

ARTIGO

LIFE PURPOSE AND IDENTITY: ARTICULATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT: The relationship between identity and life purpose has been highlighted both by the legal frameworks that define the life purpose as the axis of basic education in Brazil and by studies on life purpose published in the country and abroad. Nevertheless, documents such as the Common National Curricular Base and the New High School do not provide theoretical foundations that would enable education professionals to know how identity and life purpose are constructed and articulated, as well as to understand their pedagogical implications. At the academic level, in turn, the relationship between identity and life purpose has been little discussed explicitly and systematically. The present article, of a theoretical nature and inscribed in the interface between the fields of education and psychology, explores the articulations between studies on life purpose and identity concerning the constitution, development, and functioning of these constructs, and discusses their implications for education. To do so, it delimits the concept of life purpose to the perspective founded by the Center for Adolescence Studies at Stanford University (United States), coordinated by William Damon, and circumscribes the processes of identity construction and functioning to the approaches of identity status, narrative identity and moral identity, whose common matrix is the work of Erik Erikson.

Keywords: life purpose, identity, identity status, narrative identity, moral identity.

PROJETO DE VIDA E IDENTIDADE: ARTICULAÇÕES E IMPLICAÇÕES PARA A EDUCAÇÃO

RESUMO: A relação entre identidade e projeto de vida tem sido assinalada tanto pelos marcos legais que definem o projeto de vida como eixo da educação básica no Brasil quanto pelos estudos sobre projeto de vida publicados no país e no exterior. Não obstante, documentos como a Base Nacional Comum Curricular e o Novo Ensino Médio não aportam fundamentos teóricos que possibilitem aos profissionais da educação conhecer como identidade e projeto de vida se constroem e se articulam, assim como compreender suas implicações pedagógicas. No plano acadêmico, por sua vez, a relação entre identidade e projeto de vida tem sido pouco tematizada de maneira explícita e sistemática. O presente artigo, de caráter teórico e inscrito na interface entre os campos da educação e da psicologia, explora as articulações entre estudos sobre projeto de vida e sobre identidade no que diz respeito à constituição, ao desenvolvimento e ao funcionamento desses construtos, bem como discute suas implicações para a

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educação. Para tanto, delimita o conceito de projeto de vida à perspectiva fundada pelo Centro de Estudos sobre a Adolescência da Universidade de Stanford (Estados Unidos), coordenado por William Damon, e circunscreve os processos de construção e funcionamento da identidade às abordagens de estados da identidade, identidade narrativa e identidade moral, cuja matriz comum é a obra de Erik Erikson.

Palavras-chave: projeto de vida, identidade, estados da identidade, identidade narrativa, identidade moral.

PROYECTO DE VIDA E IDENTIDAD: ARTICULACIONES Y IMPLICACIONES PARA LA EDUCACIÓN

RESÚMEN: La relación entre identidad y proyecto de vida ha sido destacada tanto por los marcos legales que definen el proyecto de vida como eje de la educación básica en Brasil como por los estudios sobre proyectos de vida publicados en el país y en el exterior. Sin embargo, documentos como la Base Nacional Común Curricular y la Nueva Enseñanza Media aportan fundamentos teóricos que permitan a los profesionales de la educación conocer cómo se construye y se articulan la identidad y el proyecto de vida, así como comprender sus implicaciones pedagógicas. A nivel académico, a su vez, la relación entre identidad y proyecto de vida ha sido poco discutida de forma explícita y sistemática. Este artículo, de carácter teórico e inscrito en la interfaz entre los campos de la educación y la psicología, explora las articulaciones entre los estudios sobre proyecto de vida y sobre identidad en cuanto a la constitución, desarrollo y funcionamiento de estos constructos, así como discute sus implicaciones para educación. Para eso, limita el concepto de proyecto de vida a la perspectiva fundada por el Centro de Estudios sobre la Adolescencia de la Universidad de Stanford (Estados Unidos), coordinado por William Damon, y circunscribe los procesos de construcción y funcionamiento de la identidad a los abordajes de estados de identidad, identidad narrativa e identidad moral, cuya matriz común es la obra de Erik Erikson.

Palabras clave: proyecto de vida, identidad, estados de identidad, identidad narrativa, identidad moral.

INTRODUCTION

The life purpose theme arrived at Brazilian schools in mid-2011 through the Full-Time Education program (BRASIL, 2012). It resulted in a significant decrease in the high school dropout rate in status that implemented it massively, such as Pernambuco and Espírito Santo – 1.5% in 2018, according to the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (*Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira - Inep*) – and in the increase in the Education Development Index (*Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação - Ideb*) (BRASIL, 2018a). These results substantially influenced the formulation of Law nº 13.415/2017, which establishes the New High School (BRASIL, 2017), and the National Common Curricular Base (*Base Nacional Comum Curricular - BNCC*) (BRASIL, 2018b), which advocate the life purpose as the main formative axes of basic education.

Despite the prominence given to the theme of the life purpose at school, none of the aforementioned legal references has a definition of this concept, nor does present theoretical foundations, curricular and methodological guidelines that can provide references to education professionals. Therefore, it is of fundamental importance to consider that, in addition to being an object of teaching and capable of being constructed through the implementation of pedagogical practices, the life purpose is constituted in the psychic instance through the coordination between psychological systems such as values and identity of individuals, whose knowledge is necessary to understand the genesis of the life purpose and its construction.

This idea appears, implicitly or superficially, in most documents that have been produced to guide schools in the implementation of work with the life purpose, usually through terms such as self-knowledge and personal dimension (BRASIL, 2017, 2018; CONSED, 2020). However, again, without

the theoretical depth that allows education professionals to mobilize them, with autonomy, in the proposition of systematic and intentional practices aimed at building the life purpose.

Specifically, to the concept of identity, such documents lack a definition that clarifies and supports their intertwining with the life purpose beyond common sense to support pedagogical interventions and also studies on life purpose. In the academic sphere, the relationship between these psychosocial constructs has been little explicitly and systematically thematized by studies on life purpose published in Brazil (KLEIN, 2011; PÁTARO, 2011; PINHEIRO, 2013; DANZA, 2014, 2019) and abroad (DAMON; MENON; BRONK, 2003; BUNDICK, 2011; MORAN et al., 2012; KOSHY; MARIANO; GOING, 2011; among others). In this sense, we highlight the study developed by Burrow, O'Dell, and Hill (2012), which identifies parallels between life purpose profiles and the identity status of James Marcia's theory (1966). More recently, Arantes and Pinheiro (2021), in research on the life purpose of young Brazilians, point out the existence of interrelationships between the processes of identity formation and the construction of the life purpose. However, it is not part of the scope of this research to deepen the approximations and intersections with studies in the field of identity.

This article aims, of a theoretical nature and inscribed in the interface between the fields of education and psychology, to explore the articulations between studies on life purpose and on identity for the constitution, development, and functioning of these constructs, as well as to discuss its implications for education. We begin by outlining the concept of life purpose and circumscribing the definition and processes of identity construction and functioning to the approaches of identity status ((MARCIA, 1966; MOSHMAN, 2011; SCHWARTZ; LUYCKX; CROCETTI, 2015; FADJUKOFF; PULKKINEN; KOKKO, 2016), narrative identity (MCADAMS, 2001; MCLEAN, 2014; SCHWARTZ; LUYCKX; CROCETTI, 2015) and moral identity (BLASI, 1984; COLBY; DAMON, 1992; HARDY; CARLO, 2010; SILVA, 2020; SILVA; ARAÚJO, 2020). Then, we present classic and contemporary studies that reveal correspondences and intersections for the constitution, development, and functioning of identity and life purpose. Finally, we indicate pedagogical implications that can be extracted from these articulations, aiming to contribute to the elaboration of pedagogical practices that can help in the construction of identities and life purpose of young Brazilians.

PURPOSE: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This study delimits the bibliography on life purpose to the perspective founded by the Center for Studies on Adolescence at Stanford University, in the United States, coordinated by William Damon. Based on an extensive empirical study with more than 400 young Americans about their perspectives for the future and the meaning they attributed to their lives, Damon, Menon, and Bronk (2003) formulated the concept of “purpose”, whose translation challenges the vocabulary of the Portuguese language. Purpose brings together a set of characteristics that go beyond the sphere of intention, synonymous with “purpose” in Brazil.

For Damon (2009, p. 53), the purpose is “[...] a stable and generalized intention to achieve something that is at the same time meaningful to the self and generates consequences in the world beyond the self”. From this initial definition, we understand that the core of the purpose is the intention to achieve something in the future. This intention must be stable, that is, it must allow the person to progress towards its performance instead of changing frequently during circumstantial variations. In addition, it must be meaningful to the person, because, if this does not occur, the affective bond and the commitment created with it can weaken. In addition to being significant for the individual, the intention must be guided by an ethical sense, promoting benefits beyond the self, whether in the public or private sphere (BUNDICK, 2009). This aspect, although controversial, as it is not identified or appears in a very small portion of the populations studied by most researchers (DAMON, 2009; PINHEIRO, 2013; DANZA, 2014, 2019), is well supported by the literature as one of the indicators of youth prosperity (HILL et al., 2010) and pro-social behavior (BRONK et al., 2009), even being considered as a development asset (BENSON; SCALES, 2009).

To the aspects that make up Damon's definition, later studies (BUNDICK, 2009; KOSHY; MARIANO; GOING, 2011; DANZA, 2014, 2019) added the need to associate this intention with

strategies that allow it to be carried out so that it can extrapolate the immaterial field of desires and gain materiality in reality. This is a factor that contributes to the affirmation of commitments, as the individual finds opportunities to act according to the interests and concerns that motivate the construction of the purpose (MALIN et al., 2013).

Considering the complexity of the aspects that encompass this concept, Brazilian researchers such as Klein (2011), Pinheiro (2013), Danza (2014, 2019), and Gonçalo (2016) have translated it as a “life purpose”. Danza (2014) justifies the adoption of this term by the fact that the notion of the project refers to a behavior of anticipation that aims to organize the future through planning that allows an opening for deviations (BOUTINET, 2002). Thus, it accommodates changes related to associated psychological constructs, such as the value system (BLASI, 1995; ARAÚJO, 2007) and identity, typical of human life.

It is important to highlight that this definition is integrative, that is, to consider that an individual has a life purpose, he must meet the four criteria mentioned here: to be a stable intention, with personal meaning, guided by ethical principles, and imbued with strategies that allow its performance. Projections that meet two or more of these criteria were understood by Damon, Menon, and Bronk (2003) as precursor forms of life purpose: 1) self-centered life goal, which excludes the positive impact beyond the self; 2) lack of personal meaning that organizes and guides efforts and actions, and 3) lack of actions to materialize the projections.

Several studies have revealed the benefits of the life purpose for the positive development of youth (MARIANO; GOING, 2011; STEGER, 2012), highlighting its psychic relevance for young people. According to a study carried out by McKnight and Kashdan (2009), the life purpose works as a self-orientation system that guarantees a certain level of psychological cohesion (MARIANO; VAILLANT, 2012) while the young person transits through different cultural references and values. Although it can be studied at different stages of development, including people of advanced ages (COLBY et al., 2020; BUNDICK et al., 2021), youth is the field that brings together most investigations on this topic for a few reasons. First because, from the point of view of cognitive development, it is at this stage that individuals establish the ability to make complex representations about the future from mental resources such as hypothetical-deductive reasoning, abstract thinking, the coordination of multiple possibilities of choice, and the elaboration of theories about oneself and about the world (INHELDER; PIAGET, 1976; MOSHMAN, 2011), essential for the construction of life purpose. Second, because the life purpose establishes an intimate relationship with the identity - whose construction is accentuated between adolescence and the beginning of adulthood -, considered by many authors (ERICKSON, 1968; SCHWARTS, 2001; DAMON; MENON; BRONK, 2003; BUNDICK, 2011) as a central component of identity.

To deepen the relationship between these psychosocial constructs, in the following section we explore the concept of identity and the approaches that contribute to the understanding of positive youth development.

IDENTITY: CONCEPT AND PERSPECTIVES

The concept of identity is often used in studies on life purpose in an imprecise way or as a synonym for self (KLEIN, 2011; PÁTARO, 2011; PINHEIRO, 2013; DANZA, 2014, 2019). In this article, the definition of identity is based on the work of Erik Erikson (1976) and studies that bring new contributions to his theory (MARCIA, 1966; BLASI; GLODIS, 1995; MCADAMS, 2001; MOSHMAN, 2011; MCLEAN, 2014; SCHWARTZ; LUYCKX; CROCETTI, 2015).

To advance in the definition of identity, first of all, we need to demarcate the tenuous difference with the concept of self. It is a system of representations that the individual elaborates about himself (DAMON; HART, 1988; HARTER, 2012; SILVA, 2020), which is constituted with the development of the representative function and the idea of a permanent object around the age of 2 (PIAGET, 1996). Identity is a more elaborate configuration of the self, which is characterized by the individual's commitment, built through an active process of exploration, with certain social roles, values, and ideologies, considered central in their self-representations and that give him a sense of psychosocial unity and an understanding of his place in society (ERIKSON, 1976; BLASI; GLODIS, 1995;

MCADAMS, 2001; MOSHMAN, 2011; SILVA, 2020). According to several studies, identity begins to appear at the beginning of adolescence (around 12 years old), but it is only at the end of this period and especially at the beginning of adulthood that it will be more actively elaborated and acquire more defined contours (ERIKSON, 1976; BLASI; GLODIS, 1995; KROGER; MARTINUSSEN; MARCIA, 2010; MOSHMAN, 2011; HARTER, 2012; MCLEAN, 2014; CARLSSON; WÄNGQVIST; FRISÉN, 2015; SCHWARTZ; LUYCKX; CROCETTI, 2015; FADJUKOFF; PULKKINEN; KOKKO, 2016; CRAMER, 2017). Blasi and Glodis (1995), for example, show that at this stage, a person increasingly begins to recognize the existence of psychosocial characteristics that are fundamentally important for the person who is – in contrast to physical characteristics, for example – and feels committed to being loyal to himself. He also starts to assert himself as an agent responsible for the construction of himself and not a mere spectator of an immanent identity that will be revealed to him.

According to Erikson (1976) and Arnett (2000), identity development is the main psychosocial task of adolescents and young adults. On one hand, this is due to the need for the individual increasingly autonomous and detached from the childhood universe, to answer for himself who he is and how he will live and act in the world, which requires the formulation of a synthesis on the processes of individuation that already existed in childhood (ERIKSON, 1976; INHELDER; PIAGET, 1976; MOSHMAN, 2011), but had been characterized by dispersed elements of the self, without forming a coherent unit (MCADAMS, 2001; HARTER, 2012). On the other hand, it stems from the advent of formal operations, which allow the individual, from adolescence onwards, to think and explore fields of possibilities about himself and the world in an abstract plan and independently of concrete reality (INHELDER; PIAGET, 1976; MOSHMAN, 2011). This process of identity construction takes place through a dialectical movement in which the individual actively coordinates and negotiates his psychic processes with the references, expectations, and possibilities of adaptation and changes available in the society in which he is inserted.

Erikson's work (1976) has been the matrix of some of the main theoretical and methodological approaches to identity, whose studies can be articulated with the life purpose. They are the model of identity status elaborated by James Marcia (MARCIA, 1966; MOSHMAN, 2011; SCHWARTZ; LUYCKX; CROCETTI, 2015; FADJUKOFF; PULKKINEN; KOKKO, 2016), narrative identity approach (MCADAMS, 2018; MCLEAN, 2014; SCHWARTZ; LUYCKX; CROCETTI, 2015) and studies on moral identity (BLASI, 1984; COLBY; DAMON, 1992; HARDY; CARLO, 2010; SILVA, 2020; SILVA; ARAÚJO, 2020).

The identity status model was formulated by Marcia (1966) as a continuation of Erikson's (1976) proposition that identity is characterized by the exploration and establishment of commitment to ideological options, occupations, and forms of relationship available in society, to help the person to forge a coherent unity about himself and to situate himself in the adult world. Based on this premise, Marcia (1966) developed a widely used theoretical-methodological model (MOSHMAN, 2011; CARLSSON; WÄNGQVIST; FRISÉN, 2015; SCHWARTZ; LUYCKX; CROCETTI, 2015; FADJUKOFF; PULKKINEN; KOKKO, 2016; CRAMER, 2017), which synthesizes the formation of identity in two processes: the establishment of commitments with certain domains of content (career, religion, sexuality, political ideology and relationships) that will constitute the self-representation and the active exploration of alternatives related to such domains.

According to Marcia's (1966) model, these processes (exploration and commitment) can be experienced in four different ways in the construction of identity, called identity status. They are I) identity achievement: the person has consistent commitments marked by deep personal investment in these areas – commitments defined through an active exploration process; II) moratorium: there are no defined commitments, but there is an active search to achieve it; III) foreclosure: commitment established without autonomous personal exploration but through the reproduction of the values and beliefs of reference figures; IV) diffusion: there is no commitment or exploratory process.

More recently, the field of domains identified by the tradition founded by Erikson and Marcia (career, religion, sexuality, political ideology, and relationships) has been expanded and specified, encompassing the domains of moral, ethnic, gender, friendships, family, romantic relationships, leisure (for a review, see MOSHMAN, 2011) and health and well-being (MCLEAN et al., 2014).

Another approach inherited from Erikson's work is narrative identity, according to which identity is organized and can be manifested through a life narrative structure (MCADAMS, 2001, 2018; PRATT; ARNOLD; LAWFORD, 2009; LAPSLEY, 2010; MCLEAN, 2014; SCHWARTZ; LUYCKX; CROCI, 2015). The elaboration of a life narrative begins to occur in the transition from adolescence to adulthood when the vast collection of autobiographical memories starts to be organized temporally and thematically and configure a story about how the individual became the person he is and who he desires to be and become. In Erikson's words (1958, p. 111), at this stage, the individual understands "[...] life in a continuous perspective, both from a retrospective and prospective point of view".

This psychosocial unit, which configures the narrative identity, is associated with a central function that Erikson (1963) attributed the function of integration to identity. According to McAdams (2018), narrative identity integrates the elements of the self in both a synchronic and a diachronic sense. From a synchronic point of view, it includes different values, social roles, and attitudes considered central by the person in his self-representation in the present moment, since it creates a sense of personal unity, explaining how the person remains the same in different situational contexts from the contents that it considers central in its self-representation. From a diachronic point of view, the life narrative allows the individual to integrate past, present, and future, demonstrating how he became who he is and also projecting the person he could become. Thus, the life narrative has the function and consequence of providing unity, coherence, and purpose to identity. In this sense, it can be said that it is, at the same time, a constructor and a product of identity (MCADAMS, 2018).

As we mentioned before, the construction of identity presupposes active exploration and commitment to certain domains of content. The integration of moral content (solidarity, justice, honesty, etc.) into identity has been an increasingly explored field in identity studies and moral psychology (BLASI, 1984, 1995, 2004; DAMON, 1984; COLBY; DAMON, 1992; HARDY; CARLO, 2010; JENNINGS; MITCHEL; HANNAH, 2015; HERTZ; KRETTENAUER, 2016; REED et al., 2016; SILVA, 2020; SILVA; ARAÚJO, 2020). The concept of moral identity refers to the centrality that certain individuals attribute to moral values in their self-representations (BLASI, 1984; COLBY; DAMON, 1992; HARDY; CARLO, 2010; SILVA, 2020).

Erikson (1976) stated that morality is one of the central contents that will be explored and some individuals will commit to the process of identity development. According to longitudinal studies, in adolescence, the moral contents start to appear in the representations that individuals formulate to describe and explain their attributes, thoughts, feelings, and actions (DAMON; HART, 1988; BLASI, 1995; PRATT et al., 2003; SILVA, 2020). Since morality is a fundamental domain of human relations and considering the insertion in the adult world demands the assumption of personal criteria for regulating one's conduct and a sense of personal responsibility, adolescents and young adults seek references and identifications with ways of life, normative principles, models of conduct and ideologies that express moral values, integrating them to their representations of themselves in different degrees. For some individuals, such values may become central to the person they are and want to be, while, for others, moral values will be peripheral in other contents considered more important. In the first case, there is the constitution of moral identity.

Studies have shown that the greater the centrality of moral values to identity, the greater the influence of moral values on the subject's judgments, feelings, and actions (BLASI, 1995; PRATT et al., 2003; KRISTJÁNSSON, 2009; FRIMER et al., 2011; LAPSLEY, 2015; HERTZ; KRETTENAUER, 2016; SILVA, 2020). In this sense, individuals with a moral identity tend to demonstrate great commitment to moral conduct (COLBY; DAMON, 1992; DAMON; COLBY, 2009; REED et al., 2016; SILVA, 2020).

The integration of moral contents (and other classes of contents) to identity, and the consequent sense of responsibility and commitment that the person feels for such contents result from the affective bond he establishes with situations, concepts, ways of life, and people (including himself) that express moral contents and that, as a result of such bonds, become values for the person (PIAGET, 1953/2004; BLASI, 1995, 2004; ARAÚJO, 2007; SILVA, 2020). The construction of values and moral identity is a dynamic and open process. Although it begins to occur consciously and systematically from adolescence onwards, can be updated and reformulated throughout life and as a result of changed

situations (AQUINO et al., 2009; LAPSLEY; STAY, 2014; JENNINGS; MITCHEL; HANNAH, 2015; SILVA, 2020).

Finally, thematizing identity requires clarifying the difference and the relationship between the concepts of personal identity and social identity. The first refers to the definition that we outlined earlier – a construction that each individual elaborates for himself in dialogue and negotiation with the society in which he is inserted and with the individuals who are part of it –, while the second concerns the bond and feeling of belonging of a person to a social group that shares certain characteristics, which give this group a sense of collective identity. Thus, although from a sociological point of view, social identity is the collective identity of a group (whether it is ethnic-racial, religious, professional, class or gender), we can only speak of social identity insofar as the individual identifies with the values, practices, claims, traditions, among other characteristics of a given group, and integrates them into his identity. In this sense, we agree with Moshman (2011), Spears (2011), and Chandler and Dunlop (2015) that social identity is part of personal identity.

ARTICULATIONS BETWEEN IDENTITY AND LIFE PURPOSE STUDIES

Identity and life purpose are closely intertwined psychosocial constructs. From the definitions of both presented here, we can unfold the understanding that the life purpose is an expression of identity (BOUTINET, 2002; BUNDICK, 2011) since what the people want to be and accomplish in the future reflects the values, ideals, and commitments central to their self-representations.

Both identity and life purpose are related to the search for a definition of who one is and how one intends to live, and for both late adolescence and early adulthood is a period of marked formulation (ERIKSON, 1976; BLASI; GLODIS, 1995; MCADAMS, 2001; KOSHY; MARIANO; GOING, 2011; MOSHMAN, 2011; DANZA, 2019). Therefore, when studying their articulations, we intend to identify correspondences and possible influences that one construct establishes on the other to contribute to the consolidation of both as objects of knowledge in teaching-learning practices in schools, aiming at integral formation. In this sense, it is worth highlighting several studies (MARIANO; GOING, 2011; STEGER, 2012; CROCE'TTI et al., 2013; MALIN et al., 2013; BERZONSKY, 2016) that reinforce that both deserve their space within pedagogical practices because they are related to indicators of prosperity, well-being, self-fulfillment, self-regulation, and engagement, all of which are fundamental for the positive development of youth. However, we have to warn that in this article we do not seek to establish total parallels between life purpose and identity, but rather to signal perceived continuities between their processes of construction, development, and functioning from a psychic point of view.

Several studies carried out in Brazil and abroad have sought to find categories of projections for the future that represent the way young people deal with their intentions for the future toward the life purpose, using criteria such as the degree of commitment they establish with the future (DAMON, 2009), the culture that supports the understanding of the life purpose (MORAN, 2014) or the psychological functioning that underlies the construction of the life purpose (PÁTARO, 2011; PINHEIRO, 2013; DANZA, 2014, 2019).

Damon (2009) formulated four categories of projections for the future: the disengaged, which do not present any goals for the future; dreamers, who, despite having goals, are not committed to achieving them; the superficial, who have goals with a low affective bond; and those who have life purpose. Moran (2014) also identified four categories: the supported, who have superficial intentions for the future, which depend on the support they receive from their families; the givers, who have declared an interest in helping others, although they are not committed to that goal; the strivers, who base their intentions on dominant social expectations about success; and the disciples, with well-defined purposes in life based on religious faith and the belief that they must fulfill what was planned by God.

The recognition that the ways of projecting for the future and the processes of construction of life purpose could establish continuities with the processes of identity construction, stimulated the study by Burrow, O'Dell, and Hill (2010), which investigated the commitment and exploration variables in measurements of life purpose and identity. The research showed possible correlations between profiles of life purpose and Marcia's (1966) categories on identity formation, systematized as follows: achieved

life purpose: there is exploration and commitment to a life purpose; foreclosed life purpose: there is commitment, but low rates of exploitation; uncommitted: there is an exploration of the life purpose, but no commitment is made; and diffused: there is no exploration or commitment to a life purpose.

In a study with 265 young Brazilians aged between 14 and 18, Danza (2019) found five different ways of organizing the future, which suggest a relationship with the identity statuses identified by Marcia (1966) and with contemporary works from the same reference (MOSHMAN, 2011; CARLSSON; WÄNGQVIST; FRISÉN, 2015; SCHWARTZ; LUYCKX; CROCETTI, 2015; FADJUKOFF; PULKKINEN; KOKKO, 2016; CRAMER, 2017). They are named normative projections, idealized projections, partial projects, life purpose, and life purpose with social commitment.

The way of an organization called normative projection was developed by young people who believed that in the future they would have a life based on work and family, as they consider universal categories of adult life, but they did not demonstrate links with these contents or the exploration process. The normalization of the future life associated with the lack of meanings in this way of organization of the future revealed the weakening of the bond with the future, expressed by the lack of personality and establishment of commitments. This result is close to the diffuse identity status (MARCIA, 1966), in which the individual neither explores nor commits to any themes that constitute the identity. In this sense, young people with normative projections seem to resort to social norms as a way of dealing with the absence of reflections on what they want for their future life. Also, on the relationship between normative projections and diffuse identity, Fadjukoff, Pulkkinen, and Kokko (2016) suggest that the very absence of clear goals can be a cause of diffuse identity, in adolescents or young adults.

The young people who organized their future through idealized projections were those who mentioned a wide range of possibilities for the future without committing to any of them, whether on a material level, through objectives and strategies for their performance, or on an affective level, for the construction of meanings that would make such possibilities central to their future aspirations. This organization seems to establish a continuum with moratorium identity status (MARCIA, 1966), in which the person explores different possibilities without committing to any of them. However, this is not the only form of organization of the future that can be related to this identity status. The organization called partial projects was used by young people who, despite not knowing for sure what they wanted for the future, prepared for it through dedication to studies, considered an important resource for them to explore and expand their field of choice. In this sense, these young people seem to take advantage of the moratorium to explore possibilities without committing to decisions.

The young people who organized the future through the construction of life purpose or life purpose with social commitment were those who presented stable intentions, loaded with personality, guided by an ethical sense, and associated with planning that allowed their achievement. The element that differentiates them is the centrality that social commitment occupies in the projections of the second group. For these young people, it is an organizing element of their intentions for the future. Possibly, most of these young people manifest the identity achievement status, in which the person autonomously assumes identity commitments, that is, after going through a period of exploration of himself and his possibilities of insertion in the world (MARCIA, 1966; MOSHMAN, 2011; CARLSSON; WÄNGQVIST; FRISÉN, 2015; SCHWARTZ; LUYCKX; CROCETTI, 2015). However, given the scope of the research instrument used by Danza (2019), there may be, in this group, young people who present the foreclosure status, that is, they establish commitments without prior exploration. This can occur as a result of external influences or pressures, for example, from the family nucleus or the school institution, which can generate the assumption of commitments linked to an identity marked by the desire to meet external expectations. Thus, the instrument used by the research does not make it possible to determine the degree of exploration in which the life purpose were built.

It is interesting to note that Danza (2019) also identified young people who did not formulate any type of projection for the future (although they were dealing with it), claiming to have doubts about their identity, doubts that are accompanied by states of anguish, fear of failure and hesitation in the uncertainty of the future. This way of thinking, called by the author as identity conflict, establishes a clear parallel with what Luyckx et al. (2008) call ruminative exploration. This is considered by them as the fifth state of identity, which represents a process that prevents the individual from advancing in the construction of the identity due to fear, hesitation, confusion, or unproductive perfectionism.

In addition to these parallels, research on identity and life purpose converge in the description of the process of construction and development of these constructs. Starting with the identity, several studies show that its construction occurs gradually from the middle of adolescence, but that it starts to gain more defined contours, especially in early adulthood (BLASI; GLODIS, 1995; CARLSSON; WÄNGQVIST; FRISÉN, 2015; SCHWARTZ; LUYCKX; CROCETTI, 2015; FADJUKOFF; PULKKINEN; KOKKO, 2016), although it can often take longer to define. A meta-analysis of 127 longitudinal studies on identity development by Kroger, Martinussen, and Marcia (2010) showed that only half of the survey participants had achieved identity before 36 years old.

Also, this and other studies (CARLSSON; WÄNGQVIST; FRISÉN, 2015; SCHWARTZ; LUYCKX; CROCETTI, 2015; FADJUKOFF; PULKKINEN; KOKKO, 2016) showed that once constituted (which does not happen for all people), the identity achievement can change throughout a lifetime. Research on identity and life purpose converge in indicating that there can be significant variability in the way in which the process of identity construction and life purpose is operated over time. Both identity (for a review, see SCHWARTZ; LUYCKX; CROCETTI, 2015; FADJUKOFF; PULKKINEN; KOKKO, 2016; CRAMER, 2017) and life purpose (MALIN et al., 2013; DANZA, 2019) can, once established, undergo reviews, updates, oscillations and even regressions throughout life, which denotes the dynamic and open character of these constructs.

In a complementary line, in the dynamics of conservation and changes of identity and life purpose over time, research points to a tendency towards the conservation of the more elaborate modes of identity (SCHWARTZ; LUYCKX; CROCETTI, 2015; FADJUKOFF; PULKKINEN; KOKKO, 2016) and future projection (DANZA, 2019), which are the identity achievement and life purpose. This trend seems to be related to the high commitment with certain contents. Research developed by Fadjukoff, Pulkkinen, and Kokko (2016), which followed the identity status of people between 27 and 50 years old through five measurements, suggests that, despite variations that may occur in identity status, there is no total reformulation and abruptness of identity, but a tendency to preserve a certain identity status for at least one of the investigated domains (religious belief, political identity, career, lifestyle, and intimate relationships). On the other hand, the maintenance of an identity status for all domains over the five measurements was rare, as what we saw were fluctuations, which, according to the authors, denotes the need that people feel to perform updates in the identity. To date, there are no longer longitudinal studies on life purpose that can identify patterns similar to those found in the study by Fadjukoff, Pulkkinen, and Kokko (2016).

Still, on the conservations and changes in identity identified by Fadjukoff, Pulkkinen, and Kokko (2016), changes from the identity achieved to the foreclosed or diffuse identity were related to periods of crisis in adulthood, for example, financial. Corresponding results were found by Danza (2019) among young people who moved from the category of life purpose to normative projections when faced with the impossibility of achieving their goals due to financial difficulties or lack of support from family members.

In addition to the relationships established between the identity status and the way young people deal with the future, the continuities that the contents of both constructs establish with each other (and how individuals are linked to them) are visible. Therefore, just as the identity status are not a totalizing structure, since individuals can be linked and committed in different ways with different types of content (such as the domains of religious belief, political identity, career, moral, etc.) (MCLEAN et al., 2014; SCHWARTZ; LUYCKX; CROCETTI, 2015; FADJUKOFF; PULKKINEN; KOKKO, 2016; CRAMER, 2017), the same can be observed in life purpose, as it is possible to build projects well-defined and meaningful ways of life about any content (DAMON, 2009; PÁTARO, 2011; PINHEIRO, 2013; MALIN; BALLARD; DAMON, 2015; DANZA, 2019; ARANTES; PINHEIRO, 2021). In this sense, any analysis on life purpose or on identity that aims at a value judgment on their contents is inopportune and inoperative from the point of view of the analysis of their consistency, psychological coherence, or the benefits they can generate.

Lewis (2003), for example, has shown that politics is the least important identity domain for young people, but interest increases through adulthood as it becomes more needed, although it remains less important than other content such as careers and family. This trend was also verified by Fadjukoff, Pulkkinen, and Kokko (2016) in a study on identity status, and by McLean et al. (2014) in two studies on

narrative identity. In this case, contents of the ideological domain were less frequent in life narratives, but when they appeared, they predominated over other contents. The same can be observed in research on life purpose, in which both politics and other forms of participation in public life, such as social commitment and citizenship, are rarely manifested in life purpose. However, when they appear, they are usually the organizing nucleus of the life purpose, as revealed by the categories of life purpose with social commitment found by Danza (2014, 2019), which have correspondents in the research of Damon (2009) and Pinheiro (2013).

Regarding moral content, there is a low incidence in the life purpose of young research participants in Brazil and abroad (PÁTARO, 2011; MALIN, 2013; PINHEIRO, 2013; DANZA, 2014, 2019; MALIN; BALLARD; DAMON, 2015; ARANTES; PINHEIRO, 2021). There are few young people whose life purpose have as their central organizing element concern for others, social commitment, and a deep desire to promote transformations with a view to the common good. Considering that the integration of moral content to life goals and the ideal self-projected by the individual has been adopted as a possible manifestation of moral identity (COLBY; DAMON, 1992; HARDY et al., 2013; MALIN; BALLARD; DAMON, 2015; SILVA, 2020), the aforementioned research on life purpose converge with studies that indicate that moral identity is a phenomenon with low incidence in the population (BLASI, 1983, 2004; COLBY; DAMON, 1992; FRIMER; WALKER, 2009).

Still on the contents of identity, in the work of McLean et al. (2014) on narrative identity, the themes of family and professional occupation were more frequently found, and in most narratives only one type of content was mobilized. Yeager, Bundik, and Johnson (2012) indicate the influence that professional concerns and motivations can exert on the development of adolescents' identity and goals. Once again, these data reveal a close correspondence between identity and life purpose, since family and work were the main contents mobilized by young people when building their life purpose in various studies (DAMON, 2009; PÁTARO, 2011; YEAGER; MORAN et al., 2012; PINHEIRO, 2013; DANZA, 2014). In some cases, one or another theme appears exclusively, as among young people who express the desire to have a well-established professional career and not start a family (DANZA, 2014); when they only express the desire to have a family and do not reveal specific aspirations about the dimension of work (PINHEIRO, 2013); or even when, despite wanting a professional career, they lack decision-making in this area, dedicating to more complex formulations on the constitution of a new family unit, as is the case of those who have partial projects (DANZA, 2019).

Although there are no studies that systematically relate the concept of narrative identity and the life purpose, reviews on the perspective of narrative identity (SCHWARTZ; LUYCKX; CROCE'ITI, 2015; MCADAMS, 2018) indicate that a mature identity can be recognized by the ability of the person in recognizing and attributing meaning to the episodes (positive and negative) of his biography and identifying them as significant for the construction of himself in the present and his purposes for the future. According to McLean et al. (2014), an important attribute of identity is the sense of temporal continuity that the individual establishes for the personality traits and values that are most central to himself. The authors agree with Pasupathi, Brubaker, and Mansour (2007) that structuring a coherent story that explains how a person changed and remained the same helps to preserve a sense of continuity through time and to think about himself in the future.

When thinking about the relationship between narrative identity and life purpose, it is worth noting that memory and project, past and future, establish a relationship of co-implication, in which one element updates and gives meaning to the other based on the connections made by the present. The projection of the future can re-signify the past and reorganize the biography, while the retrospective reading of oneself produces meanings about the future (MELUCCI, 2004).

Therefore, the elaboration of a coherent connection between past, present, and future is an important attribute of identity and finds correspondence with studies on life purpose (DAMON et al., 2003; DAMON, 2009; DANZA, 2014, 2019) that define the consistency of a life purpose based on the young person's ability to coordinate life goals with interests, values, and behaviors related to the present and, sometimes, to the past, incorporating the autobiographical narrative.

PEDAGOGIC IMPLICATIONS

The parallels found between identity and life purpose studies suggest a high degree of overlap between the constructs. Since the life purpose is conducted of anticipation in which the individual projects his most central values and commitments, his construction presupposes or at least must occur simultaneously with the constitution of identity. It is not a matter of affirming a linear relationship of causality, because if, on the one hand, the life purpose is an expression of the way of organization, the commitments, and contents that forge the identity, on the other hand, the prospection - the definition of who the subject wants to be and what he wants to accomplish - is an inalienable component of identity construction (ERIKSON, 1958; ARNETT, 2000; PASUPATHI; BRUBAKER; MANSOUR, 2007; MOSHMAN, 2011; MCADAMS, 2001, 2018). In this sense, building the life purpose is a procedure that can give more defined contours to the identity. However, adopting an identity as an object of knowledge and creating conditions for young people to be able to build it more consciously and autonomously is essential to help them build their life purpose.

As advocated by Danza e Silva (2020), pedagogical practices that embrace self-knowledge (from the psychic and social point of view), self-regulation, the conceptualization of the processes of construction of personal and social identity, and the elaboration of the autobiographical narrative can contribute to this purpose. McAdams (2018) and McLean et al. (2014) argue that the elaboration of an autobiographical narrative, in which the individual selects and organizes the events of his life in a coherent structure, articulating past, present, and future, is a powerful instrument for the development of identity and for the attribution of purpose to it.

The research findings presented in the previous section call attention to the open and not necessarily linear character of identity construction and life purpose. These are constructions that can change over time, both in terms of organization and content. This points to the importance of pedagogical practices creating conditions for young people to explore themselves and the world so that their identities and life purpose result from an autonomous and conscious construction. In this way, they will be able to update, review and modify their life purposes as they feel the need and according to social contingencies. Otherwise, there will be a normative life purpose that is dependent on external and external determinations and pressures.

The issue of decision-making and its relationship with autonomy and engagement is of paramount importance for the life purpose and identity. Berzonsky (2011) identified three ways of dealing with decisions in the identity construction process: a) informational style, characterized by openness and flexibility, willingness to explore new ideas and well-established commitments, which are subject to review, if necessary; b) normative style, characterized by conformity to authority figures and low willingness or ability to consider other options; and c) diffuse style, characterized by the avoidance of defining commitments and taking responsibility for them. Although the study does not focus on the life purpose, these categories can be references for educators to understand possible patterns of behavior of young people in terms of decision-making and to help them build life purposes with autonomy, commitment, and stability, and to be able to deal with contingencies, uncertainties, and changes.

In this sense, we consider that the definition of a life purpose at the end of high school, although desired, is not as important as the construction of knowledge, skills, and competences that allow the person to build and rebuild his life purpose beyond the stage of schooling. This premise is reinforced by research data that demonstrate that identity and life purpose are complex constructions whose definition time varies between individuals and that, for many of them, will only occur in early adulthood (CARLSSON; WÄNGQVIST; FRISÉN, 2015; SCHWARTZ; LUYCKX; CROCETTI, 2015; FADJUKOFF; PULKKINEN; KOKKO, 2016). Therefore, artificializing this definition through directive pedagogical interventions could result in a normative life purpose and, consequently, without the consistency and positive affective charge necessary to sustain the changes that the passage of time imposes.

Regarding this discussion, we should add that the high rates of young people who do not reveal having built an identity and a life purpose at school age come from studies in which these young people did not participate in systematic interventions aimed at this purpose. Different data have been identified in research with interventions on the development of identity (YATES; YOUNISS, 1996; BERNACKI; JAEGER, 2014; SILVA; ARAÚJO, 2019; SILVA; ARAÚJO, 2021) and life purpose (DANZA, 2019). Longitudinal research developed by Danza (2019), which analyzed the conversations

and changes in the future projections of young people over the three years of high school, showed significant differences between young people who participated in systematic pedagogical interventions on life purpose throughout high school, and a control group that did not receive this type of intervention. While the first group started with 27.1% of young people with life purpose and ended the study with 81.42%, the second started with 24.2% and ended with 27.2%, which suggests, that in the second group, the school did not exert a significant influence on the young people who finished their studies with life purpose.

Such data attest to the importance of identity and life purpose being the object of teaching and learning. If the school is the institution responsible for preparing children and adolescents for life in all its complexity, this implies contributing to the formation of a human being in its entirety, contemplating not only the knowledge of the physical and social world but also the self-knowledge, integrating the physical, social, cognitive, affective and ethical components.

Pedagogical work with the identity and life purpose cannot be alienated from the different contents around which these constructs may be constituted (DAMON, 2009; PÁTARO, 2011; PINHEIRO, 2013; MALIN; BALLARD; DAMON, 2015; SCHWARTZ; LUYCKX; CROCE'ITI, 2015; FADJUKOFF; PULKKINEN; KOKKO, 2016; CRAMER, 2017; DANZA, 2019; ARANTES; PINHEIRO, 2021). In the life purpose, in particular, it is common for the dimension of the professional career to have exclusivity or primacy over other contents within the scope of pedagogical interventions. However, it should be noted that content such as family, religion, political and moral ideology can also be a source of a life purpose (DAMON, 2009; BUNDICK, 2011; KOSHY; MARIANO; GOING, 2011; PÁTARO, 2011; PINHEIRO, 2013; DANZA, 2019) and should be the object of teaching and learning. Family and friendship relationships, for example, are an important dimension of a person's life – of their constitution and choices –, in addition to playing a role as a reference and support for young people. Although alongside the professional career, they are a predominant content in the life purposes of young people (PÁTARO, 2011; PINHEIRO, 2013; DANZA, 2014, 2019), they are not usually considered as teaching-learning content.

Moral content has a low incidence in the life purposes of young people (PÁTARO, 2011; MALIN, 2013; PINHEIRO, 2013; DANZA, 2014, 2019; among others). This data is explained, in part, by Malin (2013) and Danza (2019), by the low opportunity for young people to put in practice their socio-moral concerns and promote social transformation. Studies on life purpose (DAMON; 2009; MALIN; BALLARD; DAMON, 2015) and moral identity (COLBY; DAMON, 1992; YATES; YOUNISS, 1996; PRATT et al., 2003; GOETHEM et al., 2014; SILVA, 2014; 2020) suggest that the engagement of young people with actions that promote social changes – such as those provided in social intervention projects (SILVA; ARAÚJO, 2019; SILVA; ARAÚJO, 2021) – enables the integration of moral values into identity and life purpose. Thus, Danza (2019) shows that when young people participate in values education practices (PUIG, 1998), the percentage of life purposes with social commitment increases over time, having been represented by 1.4 % in the initial phase of the study and 24.2% in the final phase by the experimental group, while the control group presented 3% in the initial phase and 0% in the final phase.

Finally, although our focus of analysis is identity, it is worth noting that the life purpose is not a natural unfolding of identity, since it involves, in addition to the values and commitments from identity, the elaboration of objectives, planning coordinated to them, and the engagement in actions that give materiality to the intentions and allow the performance of the life purpose. This means that, in addition to identity, exploration, and knowledge of the world, reflections on oneself and on the contents to which we refer elsewhere, it is necessary to contemplate, in the context of pedagogical interventions, the development of knowledge and skills associated with choice, decision-making, and planning, in the personal, professional and citizen spheres.

FINAL REMARKS

The exploration of the articulations between identity and life purpose shows correspondences and possible intersections in the constitution, development, and functioning of these constructs, both in terms of modes of organization and contents. Both are constructs that

keep differences but are intimately intertwined: if, on the one hand, the life purpose expresses the values and commitments of identity, on the other hand, the prospection of the self is a constitutive and inalienable dimension of identity. The following considerations can be extracted from this: a) the construction of the life purpose presupposes or at least occurs simultaneously with the constitution of the identity, b) however, life purpose also includes, beyond identity components, aspects such as planning and carrying out actions to achieve goals. Therefore, c) life purpose is not synonymous with the prospective dimension of identity, although this is one of its fundamental components. In this sense, since the construction of the life purpose involves exploring oneself and the world, d) its construction can give more defined contours to the identity.

Identity and life purpose studies indicate that they are constructions that assume consistency and certain temporal stability, but that both their modes of organization and the contents can be changed over time, which indicates their dynamic and open character. This points to the need for young people, more than defining a life purpose at the end of high school, should construct knowledge, skills, and competences that make them capable to build and rebuild their life purpose throughout life with autonomy and to deal with contingencies, uncertainties, and changes.

The continuities identified in the psychosocial processes of identity and life purpose construction suggest that the exploratory capacity of self-knowledge and world's knowledge is a way of important relevance to understanding the performance of young people both in the conquest of identity and in the formulation of the life purpose. This leads us to defend that, from a pedagogical point of view, these two dimensions should be emphasized so that students can explore different possibilities of being in the world to be able to construct the identity and life purpose consciously and autonomously.

In addition, the psychic phenomena that produce feelings of anguish and fear in the need for this exploration, in conjunction to the results of research that show the role of pedagogical interventions in the formulation of life purpose (BUNDICK, 2011; MALIN et al. 2013; DANZA, 2019)), seem to be important indications of the need to thematize the life purpose and identity in spaces of intentional teaching-learning, where young people can be welcomed and guided in their doubts about who they are and who they want to become, in difficulties to deal with the uncertainty of the future and faced with the need to formulate and engage in goals that allow them to live the life they want to have, considering the other in their field of actions.

By identifying the correspondences, continuities, and intersections between studies on identity and life purpose, this article provides knowledge that can contribute to the formulation and improvement of pedagogical practices so that young people attribute personal and social meaning to their training process and their insertion in the world, becoming capable of meeting social demands and intervening on them with autonomy, competence, and engagement, under ethical and moral parameters. It also indicates a field of study to be explored, especially by empirical research that can provide data to corroborate, refute or formulate new questions about the interrelationships between the complex processes of identity construction and the life purpose that we highlighted in this article.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with this article.

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