not from a prefixed text, linked to the artist's life, memory, and experience (Cohen, 2019). Through the narratives, it was possible to capture transversal aspects, cultural crossings, as well as unique ways of negotiating meanings in personal trajectories.

The socio-historical matrix can be highlighted in the participants' narratives through macro-social dimensions that regulate their experience, correlated to political and historical factors that impact the organization of spaces, discourses, and social practices. One element present in all the narratives and attributed to the socio-historical matrix is the organization of gender in society, which is deeply related to drag queens. Even before the presence of drag in personal trajectories, gender was an organizing axis in people's histories. As Butler (2018) points out, gender is configured in a binary and polarized way, limiting it to men (masculine gender) and women (feminine gender), with desire always oriented towards the "opposite". This framework generates

expectations and social practices that maintain this linearity, disregarding or delegitimizing other possible forms of existence. We can see that this form of social organization is present in all the participants' narratives, highlighting the cultural intersection that constitutes them and at the same time is reproduced or renegotiated by them. In this way, we can understand that the construction of gender is part of the socio-historical matrix characterized here through not only the assumption of certain standards but also through clashes, resistance, denials, and even the creation of other possible social places. These biographical events are connected to a historical context of feminist and LGBTQIA+ movements, which question the hegemonic sex-gender scheme, reaffirming possibilities other than the cisheteronormative model, which indicates the co-constructive nature of these dimensions.

Some excerpts from the narratives allowed us to see that gender has been regulated since childhood. Daniel, a cisgender, homosexual, and mixed-race man, as he characterized himself, who was 22 at the time and a drama student, says the following: "I was a bit more feminine, right? My family sometimes denounced it, but nothing alarming until this came along: Rouge, my love". The use of the crime metaphor, "denounce", is linked to a discourse on gender and sexuality that is based on the opposition between men and women, making Daniel's identification with "feminine" elements - such as the band Rouge, popular with girls - out of the norm and apt to be accused by the family. Rios et al. (2019) point out that there is a classification between boys' and girls' games, and children who try to break with this distinction are denounced as outside the norm.

Rosa, a cisgender, heterosexual, white woman, who was 39 years old, a university student in Social Sciences, and a mother, looking back on her childhood, says: "My brothers all went to school (...) in the city center (...) I went to school in the street next to the house. (...) I was the little girl of the house, I was fragile." From the excerpts, one can see signs that gender is organized in a polar way: boys and girls have different places and different possibilities in society. Dialogic interactive fields are set up, in which these "others" - notably the family context during childhood - act as mediators and interlocutors. In telling their stories, other voices are present, endowing the account with multiplicity. In the man's narrative shown above, curiosity or identification with "feminine" elements is stifled or even forbidden, while the girl has been placed in a position of being protected. As we follow their narratives, we find evidence of the presence of intra and interpersonal conflicts, as well as changes in the way they understand and experience gender. The socio-historical matrix is thus seen as a dynamic dimension, not characterized in a homogeneous way. People play an active role in its construction, perpetuating, modifying, reconstructing, and transmitting the multiplicity of voices (Rossetti-Ferreira, Amorim, & Silva, 2004). Although gender is a central organizing axis, it can be re-signified and subverted. Circulation in other contexts, as well as getting closer to the drag queen figure, are elements that have

promoted ruptures and transformations (Ferreira & Aléssio, 2020).

Rosa recounts a moment she experienced as an adult: "The performance (...) of my drag queen (...) is the political sense (...) of deconstructing gender patterns. (...) Knowing that I'm married [they ask]: 'What about your husband?' (...) As if I needed his consent." This excerpt also shows gender regulation, which occurs throughout life. Her place as a woman is once again designated by the other, but in adulthood, her understanding of this place is no longer the same and she renegotiates it. In her speech, she also refers to drag as a political tool, bringing her experiences and reflections to other people, which highlights the mutually constructed nature of relationships and contexts.

For his part, Daniel has also experienced changes in the way he understands gender. When he went to university to study theater, he began to move around in other contexts, tracing new relationships and possibilities: "It never occurred to me to dress up as a woman for the stage. (...) Then, (...) I came across figures like (...) the Female Impersonator, (...) and I fell in love with this art." When he learned about the practice of female impersonation, he was inspired for the future emergence of his drag queen. As well as a physical space, this place is constituted by new interactions, which have led to a change in his position in relation to these issues, as well as in relation to his family.

Temporalities are also factors that mark the narrative. Based on present events, it is possible to perceive the influence of other temporal dimensions, such as lived (past) and historical time, which is updated in the form of organizing the here-and-now and guiding the future (Rossetti-Ferreira, Amorim, & Silva, 2004). By telling people about their past, they add a new meaning to it and reconstruct it, which has repercussions on the present. In the research in question, it was possible to see that drag often emerged in adulthood as a way of expressing desires that originated in childhood.

In Rosa's speech, we can see how the time lived functions as an organizer of the present: "Today, I see that everything she [her drag persona] has, came from everything (...) here. Not just the artistic issue, (...) but the issue of her personality and what she fights for, what I fight for." Doing dragis configured as a manifestation of art and as a political tool, influenced by issues experienced by Rosa in her biography. In addition to her previous experience with theater, she also mentions a childhood desire to be free, as well as having had two abusive romantic relationships, from which she "freed" herself, experimenting with a drag queen as a means of that freedom. This shows the changes in her position in her career, from a dreamy child, to being asked to be a "straight girl" (not in terms of sexuality), when she understands herself to be in a place of oppression, and then to a phase of liberation and empowerment.

Vitor, a white, cisgender, homosexual man, 20 years old at the time and a university drama student, reports: "Everything in my life that I wanted to do (...) in relation to this issue of the opposite gender, (...) was always: 'no' (...) When I started theater at university, I began to see that

it wasn't quite like that". This excerpt reveals the ways in which he recalls some of the desires of his childhood and adolescence in the present, outlining new possibilities for action in adulthood. It also suggests that he is beginning to rethink the values and beliefs that have been handed down to him and is positioning himself differently in relation to gender, including assuming a position as a drag queen. In this process, the meanings attached to this practice are also transformed, a practice that was previously misunderstood is now seen as a means of expression. These excerpts also show the presence of historical time, such as the binary organization of gender, as well as its debate, illustrating the dynamic role between people and the socio-historical matrix. Also evident is the conception of drag as a political locus, which is associated with the consolidation of the LGBTQIA+ movement and the multiple demands of being and doing drag.

The presence of prospective time is also noticeable. Marcos, a cisgender, homosexual, black man, 31 years old, with a degree in publicity and advertising, says: "Nowadays, we have a lot of national references in music. (...) This gives you strength, (...) because there wasn't a person like this in my generation. (...) Who knows, maybe I can (...) be a reference for other people...". The various temporal dimensions are intertwined. As a homosexual child and adolescent, he feels he had no references, which changes in the here and now. These references become an inspiration for him, and he starts to see himself as a possible reference for future generations. The presence of social prejudice is also visible, the result of the sex-gender system based on cisheteronormativity. Deviant existences are delegitimized and assigned to the margins (Rosa, 2020). Still, in Marcos' narrative, we can also see changes in his position: "Today I understand gender in a very, very different way. (...) I find it very sad how (...) in people's education, this is not brought up. (...) This could prevent so much (...) violence (...) towards black people, towards LGBT people." Marcos came to understand gender and drag differently, taking a political stance on social issues such as racism and LGBTphobia.

The narratives also show the presence of both intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts, which encompass the family, the drag community, and society. Internal conflicts generally stem from a clash between what is learned as right and wrong in terms of gender - which is associated with a heteronormative matrix, and what these people want and how they express themselves - which often goes against what is socially expected. Vitor's speech allows us to observe the ambivalent way he felt: "At the same time as I had this resistance to these people who had an effeminate manner, or wore lipstick, skin-tight pants or something like that, I had a real passion for these objects too." Throughout their careers, people renegotiate roles and positions, confront and question certain social rules, and articulate other possibilities. In their speeches, we continually see the flow between the "micro" and "macro" elements, which, in the interplay of elements, concomitantly constitute transversal crossings and singular experiences.

## Final Considerations

This article has focused on autobiographical narratives as a possible methodological tool to approach the study of development, with the specificity of understanding processes of transformation that are constitutive of human ontogenesis, as is the case with the theoretical-methodological perspective of *RedSig*. Given the processes of change through time and situations, reconstructing certain moments, and identifying relevant points in personal stories, it was possible to show that autobiographical narratives are a powerful methodological tool, using *RedSig* to support the analysis undertaken. Autobiographical accounts, although singular, are processes of intersubjectivization and not just processes of subjectivation. This is because singularity is a constant dialog with different protagonists throughout personal stories. The constitution of the person takes place in social interaction, in agreement and disagreement, consensus and dissent, and stability and transformation. These aspects could be captured in the participants' accounts. From the perspective of *RedSig*, it was possible to interpret different temporalities in the ontogenetic process that emerged in speeches situated in time and periods of life; dialogical interactive fields were identified and the transformations that took place, were reported as a contravention of the established, because they were articulated to the socio-historical matrix, a conservative socio-cultural environment, but one marked by debate and continuous discussions in recent decades. An environment of effervescence in the political battle for rights and recognition of so-called "deviant" genders and sexualities, as well as multiple ethnic-racial belongings, which legitimize existences beyond cisheteronormativity and whiteness, considered hegemonic.

Through the individual's speech, it is possible to highlight key moments in the development of the process, as well as to observe how the individual weaves these events together in order to transform them into a story that makes sense to them. As previously explained throughout the text, the autobiographical narrative acts both as a methodological tool for collecting and constructing "data" and as a locus for intersubjectivization. In addition to the possibility of analyzing specific moments of interaction, negotiations of senses and meanings, positions, and processes of change, autobiographical narratives made it possible to glimpse cross-cutting aspects that broadened the understanding of the socio-historical matrix. The complexity that runs through the processes was highlighted, exemplified by the variety of possibilities, contradictions, and divergent views. Furthermore, the contribution of this work is the interchange between different fields of psychology, including developmental psychology and Jerome Bruner's social and cultural psychology.

This highlights the support provided by *RedSig*'s theoretical-methodological perspective for the discussion and interpretation of qualitative data from autobiographical accounts. However, it is acknowledged that its interpretative constructs need to be increasingly specified to be useful

to other fields of psychology, not just human development studies.

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*Ligia Ribeiro Ferreira* is a Ph.D. candidate of the Postgraduate Program in Psychology at Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife-PE, Brazil.

*Renata Lira dos Santos Aléssio* is a Professor of the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife-PE, Brazil.

*Maria Isabel Pedrosa* is a Professor of the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife-PE, Brazil.

*Authors' Contribution:*

All authors made substantial contributions to the conception and design of this study, to data analysis and interpretation, and to the manuscript revision and approval of the final version. All the authors assume public responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

*Associate editor:*

Sonia Regina Pasian

*Received:* Mar. 11, 2023

*1st Revision:* Jun. 16, 2023

*Approved:* Aug. 09, 2023

*How to cite this article:*

Ferreira, L. R., Aléssio, R. L. S., & Pedrosa, M. I. (2023). Autobiographical narrative as a methodological instrument of the Network of Meanings. *Paidéia (Ribeirão Preto)*, 33, e3326. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-4327e3326>