

ARTICLE

STUDENT TRAJECTORIES AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY: BETWEEN FAMILY PROJECT-PATHS, BELONGING AND INDIVIDUATION¹

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ABSTRACT: This article is situated at the interface between studies on the composition of the university student public and the practices within its segments. We seek to understand the diversity of challenges that the university experience poses for a group deemed to be privileged. In the context of expanding access opportunities for lower income classes in higher education, the subject of elite schooling sheds light on the dynamics that structure university trajectories. We analyze the trajectories of students from a public university in the South of the country, considering family income, cultural capital, and perceptions of family paths-projects, training, and university life. We characterize socioeconomic conditions and ways of appropriating family heritage, with ruptures and adjustments in processes of individuation. We applied a questionnaire to undergraduate students in different programs, we obtained 1,463 valid responses and classified respondents into three groups. We conducted in-depth interviews with 10 out of 202 students from high-income families. The analysis addressed how these students express family and individual mobilization through family paths-projects and individuation processes. The data indicate a tendency among individuals to perceive, take position, and act in a manner convergent with the circumstances of relative social and educational privilege when compared to other segments. The interviewed students value schooling and pursuing a degree at a public university in a naturalized family path-project. On the other hand, they present elements of discomfort concerning family values and prescriptions, leveraging experiences in the university environment, a heterogeneous public space, to construct unique trajectories and achieve individuation.

Keywords: student trajectory, cultural heritage, family project-path, university, individuation.

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TRAJETÓRIAS DE ESTUDANTES EM UMA UNIVERSIDADE PÚBLICA: ENTRE TRAJETOS-PROJETOS FAMILIARES, PERTENCIMENTO E INDIVIDUAÇÃO

RESUMO: Este artigo se situa na interface entre estudos sobre a composição do público estudantil da universidade e sobre as práticas de seus segmentos. Buscamos compreender a diversidade de desafios que a experiência universitária suscita para um grupo considerado privilegiado. No contexto de ampliação de oportunidades de acesso para setores populares na educação superior, o tema da escolarização das elites ilumina as dinâmicas que estruturam trajetórias universitárias. Analisamos trajetórias de estudantes de uma universidade pública da Região Sul do país, considerando renda familiar, capital cultural e percepções do trajeto-projeto familiar, da formação e da vida universitária. Caracterizamos condições socioeconômicas e formas de apropriação da herança familiar, com rupturas e ajustes em processos de individuação. Aplicamos um questionário a estudantes de graduação de diversos cursos, obtivemos 1.463 respostas válidas e classificamos os respondentes em três grupos. Realizamos entrevistas em profundidade com 10 entre 202 estudantes pertencentes a famílias com renda alta. A análise objetivou responder como estudantes que pertencem a um segmento social elevado expressam a mobilização familiar e individual em trajetos-projetos familiares e processos de individuação. Os dados indicam inclinações para perceber, posicionar-se e agir de modo convergente com relativo privilégio social e escolar, frente a outros segmentos. Os estudantes entrevistados valorizam a escolarização e evidenciam que o curso superior na universidade pública está inserido em um trajeto-projeto familiar naturalizado. Por outro lado, apresentam elementos de desconforto em relação a valores e prescrições familiares, aproveitando experiências no ambiente da universidade, espaço público heterogêneo, para construir trajetórias singulares e produzir individuação.

Palavras-chave: trajetória estudantil; herança cultural; trajeto-projeto familiar; universidade; individuação.

TRAYECTORIAS ESTUDIANTILES DE UNA UNIVERSIDAD PÚBLICA: ENTRE TRAYECTOS-PROYECTOS FAMILIARES, PERTENENCIA E INDIVIDUACIÓN

RESUMEN: Este artículo, en la interface entre los estudios acerca de la composición del público estudiantil universitario y aquellos acerca de las prácticas de sus segmentos, busca comprender la diversidad de desafíos que la experiencia universitaria plantea a un grupo considerado privilegiado. En el contexto de la ampliación del acceso a la educación superior para sectores populares, el tema de la escolarización de las élites ilumina las dinámicas de las trayectorias universitarias. Analizamos las trayectorias de estudiantes de una universidad pública en el sur del país, considerando la renta familiar, el capital cultural, las percepciones del trayecto-proyecto familiar, la formación y la vida universitaria. Caracterizamos las condiciones socioeconómicas y las formas de apropiación de la herencia familiar, identificando rupturas y ajustes en los procesos de individuación. Aplicamos una encuesta a estudiantes de pregrado de diversas carreras, obtuvimos 1,463 resultados válidos y clasificamos a los participantes en tres grupos. Realizamos entrevistas en profundidad con 10 de los 202 estudiantes de familias con ingresos altos. El análisis explora cómo esos estudiantes expresan la movilización familiar e individual en trayectos-proyectos familiares y procesos de individuación. Los datos indican inclinaciones hacia comportamientos convergentes con una situación de privilegio social y educativo en comparación con otros segmentos. Los estudiantes valorizan la escolarización y destacan que la carrera en la universidad pública forma parte de un trayecto-proyecto familiar naturalizado. Además, presentan elementos de desconforto en relación con valores familiares, aprovechando las experiencias en el ambiente universitario, espacio público heterogéneo, para construir trayectorias singulares y lograr individuación.

Palabras clave: trayectoria estudiantil, herencia cultural, trayecto-proyecto familiar, universidad, individuación.

INTRODUCTION: SITUATING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

This study of the trajectories of students belonging to a high social segment considers the internal heterogeneity of the elites in higher education and the transformations resulting from the expansion and diversification of access, made possible through affirmative action policies. Through analyzing individual paths, we seek to visualize the unique ways students from a privileged group experience public university. This discussion lies between studies that seek to understand the social reproduction of inequalities and changes in this framework.

When exploring student trajectories in higher education, it is necessary to consider the relationship between family and school socialization, which makes up a large part of sociological studies of education, especially from Bourdieu's theoretical proposition based on the transmission of cultural heritage (Bourdieu; Passeron, 2014; Lahire, 1997; Singly, 2009). This literature includes parental involvement in the choice of institutions and their guidance and support in daily life and academic performance (Nogueira, 2005). Other important topics are school opportunities and paths, transitions between educational levels, feelings of belonging (Abrantes, 2005; Horner, 2022), and choice of higher education programs (Nogueira, 2004; 2005; Madeira, 2022; Villa Lever, 2019). The analysis of educational trajectories through social and cultural variables reveals unequal opportunities in Brazil (Catani; Catani; Pereira, 2001; Valle, 2015; Catani, 2022) and in other countries (Brown, 2016; Haltia; Isopahkala-Bouret, Mutanen, 2023). Several studies on educational trajectories, such as those systematized by Massi, Muzzeti and Suficer (2017), and analyses on higher education students focus on audiences that traditionally access this level of education (Nogueira; Aguiar, 2008), considering specific program (Nogueira; Pereira, 2010) and students' social classes (Almeida, 2015; Piotto; Alves, 2011; Zago, 2006), among other research approaches. This literature demonstrates how individuals' educational experiences are affected by the cultural capital they have available in their social environment of origin. Nogueira (2005), almost two decades ago, discussed the relationship between family and school, arguing that, amid social processes of greater individuation, parents increase their responsibilities for their children's success or failure, employing strategies to increase competitive advantages in the school system. In the context of the complexity of sociological analyses, she points out that schooling remains an instance of legitimizing individual successes and occupational destinies.

In the context of the diversification of student populations at federal universities, achieved through expanding vacancies and implementing affirmative action policies (Senkevics *et al.*, 2023), a fraction of students with privileged socioeconomic and cultural conditions continues to seek educational opportunities at public institutions. In this article, we address social relations that imply affinity and more or less "natural" socialization in choosing a program and institution, entering and remaining at university. At the same time, we identify the action and singularization of individuals in these processes. The objective is to understand paths constituted by family projects and social trajectories that include the mobilization of capitals and socializing practices. The contingent articulations of these factors form non-linear and non-homogeneous project-paths (Singly, 2009) among people of the same social class, subject to modes of perception and action that are unique to family units and individuals.

This article is developed around the question of how students who belong to an upper social segment express family and individual mobilization to remain or rise in their social positions, considering family project-paths and the processes of individuation in their trajectories at a public university. To answer this question, we worked with data produced through surveys and in-depth interviews. We aim to identify and analyze, among people situated in similar social positions, what differentiates them within the place they occupy in the social topology. In addition to what is shared as a social group, students experience processes of individuation through which "[...] each person, having a unique trajectory and location in the world, internalizes an incomparable combination of schemes" (Wacquant, 2007, p. 67). By analyzing one of the segments of students that make up a public university, we intend to help understand how this is constituted in the scenario of recent changes.

CULTURAL HERITAGE, FAMILY PATH-PROJECT AND INDIVIDUATION

The work “The Inheritors: French Students and Their Relations to Culture”, by Bourdieu and Passeron [1964], explains the inequalities in the chances of academic success, how cultural heritage is transmitted, and the social bases of students’ trajectories in higher education courses, all of which are variables involved in the reproduction of social inequalities. It addresses the different ways of experiencing the student condition, perceiving oneself in intellectual activity and its expectations (Bourdieu; Passeron, 2014; Nogueira; Nogueira, 2015; Almeida; Perosa; Ernica, 2015; Brown, 2016). The classic study demonstrates that “[...] social origin is, of all the determinants, the only one that extends its influence to all domains and all levels of students’ experience and primarily to their conditions of existence” (Bourdieu; Passeron, 2014, p. 28).

The context of France in the 1960s, with its post-war demographic growth and social struggles for democratization of access to higher education, can be related to the long history of struggles to expand access to public universities in Brazil. The public policy of reserving places for socio-educational and ethnic-racial groups that, until recently, had very restricted access to universities meant changes but did not represent a democratization of higher education. In an unequal society, social origin continues to affect the chances of admission. According to Salata (2018), between 1995 and 2015, people from higher-class backgrounds continued to have a greater chance of admission than groups with lower levels of economic and cultural capital.

In addition to accumulating valuable cultural capital during their school career, inheritors also rely on family project-paths mobilized to continue their studies at more advanced levels, from undergraduate studies to higher degrees (Caldeira; Alves, 2021). Family actions do not always make explicit the process of calculating socio-educational investment, although they include pragmatic strategies and actions permeated by assessments of gains versus risks of losses. Among students classified in the sociological literature as inheritors, family socialization can place the higher education project in a subtle or strongly demarcated way within plans and actions developed from an early age. Thus, the trajectories of students with the resources to compete and obtain tuition-free and restricted places through a highly competitive selection process at public universities constitute a phenomenon that requires ongoing investigation. We are interested in students’ logics of action in the university path and the expectations linked to it.

We consider the Bourdieusian notion of trajectory as “[...] a series of positions successively occupied by the same agent (or the same group) in a space that is in flux, subject to incessant transformations” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 189). In dialogue with the analysis of social positions in a relational sense, we work with the perspective of François de Singly (2009), an author associated with the tradition established by Bourdieu, but who works with sociology on an individual scale, also inspired by Norbert Elias. His research analyzes variations in the mechanisms of transmission of cultural heritage by families and focuses on the contradictory movements of affiliation and disaffiliation that permeate the appropriation of this heritage. His analyses advance from the effects of social position, defined by belonging to social groups and families, to individual histories. They use the notion of family and individual mobilization to refer to the investments of time and energy by different generations of families in the context of great school competition. Singly (2009), like Lahire (1997), considers interactions, affection, and personal attention in family and school environments as elements that elucidate the transmission and appropriation of cultural heritage.

The mechanisms of transmission and appropriation of family inheritance involve contradictory movements. On the one hand, children seek to distinguish themselves from the parental generation, promoting a form of rupture to build an autonomous identity. This process of individuation is permeated by reflexivity that produces singular meanings (Pinheiro; Colombo, 2021). An extreme type of this movement is disaffiliation, leading to the dilapidation of the inheritance, when individuals effect ruptures seeking to establish conditions to act “without owing anything” to the previous generation (Singly, 2009).

Despite processes of disaffiliation and individuation, the appropriation of cultural heritage requires that children assume the bond of filiation, preserving the bond of interdependence by recognizing themselves as heirs of a debt with the previous generation. The appropriation of heritage by children also demands a work of transmission by the parental generation in processes of socialization in which dispositions, skills, tastes, forms of appreciation, norms, and values are cultivated. This action

involves the dedication of time, mainly by mothers (Windle; Nogueira, 2015), so that the transmission occurs effectively. This includes, for example, reading habits and other practices that promote academic success (Lahire, 2004). The transmission also involves forms of self-appreciation that depend on affective relationships and how young people are seen, including expectations of success in becoming what the family expects (Lahire, 1997; Singly, 2009; Horner, 2022).

Therefore, Singly (2009) and Lahire (1997) focus their analyses on parental action, recognizing the importance of the interpersonal dimension and attention in pedagogical relationships in the family and at school. Singly (2009) emphasizes that intergenerational relationships must be flexible enough not to be broken. For him, inheritors need to carry out a work of self-cultivation and have degrees of freedom to choose what to accept as an inheritance. Inheritors can mark a generational distance, claiming independence but without a complete rupture, reaffirming affiliation. This flexibility in family networks based on trust and which seek to create conditions for autonomy also allow for the reproduction of close or contradictory bonds between inheritors and families. Faced with ambiguities, young people act creatively, shaping and attributing meaning to social relationships. Their action is based on the injunctions of the social structure and in the search to establish themselves as autonomous subjects, however inserted in relationships of interdependence, sharing and variable cooperation.

METHODOLOGY

The production of the data analyzed in this article took place in two phases: (1) the production and application of a survey, answered voluntarily by students from a public university located in a state capital in the southern region of Brazil; and (2) in-depth interviews with students who were part of the highest income segment among the survey participants and who were willing to participate in this second stage by providing contact information.

In the first phase, we sent invitations to respond to the survey to students enrolled in 84 undergraduate programs through their coordinating committees. In the first semester of 2021, when the procedure was carried out, 25,823 students were enrolled in undergraduate courses at the university. We obtained 1,463 valid responses to the questionnaire. Despite this number, this is not a representative sample of the university's students as a whole, since the responses were voluntary and there was no prior statistical calculation to reflect the variables that make up the student universe. We defined groups of respondents by declared family income, obtaining the following division²: Group A – more than 10 minimum wages³ with 202 respondents (14%); Group B – more than 2 to 10 minimum wages with 881 respondents (60%); and Group C – up to 2 minimum wages with 299 respondents (20%)⁴. In addition to this variable, the delimitation of social position considered economic capital based on the occupation of parents, housing characteristics, financial responsibility, and burden of household chores of the participating students.

Cultural capital was measured by information regarding school level, undergraduate and postgraduate degrees of parents; type of school attended by participants in basic education; language courses, exchanges, and vacation trips abroad. We adopted a relatively broad definition of cultural capital (Nogueira, 2021), seeking to identify cultural practices more typical of contemporary times, such as the appreciation of international experiences (Windle; Nogueira, 2015).

Demographic data on gender, race/color, and age group were also obtained. Group A, examined in this article, has the following profile: 183 were White (90%); 9, Brown (5%); 4, Black (2%); 1, Asian (0.5%); and 5 declared other belonging (2.5%). The gender of the participants was identified

² The sum of the fractions relating to the groups does not total 100% because 6% of the respondents did not declare family income.

³ The minimum wage in 2021 was R\$1,100.00 (Brazil, 2020).

⁴ The Observatory of Brazilian Metropolises produced the following extracts according to the average monthly income of families in 2022: the poorest group (40%) with an average income of R\$510.66; the intermediate group (50%) with R\$1,857.82 and the upper extract (10%) with R\$8,514.91 (Salata; Ribeiro, 2023, p. 17). The delimitation of the “upper social segment”, initially established in the research through family income, converges with the data from the Observatory since our interviewees are from the upper stratum, occupied by 10% of the population.

based on the pronoun of address selected in the survey response. The pronoun “she” was chosen by 106 students (52.5%), the pronoun “he” by 91 (45%), and 5 (2.5%) marked Other. The average age of Group A is between 28 and 29 years old, but the most frequent age group is 23 to 24 years old.

The data produced through the survey allowed us to characterize the family group and the social position of the respondents. The combination of analysis dimensions – social position and trajectories – associates scales and articulates relatively more objective data with other more subjective data, produced through interviews. This second set of information allows us to understand microsocial relationships, cultural practices, and dispositions.

In the second phase of the research, we conducted interviews with ten students from Group A between October 2022 and February 2023⁵. Of the 10 interviewees, 9 were White and only 1 Brown. Regarding the gender-related pronoun, 5 chose “she”, 4 chose “he” and 1 chose Other. The average age of the interviewees was 25 years old, with only one interviewee over 40 years old, as shown in Chart 1 below.

Chart 1 – Characterization of interviewees, according to race, age, gender, course area and year of entry into university

Interviewees ⁶	Program area (institutional classification)	Entry	Pronoun	Skin color	Age
Alex	Health	2020	Other	White	28
Bruno	Human and Social Sciences	2019	He	White	23
Cíntia	Human and Social Sciences	2021	She	White	21
Daniela	Biological, Natural and Agricultural Sciences	2016	She	White	24
Eliane	Biological, Natural and Agricultural Sciences	2019	She	White	22
Fernanda	Exact Sciences and Technologies	2020	She	White	21
Gabriela	Health	2018	She	White	21
Henrique	Economics Management and Business	2013	He	Brown	46
Igor	Engineering and Architecture	2016	He	White	25
Jorge	Health	2021	He	White	19

Source: Created by the authors, 2023.

The ten people interviewed were admitted through open competition, most of them through the entrance exam (*vestibular*). Only one used the National High School Exam (Enem-*Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio*) score to enter through the Unified Selection System (Sisu-*Sistema de Seleção Unificado*). The interview schedule addressed three dimensions of the individuals’ trajectories: their previous family and school life; their experiences at university; and their expectations for the future. Thus, questions were asked about: family support and incentives; high school and preparatory courses for university entrance; variations in access to cultural assets and their relationship with the university experience; first impressions, progress of the undergraduate program, challenges, strategies, adaptations, and reflexivity; paid activities, work, employment, and financial maintenance; prospects and the professional field of the course.

We sought to follow Bourdieu’s (1997b) recommendations regarding the relationship between researcher and interviewee. To avoid forms of symbolic violence that could affect what was being said or lead interviewees to remain silent, we sought to minimize inequalities in the social space. The interviews analyzed here were conducted by a research apprentice who was also an undergraduate student at the same institution. He therefore shared the student condition, allowing for a horizontal dialogue and, at times, identification about the hardships and satisfactions experienced in the university environment. We assessed that the results of the interviews, in terms of fidelity to the objectives,

⁵ The research project was approved by the University's Research Ethics Committee, according to the Certificate of Presentation of Ethical Appreciation (CAAE) 25927619.1.0000.5347 and participants were duly informed and signed the Free and Informed Consent Form.

⁶ Fictitious names were adopted to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

sequence, and simplicity, were close to a practice committed to taking care to limit the effects of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1997b). Despite this, it was not possible to avoid differences in other categories, such as the gender of six interviewees.

Since the interviews refer to the students' trajectories, in search of setbacks, doubts and rearrangements, often, personal relationships, and anxieties were evident in the interviewees' discourse. Just as some of them spoke naturally, others were also clearly controlled and careful not to expose themselves. This was perceived in the interview process and the full transcript, whose content was analyzed. In the analysis, we sought to understand their points of view and feelings but also objective conditions and social conditionings subjectively incorporated. We considered capitals and ways of believing, acting, and planning, expressing dispositional aspects extracted from the accounts. We sought to identify accumulated capitals and practices acquired in the broader socialization process, such as the use of technology, language learning, and the appreciation of diverse cultural experiences beyond the university program curriculum. Inspired by the logic of "understanding" (Bourdieu, 1997b), we sought to explain the trajectories and positions in the group's social space, in addition to individual variations related to the motivations for practical actions. We also observed, in the interviews, perceptions of greater or lesser belonging to the university environment and the establishment of bonds with colleagues and professors (Horner, 2022) in processes of building social capital (Brown, 2016).

SOCIAL POSITION, FAMILY GROUP AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

The social position of the participants and their families was constructed according to the group of students who responded to the survey. The three groups of respondents presented distinct profiles regarding the socio-professional categories in which the mother and father are inserted, with greater social prominence the higher the declared income. Chart 2 below represents the socio-professional categories of mothers and fathers that were most frequent for each of the sample groups.

Chart 2 – Socio-professional category of mothers and fathers, according to each income group

Group	Socio-professional category ⁷	Modal value	
		Mothers	Fathers
A	Independent professional, businessman, company director, and civil service provider with higher education. Ex.: Doctor, engineer, dentist, psychologist, economist, lawyer, judge, prosecutor, defender, police officer, lieutenant, captain, colonel, university professor, director in public or private companies, politician, owner of companies with more than 10 employees	108 53.4%	118 58.4%
B	Professionals, small business owners, and civil employees with a medium level of education. Ex.: Teacher (elementary school, language, music, arts, etc.), technician (nursing, accounting, electronics, etc.), police officer, low-ranking military officer (soldier, corporal, sergeant), real estate agent, supervisor, manager, construction foreman, pastor, micro-entrepreneur (owner of a company with less than 10 employees), small trader, small landowner, self-employed worker.	294 33.4%	214 24.3%
C	Urban worker in the service sector. Ex.: Day laborer, domestic worker, elderly caregiver, nanny, private driver, gardener, company and building cleaner, security guard, doorman, postman, office boy, salesperson, cashier, store attendant, administrative assistant, receptionist, bricklayer's assistant, merchandise replenisher.	99 33.1%	66 22.1%

Source: Created by the authors, 2023.

The most frequent parental socio-professional category in Group A is of professionals, businesspeople, and civil employees with higher education. Group C has parents at a disadvantage in

⁷ The socio-professional categories were organized into five groups based on the Brazilian Classification of Occupations (CBO) established by Ordinance 397 of the Ministry of Labor, dated 10/10/2002. The organization into five groups is used in the socioeconomic questionnaire of the National High School Exam (Enem).

terms of professional status, with mothers and fathers working in urban areas in the service sector, often in precarious labor relations. Another important element that can be observed is that for Groups B and C there is greater variation in the socio-professional category occupied by parents than for Group A. This shows a certain consolidation of this last group and of families in occupations that require a degree.

Most (66%) of students in Group A are financially supported by their mothers and fathers, in contrast to most of the students in Group C, with incomes below 2 minimum wages, who need to support themselves or receive insufficient aid from their families.

In the case of students in Group A, the material conditions provided by mothers and fathers ensure the lowest percentage of financial responsibility than other groups. Only 28% declared themselves to be the main and frequent financial contributor. In Group C, this fraction was 66% and, in Group B, 42%. The financial comfort of students who have the support of their parents guarantees more time to take advantage of opportunities during their studies (Haltia; Isopahkala-Bouret; Mutanen, 2023). Financial security also allows free time to experience informal spaces on campus, which is essential for building a sense of belonging to the university (Horner, 2022). It is important to highlight that Group A is the one that, proportionally to the others, has the greatest financial contribution from parents, evidenced by the lowest percentage of the categories “does not collaborate” and “does not apply” (31%).

To understand the obligations in the daily life of the family group, we asked about the responsibility for household chores. The results of the two alternatives of the questionnaire were added together: main contributors and frequent contributors in household chores. Although 50% of the students in Group A are frequent contributors to household chores, the main contributors are their mothers in 43% of the responses. A similar phenomenon occurs in Group B, in which mothers are the main contributors in 47% of the responses. Groups A and B seem to be freer from household chores when compared to the students in Group C, where mothers are the main contributors in only 26% of the responses, with the respondents being the main ones responsible for the chores in 71%. In Group A, this occurs with only 23% of the respondents, and in Group B, with 44%. Therefore, there is a higher percentage of students in Groups A and B who indicate affording more time to dedicate to studies than in Group C.

However, the sample that makes up this segment of students from upper social backgrounds does not seem to be confused with the economic elites of São Paulo and Minas Gerais investigated respectively by Setton and Neves (2022) and Caldeira and Alves (2021) or the Argentinean elite researched by Fuentes (2020). These authors study political, industrial, financial, communications, commercial, and celebrity elites. The groups they researched are wealthier, hold greater power, and, in many cases, have obtained higher education degrees for three generations or more. Furthermore, they experience school processes marked by internationalization, have studied in foreign institutions, or have children attending private bilingual schools in the country.

The most privileged group of students in our sample are children of professionals, civil employees with higher education, and small and medium-sized business owners, a social segment that depends heavily on the school system to acquire cultural capital and is closer to the upper-income middle classes than to the wealthiest segment of Brazilian society. However, the data do not allow us to state that the highest-income group in our sample corresponds to the elite of the institution, since the sample is not representative.

Based on Table 1 below, the three groups, initially segmented based on income criteria, also express differences in parental education. Thus, in Group A, a large number of mothers (80%) and fathers (78%) have higher education degrees.

Table 1 – Parent's higher education of Groups A, B and C

Level of education	Group A		Group B		Group C	
	Mother	Father	Mother	Father	Mother	Father
Incomplete higher education	11	18	92	118	34	25
Complete higher education	49	63	195	171	41	53
Specialization	57	44	148	77	25	10
Master's degree	16	14	23	23	4	3
Doctorate	30	18	12	14	2	0
Total with higher education	163	157	470	403	106	91
	80%	78%	53%	46%	35%	30%

Source: Prepared by the authors, 2023.

The set of information accessed through the questionnaire shows that Group A comprises a profile with a comfortable social position, time to study, and without an onerous responsibility for household chores, which can be understood as a segment of students who are better able to adapt to the demands of a traditional public university.

After characterizing the three groups that make up the sample, we can now construct the social position of the 10 students interviewed, who belong to Group A. The interviewees depend financially on their families, except for Henrique, a 46-year-old Brown man. Most of them have parents who are well-positioned in the job market, and only two interviewees, Daniela and Gabriela, were supported only by their mothers when they responded to the survey. Regarding the material conditions of existence, it was observed that Henrique indicated that he lived in the most modest home, with only one bedroom and one bathroom. The others indicated homes with three to four bedrooms and two to four bathrooms.

Recognizing her privileged position, as someone who does not depend on their work and income to support herself, Cintia refers to the situation of her colleagues, stating that “many people really have to work. Not everyone can afford to earn 400 bucks”, the amount of the scientific apprenticeship scholarship at the time of the interview. These higher-income students, whose parents have university experience and work in graduate professions, in addition to taking advantage of extracurricular activities, have greater possibilities of choosing internships and jobs that are more in line with their aspirations during and after completing their undergraduate degree (Haltia; Isopahkala-Bouret; Mutanen, 2023).

Among the interviewees, it is common to recognize that they occupy a material and time position that distinguishes them from the colleagues with whom they interact in the university environment. This result is possibly justified given the context of high social and educational inequality that exists in Brazilian society. It contrasts with the results obtained by Brown (2016) and Haltia, Isopahkala-Bouret and Mutanen (2023), according to which English, French and Finnish students, from a situation of privilege, did not recognize this condition in the interviews.

Like the parents of students at a private religious school that brings together students from upper-middle-class and elite groups from Minas Gerais (Caldeira; Alves, 2021), the parents of most of the interviewees have institutionalized cultural capital in the form of higher education diplomas, and many also have postgraduate degrees. Daniela's and Igor's mothers have doctorate degrees. The others are the children of professionals, civil servants, and businesspeople. Of the 20 parents, 14 have completed higher education. Jorge is the only interviewee without a parent with a higher education degree; however, he has an older brother who has a degree and is working abroad.

Regarding previous school levels, we found that most interviewees studied in private high schools of different configurations, one of them in a military school and one in a public school in an outlying city of a neighboring state. Chart 3 shows a characterization of the schools attended by the interviewees.

Chart 3 - Characteristics of the high schools attended by the interviewed students

Interviewees	Schools	Characterization of schools attended
C01, C02 e C09	Catholic confessional	Recognized for passing entrance exams for higher education.
C03	Military public	Recognized for passing entrance exams for higher education.
C04	Secular and alternative private	Recognized for passing higher education entrance exams and for pedagogical innovation.
C05	Secular private	Content focus targeting higher education entrance exams.
C06	Private	Not detailed in the interview.
C07	Traditional secular private	A traditional school recognized for being attended by descendants of the German-Brazilian community and for its high approval rates in higher education entrance exams.
C08	Public in an outlying city of another Brazilian state	Not detailed in the interview.
C10	Private or confessional from another Brazilian state	Focus on preparation for higher education entrance exams and with pedagogical coordination and psychology services to support students.

Source: Prepared by the authors based on information from questionnaires and interviews, 2023.

Eight of the ten interviewees attended high school in the same state as the institution where they study. These schools are not easily accessible to families with few socioeconomic resources and are often sought out by families who prioritize their children's long-term education. Although educational backgrounds may vary, there seems to be a tendency for their schools of origin to provide knowledge, educational activities, and access to cultural assets aimed at helping their graduates pass the test traditionally administered by universities, the entrance exam. Despite recent changes, entrance exams maintain a style of test that requires specific knowledge in various areas of knowledge, consolidating candidates' performance according to the vacancies for which they compete.

The interviewed students indicated that they act to obtain internationalized education and experiences. Learning a second language is one of the indicators of distinction in the academic environment among students in Group A. The interviewees Bruno, Cíntia, and Jorge emphasized the search for an education that involves internationalization. Cíntia studies French and intends to participate in a mobility program, seeking to build cosmopolitan cultural capital through prolonged exchanges, a common strategy in groups with greater volumes of cultural capital than economic capital (Windle; Nogueira, 2015). Bruno, on the other hand, seems to have an aspiration more associated with the social context of a private school located in an upscale neighborhood of the city. He wanted to study abroad with family funding or participate in the Science Without Borders Program (*Programa Ciência sem Fronteiras*): "I thought I was going to study abroad, [...] there was a time when the Science Without Borders thing existed [...]; [but also] it wouldn't be a problem, theoretically, for my parents to pay for, I don't know, an exchange program" (Bruno).

Jorge, like his brother who is working in the academic field in a European country, also aspires to work abroad and honor what he understands as "the sacrifices of the parents" and his own in building an upward social trajectory. All interviewees took language courses, and Alex, Bruno, Fernanda, and Gabriela also went on exchange programs during their secondary education. Among the ten, only Jorge did not travel abroad. International experience can strengthen ties of belonging to a group and raise symbolic boundaries about others who do not share these experiences of distinction (Caldeira; Alves, 2021). We understand that the students interviewed seek an internationalized education that allows them to integrate into other countries. The middle classes value internationalization as a cultural asset, a value that increases educational and professional opportunities for their children, but also as a path to contact with other cultures and for the education that produces an "autonomous individual" (Nogueira; Aguiar, 2008, p. 367). The formation of a cosmopolitan cultural capital, particularly fluency in languages, legitimized in higher education evaluation processes, produces distinction because it is not available to

the population as a whole, has effects on symbolic domination, and is indispensable to aspirations of participation in an international field of power (Windle; Nogueira, 2015).

Internationalization is on the horizon for this group, whether due to past travels or future projects, but the main strategy was to attend a public university, a characteristic of the elite fraction with the greatest volume of incorporated and institutionalized cultural capital and which needs the national school system for its reproduction (Caldeira; Alves, 2021). Therefore, the sample of interviewees converges with the finding that students from privileged backgrounds who perform well in selective tests opt for public universities (Senkevics *et al.*, 2023).

The socialization dynamics and the family project-path (Singly, 2009) of the interviewees, in general, mark the analyzed trajectories as factors that favor access to public universities. Due to family legacies, students act based on dispositions that demonstrate relative coherence with their inheritance (Lahire, 1997). In this context, we identified dilemmas and discomforts regarding their course choices and prospects for permanence, which we discuss based on the conceptual notions of inheritance and appropriation of cultural capital, family project-path (Singly, 2009), and individuation processes that occur through participation in networks of sociability and cooperation (Colombo; Rebughini; Domaneschi, 2022; Horner, 2022; Haltia; Isopahkala-Bouret; Mutanen, 2023).

FAMILY PROJECT-PATH IN INDIVIDUATION PROCESSES

Almost all of the interviewees follow family paths and projects in unique processes that reflect their individual work in the university experience. In this part of the article, we present subsections that discuss cases of relatively forced adjustment, accommodation, and tortuous relationships with the family project. The interviewees' accounts present the recurring understanding that attending higher education is part of the normal social trajectory in the family's social horizon, a naturalized aspiration. This situation reflects the objective probabilities of passing the entrance exams to a public higher education institution (Singly, 2009; Nogueira; Nogueira, 2015). Almost all of the interviewees mentioned that university was an indisputable expectation of their families because their parents and/or siblings also attended higher education: "As long as I can remember, this issue of going to college has been ingrained" (Daniela); "it was always predetermined in my family that I would go to [University]" (Eliane); "Since I was little, I always imagined going to university, having a higher education degree, so it's in my project, in my life plan" (Cíntia); "My family has always wanted me to go to university since I was a child. [...] My parents have higher education, so that's why they insisted on it since I was a child" (Fernanda); "I was almost pushed in that direction" (Igor). The value of public universities may be associated with the volume of cultural capital in the structure of family and social capital, as well as in its way of validating the family's path through the school system (Singly, 2009).

Although the interviewees have resources that favor their entry, continuation, and completion of higher education, they also report challenges, indicating the need to organize and develop strategies to succeed in their studies. Alex details how they achieve good performance:

[...] having a planner where I can write things down to remind myself [...]. Since I have this issue of being more of a shy person, if I have any questions, I ask in the end of the class. To present group work, I have to rehearse before presenting [...] (Alex).

In Alex's case, dedication to their studies at university can be understood as part of their individual work to follow the strategy of maintaining their cultural heritage. Gabriela, due to her excellent performance in high school, was advised to take a very competitive Program in the Health field: "I got very good grades in high school and, when you are one of the best in the class, people always start suggesting that you take [the program]" (Gabriela).

For other students, dedication to studies is necessary for a trajectory that aims to increase the family's cultural capital, as in the case of Jorge. In addition to a moral dimension, his testimony highlights the value of inheritance: "I want to try to make the work my parents did and the work I did worthwhile. [...] my biggest fear is not making my efforts and my parents' efforts worthwhile. That destroys me in every manner" (Jorge). Jorge, like Gabriela and Cíntia, follows the family project-path in a trajectory of studies in a recognized traditional profession. Among the interviewees, Eliane, Cíntia and

Jorge dedicate more than 12 hours a week to studies, while Daniela, Fernanda, Gabriela, Henrique, and Igor try to balance dedication to studies and personal life, setting aside time for sports, cultural, and artistic activities: “I started taking singing lessons, which is something I have for myself, it’s an hour of my week that I’m going to do that and I’m not going to do anything related to college” (Gabriela).

Alex and Igor switched courses. Both started their undergraduate studies in the same competitive program in the field of Engineering and Architecture. While Alex transferred to another, more competitive course in the Health field, Igor stayed in the same field, but in a relatively new and, therefore, less competitive specialty, with a smaller number of candidates in the entrance exam. Alex was in the first semester of the Health course at the time of the interview and intended to complete it. The change was experienced as a conflict with his family, who wanted their studies to contribute to the family business. Switching programs, therefore, represents a rupture, a partial refusal of the inheritance, and certain obligations suggested or imposed by the family project. Alex’s experience also refers to a specific type of suffering that can reside in a privilege, with its dispositions being out of step with the family’s aspirations (Bourdieu, 1997a).

The family’s desire to choose a program following their business ventures seems to have led to a situation that revealed a mismatch between Alex’s inclinations for the arts and the curricular requirements in the field of mathematics. They claim not to have a penchant for Mathematics or the Exact Sciences, although their father, who completed higher education, developed skills in these areas. Thus, their account could indicate a limit in the transmission of cultural heritage (Singly, 2009). This situation regarding mathematical aptitudes recalls Lahire’s (1997) observations about reading habits in domestic environments, suggesting that the existence of such habits in at least one of the parents does not guarantee the transmission of this taste to the children if this parent does not regularly participate in the children’s socialization processes. He mentions an association between the reading atmosphere at home, conversations about books, and emotional relationships. According to him, for the transmission of the disposition to occur, in addition to the experience being long-lasting, it needs to be positive from an emotional point of view.

Despite the conflicts, Alex did not distance himself from their family after changing courses. They continued working at their parents’ company and felt financially and emotionally supported in their professional pursuit, which involved asserting their autonomy. With the change, Alex began to feel a sense of belonging in academic life:

[...] I’m really enjoying the course, I like being in class, I like taking a university extension course, [...] it gives me pleasure to be everywhere, I think I take part in as many things as I can, to have as many experiences outside the classroom as possible too. I get along really well with my classmates [...]. My class is very close-knit, the people are very calm, very nice, they’re very open to conversation and, so, I think that motivates me a lot. The teachers are also very nice. I think it was great that I got a scholarship right at the beginning of the course because we start to have more contact with the teachers, with master’s students, [...] so we start to build these relationships [...] (Alex).

In Alex’s career, in parallel with a break with family expectations, there was a movement of affiliation with the institution and the program. Individuation processes can be marked by experiences in cooperation networks restricted to the family, strongly associated with close friends, or even established with colleagues, enabling future professional networks. These are groups of belonging, identification, and sharing of values and attitudes in which one seeks to grow with others while maintaining individuality and distinction (Colombo; Rebughini; Domaneschi, 2022).

Relatively forced adjustment to the familiar project-path

Although access to higher education is a naturalized family path-project, there are individual variations in the way family expectations and children’s inclinations are adjusted or thwarted. In this subsection, we address the case of Cíntia, who follows the project-path outlined by her family with some ease, but who expresses conflict in her inclinations.

[...] my whole family always motivated me a lot, they motivated me to get in, they wanted me to get into the Military College when I was younger, I didn't want to. [...] I do [the traditional prestigious course] and I don't like it very much. [...] But yes, I think it's not just a demand, but an idea of having stability. [...] My mother always said [teaching degree]? Get out of it for your own good! (Cynthia).

Cíntia seems to be experiencing a mismatch between her dispositions and the prestigious traditional course that prepares her to work as a freelance professional, as she says she does not identify with her colleagues and professors. She would have preferred to enroll in a teacher training program and enjoys the voluntary scientific apprenticeship she is taking in the area of Human Sciences, a space that she believes “opens the doors to knowledge”. Nevertheless, she intends to complete the degree currently underway.

The choice of higher education program, a product of family reflexivity, may conflict with individuals' preferences for other areas of study (Setton, 2002). In the case of younger students with favorable social and educational trajectories, there is a tendency to choose competitive and prestigious courses upon admission that prepare students for profitable and socially recognized professions (Nogueira, 2004), as mentioned by Cíntia and Gabriela. These cases converge with those observed by Haltia, Isopahkala-Bouret and Mutanen (2023) in Finnish middle-class students who tend to receive family guidance and make strategic choices regarding the institution and degree, heading towards fields of study with higher status and prospects for better pay after graduation. This choice is also associated with the objective possibilities of admission, considering the competitiveness of exams in Brazil. By staying in the prestigious program and doing an internship in a place that represents a space for great professional success, Cíntia maintains the family project. It appears to be a strategy used by middle-class families who invest significant material resources and time in their children's education to provide them with differentiated professional opportunities.

Cíntia takes on a course that she does not enjoy and, in an action that contradicts her taste, obeys her predecessors, recognizing the value of the program to have the possibility of occupying a position with higher pay, although it is out of line with her inclinations. The incorporation of ascetic and convergent dispositions into the family project-path seems to have occurred early in Cíntia's socialization. She says that her mother always valued studies indirectly, cultivating a tacit understanding: “she never demanded it from us here at home, my sister and I, but she always made it clear what she valued, so we kind of knew” (Cíntia). In her experience, the elements of cultivation of self-control by families in children appear, in preparation for the school environment (Lahire, 1997). This construction is based on permanent bonds based on autonomy and trust (Colombo; Rebughini; Domaneschi, 2022). From Cíntia's account, it can be inferred that she was convinced of the importance of studying at a military school for her plans:

[...] it was difficult because the school had some teachers who were very pushy and so on. [...] Especially in the first year, a lot of people were flunking. So, I was afraid. It's a very competitive environment. [...] I wouldn't like to go back. But I think I created a different relationship with studying [...]. I became more autonomous, [...] knowing how I study, knowing how I learn and organizing myself too (Cíntia).

In this case, the transmission of inheritance requires the overtaking of parents not only to preserve the wealth accumulated in previous trajectories but also to increase it. This form of persistence of the family project-path makes it clear that the daughters have been given the task of prolonging the achievements of their predecessors in a compensatory project of their parents' trajectory, which is idealized and which may also be difficult to carry out, considering the cultivated dispositions (Bourdieu, 2012a; 1997a).

Unfortunately, [...] this semester, I'm doing an internship [required by the program curriculum], unfortunately. So, I can't really enjoy the university's facilities that much. [...] unfortunately, I started doing an internship and everything kind of went away, because the activities happen in the afternoon and so does my internship (Cíntia).

The repetition of the word “unfortunately” associated with the internship throughout Cíntia’s interview and the negative perspective regarding the practices of colleagues and teachers lead to the inference that there is a mismatch between inclinations linked to taste and her academic trajectory: “the teachers are kind of a little indifferent [...]. I do [the program] during the day, sometimes it reminds me a little of a private school, it tires me a little, it’s kind of childish. But there’s also something somewhat competitive [...]” (Cíntia).

There seems to have been an incorporation of ascetic dispositions linked to the future professional practice defined by the mother. Thus, Cíntia’s disappointment with the internship seems to be in contradiction with parental expectations taken as an obligation: “I can rarely do anything because of the internship trash. [...] it’s kind of frustrating because of the internship, [...] I’m kind of a slave to the internship [...]. I prefer a slightly more academic learning” (Cíntia). This project-path involves renouncing a path more aligned with personal inclinations, indicating contrary dispositions, resulting from family action, in this case tacit, to make realistic choices (Lahire, 2004).

On the other hand, Cíntia also wants to pursue a master’s degree, but in her preferred field and not in her major’s, seeking to reconcile her personal preferences and tastes with her family’s project-path. The testimony exposes the conflict between a moral obligation, which she carries out with some suffering, but also with skill, and the taste that inclines her towards another path that she seeks to reconcile with her family’s path-project.

Accommodation and setbacks to family project-path

In this section, we discuss the cases of Daniela, Igor, Fernanda, and Jorge, whose educational trajectories meet parental expectations and indicate variations associated with rational choices in the face of objective opportunities for future employment.

Daniela expresses frustration with the results of the freedom to choose a program in the area of Biological, Natural, and Agricultural Sciences, granted by her family and encouraged by her alternative private school. Although she was continuing her studies for an academic master’s degree at the time of the interview, she would have preferred to have chosen a profession with greater employability opportunities: “my parents were just very supportive of whatever I chose. Even now, I joke that I wish they hadn’t supported me. Now I’m unemployed. And then I joke with them like: ‘oh, you should have told [me] to do something else’” (Daniela). Throughout her education, she oscillated between two degrees, having participated in an extension project in a program more traditional than the one she took and, by completing a master’s degree, she tried to reconcile these two inclinations. She is thinking about pursuing a doctorate or perhaps taking another undergraduate degree, as she realizes that there is a lack of opportunities for job placement. Both alternatives prolong the student status, but the second could lead her to a more profitable career in the job market.

Igor, after dropping out of the same course as Alex, opted for a career in a relatively new field with job opportunities. At the time of the interview, he expected to be hired at his internship location. Although his family supports his decisions, he reported that his father always warned him about the need for professional training associated with employability: “my parents, to some extent, gave me [...] a certain freedom [...] to choose the course [...]. My father always said: ‘[...] you have to think about your livelihood, you have to think about your job’. [...] because I am a musician and I think he was afraid that I would study Music” (Igor). Unlike Alex, his father passed on to Igor a taste for mathematical reasoning: “my father took an Engineering course. He didn’t finish it, but I learned a lot about math and other things from him, and I think that ended up influencing me” (Igor). This taste led him to choose a second program that has a curriculum with an emphasis on this area. In this new program, he built a support network, and the environment was “very collaborative, I always had help on many levels and I was always able to help my colleagues a lot” (Igor). He is interested in a job that is in tune with contemporary socio-environmental challenges, a topic that “is not well-established in any program”, leading him to chart a unique academic path that involves complementing the training offered in different courses. At the same time, he claims to have benefited from an opportunity for scientific apprenticeship

focused on his field of interest. His future is open, according to him, and he is considering completing another degree to qualify for the desired career.

Even though the interviewees live in a condition of relative privilege, remaining in and completing the degree requires dedication and support within the university environment, as exemplified by the case of Gabriela, who relies on her course colleagues.

Here, we spend all our time together, we wouldn't be able to go through college without them [...]. Because we walk together [...]. Each one helps each other. It's an environment that can be, from time to time, a heavy environment. There are many experiences that we share to help each other (Gabriela).

Socialization in prestigious programs and institutions confers an advantage derived not only from institutional notoriety but from the educational experience it provides, which requires a lot of dedication (Brown, 2016) and support from colleagues (Horner, 2022).

Fernanda, on the other hand, seems to have taken a path that was closer to a calculated choice. She received career guidance, which she believes contributed to her self-knowledge, and researched the possibilities of professional careers in three different courses, all with an emphasis on mathematics and technical-scientific approaches: "I tried, on my own, in the third year of high school, to talk to teachers [...] of the programs [in] which I was interested" (Fernanda). After this contact, she took a decision that she is satisfied with it. She reports that her family gave her freedom and supported her in her choice of program. She was not forced to follow the same parental choices or a profession that "gave more money". However, she does not know if her parents would have acted the same way if she had chosen a less prestigious course or one with few job opportunities. Thus, as an inheritor, she appropriated the sense of investment in her educational trajectory through profitable academic options in the job market to refuse undervalued fields (Bourdieu, 2011; Bourdieu; Champagnet, 1997). With the course she chose, in the area of Exact Sciences, she has good expectations of entering the professional market. She envisions continuing her academic trajectory in a postgraduate program. She hopes to complete it at another institution, although she recognizes that the low value of the master's scholarship could make this plan unfeasible.

Jorge studied at a private school in another Brazilian state and had been accepted by the Enem in private institutions and one public institution in his home state. The context of the pandemic allowed him to use this score as an entrance exam for an institution in the South of Brazil that, according to him, was "the third best" in his degree area. Thus, he decided to move from a distant state in the federation, in part, because he wanted to live alone, "[...] I didn't want to live with my parents anymore. [...] they are two people who are together, but who should be separated. [...] they are people who fight a lot" (Jorge). His parents, who do not have a college degree, started working when they were still children and provided him with financial support, having fewer resources to also provide emotional support. Jorge has always been dedicated to his studies, considering that his future depends on his education: "[...] when I got to the first year of high school, I was already studying like crazy because I know that the Health field is very difficult to get into" (Jorge). After graduating, he thinks about taking a specialization course, pursuing a military career or going abroad like his brother. In the southern city, he suffers prejudice because of his accent: "So, I suffered some prejudice in some situations, which made me think I didn't belong, you know?" (Jorge). He is afraid of approaching people outside the university environment and says that it was difficult to make friends in the program, although he has already established some bonds. Horner (2022), when analyzing the reality in South Africa, states that students from other provinces, far from the university campus, can be intimidated by linguistic differences and need a period of observation before risking interacting. In Brazil, differences in accent can produce social discrimination, as Jorge perceived.

Winding paths in the family project-path

In this section, we discuss the cases of Bruno, Eliane and Henrique, which indicate conflicts between their aspirations, educational trajectories and parental expectations. Bruno reports that his good teachers and his interest in the Humanities and Social Sciences influenced him in his program choice. He

considered pursuing a more prestigious profession, considering taking the same course as his parents, who have bachelor's degrees and are licensed professionals. However, he enrolled in another degree.

[...] oh, I want to, I don't know, study Law. I want to study Engineering... Psychology. In the end, I ended up doing [a teacher training program]. [...] I had finished high school, I had done a year of preparatory courses, [...]. It took me a while to reach this conclusion. [...] But now, speaking of it, I remembered that I had very good teachers in high school. Towards the end of high school [...], I knew that I wanted to teach, I wanted to be a teacher [...] (Bruno).

It is possible that Bruno's academic performance did not allow him to be accepted into more competitive courses, since he compares his greater organization at university with the way he studied in high school, when he procrastinated:

So, little by little, I started to organize myself more and better, [...] much better than I was in high school [...]. I don't procrastinate anymore [...]. I do things in advance [...]. College is still hard, right? [...] It's quite a burden. I think that also because it's a program that I like, I give it a lot of importance. In high school, I had [...] to study the subject that I didn't like, I didn't care [...]. So, I ended up putting it off. But not in college (Bruno).

The possibly somewhat forced choice of a teaching degree due to his academic performance could lead to a decline in his status or family trajectory. According to Bourdieu (1997a), school verdicts impact the transmission of cultural heritage. In Bruno's case, there is an adjustment in subjective aspirations resulting from the objective conditions of passing or failing the entrance exams (Caldeira; Alves, 2021). His father tried to guide him towards a more profitable course in the job market in a technical area, without any relation to his son's preferences, but his mother supported him in his choice: "he came to me and said, 'Oh, why don't you take a programming course [...]. Something that makes a lot of money in the market?'. And I said, 'Okay, but it has nothing to do with what I want.' You know...? He said that out of the blue. I was a bit shocked" (Bruno).

During the school career, agents may not continue with the project inscribed in their parental trajectory (Bourdieu, 1997a). Thus, Bruno, when saying that he preferred the undergraduate program in which he is enrolled, could be carrying out a type of "protective rationalization" (Lahire, 2004), denying an interpretation of possible declassification. A possible declassification would correspond to the impossibility of achieving the reproduction of status. This process may be permeated by generational conflict resulting from the opposition between values and lifestyles: "because at first I would like to continue in the academic environment. Do a master's degree, a doctorate, do science. But... who knows, maybe become a university professor. But I also want to have experience teaching in school" (Bruno).

At university, Bruno began to organize himself and perform well in his studies, planning a possible career as a professor at a public higher education institution, which could be a way of maintaining his position in the social space and showing himself worthy of the family inheritance (Singly, 2009). It is interesting to note the profitability of the cultural inheritance of inheritors without great academic success (Bourdieu, 2012a), but who have enough cultural capital to face the challenges of a less competitive programs, such as the teacher training ones, and project good prospects.

The dispositions regarding the future seem to be guided by objective opportunities in the case of Bruno, with the possibility of pursuing a teaching career in higher education; or Fernanda, of pursuing postgraduate studies and finding a place in the job market; the exploration of a new profession and a new area of activity in the case of Igor; or, even, Daniela's uncertainty regarding her possibility of future employability. Thus, the strategies for reproducing social positions depend on the volume and structure of the capital to be maintained or increased, but also on the economic and socio-historical context (Bourdieu, 2012b). Faced with structural limits, students live conflicting experiences and devise sometimes tortuous strategies in their individuation processes.

Eliane always wanted to pursue the degree she is enrolled in, in the Health field, but in her third year of high school, she decided to take the entrance exam for a more prestigious profession and failed it. Her mother values her older sister for having a degree in the profession she aspired to. She says that some people consider her program less serious than others, particularly her sister's, in the Biological, Natural and Agricultural Sciences area. This detail may indicate frustration with the family project in her

case. Horner (2022) refers to parental pressures and the fear that some college students have of not living up to them. In Eliane's case, the fear of not living up to family expectations may have produced a propensity for intensive study, dedicating many hours a week to the demands of the undergraduate course.

Eliane intends to complete the degree she is enrolled in and wants to work in a subfield that is usually occupied by men, a space that is prejudiced against female professionals. In addition to her, Daniela and Fernanda also referred to gender inequalities within their areas of training: "my scientific apprenticeship scholarship is a scholarship [...] only for programs with less than 40% women and you can count on your fingers the number of Black students [in the program]" (Fernanda). Universities are asymmetrical spaces that offer differentiated and unequal opportunities to different social segments (Villa-Lever, 2019).

Even though she experiences conflicts regarding family expectations and also resents gender inequalities in her course, Eliane perceives the richness of the academic space-time that provides coexistence with colleagues "outside the bubble" as explained in the following excerpt:

The university gives you a much broader social perspective. You can interact with people from more diverse backgrounds, with the most diverse origins and thoughts. [...] And the more diverse people we come into contact with, the more we talk to, the more open our minds become, the greater our repertoire of information to make the best decisions (Eliane).

Henrique is an exception to the norm among those interviewed. Although he passed the university entrance exam at the age of 17, in a medium-sized city in another state in the south of the country, he had to work to support himself, postponing the plan to pursue a higher education degree until he was 30, when, after obtaining a stable job by passing a public exam, he enrolled in a distance learning undergraduate program. He did not complete this degree and enrolled through the university entrance exam at the age of 37, in the in-person evening program. He chose the institution because it was public, tuition-free, and because of the quality of the program. He enrolled in a few courses per semester to balance his studies, professional life, and personal life. At the time of the interview, he was finishing his undergraduate degree, almost 10 years after enrolling.

[...] I always lived far from my family, [...] I didn't have a direct influence from them. All of them, my closest relatives, were higher education graduates, they were successful people. But we always had very independent lives. Even I, as a son, since high school I lived alone, sharing an apartment with other students. So, I never wanted to have much of that influence, their financial influence, [because I was afraid that] the financial help I received would eventually influence my choices. [...] So, I always had a very independent way of thinking [...] (Henrique).

Entering as an adult and taking almost 10 years to complete undergraduate studies can be interpreted as a social disadvantage (Nogueira; Nogueira, 2015) and seems to have resulted from a break with the family that occurred during high school when the student moved to another city. However, it may also be a family environment more associated with the accumulation of economic capital than cultural capital.

Henrique seems to have undergone a form of disaffiliation (Singly, 2009), in the sense that he avoided his parents' paths and resources, becoming independent in the early stages of his youth. Thus, he seems to have the feeling that he owes nothing to the previous generation. He could be better off professionally if he had completed his higher education earlier, but he values his own experience and considers that the undergraduate degree is not so central to his professional development. He highlights his independence before his family and the university: "I lost this vision that university is the key to success" (Henrique). The interviewee also offers evidence of experiencing a path marked by isolation.

FINAL REMARKS

The trajectories of the students analyzed in this article show that we are dealing with inheritors from the point of view of their family's social position and the cultural heritage they have. Children of a social segment well-positioned by their parent's education and income, within Brazilian

standards, the interviewees perceive themselves as belonging to the public university. This social segment depends heavily on the school system to maintain its class position with the continuous incorporation of cultural capital and, in some cases, with the expectation of social ascension.

We aimed to understand how family mobilization and the process of individual action in relation to the social position presented and we found that family project-paths exist and are originated early in the lives of students. There is family mobilization and investment, as well as an active relationship, in the daily lives of each of the interviewees, between inheritance and accommodation or forced adjustment to maintain or overcome the projected path. The analysis of the individuation processes showed variations in the forms of family and individual mobilization in processes of transmission and appropriation of inheritance and affirmation of autonomy through reflexivity.

Adaptation to the family project-paths shows that, in general, the inheritance was incorporated, that the resources and skills acquired could be realized, revealing adaptation and gratitude towards the parental effort. In the case of forced adjustment, an incorporated disposition is revealed and evidenced in the ability to take a prestigious program and postpone the pleasure that would be provided by the fulfillment of one's taste in another less prominent degree. Although this is not the rule in all cases, some choices can be seen as more autonomous based on family socialization that, in general, prepared the children for higher education, through competitive schooling. This strategy enabled them to face the challenges of university naturally, combining dedication to studies and self-cultivation with the enjoyment of living in an institution formed by an audience with diverse social, cultural and geographic origins. In general, individual investments in affirmation in the social space of the university denote relations of interdependence in trajectories of individuation that value the present experience and the plural space of the university.

We identified concerns about professional security, which do not seem to be definitively guaranteed, and at the same time, relatively comfortable projections regarding the future. In this sense, it is possible to affirm that, although they are inheritors, there is intense work by individuals to assert themselves in the space in which they are inserted and to maintain or improve their social position.

We found that the individuation process is permeated by several contextual elements: (1) coexistence in the university space with heterogeneous audiences, regionally and culturally diverse; (2) appreciation of cultural diversity and recognition of varied experiences; (3) investment in language courses, trips abroad and exchange programs, internationalized training practices; (4) insecurity regarding the prospect of professional practice; (5) modes of reflexivity socially constituted by individuals and participation in collaboration and support networks; and (6) attempts to enjoy the university experience based on the taste developed in one's own fashion in family socialization.

The interviewees, who were mostly White, not only felt like they belonged to a public university but were also cognizant of their own privileges. However, the group interviewed also reported situations of prejudice and social discrimination, associated with gender and regional origin, which is evidenced by the corresponding accent. There were also conflictive relationships linked to the hierarchies between degrees and their levels of demand. The challenges are varied in traditional, elite universities, which are responsible for providing support for all students to remain in and complete their studies.

The study relied substantially on the analysis of trajectories from a delimited social group. It allows us to consider that focusing on the trajectories of students who attend Brazilian public universities provides a better understanding of the universe of students, both inheritors and non-inheritors. In doing so, it encourages the continuity and deepening of investigations and discussions on relative advances in terms of democratizing access to and continuation of studies in federal public higher education institutions.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1 – Project coordination, active participation in conceptualization, methodological development, data analysis, writing, and critical review of the final draft.

Author 2 – Active participation in conceptualization, methodological development, analysis of qualitative data, building relationships with quantitative data, preparation, and writing of the article text.

Author 3 – Production, organization, and analysis of quantitative data and conducting interviews.

Author 4 – Organization and analysis of qualitative data.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

The authors declare that this article does not imply conflicts of interest.

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DECLARATION OF UNAVAILABILITY OF RESEARCH DATA

The data set supporting the results of this study is not publicly available so as not to expose details and information that could identify the interviewees, following the General Law on the Protection of Personal Data (Law number 13,709/2018).