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Student Dispositions and Permanence in Higher Education in Administration: A Biographical Analysis of Young People from Low-Income Backgrounds

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Abstract

This article aims to understand how the dispositions of young people from low-income backgrounds (understood as peripheral areas) influence their permanence in Administration courses. To this end, the biographies of three students from low-income backgrounds in Rio Grande do Sul (RS) were examined. The participants' dispositional heritage was analyzed to identify inter-individual dispositions, such as moral flexibility, social apprehension, and social appropriation, as well as intra-individual dispositions, such as self-improvement, discipline, forward thinking, forward planning, and hard work. Self-improvement, social apprehension, social mimicry, discipline, flourishing, and forward thinking were particularly important in relation to remaining in higher education. Work emerges as a central element in the lives of those profiled, contributing to student permanence and the formation of their identities. Family influences permanence as well, enabling young people to reflect on their life trajectory and social origin and project possibilities for mobility and professional advancement through higher education. The

research indicates that permanence plays a significant role in studies that seek to understand youth trajectories because they reveal feelings of belonging to and alienation from educational structures during academic experiences, unveiling material and symbolic conditions. Permanence should be understood as an instrument of transformation and constitution of the subject in the academic space. In order to continue studying, it is essential that the individual feels part of networks of relationships that reinforce a sense of belonging.

Keywords: dispositional heritage; student permanence; young people; low-income backgrounds.

Introduction

According to Bourdieu (2007), having cultural, economic, and social capital is one of the defining factors for accessing various social spaces, contributing to the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities among people. In this context, young people from low-income backgrounds, in particular, lack the expected capital for the university environment. Yet, they demonstrate the ability to meet academic requirements and perform satisfactorily. Such performance becomes a strategy for acceptance and recognition among peers, as well as a means of overcoming exclusion and prejudice, particularly given their status as scholarship recipients and their precarious educational background (Ganam & Pinezi, 2021).

This study focuses on young people from low-income backgrounds enrolled in Administration courses because, although they represent a growing proportion of new entrants to Brazilian higher education, they still face structural barriers that compromise their permanence and academic success. Studies such as the one by Moraes (2023) demonstrate that Administration courses, particularly at public institutions, have attracted a substantial number of students from low-income backgrounds. These students' academic journeys are characterized by strategies of resistance and overcoming the challenges imposed by cultural and economic inequality.

In recent years, there has been an increasing, albeit still preliminary, adoption of Bernard Lahire's theoretical framework, particularly the concept of dispositional heritage, in the fields of Administration and applied social sciences. Studies such as those by Silva (2018) and Machado (2019) contribute to this debate by discussing the limitations of Bourdieu's unified habitus model and proposing a sociological analysis "at the individual level" that considers the variety of dispositions formed through different life experiences. While these contributions primarily focus on the theoretical level, they provide valuable insights into formative processes in courses such as Administration. In this vein, Moraes (2023) articulates dispositional heritage with situated learning to explain why students from low-income backgrounds remain in Administration courses. He highlights how inherited and acquired dispositions are activated or inhibited at different stages of the educational journey.

Nevertheless, significant gaps remain. First, few empirical studies mobilize the concept of dispositional heritage in the context of Administration education, particularly in Brazil. Additionally, few studies focus on the in-depth reconstruction of students' individual trajectories. This is an essential methodological condition for capturing the composition and activation of dispositions in concrete contexts, as argued by Lahire (2002). Third, research analyzing how different teaching situations, such as courses, internships, and projects, influence the mobilization of diverse dispositions is lacking. This limits our understanding of how students navigate between

academic, institutional, and professional expectations. Thus, new studies integrating biographical and situational approaches are needed to better understand the formative processes in Administration courses from a dispositional perspective.

These gaps signal the need for future studies that: (a) use a longitudinal and biographical methodological design to map dispositional trajectories in Administration courses, (b) examine conditions that activate or inhibit repertoires in laboratories, classrooms, and internships, and (c) consider the institutional and socioeconomic context that shapes heritage and its mobilization in the educational process. These studies would advance our understanding of administrators' professional development as a result of a plural and situated dispositional heritage.

Other factors that support student permanence include the family environment, financial and emotional support networks, transportation between home and school, and cultural and social norms of the place of origin. Subjects taught by admired teachers and those that foster positive social bonds are also essential for permanence. Conversely, signs of a lack of concern by teachers for understanding the different socioeconomic realities and needs of students negatively influence permanence (Soares et al., 2022). Tinto (1997) highlights that students' involvement with the academic community, combined with institutional support, is fundamental to their permanence and success in higher education.

Recent research in the field of Administration has focused on understanding the permanence of students with diverse profiles. For instance, Silva et al. (2022) found that institutional student support policies combined with recognition of students' social trajectories significantly contribute to academic success. Carvalho and Souza (2020) demonstrate that fostering a sense of institutional belonging is crucial for retaining students in Administration programs, particularly those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds.

Concurrently, for families from low-income backgrounds, ensuring that young people enter the workforce is crucial for survival and development. As with basic education, enrolling in an undergraduate program is a strategy for entering the workforce because higher education facilitates participation in the competitive job market. Young people tend to base their efforts and choices on objective and subjective conditions for decision-making in different areas of their lives (D'Avila & Coutinho, 2019). Since the 1990s, studying and working concurrently has become common for underprivileged youth (Borghi, 2013).

One incentive for young people from low-income backgrounds to pursue higher education is their families' financial insecurity. At this level of education, young people from the periphery deal with "natural" demarcations of the spaces in which they can circulate. To this end, they interact and form networks with similar people, either consciously or unconsciously (Borghi, 2013). For these individuals, work involves more than just the remuneration received; it also offers the possibility of social advancement. They seek occupations that allow them to balance work and study because they associate work and study with a better future. They envision better working conditions once their academic training is complete (Costa, Marques, & Ferreira, 2020).

Analyzing the persistence of young people from low-income backgrounds enables us to understand the limitations and potential of institutional support policies and to address the ongoing educational disparities in the field of Administration. Studies such as the one by Teixeira and Figueiredo (2023) show that the challenges this group faces lead to reflection on pedagogical

practices, the structure of the curriculum, and institutional culture. This promotes more inclusive and equitable higher education.

Theoretically and methodologically, this study is a significant advance because it adopts the theory of dispositional heritages (Lahire, 2004; 2005). This shifts the focus from habitus, which is understood as a relatively stable, structured, and structuring matrix (Bourdieu, 2007), to a more dynamic approach that is sensitive to the heterogeneity of individuals' socialization experiences. This change enables us to view young people from low-income backgrounds not as a homogeneous group that reproduces inequalities, but as individuals with various, sometimes conflicting, dispositions that are selectively utilized in different contexts, such as the university environment.

This approach has proven fruitful in administrative research, enabling us to capture nuances in the academic trajectories of socially vulnerable students and understand how they articulate different dispositions – school, family, and professional – in constructing strategies for permanence (Lima, Andrade, & Teixeira, 2022). Furthermore, considering the diversity of influences shaping students' repertoires of action avoids deterministic or overly structural explanations. This broadens our understanding of agency and institutional adaptation, which are central elements in contemporary organizational analyses.

In the field of Administration, where functionalist and economic approaches to student dropout and permanence still prevail, the introduction of disposition theory is an epistemological innovation. This theory brings studies of educational management closer to broader discussions of inequalities, subjectivity, and social practices in institutional daily life. Integrating sociological approaches into organizational studies enriches analyses of academic culture, belonging, and performance by addressing issues of management, identity, and social justice. Thus, adopting this framework strengthens the analytical rigor of the research and aligns it with critical, interdisciplinary trends consolidating in Administration as a scientific field.

This study is anchored in the theory of dispositional heritage (Lahire, 2004; 2005), which posits that individuals accumulate a set of dispositions, knowledge, skills, and habits through socialization that guide their practices and perceptions in the social world. The study aims to understand how the dispositions of young people from lower-income backgrounds influence their permanence in an Administration course. To this end, a biographical study was conducted with three individuals from low-income backgrounds in the state of Rio Grande do Sul (RS) to reconstruct their life stories, identify their dispositions, and understand how these dispositions influence student permanence. Reconstructing biographies allows us to capture socialization experiences (Lahire, 2017) and analyze aspects related to student permanence.

This research is based on discussions of Bernard Lahire's dispositional theory (Lahire, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2015), which focuses on inter-individual – or shared – and intra-individual dispositions (Silva, 2017), as well as issues related to student permanence (Barbosa, 2015; Bisinoto, 2016; Gonçalves, Tude, & Junior, 2020; Felinto, 2019; Seabra, 2019; Barbosa, 2015). The following subsections present these concepts and offer reflections based on previous studies to help us understand the dispositions of young people from low-income backgrounds and the factors contributing to their permanence in an Administration degree course.

Bernard Lahire's dispositional theory

Lahire problematizes dispositional theory (i.e., the study of the origin of dispositional heritage) by examining the concept of habitus (Bourdieu, 2007), which is linked to the lifestyles, manners, and tastes adopted by individuals. Lahire criticizes Bourdieu's understanding of habitus as a "homogeneous system of general, permanent dispositions, transferable from one situation to another, from one domain of practice to another" and asserts that the use of terms as generative and unified principles, such as habitus, is inconsistent when referring to practices or behaviors. This is because "individual dispositional heritage is rarely very coherent and homogeneous" (Lahire, 2004, p. 318).

Social practices result from different interactions and the interweaving of past and present experiences in individuals' actions (Lahire, 2005). Action patterns, including perceptions, evaluations, assessments, the habits of seeing, feeling, doing, and saying, as well as the present situation, influence the activation of dispositions, which have a degree of fixation, strength, and regularity according to the intensity of socialization (Lahire, 2005). Habitus is perceived as heterogeneous, not unifying "all practices in all situations," since various socializing contexts coexist: family, neighborhood, school, and networks of friends, among others (Roldão, 2015, p. 78).

These reflections on the notion of habitus imply that dispositions are not generalizable (Lahire, 2005). This results in a microsociological approach that seeks to understand dispositional variations. This involves knowing the dispositional heritage that exists within social groups (inter-individual dispositions) and within individuals (intra-individual dispositions). Lahire's (2005) proposal challenges the concept of a unified habitus, instead emphasizing the diversity of dispositions acquired throughout various social trajectories.

Intra-individual dispositions are modes of conduct acquired through experiences in various social contexts. Inter-individual dispositions contribute to our understanding of existing social and cultural inequalities (Boaes, Oliveira, & Assis, 2019). These dispositions arise from the interaction between social, cultural, historical, and biographical factors, as highlighted by Lahire (2002). Inter-individual dispositions indicate differences between people resulting from their experiences and life events. These differences emphasize not only biological aspects, but also disparities in opportunities and life experiences. Thus, dispositions are shared heterogeneously within the same social group, a phenomenon particularly evident in each person. Depending on the socializations established in their specific contexts, individuals may or may not activate these dispositions (Boaes, Oliveira, & Assis, 2019).

Lahire (2015) seeks to understand the genesis of dispositions and the modes of socialization that underpin them (Alves, 2016). He considers dispositions to have an origin, be grouped by socializations, have an intensity resulting from repetition in analogous experiences, be observable in attitudes, practices, and behaviors, and reveal behavioral tendencies, inclinations, and propensities.

Table 1
Summary of the aspects discussed in Bernard Lahire's dispositional theory

Aspect	Summary	Authors
Habitus - traditional concept	Homogeneous and enduring system of dispositions, lifestyles, and incorporated tastes, transferable between situations and domains.	Bourdieu (2007)
Criticism of habitus	Habitus is not a homogeneous system that unifies all practices; individual dispositions are heterogeneous and inconsistent.	Lahire (2004)
Social practices and dispositions	Practices derive from the interaction of multiple past and present experiences; dispositions are activated according to the context and intensity of socialization.	Lahire (2005)
Heterogeneity of habitus	Habitus seen as heterogeneous, with the coexistence of multiple socializing contexts (family, school, neighborhood, etc.).	Roldão (2015)
Microsociological approach	Analysis of dispositional variations, considering intra-individual (within the individual) and inter-individual (between individuals in the group) dispositions.	Lahire (2005); Boaes, Oliveira & Assis (2019)
Intra-individual dispositions	Resulting from experiences in different contexts; influenced by social, cultural, historical, and biographical factors.	Boaes, Oliveira & Assis (2019)
Inter-individual dispositions	Differences between individuals related to opportunities, experiences, and backgrounds, not just biological factors.	Boaes, Oliveira & Assis (2019)
Genesis of dispositions	Dispositions originate in socialization; they are shaped by repetition and observable in attitudes, practices, and behaviors.	Lahire (2015); Alves (2016)

Source: prepared by the authors (2025).

Dispositions can be summarized as follows: gregarious instinct, hard work, forward thinking, discipline, practicality, self-improvement, asceticism, hedonism, conciliation, confrontation, prudence, recklessness, autonomy, moral flexibility, righteousness, social distinction, and social appropriation (Silva, 2017). The first set (gregarious instinct, hard work, forward thinking, discipline, practicality, and self-improvement) refers to inter-individual (shared) dispositions. The second set (asceticism, hedonism, conciliation, confrontation, prudence, recklessness, autonomy, moral flexibility, righteousness, social distinction, and social appropriation) corresponds to intra-individual dispositions. Silva (2017) proposed this synthesis considering the results of a survey of young Administration degree recipients who were scholarship recipients of the University for All Program (PROUNI). The objective of the survey was to understand the influence of social origin on education and professional integration.

Gregarious instinct refers to behavior that unites and strengthens family ties. There is mutual dependence among family members in terms of sharing difficulties, advice, companionship, financial support, and domestic activities. This instinct involves a family project aimed at collective growth and future repayment by children to their parents, who supported them and passed on examples and values. This instinct is also related to maintaining friendships from childhood and forming new ones. It is a way of valuing one's social origins and overcoming difficulties along the way (Silva, 2007).

Hard work is associated with professional qualifications and the possibility of social advancement through effort and dedication. Work is a key path to improving one's life; therefore, reconciling work and study is natural, especially for young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who have worked since childhood (Souza, 2010). This concept is related to **forward**

thinking, which involves making plans and setting future goals for oneself and one's family while paying attention to opportunities. The goal is to avoid mistakes and the waste of resources; therefore, planning, self-control, and sacrifice are essential to establishing the idea of a better future (Souza, 2010).

Discipline refers to behaviors learned in childhood within the family that establish habits for studying and other activities, which are essential for achieving goals. It involves giving one's best in the activities performed. This disposition is important for academic success and the development of independent behaviors, as well as the ability to accomplish tasks independently (Lahire, 1997; Souza, 2010).

Intra-individual dispositions are related to asceticism, or the rational calculation of resources and focusing efforts on what can generate the greatest return. This disposition is associated with discipline and hard work (Lahire, 1997; Souza, 2010). In contrast, hedonism consists of valuing pleasure, rest, and fun, and allowing oneself to enjoy momentary pleasures. Hedonism can be considered a class privilege that does not compromise other spheres of life (Souza, 2010). Conciliation is the tendency to avoid conflict by giving in or changing position during impasses or apparent divergences. This allows one to adapt to different environments and codes of conduct (Silva, 2007).

Other individual dispositions include confrontation (adopting a firm stance in the face of questioning or conflict and not giving up easily in an argument or dispute), prudence (careful conduct, avoiding unnecessary risks, and opting for safety and stability), recklessness (a lack of prudence resulting in bold conduct with a tendency to take risks and behave audaciously), autonomy (the existence of an impulse that motivates individuals to achieve their desires without waiting for others or the ideal moment), moral flexibility (adaptive behavior in different contexts, situations, and opinions to receive recognition and legitimacy, even from those with whom one disagrees or is different), righteousness (integrity and acting in favor of duty, rules, and the law while valuing the righteousness of character), social distinction (the need for social differentiation in relation to those belonging to different social classes), and social appropriation (the ability to move easily through different social circles, interact with people from different backgrounds, and adapt to different contexts) (Silva, 2017).

Two other inter-individual (shared) dispositions are practicality and self-improvement. Practicality relates to the renunciation of personal pleasures and vanity in favor of objective, concrete returns. In other words, it is a behavior of personal sacrifice where someone decides to abdicate when they don't perceive personal advantages. Usually, the focus is on professional advancement and the search for opportunities in the job market (Souza, 2010). The second disposition involves the belief in the possibility of social advancement and achieving a better life through study and work. This belief is often transmitted through living with one's parents. This discourse emphasizes perseverance, responsibility, and individual effort (Lahire, 1997).

Silva (2017) describes the dispositions identified in young graduates of the Administration course from PROUNI. These dispositions reveal a complex set of values and behaviors that reflect social mobility strategies and adaptations to the demands of the contemporary world of work. These dispositions are echoed in several Brazilian studies in Administration, particularly those

dealing with people management, organizational culture, and the professional integration of individuals from lower socioeconomic classes.

Gregarious instinct as a collective family project for social advancement is often discussed in studies on social capital and the importance of informal support networks for professionals early in their careers. Studies such as those by Lima and Conserva (2006) and Fontes (2018) show that family and community support directly influence the development of professional identity and the capacity to overcome challenges in the corporate environment. Strengthening these bonds acts as a resistance strategy in the face of structural inequalities.

The disposition for hard work and forward thinking is directly related to the concept of employability. According to this concept, individuals must continuously commit to their own development by cultivating marketable skills (Oliveira & Batista, 2017). However, this perspective is intertwined with the meritocratic discourse widely disseminated in organizational environments. As Conceição (2011), Ribeiro (2014), Rodrigues (2017), and Fontes (2018) warn, this discourse can hide inequalities of origin and ignore the effects of class habitus on real opportunities for mobility.

Similarly, discipline and practicality suggest the adoption of a managerial ethos centered on resource optimization, efficiency, and individual performance. These characteristics are highly valued in the field of Administration, particularly in environments that demand high productivity and constant adaptability. However, studies by Lima and Conserva (2006), Valle, Barrichello, and Tomasi (2010), Barbosa (2014), and Abrantes and Gonçalves (2023) show that when this ethos is taken for granted, it can justify self-management practices of suffering and work intensification, particularly among workers seeking social affirmation.

Intra-individual dispositions such as asceticism, prudence, and righteousness can be understood in terms of the expectations of ethical behavior and self-control in organizational settings, thereby reinforcing the significance of subjectivity in modern corporate governance. Conversely, the coexistence of seemingly contradictory dispositions, such as hedonism and asceticism or prudence and recklessness, reveals the ambivalence of these individuals' trajectories. They must continually reconcile internalized values and external demands to maintain their position in the market.

Furthermore, moral flexibility and social appropriation are essential for understanding navigation practices in various social contexts. As Conceição (2011), Rodrigues (2017), and Fontes (2018) point out, subjects from the low-income classes must acquire specific symbolic skills to be accepted in spaces traditionally occupied by economic and cultural elites. This includes the ability to "read" and adapt to different codes of conduct. This involves constructing a legitimate image and controlling aspects of one's origin.

Finally, social distinction reflects a search for recognition that transcends the economic sphere and is a need to demarcate symbolic boundaries between groups. Studies such as the one by Conceição (2011) demonstrate that professional advancement often comes with identity tensions. Subjects find themselves torn between belonging to their origins and integrating into new spaces, which are often marked by veiled discrimination.

Thus, Silva's (2017) findings are relevant to central debates in contemporary Administration, revealing how individual and collective dispositions are mediated by social trajectories, power relations, and organizational demands. Subjective strategies for entering and

remaining in the world of work highlight the intertwining of structure and agency, challenging normative models that treat careers as purely individual journeys.

Student permanence

In the context of public institutions, student permanence is viewed from the perspective of a welfare policy or program that supports strategies to maintain and guarantee students' rights (Silva, 2017; Maciel, Júnior, & Lima, 2019). However, the term can also refer to student retention, particularly in private institutions (Silva, 2017). It can also represent students' efforts to remain in the academic environment until they complete their course of study. This encompasses an understanding of the obstacles and difficulties they face (material and symbolic) as well as the motivational factors involved (Felinto, 2019; Maciel, Júnior, & Lima, 2019).

This study adopts the latter understanding of obstacles and motivational factors since this perspective aligns with the theoretical lens of dispositional heritage. This allows us to understand not only the material elements of permanence but also the symbolism of the process and motivations for permanence. Social origins (e.g., ethnicity, nationality), place of residence (e.g., periphery, city center, rural areas), and gender permeate school trajectories. Students from low-income backgrounds are generally penalized by the school system due to their characteristics: most are black, from rural areas, or residents of impoverished urban areas (Seabra, 2019).

They usually have poor, low-quality basic schooling (Barbosa, 2015) and drop out of higher education the most due to socioeconomic conditions, poor performance, failing grades, and a lack of effective support from educational institutions and teachers. They also experience difficulty studying and working and have uncertainties about their career path and the job market (Kampff, Teixeira, & Mentges, 2018). Bisinoto (2016) summarizes reasons for students' permanence or dropout from higher education in three categories: personal characteristics, characteristics internal to educational institutions, and characteristics external to educational institutions.

Personal characteristics include study skills, personality, previous schooling, early choice of profession, difficulty adapting to university life, incompatibility between academic demands and the job market, demotivation from choosing courses as second or third options, misinformation about courses, and difficulty with the teaching-learning relationship (constant failure and/or low attendance).

The teaching characteristics of institutions include outdated and/or lengthy curricula, high prerequisite requirements, a lack of clarity about the pedagogical design of the course, inappropriate assessment criteria, and a lack of institutional support and student development programs. These conditions are associated with a model of higher education marked by precarious teaching work and heterogeneous supply conditions, as noted by Sguissardi (2023) and Vargas, Zuccarelli, and Honorato (2024). From an external perspective, educational institution characteristics are related to the labor market, social recognition of careers in the field, the economic situation, the devaluation of the teaching profession, and the financial difficulties students face. These factors are exacerbated by the absence of consistent, continuous public policies that value higher education, as indicated by Sousa Sobrinho, Lima, and Santos (2022) and Patrocino (2023). They also highlight the impact of educational reforms and multilateral organization prescriptions in this scenario. Additionally, the lack of support for initial and

continuing education, coupled with the massification of education, compromises the quality of higher education and the permanence of students (Bertolassi, 2021; Bisinoto, 2016).

In the literature on student permanence, there are two main theoretical approaches: the sociological approach, which is linked to family context, social and academic experiences, support from friends, social and academic integration, academic performance (effort and grades), and the institution; and the psychological approach, which is related to learning, informal contact with teachers, pre-entry and environmental factors, opportunities, and student involvement (Gonçalves et al., 2020). Decisive factors in continuing or dropping out of education generally involve identification with or satisfaction with the course, learning difficulties, lack of study aids, career possibilities and job opportunities, personal and professional development, financial conditions, geographical conditions (e.g., access, unavailability, or lack of transportation and rides), and personal and family problems (Souza & Reinert, 2009).

The research method: sociological portraits

The analysis of dispositional heritage is based on biographical interviews that capture past and present socialization experiences at different life stages (Lahire, 2017). These qualitative interviews use a semi-structured script to understand the interviewee's story in detail. Unlike other qualitative studies that use interviews as a data collection technique, these interviews do not need to be numerous. Brazilian research investigating dispositional heritage is generally located in the areas of education and teaching and starts from one subject to study (Dias & Gauche, 2021).

According to Lahire (2017), sociological biographies do not separate individuals from their contexts. Instead, they allow for the gradual reconstruction of the connections that individuals establish with others, social groups, and institutions throughout their lives. Thus, they become detailed, effective analytical tools for observing how social relations form between individuals and the spaces they occupy. By capturing the social structures experienced and traits adopted by individuals throughout their lives, these biographies demonstrate great methodological potential for investigating social experience (Lahire, 2017).

The perspective proposed by Lahire, who conceives of biographies as "sociological portraits," is theoretically significant for at least two reasons. First, it offers an alternative to macrosociological approaches, which are often more abstract and generalizing, by focusing on the microsociological dimension and unique processes of socialization. This approach highlights that the dynamics between social classes and dominant cultures are not homogeneous nor automatically reproduced at the individual level. Second, it enables a specifically sociological treatment of individuality, recognizing individuals as bearers of multiple socially shaped and historically situated dispositions (Junior & Massi, 2015).

Sociological portraits are developed based on semi-structured biographical interviews, which are marked by flexibility in terms of themes and an absence of rigid topic order (Lopes, 2012). These interviews should take place at various stages of the study to allow the interviewee to revisit their experiences with greater depth and nuance. The interval between meetings between the researcher and participant is essential because it encourages reflection on one's

trajectory, increasing the likelihood of constructing a genuine narrative that transcends fixed, idealized discourses or standards of personal success.

Developing sociological portraits requires an interview script that moves through participants' past, present, and future experiences. This approach contemplates the complexity of the social contexts in which individuals are embedded, favoring a broader understanding of the interactions that shape their trajectories (Silva, 2018). Therefore, the focus is not on the number of interviewees, but on the density and depth of the information produced. For this reason, the method avoids generic or simplified readings and takes an attentive stance toward singularities.

This research aims to understand the conditions that favor the permanence of students from low-income backgrounds in higher education. To this end, an interview script was developed based on contributions from Ferreira (2020), Silva (2018), Gomes et al. (2014), Reis (2014), and Ruskowski (2012). The script incorporates different spheres of social life, such as family ties, school experiences, entry into the world of work, friendships, cultural practices, and forms of leisure. A new axis on student permanence was added to identify characteristics of courses and institutions that are fundamental to permanence, as well as adaptation processes, strategies for continuing studies, incentives to study, study routines, learning resources and challenges, relationships with teachers and peers, and family, professional, and other environments that are present throughout the academic journey.

This methodological approach aims to avoid self-promotional or heroic narratives in reports, instead promoting conditions that enable the biographee to access deeper aspects of their social experience. During this process, the researcher must listen sensitively and ask questions that reveal the social core present in the participants' life stories. Committed and situated listening is therefore fundamental to revealing the multiple, socially acquired dispositions that traverse each biographical trajectory (Lahire, 2002, 2004).

The interviews and data processing adhered to the guidelines of Lahire (1997) and Silva (2017). Table 2 organizes the preparation and process of collecting and analyzing the data, which culminates in constructing the sociological portraits.

Table 2
Analytical procedures for constructing sociological portraits

Methodological Reference	Inspired by Silva's (2017) analytical model, which structures qualitative analysis based on previously defined socializing dimensions.
Dimensions of Analysis Used	(i) Social, educational, and professional trajectory: analysis of individual, family, school, work, and social network contexts; (ii) Place of origin: consideration of objective (material) and subjective (symbolic) aspects and interactions between dynamics internal and external to the territory of origin.
Portrait Structure	After transcribing the interviews, the portraits were organized individually. Initially, an overview of the participants' life trajectories is presented, followed by a reconstruction of their socializing contexts (childhood, family, school, work). In this research, the focus is on the contexts of place of origin and higher education, in accordance with the specific objectives.
Disposition Identification Process	Based on successive readings of the empirical material, both individual and shared dispositions among the participants were identified. Specific terms were proposed to name and explain these dispositions, which were refined throughout the analysis.
Analysis Stages in This Thesis	1. Preparation of individual portraits (Aline, Larissa, and Thainã); 2. Identification of: (i) intra- and inter-individual dispositions; (ii) dispositions linked to places of origin; (iii) dispositions associated with academic permanence (activated or developed in the university context).
Final Disposition Summary	At the end of the analytical process, the following were systematized: - the new dispositions evidenced from the narratives; - the dispositional heritage of the subjects, highlighting the most recurrent; - dispositions linked to the place of origin and the process of permanence in higher education.

Source: prepared by the authors (2025).

This study profiled three people: Larissa, Thainã, and Aline, from three low-income neighborhoods in Porto Alegre, RS: Lomba do Pinheiro, Restinga, and São Tomé (Viamão). The researchers contacted them through social media, presented the research objective, and gauged their interest. Once they accepted the invitation, the online interview process began, taking place between March 2022 and April 2023. The interviews averaged 1 hour and 45 minutes in length. Fourteen interviews were conducted and are distributed as follows: Aline participated in five interviews, Larissa in five, and Thainã in four. During the initial meeting, the informed consent form was read, and the use of real names, recording conditions, desired breaks, transcription of the interviews, and sharing of the transcripts with the interviewees for adjustments were agreed upon.

The participants in this study were selected based on two saturation criteria applied to the analysis of social space: strata and representations. Strata refer to the widely recognized structural dimensions that are essential for defining a sample or research group. These dimensions include age group, occupation, religion, and gender, among others. Representations, on the other hand, refer to the subjective variations in individuals' relationships with objects and highlight how these relationships form. According to Bauer and Aarts (2003), this dimension is understudied and requires further investigation because qualitative research aims to understand the specific representations that arise from the interaction between subjects and objects in social contexts.

In this approach, strata are considered in association or typification with these representations. Limiting the corpus to biographies allows for a deeper understanding of the sociocultural and historical contexts in addition to the participants' experiences. This enables the identification of commonalities and divergences in the narratives, which are all analyzed using the same theoretical basis.

Participation was voluntary and based on their interest. Before making direct contact, the researchers posted an invitation to participate on social media. The invitation clearly presented the research objectives and procedures, and it provided channels of communication for questions. This strategy generated responses expressing both curiosity and a willingness to share life stories in an academic context. After receiving these initial responses, the researchers provided more detailed information about the objectives and methodology of the investigation. Ultimately, four people expressed interest in participating, though one withdrew before the interviews began.

The interviews followed the categories that had been defined for each dimension of the prepared script. At each meeting, the participants were informed of the topics to be discussed, promoting clarity and alignment during the conversations. Each session began with a review of the topics covered in the previous meeting to contextualize the participants within the trajectory of the ongoing research.

After the interviews, the collected material was transcribed in its entirety to allow for a thorough reading of the narratives, identification of sensitive aspects of the trajectories – often highlighted by the interviewees themselves – and selection of excerpts requiring further exploration in subsequent meetings. We respected intervals between interviews, allowing for moments of reflection by both the researchers and the participants. This approach aligns with the recommendations of Bernard Lahire (1997, 2002) regarding the conscious elaboration of life stories.

During transcription, we faithfully recorded the interviewees' statements, including interjections and forms of expression typical of oral speech. We made grammatical adjustments only when necessary to comply with citation standards for the analyses. Regarding the construction of the biographies, the participants collaborated in the process of elaborating the narratives, especially in validating the contents, paying attention to the chronological sequence of reported events and the accuracy of references to people and places. Thus, the biographies were constructed through a collaborative process.

Biographies, results, and discussion

Aline

Aline is 27 years old and identifies as white. She was born in Porto Alegre (RS) and has lived in Viamão, in the metropolitan area of Porto Alegre, since childhood. She is part of a small nuclear family and has one sister. She currently lives with her parents. Her mother was always present, while her father provided for the household. Until she was 16, Aline lived in a wooden and brick house behind her grandmother's house in the same yard. The house had a kitchen, where the table doubled as Aline's study desk, a living room, a bathroom, and two bedrooms. She attended public schools throughout her education. In 2015, she began attending the School of

Administration at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), marking her entry into higher education.

She prepared for the entrance exam by taking preparatory classes at a popular education institute, where she interacted with people in a social situation similar to her own. Attending UFRGS was always Aline's goal: *"I always focused on UFRGS because it's free. I had no other option; I couldn't afford a private college."* Work has always been part of her life, and she entered the world of work out of a *"need to survive."* From 2015 until mid-2017, right at the beginning of her course, she worked at a market with her mother and aunt on weekends. In 2018, she began an internship at Porto Alegre City Hall. She studied in the morning and worked in the afternoon.

She remained in the Administration program due to a combination of trying to survive in that environment and focusing on her professional future. Courses involving people management helped her reflect on her career and analyze opportunities. It was the teachers who encouraged Aline to stay, not UFRGS as an institution, but she emphasizes that student assistance programs are important for other students. She revisited the difficulties she faced at the beginning of her journey, emphasizing the difference in grades and academic performance, as well as the contrast with her basic education. Her lack of openness with classmates from better social backgrounds caused her frustration, a situation that was different when she participated in class activities.

Professional experiences were also important for her to continue her studies. Overall, her jobs at the market, City Hall, and the accounting firm helped her develop communication, reflection, action, and interpersonal skills, especially when her work aligned with course subjects. Interacting with others at the university helped Aline develop her relational skills, especially at the accounting firm. Interpersonal relationships overshadowed content relevance in Aline's work activities. Additionally, working in an office with third sector entities greatly influenced her choices, purpose, and academic work, including the topic of her final course project.

Thainã

Thainã is a 30-year-old black man who lives in the Hípica neighborhood of Porto Alegre. He has been dating Letícia for over six years, and they live together. He has a son from a previous relationship. Inspired by the people around him, he reflects on his life experiences, evaluating them positively or negatively so that he can learn from these situations. He makes projections for the future based on solid life planning and his financial means. His parents are civil servants at a financial institution. His mother completed high school and is now retired. His father did not complete elementary school and has not yet retired.

Thainã began his working life in his second year of high school. He worked as an intern at a bank for two years until he graduated. Intending to continue his studies, he enrolled in a technical course in Administration with his father's support to pay for it. Thainã believed that the Administration course was the right path for him based on his professional and academic trajectory. As soon as he began private higher education, he started an internship at the Legislative Assembly of Rio Grande do Sul. This internship allowed him to balance his professional activities with his academic studies. His main expectation was to be employable.

When asked why he continues studying, Thainã says it is because of his plans for the future and his desire to turn difficulties into motivation. Therefore, he knows how to act, understand situations, and acquire knowledge to make decisions. His financial situation and social status are important motivators for continuing his studies because he always considers his family a benchmark for his existence. Teachers also inspire him to persevere. The professional trajectories that teachers discuss in class motivate him not only to continue the course but also to reflect on the job market, professional management positions, and even starting his own business. Today, Thainã has already graduated with a degree in Administration.

Larissa

Larissa is a 26-year-old white woman who is married and lives in the Lomba do Pinheiro neighborhood of Porto Alegre. She is currently a student on the Administration course at a private university in Porto Alegre. She was born when her mother was 20. Because her parents worked, her grandmother was always present in her upbringing, and her mother took turns with her grandmother in caring for her on a daily basis. Larissa's family owns a restaurant in the neighborhood. Before owning the restaurant, Larissa's mother worked as a cleaner and cook in another restaurant. Larissa's mother's connection to cooking goes back a long way, starting with one of her first job interviews. Larissa's father previously worked in a hypermarket. Larissa moved to her current home at age 15. Before that, she had always lived in another neighborhood in the same city.

Her parents always emphasized the importance of studying, as they did not want her to follow in their footsteps. Her mother advised her to ask her teachers questions whenever necessary to avoid any confusion. They always made it clear that they could only offer her a limited education and help her with school activities to a certain extent. She attended public elementary and high school. While in high school, she took a technical course in Administration and took the ENEM (National High School Exam), which led to her acceptance into the Pedagogy course. However, she realized that she did not have an affinity for the course, so she dropped out and decided to study Administration at the same institution. She enrolled as a paying student and relied on her parents for financial support during the initial months until she found a job.

Her parents' life story strengthened her commitment to her studies, especially her memories of the restaurant and her parents' hard work to achieve their dream. Her classmates, who have become friends, are also sources of inspiration and motivation. In moments of discouragement, she tries to remember with them the reasons for being in college, their history, and their place of origin. Her desire to succeed is the driving force behind her decision to continue studying Administration. "*Where can I go if I study? What will I achieve? What [professional] field do I want to pursue?*" Her decision to remain on the course also stems from her need to support herself, greatly influenced by her mother's words: "*If you give up on this and working, who will support you?*"

Work is another fundamental element in Larissa's story. Since she was six years old, she has observed her family members working hard. So, when she had the opportunity to work, she didn't hesitate. "*I just faced it. I'm going to work because I want to have my own things.*" She is currently doing an administrative internship at the Sicredi community bank. In her free time, she enjoys

going to the beach, reading Harry Potter and science fiction books, visiting city parks such as Parque Farroupilha and Germanica, going to the movies, listening to *sertanejo* music, and going to water parks, the zoo, concerts, children's birthday parties, and traveling.

The intra-individual dispositions of the biographed subjects

Aline

The biographee emphasized the importance of doing good, which points to an inclination toward **humanitarianism**: *"There's no point in being on Earth if it isn't to make a difference, however small, in someone's life."* This behavior indicates a social mission and commitment to a more just, inclusive, egalitarian society with care for others, as well as principles and values that legitimize her actions (Nascimento, 2013). She believes she deserves her achievements, though she acknowledges the need to bolster her self-confidence and belief in her potential. She reflects on her social and economic trajectory, recognizing the dedication and effort she applied to overcome the difficulties she encountered.

Another disposition identified was **social apprehension**. Aline recognizes social inequalities in the spaces she frequents, especially in higher education. She highlights the clash of realities, resulting in feelings of exclusion, limitations in interpersonal relationships, and difficulties coexisting with and interacting with classmates from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. This disposition reveals a person's ability to quickly adapt to social categories in a given context and demonstrates their unique understanding of events (Carraro, Oliveira, & Rovati, 2017).

In higher education, Aline uses **social appropriation** (Silva, 2017) as a strategy to overcome obstacles. She seeks to adapt to the academic context through behavioral flexibility despite her awareness of existing social differences, which reinforces her disposition for social apprehension. The few social relationships she establishes at the university are influenced by her assimilation of the social conditions of others, limitations imposed by social apprehension, her personality, and her socioeconomic situation. Therefore, she exhibits a noticeable inclination toward **moral flexibility** (Silva, 2017) – a behavior that adapts to contexts, situations, and opinions in search of recognition or legitimacy in a given social field.

She also has a tendency for **confrontation**. This disposition is related to taking a firm stance in the face of questions, discussions, or conflicts (Silva, 2017). This disposition is associated with Aline's determination to finish her Administration course despite the noticeable difficulties she encountered along the way: *"[...] when I realized that I wasn't [going to give up] anymore, and that I was already halfway through the course, I said, 'Well, let's see it through to the end. You started it; finish it [...].'"* In this excerpt, we observe **asceticism**, which refers to the rational calculation of the effort required to achieve significant results. Aline's ascetic inclination can be associated with the benefits of a university degree.

Aline finds disrespectful, corrupt, and coercive professional environments involving physical and/or moral aggression unacceptable. On these points, dispositions for **prudence** and **righteousness** are observed. Prudence relates to careful, necessary, safe, and stable conduct. Righteousness, on the other hand, is conduct based on integrity and character that aligns with

laws, rules, and duties (Silva, 2017). Asceticism is also evident in her work at the accounting firm. She understands that her labor is necessary for her survival, and she is motivated by the content of her professional activities to work at this company.

Additionally, two other dispositions were observed: **servitude** and **hedonism**. Servitude refers to a person's responsibility for the results and risks of the organization in which they work. This concept is a consequence of the valorization and centrality of work in capitalist society (Carelli & Andrade, 2022). This idea is evident in the following excerpt: "[...] *you're providing a service; you're helping someone through your service. You're doing something; no matter what you're doing, you're helping some area get better [...]*." Finally, the hedonistic disposition relates to placing value on pleasure, rest, and fun (Silva, 2017), as seen in Aline's cultural activities.

Larissa

Similar to Aline, Larissa shows a tendency for **confrontation** (Silva, 2017). She describes herself as polite and firm, and she acts offensively or defensively depending on how people address her in different situations. She acts this way because she observes the influence of gender on the position adopted by individuals. Therefore, she expresses her opinions and takes positions in areas of dispute or conflict. Another disposition identified is **righteousness** (Silva, 2017). She recounts leaving the law firm due to disrespectful treatment, including shouting and swearing, from one of the firm's partners. She felt undervalued as an individual, particularly in the workplace.

Moral flexibility, **hedonism**, and **social appropriation** are other dispositions identified (Silva, 2017). Larissa usually adapts to contexts, situations, and the people involved, demonstrating apparent flexibility in her behavior and interactions with other professionals, which can be attributed to moral flexibility and social appropriation. Regarding hedonism (Silva, 2017), Larissa organizes leisure activities into her routine, such as going to parks, shopping malls, movies, and taking trips. She prioritizes leisure activities such as going to the beach and traveling.

There is a tendency toward **gratitude**, which is understood as a personality disposition that encourages reciprocity. This disposition develops through appreciation of someone's actions, recognition of the effort involved, and positive feelings toward the intention behind the actions (Pieta & Freitas, 2009; Alves, 2010). She has expressed gratitude at different times for life, God, professional and personal opportunities, and the people who have been part of her life. In her speech, she emphasizes the teachings and opportunities for learning and growth at work that contributed to her personal achievements. She is grateful to her parents for their role in her upbringing and education, the values they instilled in her, and their example as individuals and professionals. She expresses companionship and mutual support for her boyfriend and friends.

Altruism is also present in her biography. This disposition relates to empathy and the motivation to promote the well-being of others. In this state, the benefactor navigates obstacles to ensure well-being. Affective, motivational, and cognitive elements are necessary for action. This behavior is detached from particular interests and not linked to rewards; a sense of community prevails (Sampol, 2019). In elementary school, she helped classmates with learning difficulties. In higher education, she organized to help classmates who were struggling with a subject and coordinated with the course coordinator to discuss the issue. At work, she started an initiative to

collect bottle caps to give to recyclable material collectors in her neighborhood. She usually dedicates time and resources to help people with material and existential issues.

Thainã

Thainã's discourse clearly reveals a disposition toward **social apprehension**. He is concerned with issues such as ethnic and racial discrimination, stereotypes based on one's place of origin, social class structure, socioeconomic inequalities, and meritocracy. For him, higher education has become a field for the manifestation of ethnic and social inequalities based on discourse, material objects, and people's phenotypes. **Social appropriation** (Silva, 2017) was also observed, especially in the academic environment. Thainã aims to understand the relationships and interactions between teachers and students regarding the job market and professional integration. He seeks to adapt to this context so that he can participate in discussions and build relationships that will facilitate his professional development.

Asceticism and **moral flexibility** are other observed dispositions (Silva, 2017). The inclination toward asceticism is linked to knowing how to articulate oneself when interacting with teachers and classmates in conversations related to the profession, the career in the field of study, and advice and support in certain selection processes. Moral flexibility is evident when he acknowledges that he must know how to handle situations and people, even if he does not like them, because he recognizes their importance for his progress.

His disposition for **autonomy** (Silva, 2017) developed in childhood when his mother assigned him household chores and he provided for both of them. Additionally, he has incorporated **altruism**, expressed through helping family members in need and through social action in his snack bar, where he distributes hot dogs to the community on specific dates. He is also **grateful** and **benevolent** because he recognizes the extra efforts commonly made by those from humble backgrounds.

The inter-individual dispositions of the biographed subjects

Aline

Aline demonstrated a **gregarious instinct**. She emphasized her parents' concern for her education, health, and interaction with others at school (Silva, 2017). They took care to make the home a comfortable and safe space and took trips to the beach and rural towns. They also went on outings to parks, soccer stadiums, the cinema, and the theater. Her friends are sources of inspiration, even if they behave differently from her. They are a close-knit group with a lot of freedom of opinion and discuss relationships and other topics.

Hard work (Souza, 2010) is another disposition that was strongly externalized. Work is a constant in her life and has permeated her development. Initially a necessity for survival, she now understands work as a space for learning and (re)signification. She grew up observing her parents' efforts to provide for the family's well-being regardless of their financial circumstances. They valued a place of affection, unity, and above all, education. They were demanding about school

lessons.

Her inclination toward **discipline** (Silva, 2017) was learned from childhood. Aware of her living conditions, she prepared to attend UFRGS because it was the only way to receive a higher education; she lacked the financial stability to cover such expenses. All of her strategies – attending a popular college prep course and taking the ENEM exam to boost her college entrance exam score – were based on her decision to enroll at UFRGS. For Aline, higher education represents access to better professional opportunities and a way to stay competitive in the job market thanks to her degree, showing her disposition for **self-improvement** (Silva, 2017).

Aline mentioned her disposition for hard work and self-improvement in her dialogues. She decided to continue studying Administration because of the professional security the course offers. It is also an alternative and fundamental way to obtain a job in a private company and/or take civil service exams. This understanding points to another disposition: **forward thinking** (Silva, 2017). Forward thinking involves establishing future plans and goals, paying attention to opportunities, and avoiding mistakes and the waste of resources. It requires planning, self-control, and sacrifices, such as forgoing leisure activities (Silva, 2017).

Finally, a disposition for **social interaction** was noted. This refers to behavior guided by social conduct rules, protocols, and standards of etiquette and courtesy that dictate how to act, be, and communicate in different situations (Barros, Souza, Silva, Silva, & Neto, 2016). Two moments exemplify this disposition. The first is when Aline incorporates the delicacy with which her boss handles various situations and problems into her social conduct. The second is her sense of responsibility and the way she communicates, interacts, and deals with people and their particularities, inspired by the social relationships she participates in at work.

Larissa

The interviews identified **hard work** and **self-improvement** (Silva, 2017) as key dispositions. Work is a central factor in the family because it provides opportunities for achievement and social development. Since childhood, Larissa has been driven by work, having grown up observing her parents' efforts to ensure the family's survival and well-being. Work is also a source of fulfillment of dreams and desires, and she demonstrates her commitment to her activities by learning and excelling in what she sets out to do. Her disposition for self-improvement nurtures her dedication to work. From an early age, Larissa enjoyed studying and understood its importance for professional advancement.

Along with hard work and self-improvement, **discipline** has been a constant in her life since childhood, evident in her study habits, household chores, restaurant duties, travel plans, leisure activities, and professional decision-making. **Forward thinking** (Silva, 2017) permeates all the other dispositions identified. Larissa's statements demonstrate her effort, dedication, and accountability for her current actions and their outcomes. While narrating her story, she often drew comparisons between her past and present to justify her behaviors and actions, which corroborates with **anticipatory thinking**, or thinking about the future.

Anticipatory thinking involves strategies a person uses to set goals and determine the means to achieve them in the future, thus planning and anticipating events before taking action

(Santos, Ramos & Silva, 2020; Silva, Garcia & Ramos, 2021). This disposition presupposes self-regulation: the individual regulates their behavior through rational awareness of the courses of action to be adopted.

Thainã

Discipline is a disposition learned from a very young age (Silva, 2017). As he grew up, Thainã took on important responsibilities with his mother, which brought out his disposition for **autonomy**. Discipline was not only evident at home when he helped his mother with household chores; it was also evident in his studies and work. **Self-improvement** and **forward thinking** are interconnected dispositions (Silva, 2017) because they both involve a desire for a prosperous personal and professional future. For this reason, Thainã strove to be a good student, believing that committing to his studies was his obligation. This mindset persisted and was reinforced by his entry into higher education.

He began seeking professional opportunities to start charting a career path in his field and gradually establishing himself socially. This suggests the externalization of self-improvement and **practicality** (Silva, 2017). Furthermore, forward thinking is a disposition that drives his daily actions, especially those related to medium- and long-term achievements. It is worth noting the intertwining of the dispositions of self-improvement and forward thinking with **social apprehension**. This demonstrates his social awareness considering factors associated with his sociodemographic and geographic origin.

Other dispositions identified are **social mimicry**, **organization**, and **anticipatory thinking**. Social mimicry is considered a disposition based on different modes of interaction, communication, and languages (Vieira, 2021) present in socialization. In this process, individuals apprehend and reproduce the behaviors of others, transforming, recreating, and recontextualizing them (Bazanini, Silva, & Biffi, 2020; Vieira, 2021). This process does not represent imitation or mirroring of reality. Mimetic behavior may be associated with the formation or endorsement of personality based on cultural, social, physical, and emotional aspects triggered in everyday actions (Bazanini et al., 2020; Vieira, 2021).

Thainã critically and reflectively analyzes other people's behaviors in different social situations. He considers how to incorporate behaviors into his daily life and puts them into practice in appropriate situations. Behavioral introjection is motivated by inspiration and experiences, such as those of his Administration teachers and superiors at his workplace. Disposition for organization refers to individuals controlling their behaviors to manage contingencies arising from their actions, anticipating the application of their efforts and skills to generate positive results (Rodrigues & Pereira, 2007).

In Thainã's case, his dispositions exemplify how young people from lower-income backgrounds sustain their enrollment in the Administration course. Discipline and autonomy, cultivated since childhood due to family responsibilities, contribute to his forward thinking and self-improvement as guiding forces in his academic trajectory. Additionally, his social awareness and moral flexibility demonstrate his ability to interpret the ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic inequalities he experiences at the university and develop strategies for adaptation and integration. Thainã's experience shows that persistence is the result not only of institutional support but also

of the selective activation of lifelong dispositions that allow barriers to be transformed into symbolic and practical resources.

Dispositions and their influence on student permanence

This section analyzes the biographies together due to their similarities. Aline's biography reveals that dispositions for **discipline**, **self-improvement**, and **forward thinking** (Silva, 2017) were fundamental to her permanence on the Administration course. Aline associates the course with survival and a focus on the future. Her biography is permeated with social and economic nuances that have influenced different aspects of her life, including her family, her relationship with work, her self-knowledge and development in academic and professional spaces, and her expectations for the future based on obtaining a university degree. Her permanence on the course is also influenced by her goal of pursuing a career in public service or a higher-level professional position.

Larissa mentions that her parents' influence made her stay on the Administration course and emphasizes that their commitment to building the family restaurant is an equally relevant factor. Thainã emphasizes that his family influenced his decision to continue studying because they encourage him to reflect on his life trajectory, social background, and the professional commitment of his family members. This influences his disposition for **hard work** (Silva, 2017). He activates his disposition for **forward thinking** (Silva, 2017) when he emphasizes the idea of future projection, a tendency identified when he compared his educational and professional attributes to those of his peers.

Aline also shows a disposition for **moral flexibility** (Silva, 2017). She adapts her behavior to seek recognition from her peers, which legitimizes her presence and sense of belonging in a field she previously thought was not for her. Regarding learning in the course, particularly in group projects, Aline was diplomatic and valued good relations within groups. **Conciliation** and **prudence** (Silva, 2017) were thus dispositions that came into play whenever joint work and decisions were involved.

Aline's disposition for **social interaction** is revealed through her incorporation of lessons learned from professional experiences and her ways of communicating, being, and acting in diverse social environments. This disposition was evident in her experiences at the market, during her internship at the City Hall, and at the accounting firm, prompting reflection on behaviors and interactions consistent with the context of socialization. She also developed an inter-individual disposition for **social mimicry**, incorporating behaviors that were considered appropriate and consistent into her practices, especially her academic and professional ones.

Aline also demonstrated an intra-individual disposition for **flourishing**. In this study, flourishing is conceptualized as a disposition premised on the individual's complete well-being, which requires the development of positive emotions, social relationships, achievements, engagement, attributions of meaning, and virtues such as self-respect, pride, dignity, and honor (Oliveira-Silva & Porto, 2021; Sousa & Fukuda, 2021; Wazlawick, 2023). Larissa's flourishing is manifested by her idealization of a better, more stable socioeconomic situation with good professional opportunities and fair remuneration.

Furthermore, in Larissa, it was observed that her disposition for **reaffirmation of goals** was triggered during moments of discouragement. She strived to recall her motivations for pursuing

higher education, her life story, and her place of origin. This disposition is related to an individual's attitude toward confirming goals in different areas of life. It reinforces purpose, realigns the direction of plans, and maintains motivation to achieve projected results. It also represents an opportunity to identify obstacles or challenges and plan new coping strategies.

Larissa has maintained a study routine since childhood, highlighting her **discipline**. She has always gotten good grades, which are a source of pride and satisfaction. She says that she sacrifices leisure time to focus on her education. This behavior signals her **practicality** (Silva, 2017) and her focus on professional goals and achieving a better position in the job market at the expense of leisure. This is also evident in Thainã's journey, as he strives to focus his efforts on academic and professional activities. Both Larissa and Thainã demonstrate a disposition for **self-improvement** (Silva, 2017) as they have the tenacity to study and work.

Larissa's behavior inclines her toward **social distinction** (Silva, 2017). This disposition alludes to social differentiation as a way of expressing social origin in a diverse social class context, as well as a way of elucidating social ascension. Together with the disposition toward **social apprehension**, the inclination toward social distinction helped Larissa understand the dynamics and social origins – class structure – in the academic space. She began to take a firm stance in class whenever she identified discriminatory or stereotypical attitudes from classmates and teachers toward her place of origin, her way of expressing herself, and her being. This activated her disposition for **confrontation** (Silva, 2017).

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to understand how the dispositions of young people from lower-income backgrounds influence their permanence on the Administration course. Through biographical reconstructions of three students, we identified the inter- and intra-individual dispositions that were mobilized throughout their academic and professional trajectories. We also demonstrated how these dispositions were activated in response to various demands. The main theoretical contribution of the article is articulating student permanence with Bernard Lahire's dispositional theory. This offers an alternative to explanations that focus solely on structural or welfare factors. It reveals how multiple, contradictory, and situated dispositions guide strategies for continuity in higher education.

Regarding intra-individual dispositions, adaptation (moral flexibility) to different social contexts is a recurring behavior since it aims to (i) facilitate social integration in these environments, (ii) legitimize participation, and (iii) internalize the capital (social, cultural, educational, economic, etc.) present. Interpersonal relationships are fundamental because they provide access to other social groups (and therefore other forms of capital) and serve as hubs for professional opportunities, particularly within the subjects' social networks.

Returning to Lahire's work, our study reinforces the critique of Bourdieu's unified habitus model and emphasizes the importance of dispositional analysis at the individual level. We take this analysis a step further by applying it to the field of Administration and student permanence. Our empirical findings demonstrate how inherited and acquired dispositions intertwine in concrete academic contexts. The analyzed biographical trajectories confirm the heterogeneity and

selectivity in the activation of dispositions. They also indicate that elements such as discipline, **forward thinking**, **self-improvement**, and **hard work** are central to the permanence of Administration students from low-income backgrounds. Thus, our article builds on Lahire's work by not only highlighting dispositional plurality but also the specific mechanisms by which dispositions are activated and inhibited in higher education.

From a theoretical and conceptual standpoint, work is an essential part of young people's lives, connecting the symbolic, material, and practical realms. Symbolically, work represents values transmitted by families, such as dignity, social recognition, and the possibility of upward mobility. On a material level, work is a condition for survival and a direct contributor to household income, as in Aline's case. On a practical level, work provides an opportunity to learn, develop skills, and achieve independence, as Larissa and Thainã reported. Thus, work shapes the identity of these individuals and presents itself as a strategy for permanence and legitimization in different social fields. It reinforces the centrality of the family as a reference for commitment to work and as a means of confronting territorial and individual stigmas.

The formation of an identity serves as both an element of social differentiation compared to individuals from the same place of origin and an element of establishing a "mark" in other environments. Work is seen as central to promoting access to education, consumer goods, and other opportunities. It is also a locus of learning sociability. The research participants emphasized the importance of adopting different modes of communication, behaviors, and ways of acting and relating in various situations and environments.

Regarding student permanence, the perception of social, cultural, and economic asymmetries motivated the respondents to pursue academic success. Activating dispositions for **self-improvement**, **social apprehension**, and **social mimicry** helped them understand their environment and the social relationships they established. Additionally, the stories here highlight the limitations of the academic experience. Classroom meetings were often the main environment for university life due to the need to reconcile work and study. For many academics from low-income backgrounds, the dual demands of work and study can complicate not only their education, but also their integration into the academic environment.

Their parents also recommended that they continue their studies, even though they had little schooling themselves. They believed that education could facilitate their children's social advancement. Thus, a disposition for **discipline** was constant among those surveyed. They maintained balanced and compatible habits and routines of work, study, and leisure that aligned with their goals, especially professional ones. Furthermore, all of the interviewees were dedicated to their activities because they sought recognition for the quality of their work. Finally, **forward and anticipatory thinking** supported the professional and personal plans of the subjects, which they articulated carefully so that they could achieve them.

Based on literature about education in Administration, this article problematizes permanence, challenging functionalist and managerial perspectives that treat it as retention or institutional efficiency. The findings demonstrate that permanence should be understood as a relational and dispositional process traversed by family networks, work experiences, and university sociabilities. Thus, we advance beyond studies that emphasize institutional support policies or isolated socioeconomic factors by showing that permanence is anchored in complex

dispositional repertoires that articulate individual agency and structural conditions. This shows that education in Administration can benefit from sociological approaches sensitive to inequalities and student trajectories, thus broadening the debate on inclusion, belonging, and social justice in the field.

Studies on permanence in Administration courses, such as those by Seabra (2019), Gonçalves et al. (2020), and Teixeira and Figueiredo (2023), demonstrate that institutional support policies, a sense of belonging, and recognition of students' social trajectories are crucial in preventing dropout. In turn, research inspired by Lahire (Silva, 2018; Machado, 2019; Moraes, 2023) has emphasized the relevance of dispositional heritage as an alternative to the unified habitus model. However, this research remains mostly theoretical, with few empirical studies in Administration. This article integrates these two approaches by empirically demonstrating, through sociological portraits of students from low-income backgrounds, how inherited and acquired dispositions, such as discipline, self-improvement, forward thinking, and hard work, are selectively mobilized to sustain academic persistence. Thus, we learn that permanence cannot be reduced solely to institutional support or material conditions but must be understood as a dispositional and relational process in which students articulate agency, family networks, work experiences, and academic sociabilities.

Methodologically, adopting the biography as the main approach reaffirms the analytical potential of life narratives as instruments for deeply understanding individual and collective trajectories, especially in contexts of social vulnerability. Analyzing biographical trajectories enables us to capture not only objective events in the subjects' lives but also the meanings they attribute to their experiences. This reveals subjective nuances that often escape quantitative or structural analytical models. This methodological choice emphasizes attentive, situated listening and respects the uniqueness of young voices, contributing to more dialogical, reflective, and ethical research practices.

From a social perspective, this study significantly contributes to the field of student permanence. It highlights the strategies that young people from low-income backgrounds use to stay in college despite material insecurity, the dual burden of work and study, and the lack of institutional support networks. The results of this research reveal the informal mechanisms that sustain academic trajectories, such as symbolic family support, work engagement, and the construction of belonging through academic performance. These results show that understanding permanence exclusively through objective indicators, such as dropout rates, academic performance, or family income, is insufficient to capture the complexity of the experiences of young people from low-income backgrounds. Dimensions of agency emerge in which students activate inherited and acquired dispositions to overcome institutional barriers, prejudices, and inequalities. This perspective contributes to improving public education policies and constructing a university that is more sensitive to the diversity of youth and committed to social transformation.

However, this research may have limitations. For example, the representativeness of the results may be questionable due to the small number of participants, which does not reflect the diversity of experiences and trajectories present in lower-income contexts. Additionally, the subjectivity inherent in biographical analysis can introduce biases since researchers' interpretations can influence conclusions. Furthermore, generalizing the results beyond the

participants' specific context can be problematic since their experiences may not be representative of all Administration students from low-income backgrounds.

Future studies should include a variety of socioeconomic, ethnic-racial, and gender profiles to capture the diversity of experiences and trajectories. Additionally, adopting methodological approaches that minimize bias and allow for more objective analysis of biographical narratives is important. These approaches include data triangulation and the participation of multiple researchers in the analysis. Additionally, longitudinal studies following young people from their entry into higher education to the completion of their course would provide a better understanding of the factors influencing academic persistence and success.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Inclusive language

The authors use inclusive language that recognizes diversity, demonstrates respect for all people, is sensitive to differences, and promotes equal opportunities.

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