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# SCHOOL EXPERIENCE IN EVENING UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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## Abstract

The article examines the school experience of young female students enrolled in the regular curriculum at evening upper secondary education. We conducted eight group discussions with female students from two public schools in the Federal District (Brazil), which were analyzed with the documentary method. The results of the comparative analysis reveal that the construction of school experience during evening upper secondary education, along with its underlying set of practices, is structured by a frame of orientation that is empirically constituted in the conflict relationship between an institutionalized standard of school career development and the *habitus* of the female students. The problem of habitual misfit connects different evening school students to the same conjunctive space of experience.

EXPERIENCE • UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION • EVENING REGULAR EDUCATION • COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

## EXPERIÊNCIA ESCOLAR NO ENSINO MÉDIO NOTURNO: UMA ANÁLISE COMPARATIVA

### Resumo

O artigo analisa a experiência escolar no ensino médio noturno de jovens estudantes matriculadas na modalidade regular. Foram realizados oito grupos de discussão com estudantes mulheres, de duas escolas públicas do Distrito Federal, interpretados a partir do método documentário. Os resultados da análise comparativa constataram que a construção da experiência escolar durante o ensino médio noturno, e o conjunto de práticas que a fundamenta, está estruturada por um quadro de orientação constituído empiricamente na relação de conflito que se estabelece entre um padrão institucionalizado de desenvolvimento da carreira escolar e o *habitus* das estudantes. O problema do desajuste habitual conecta diferentes estudantes do período noturno a um mesmo espaço conjuntivo de experiência.

EXPERIÊNCIA • ENSINO MÉDIO • ENSINO REGULAR NOTURNO • ANÁLISE COMPARATIVA

## EXPERIENCIA ESCOLAR EN LA ESCUELA SECUNDARIA NOCTURNA: UN ANÁLISIS COMPARATIVO

### Resumen

El artículo analiza la experiencia escolar en la escuela secundaria nocturna de jóvenes estudiantes matriculadas en la modalidad regular. Fueron realizados ocho grupos de discusión con estudiantes mujeres de dos escuelas públicas del Distrito Federal (Brasil), interpretados mediante el método documental. Los resultados del análisis comparativo constataron que la construcción de la experiencia escolar durante la secundaria nocturna, y el conjunto de prácticas que la fundamentan, está estructurada por un marco de orientación constituido empíricamente en la relación de conflicto que se establece entre un patrón institucionalizado de desarrollo de la carrera escolar y el *habitus* de las estudiantes. El problema del desajuste habitual conecta a diferentes estudiantes del período nocturno a un mismo espacio conectivo de experiencia.

EXPERIENCIA • ESCUELA SECUNDARIA • ENSEÑANZA NOCTURNA REGULAR •  
ANÁLISIS COMPARATIVO

## EXPÉRIENCE SCOLAIRE DANS L'ENSEIGNEMENT SECONDAIRE EN COURS DU SOIR: UNE ANALYSE COMPARATIVE

### Résumé

Cet article analyse l'expérience scolaire de jeunes femmes inscrites dans l'enseignement secondaire régulier en cours du soir. Huit groupes de discussion ont été organisés avec des étudiantes de deux lycées publics du District Fédéral (Brésil), dont l'évaluation a été effectuée à l'aide de la méthode documentaire. Les résultats de l'analyse comparative ont montré que l'expérience scolaire en cours du soir au lycée (ainsi que l'ensemble des pratiques qui la sous-tendent) est structurée par un cadre d'orientation qui se constitue dans le rapport de conflit entre un modèle institutionnalisé de parcours scolaire et l'*habitus* des étudiantes. La question du désajustage habituel relie les différentes étudiantes inscrites en cours du soir à un espace commun d'expérience.

EXPÉRIENCE • ENSEIGNEMENT SECONDAIRE • COURS DU SOIR •  
ANALYSE COMPARATIVE

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**I**N THE LAST TWO DECADES, THE OFFER OF UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION IN BRAZIL HAS gradually expanded. In 2017, net enrollment and school attendance rates at this stage indicated a coverage of 91.3% of the population aged 15 to 17 years (Senkevics & Carvalho, 2020). While this percentage indicates an expansion of education coverage at this level, in addition to advances in terms of school access, a significant body of research has shown that upper secondary education still has the highest absence, grade repetition, and dropout rates, and that these rates are found mainly at the beginning of the transition from the first to the second year of upper secondary education, compromising the quality of the educational flow and affecting how young people build their school experience (Santos & Albuquerque, 2019).

Among the states in the Central-West region, in 2017 the Federal District had the best basic education access curve, with around 73% of 19-year-olds having reached 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in upper secondary education (Simões, 2019). However, when it comes to dropout and grade failure, the high rates seen in educational statistics (4.6% and 12.2%, respectively) show that these two phenomena are still obstacles to ensuring the right to stay in and complete formal education for a significant percentage of young people living in the country's capital city: those who attend upper secondary education in the public education system (Companhia de Planejamento do Distrito Federal [Codeplan], 2020).

It is hardly news that the number of women attending school has grown to the point that this group now represents the majority of students across upper secondary grades in Brazil, appearing in education statistics as the group with the highest rates of academic performance, progression, and completion of studies at this stage (Senkevics & Carvalho, 2020). Nevertheless, few studies have focused on the school experience of girls in upper secondary education, and even less on those attending evening school. When it comes to evening regular education, very little is known about who are the young women attending it, about their reasons for deciding to attend at these class hours, and about the practices that make up their school experience. In the Federal District, they represent 47.59% of the students attending school at these class hours (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira [Inep], 2021).

In the case of students who used to attend classes during the day, and who after school absence and grade failure instances returned to school to attend evening upper secondary education, we considered that the labeling (Becker, 2008) and stigmatization processes they undergo can place these young women in a position of inadequacy in relation to the normative expectations regulating their conduct and the representations about the student craft (*métier d'élève*)<sup>1</sup> in the school world. In addition to the absences and material precariousness that characterize the pedagogical organization of evening schools across the country (Oliveira, 2010), symbolic problems also affect the everyday school experience of female students, such as prejudice and discrimination inside and outside educational institutions (Pontes, 2020).

Female evening students can experience feelings of inferiority and disadvantage caused by constant comparisons with their morning and afternoon counterparts, as demonstrated by the study of Gomes and Carnielli (2003). In addition, unequal conditions of school organization between both school shifts can impoverish young women's experiences from a sociability perspec-

1 The concept of student craft appears in the work *Métier d'élève et sens du travail scolaire* by the French sociologist Philippe Perrenoud. As a model of a social actor (Perrenoud, 1995), student craft defines the tension between its ideal rationality and its effective exercise, *i.e.*, a tension between norm and practices.

tive, since the lack of recreation space and time outside the classroom hinders the establishment of peer socialization networks (Sousa & Oliveira, 2008).

Taking these considerations into account, this article aims to analyze the school experience of young female students enrolled in the regular program at public schools in the Federal District. The following guiding questions were formulated:

- Who are the young women who attend evening upper secondary education in the Federal District?
- What problems characterize their school experience in evening regular upper secondary education?

Based on a comparative analysis, we centralized the discussion on the problem of habitual misfit, which represents the frame of orientation that sets the construction of young women's experience in evening schools.

### The concept of school experience

In the late 1990s, the translation of the book *En la escuela: Sociología de la experiencia escolar*, by François Dubet and Danilo Martuccelli, introduced Latin American scholars to a new theory that would pave the way to more complex insights regarding the process of school socialization in the contemporary world (Weiss, 2000).

In the book, which resulted from empirical research conducted in France, Dubet and Martuccelli (1998, p. 79, own translation) define school experience as the “way in which individual and collective actors combine the various logics of action that structure the school world”. Among these various logics, the authors list the integration, strategy, and subjectivation principles as the most determinant for school experience, as they are directly linked to three central functions of the modern school system: socialization, skills distribution, and education. Theoretically, each logic is executed by reflectively combining different behaviors, and it is up to school actors to build coherence between them and extract meaning from it. As an example of social experience, school experiences are subjective combinations of objective elements of the system, *i.e.*, types of action which do not belong to individuals, but which they can mobilize through reflexivity (Wautier, 2003).

Conceived as a kind of “imposed proof” (Dubet & Martuccelli, 1998, p. 316), the construction of school experience within each stage of the educational system is equivalent to specific combinations of logics of action, which can vary according to the particularities of the education level and the social characteristics of the student population attending it (Weiss, 2000), and the relevance of either of these is assigned by the actor when combining them. While in primary education the school experience is strongly structured by an integration logic, *i.e.*, by the conformation of students' subjectivities to institutional norms and models of conduct, the scenario becomes more complex as secondary education begins, and the young people themselves become responsible for structuring their identity building processes, besides being called to elaborate in their own terms the meanings of schooling and of being in school.

In the educational scenario described by Dubet and Martuccelli (1998) and on which they concentrate their analysis efforts – in the *lycée*, equivalent to upper secondary education in Brazil –, the logic of subjectivation appears as the central and structuring element of concrete school experience. As students advance their schooling paths, enter new relationship networks,

and incorporate expressions of social practices and identities that do not fit in with school culture standards, their young subjectivation moves further apart from an integration logic, their experience in high school is defined more and more as an authentic construction made by the actors, and less and less as adjusting their conduct to normative expectations linked to the student craft. One effect of this separation is the crisis arising within the relationship between youth and school from this stage onwards, a finding that has also become consensus in research conducted in Brazil (Dayrell, 2007).

Dubet and Martuccelli (1998) show that during one's experience in upper secondary schools the possibilities of individualization become more tangible, and the decision to fully adhere to the school's cultural references or reconcile them with the references and meanings derived from their own world, *i.e.*, that of the young – something the authors call an integration in parentheses –, is an individual prerogative of each actor. In the subjectivation sphere, building one's personal identity is no longer determined by playing a particular role, but through the “subjective experience of self-formation” (Dubet, 1994, p. 30, own translation), through subjects' efforts to reflect about themselves to constitute themselves. The transition into this self-managed construction process, which keeps distance from traditional socialization processes and collectivized roles, is based on the critical activity that characterizes the logic of subjectivation, defined by engagement in building a social identity that resists alienation (Wautier, 2003).

In the Brazilian context, research adopting this theoretical perspective, such as the study of Sposito and Galvão (2004), has also shown that the logic of subjectivation is central in building school experience during one's course through upper secondary education. However, the process of subjectivation of young male and female students is not understood here in its relationship of denial or conformity with school's normative and cultural apparatus – *i.e.*, the integration logic –, but in a positive relationship with school knowledge. More than a necessary means to attaining a diploma, appropriating such knowledge is a determining part of their future identity, which is why they establish a subjective bond with their studies. However, the school institution becomes more appreciated in the life of young people mainly when they project themselves into the future, and not through the unfolding of a relationship of total integration into students' identities in the present.

In other words, appropriating school knowledge is not directly related to performing this role or its subjectivation.

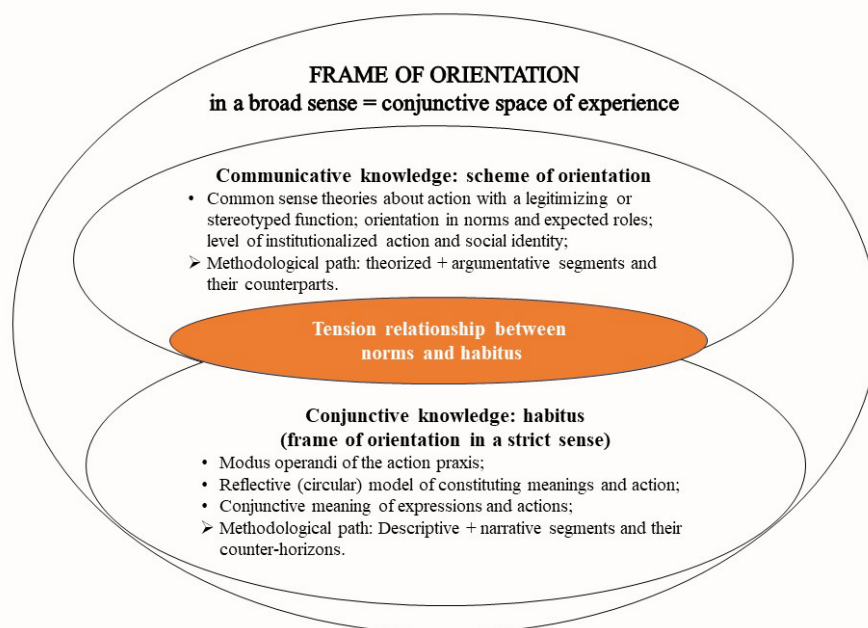
The empirical study that we conducted about school experience in evening upper secondary education is not entirely related to the typology of logics comprised by the concept of Dubet and Martuccelli (1998). Our brief mention of it and of the study is mainly justified as it can help us put into perspective the set of logics comprised by the communicative dimension of knowledge – *i.e.*, a set of logics of a theoretical type – which is implicated in young female students' everyday actions, and in as much as it assumes the existence of guiding principles underlying school performance. To complexify the notion of school experience, complement it, and rebuild its conjunctive dimension – *i.e.*, the atheoretical or habitual knowledge involved in building it through day-to-day practices –, we rely on the contributions of the praxeological sociology of knowledge developed by Ralf Bohnsack (2014) and his central notion of ‘frame of orientation’.

The ‘frame of orientation’ category helped us to bring *habitus* back into the discussion about school experience, since it introduces the conjunctive dimension of that experience, a dimension marked by the mostly implicit habitual knowledge that guides one's actions in everyday life. In a

broad sense, the concept of frame of orientation (Figure 1) extends the analysis of the Bourdieusian notion of *habitus* to include the way in which individual and/or collective *habitus* is developed, reproduced, or transformed in its confrontation and interaction with normative expectations for roles and social identity (Bohnsack, 2014), elements encompassed in Bohnsackian theory through the “scheme of orientation” category. From this perspective, we consider that the construction of school experience in evening upper secondary education, along with the set of practices and actions associated with it, is structured by a frame of orientation empirically formed in the conflict relationship that arises between the normative structures regulating the “school’s institutionalized culture” (Silva, 2006, p. 205, own translation) and the collective *habitus* of these young female students (Bohnsack, 2014).

**Figure 1**

*The conception of frame of orientation*



Source: Translated and prepared by the authors, based on Bohnsack (2014).

While for Dubet and Martuccelli (1998) the tension generated by the conflict between the integration and subjectivation logics produces at the heart of the school experience, and therefore at the core of action, a conscious rupture with the normative structures that regulate the school culture, for Bohnsack (2014), from the multiple tension relationships between norm and *habitus* emerges a frame of orientation that redefines the meaning of the former in relation to the latter. Within the limits of this frame of orientation and of the tension relationship characteristic to it and by which it is formed, the norm and its meaning are recomposed in the context of the structure of the *habitus*. In its domain, norms and *habitus* are in a dialectical, interdependent relationship that generates new orientations.

From a sociological perspective, rules and norms play a legitimizing role and can be mobilized in the justifications made by individuals when explaining the reason for their actions in everyday life, to respond to the moral expectations placed on them depending on the set of roles assigned to them. However, in scientific analysis scenarios, the empirical meaning of normative standards assumes a clearer shape only in the relationship with agents’ *habitus*, *i.e.*, in confrontation



with their schemes generating and/or structuring practices. Access to this meaning is not easily achieved through individuals' rational efforts, since it is formed and unfolds in the complex and implicit reflection processes inherent in the performative structure of *habitus*, *i.e.*, processes which operate at the level of the *modus operandi* of practical action (Bohnsack, 2014). It is at the heart of this circular reflection process between norm and *habitus* that action and its meaning are constituted and that a frame of orientation can be analytically reconstructed by social interpreters.

Following the Bohnsakian approach, we consider that the daily actions of these young women as “evening students” are initially inscribed in the framework of a communicatively generalized knowledge that crosses and constitutes school relations in this school shift. The set of expectations, stereotypes, and classifications that define the fundamental institutions of a given school culture is the expression of this type of knowledge. In this case, it comprises knowledge of what evening upper secondary education is, whom it is intended to, and what roles, duties, and obligations are set as a normative horizon for individuals attending the evening school.

In the real context of the experience of young female students who came from daytime school and have undergone a new formal socialization in the norms and rules of evening school life, this knowledge is apprehended as schemes of orientation (Bohnsack, 2014) or models of conduct inherent to the evening female student role, which can inform, even if only partially, their repertoires of action and align them to what is established in the symbolic order that organizes the school environment, even if conflicts, discomfort, and unfamiliarity are part of the adequacy process. However, the socialization experienced by these young women in other cultural milieus, the identity references produced in them, and the type of socialization that forms them also feed the practical construction of experience in upper secondary education, producing an entirely new meaning about this stage, different from the one that informs the public narrative about its social function.

These distinct milieus, or conjunctive spaces of experience, refer to implicit knowledge stocks and collective *habitus* forms shared by certain people or groups socialized in similar life contexts and social conditions, who are connected by a kind of “fundamental sociality” (Bohnsack & Nohl, 2003, p. 369, own translation). Such knowledge stocks, which are largely pre-reflective, have an action-guiding effect and are acquired during a common socialization that unfolds in the development of homologous social practices and similar forms of processing and building social reality (Weller & Pfaff, 2012).

Empirically, conjunctive experiences can be a particular group's shared experiences – in the case of the two groups of students presented below in this study. They refer to the joint involvement in habitual misfit practices and to the knowledge stocks that materialize and are processed in and through them. These habitual knowledge stocks, reconstructed through the analysis of these evening students' practices, are produced in a kind of “informal socialization” (Stecanela, 2008, p. 50, own translation) occurring in day-to-day relationships with one's peers, inside and outside the school. From these conceptual and practical production contexts emerges a set of meanings about life in and during upper secondary education, which are the basis for the orientations guiding the actions of these evening students, who also share common experiences in their school biographies and family socialization processes.

## The group discussions and the documentary method

As a research method, group discussion began to be used from the 1980s in qualitative research on youth (Weller, 2019). In Germany, it was Ralf Bohnsack who updated the group discussion practice introduced in the 1950s by the Frankfurt School and later re-elaborated by the German sociologist Werner Mangold. Bohnsack (2020) resumed the concept of group opinions from Mangold's view, but focused his approach on investigating the collective orientations that support these opinions and are anchored in conjunctive spaces of experience. At this point, the contributions of Karl Mannheim's (1982) sociology of knowledge, in particular his notion of collectivity, were essential for the advances in the theoretical-methodological basis for group discussion as a research method (Weller, 2019).

In the field under investigation, the groups refer to interaction contexts in which externally initiated communication processes must develop autonomously through individuals who, based on their common systems of relevance and knowledge stocks, define what topics will be discussed, in what sequence, and from what perspective, horizon, or framework. Participants are conceived as having collective orientations, which are interactively documented in discourse and representative of social dimensions underlying the group's conjunctive spaces of experience.

The theoretical-methodological basis for the group discussion was also addressed by Ralf Bohnsack in tandem with the development of the documentary method for analyzing empirical data (Weller, 2019). The documentary method, was used to analyze the groups discussions we conducted in the field and allowed us access, via interpretation, to the internal logic of a cultural milieu until now unknown in the sphere of education research, and to the theoretical reconstruction of the collective orientations (Bohnsack, 2020) that combine in the practical actions of young students attending evening regular upper secondary education.

The documentary method and its socio-genetic interpretation constitute an analysis approach that aims to reconstruct the genesis and social anchoring of practical actions.<sup>2</sup> Thus, we took the actors' habitual knowledge as the empirical basis for theoretical propositions and conceptual formulations, preventing the logic of external theories from overlapping with the logic of practice, the logic of *habitus*.

Analytically, we considered not only the narrated practice of action as empirical documents, but also the students' performative acts of speaking, arguing, and representing as a possible way of reconstructing their *habitus*. Thus, the transcription model used in the initial treatment of data, along with its speech code rules,<sup>3</sup> was a resource that enabled the adoption of a socio-genetic analytical attitude that characterizes the style of analysis of the documentary method. This study aimed not only to reconstruct "what" the young females were saying about an evening student's reality, but "how" they talked of that reality and how they built it in their discourse.

2 Of the four steps of analysis that were planned in the documentary method, only three were carried out in this study: formulated interpretation, reflected interpretation, and comparative analysis. Type construction, the method's final stage, was disregarded in the analysis process, given the absence of maximum contrasts between the empirical cases.

3 The main codes used were: Af/Bm = the initial letter of the interviewee's first name followed by their gender; (.) short pause; (2) pause and time length; <sup>L</sup> speech initiated before another youth concluded their remark; ; (semicolon: a slight decrease in voice tone); . (period: a marked decrease in voice tone); , (comma: a slight increase in voice tone); ? (question mark: a strong increase in voice tone); examp- (suppression of part of the word); example=example (continuous pronunciation); example (emphatic pronunciation); **example** (loud pronunciation); °example° (low volume pronunciation); (example) words that were not fully understood; @example@ (pronunciation with laughter). For more details on the transcription model adopted in our research with the documentary method, see Bohnsack (2020).



## About the study with young females in evening upper secondary schools in the Federal District

In the first half of 2019, we started fieldwork at two public schools in the Federal District that offered regular evening upper secondary education. The educational institutions belonged to two administrative regions (RA, in Portuguese), which differed as to their populations' *per capita* income and education levels. In RA 1, we selected a school located near the city's commercial center, an economically developed area with a good infrastructure and spatial organization. As for RA 2, the selected school was in an area whose population of lower socioeconomic status, a territory characterized by high socio-demographic vulnerability and an absence of basic public services, such as regular law enforcement and urban cleaning.

In addition to observations of school everyday life, we conducted group discussions with two upper secondary-level third-grade classes from each school. In all, 35 female students participated actively in the study, distributed over eight group discussions. Although important, numerical representation was not central in composing the empirical *corpus*. Similarly to the *modus operandi* of grounded theory, in the documentary method we used theoretical sampling and the constant comparison principle (Strauss & Corbin, 2008) to select the groups and define the empirical *corpus*. This procedure was applied during data collection through contrasts in the horizons of comparison that emerged from talks in the groups, *i.e.*, instances of common experiences systematically documented in different cases and which, at some point in the group discussions, reached some degree of saturation in the collective discourses.

In the field, to define the first group discussion we considered two criteria, based on the characteristics of the public to be studied: young female students attending evening school, enrolled in the last grade of regular upper secondary education, and who had attended daytime school at some point in the same school stage. From the second group onwards, we began to identify in the young females' discourse the documentation of a kind of habitual misfit in their practical relationship with the institutional culture of school, a condition that resonated in their representations about being an evening school student. We proceeded with the group discussions until the possibilities of theoretical framing of misfits were exhausted in the narrative horizon of the other groups. Of the eight group discussions conducted, two were selected for in-depth analysis, namely GD Pressure and GD Party (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
Information about participants in GD Pressure and GD Party

GD PRESSURE						
Participant	Age	Race/Color	Parents' education and occupation		Siblings	Prior school experiences
			Father	Mother		
Babi (Bf)	18 years old	Black	PE (early grades) Mechanic	PE (early years) Domestic worker	Two sisters	School absence (1 <sup>st</sup> grade of SE) Grade failure (2 <sup>nd</sup> year of SE)
Carla (Cf)	19 years old	White	SE Public employee	HE Ad woman	Two brothers and two sisters	Grade failure (5 <sup>th</sup> grade)

(To be continued)

*(Continuation)*

GD PRESSURE						
Participant	Age	Race/Color	Parents' education and occupation		Siblings	Prior school experiences
			Father	Mother		
Daniela (Df)	18 years old	White	PE Security guard	HE Beautician	Two brothers and two sisters	School absence (1 <sup>st</sup> grade of SE) Grade failure (3 <sup>rd</sup> grade of SE)
Fernanda (Ff)	18 years old	White	PE Entrepreneur	PE Housewife	Three brothers and two sisters	Grade failure (9 <sup>th</sup> grade)
Michele (Mf)	18 years old	White	SE Self-employed	PE General service worker	A brother	Grade failure (9 <sup>th</sup> grade)
GD PARTY						
Bebela (Bf)	18 years old	Black	PE (early grades) Self-employed	PE Gas station attendant	Two brothers	Grade failure (2 <sup>nd</sup> grade of SE)
Cecília (Cf)	18 years old	White	Deceased	PE Housewife	Three brothers	Grade failure (2 <sup>nd</sup> grade of SE)
Flávia (Ff)	18 years old	Black	Didn't know her father	PE (early years) House maid	Three brothers and a sister	Grade failure (1 <sup>st</sup> grade of SE)
Jennifer (Jf)	18 years old	Black	PE Cook	PE Sealer	Three brothers	Grade failure (2 <sup>nd</sup> grade of SE)
Rayla (Rf)	18 years old	White	SE Public employee	PE Unemployed	Two sisters	Grade failure (1 <sup>st</sup> grade of SE)
Luana (Lf)	19 years old	Black	Did not know her father	PE House maid	Two sisters	School absence (1 <sup>st</sup> grade of SE) Grade failure (3 <sup>rd</sup> grade of SE)

Source: Authors' elaboration, based on the empirical data (2023).

PE: Primary education; SE: Secondary education; HE: Higher education.

The selected groups were named after metaphors collectively elaborated in participants' discourse to represent evening school reality. In both groups, the empirical problem of habitual misfit was elaborated in greater depth and detail through collective narratives, indicating that it was an experience common to students in evening upper secondary education from different public schools, the same socioeconomic status, and with similar school biographies.

### The consequences of habitual misfit: School absence

For many youths, the experience of transitioning to upper secondary education is a critical moment in schooling and can be understood as a biographical challenge in their course through basic education. The norms they were socialized during their experience in primary and secondary school seem to lose their relevance as a horizon of orientation, given the typical changes in school culture since the beginning of upper secondary education, especially regarding the new requirements, practices, and responsibilities that make up the student craft and school work at this stage (Corti, 2014).

Among the young females in GD Pressure, a sense of misfit appears as one of the hallmarks of the crisis in their relationship with upper secondary education, when the question focuses on their experiences in transitioning to this stage (passage Journey, lines 1 to 47):

- 1 Y: And girls, like (.) I'd like you to talk a little (.)  
 2 eh: how did you enter upper secondary education (2) what has  
 3 your school journey been like so far in third grade  
 4 Bf: Upper secondary education for me has been a desperate time (2) when I  
 5 entered it (.) because like (2) is a time when everyone has  
 6 an expectation for you that you'll be someone after you finish it  
 7 (2) to the point that I failed second grade (2) out of pressure (.)  
 8 I left it all like I just couldn't be bothered out of  
 9 pressure like from family from friends who studied hard and I  
 10 like I didn't want to study (1) so my second grade (2) was  
 11 even in morning time (1) 2MJ (.) I stopped studying in the third  
 12 bimester. (.) I said I wouldn't go anymore period (1) and  
 13 I even put it down in the form (1) and then: (1) then I was like  
 14 reflecting whether I really didn't want it and all (1) then: I'd look at  
 15 beggars in the street I'd see several realities (.) then I (.) chose  
 16 to finish the year without=without finishing second grade (1) then my  
 17 mom asked me if I wanted to do EJA °to speed up the process  
 18 or if I wanted to stick to normal (2) as I was (2) I turned  
 19 eighteen that year (1) I think I was: (1) still hadn't turned  
 20 seventeen (.) that's right (1) then I chose (.) no I'm gonna (.) since I'm still  
 21 the right age still more or less (.) where I can: finish it I'm going to  
 22 finish normal. I don't wanna do EJA, because I think EJA  
 23 is too pushed off you know like a slap, get out already  
 24 TD: @(.).@  
 25 Bf: @And I didn't want that for me@ you know (1) then like: but  
 26 upper secondary for me has been nothing like I  
 27 thought (.) it would be (1) when: I was in secondary school (1) I  
 28 thought upper secondary was much more serious and all (.) it's  
 29 just the opposite, to what people will have you think  
 30 but upper secondary still has this pressure (2) coming from people  
 31 from outside, to keep pressing you (1) every day someone  
 32 different will ask me what I want to be, what I  
 33 want to study (.) I'm like (.) Gee I haven't even left school yet cool it  
 34 (1) then? if you  
 35 Df: L-Oh but you're already -in third grade buddy  
 36 Bf: L-No we're cool? cool  
 37 Df: @I'm breathing down your neck@ just kidding  
 38 Bf: There=there -see

39 Df: @ (1) @  
 40 Ff: @there -see@  
 41 Bf: You know what I mean (1) so I think like  
 42 gee (1) every day, you're someone else every day you're  
 43 someone different (.) today? I may -be thinking this way  
 44 tomorrow I might've already -made up my mind (.) for example  
 45 three professions have crossed my mind (.) that I wanted to do it  
 46 you know (1) so I think upper secondary (1) is a pressure  
 47 cooker

The crisis in their experience transitioning to upper secondary education (“It was a desperate time”), arose when the girls found it difficult to habituate, in their student practices, the behavioural dispositions inherent in the school *habitus* (Brandão et al., 2012) and the set of normative expectations that make up the institutional culture of the new educational stage. This problem of fitting or adjustment, which we might call a kind of habitual misfit, expresses the discrepancy between an institutionalized standard of school career development in upper secondary education – a socially established standard that, as we will see, also regulates families’ relationship with their daughters’ education – and these young females’ collective *habitus*.

If, on the one hand, achieving this standard requires commitment to your studies (“studied hard”) and engaging in choosing a future identity project necessarily in the present (“what I want to be”), on the other hand, students’ practices in upper secondary education have as its main provisions the postponing of biographically relevant decisions, related to one’s professional field of activity, and an openness to experiencing daily transformations in their personal identity constitution process (“every day you’re someone else”).

In Babi’s personal journey, which stands out as an example in the initial discussion, the habitual misfit and the tension relationship with this institutionalized standard and its schemes of orientation, *i.e.*, the external normative expectations in which it is actualized (“everyone has an expectation for you”), are at the genesis of the pressure that is reported as common to the group’s field of experience as they began their transition to upper secondary education, and in her case was also one of the catalysts of her decision to leave school after failing upper secondary second grade. The elements of the *habitus* linked to the school standard, the student craft, and its performance requirements were not so easy to execute in student practice, due to the incompatible orientations (“I just couldn’t be bothered”; “I didn’t want to study”). Faced with this scenario, leaving school was the way Babi found to face, if temporarily, the problem of habitual misfit.

### High school is a pressure cooker

As discussed in section two, the conjunctive spaces of experience are also spaces for conceptual elaboration. In general, conceptual categories with a conjunctive meaning unfold in the form of metaphors that document orientation contents, *i.e.*, which frame elements of the *habitus* of practice (Bohnsack, 2020). The metaphorical definition used by Babi in the previous passage – that high school is a pressure cooker – is now collectively elaborated to designate what the group sees as the purpose of upper secondary education (passage Upper Secondary Education, lines 41 to 50):

- 41 Bf: like I said in the beginning (.) I think it's a pressure cooker like  
 42 that: (3) won't be through until you actually graduate as something  
 43 Df: ↳When  
 44 you've cooked through  
 45 Bf: When:: is that? When you've cooked through (2) and people look at you  
 46 like (1) but, there will always be you know (.) always  
 47 Mf: ↳No there will always be (1) when you're  
 48 accepted into college  
 49 Bf: ↳There'll be someone saying it's not good enough, no.  
 50 Mf: You have to get a job (.) then formal contract

The metaphor used by the group to define upper secondary education refers to a cooking utensil whose main purpose is to speed up the food cooking process. Initially, the analogy defines pressure as a feeling that is constitutive of the field of students' experiences during their time in upper secondary education, *i.e.*, feeling pressured is a feeling that pervades the whole period of educational experience and can extend beyond it. Although pressure is experienced as a subjective reality (Berger & Luckmann, 2007), it is possible to identify objective structures acting to conserve this interior situation. What is real within these young females (and for them) actually reflects a set of normative demands experienced in different spaces of relationships in which they move, and which serves the institutionalized standard described.

In this period, the pressure limits and length are said to be regulated by an external eye's perspective which evaluates and legitimizes the success of a process that, by all indications, does not end when one finishes school education ("there will always be"). From this perspective, concluding upper secondary education studies does not mean to "actually graduate as something" in the full sense of this term, it is no guarantee of total social approval, and likewise does not make anyone truly "cooked", as Daniela adds, *i.e.*, graduated in terms of the institutionalized standard designed as a norm for school career development at this stage and later, when their transition to adult life places them before a new set of social scripts and standards of biography development ("accepted into college", "get a job" and "formal contract"), as Michele exemplifies.

Qualification via a school diploma, while important, is not enough for one to rise to this status, nor does it determine the end of the maturing process. To obtain recognition, one must adapt to the type of conduct that is socially expected of those who have reached this point in their life and school career, which is to commit to achieving the institutionalized standard. More than a stage of schooling, upper secondary education is given a distinct meaning, implicitly articulated in the discourse: it is understood by the young women who experience it as the beginning of the induction, within the scope of their personal development, of a maturing process which, from a normative perspective, must necessarily involve defining, still in the present, a project for the future: "what I want to be, what I want to study", as initially mentioned by Babi.

Besides this scheme of orientation that legitimizes them in the eyes of others, there is a specific range of practices that is conditioned to recognizing that one has "cooked through" in their daily relationship with peers, and which also constitutes their spaces of experience in this period. If, according to the norm, being cooked through, *i.e.*, reaching the institutionalized standard,





interaction at the practical level of action. In this last passage, the young female students enter into a habitual agreement (Bohnsack & Nohl, 2003), which means that they are guided by a homologous understanding of what characterizes school experience in upper secondary education, as a result of their practices, which, in addition to being identical, have in common the same *habitus* or elements of a *habitus*. This agreement can only happen among those participating in the same conjunctive space of experience, in the same universe of implicit practices and knowledge stocks.

The tensions between the institutionalized norm and the group's *habitus* are clearly revealed when Daniela says that during their experience in upper secondary education they are struggling to “be someone” in life. The metaphor of struggling highlights the conflict in pursuit of recognition and legitimation without having to fully adhere to the institutionalized models of identity development and its moral requirements, without giving up the habitual style of building one's own identity (Bohnsack, 2020, p. 89). In this period, discovering oneself in the present, while temporary and involving short-term decisions, and revealing oneself to a world circumscribed to the group milieu (Weller, 2019), *i.e.*, one's “bunch”, are practices experienced in peer socialization in upper secondary education and result in specific ways of social constitution.

### Grade failure as a symptom of habitual misfit

The institutionalized standard of school career development also appears as a norm external to the experience of the group called Party during upper secondary education. However, it is not addressed directly in these youths' discourse, but unfolds through implicit reflection processes referring to an action practice that failed to execute the standard, and which did not satisfactorily incorporate the school *habitus* underlying it (passage Upper Secondary Education, lines 1 to 39):

- 1 Y: And so girls (.) eh: could you talk a little about what it's  
2 like to be an upper secondary student for you  
3 Bf: A pain (.) requirements  
4 Jf: LBoy it's hard  
5 Bf: Too many demands (.) I myself (.) my mom (.) I failed  
6 upper secondary second grade here at school you know (1) **was it? it**  
7 **was** like my failure it was kind of personal? and also; (1) like it; or not; it  
8 was a bit of a slip, o' mine, because I oh dear I think  
9 no one would ever imagine (1) **that I** (2) would fail  
10 Ff: LGee? **it's true** (.) you'd get  
11 good grades every time  
12 CF: I also thought Bebelá was -already in college  
13 Bf: LNo (.) **yes**  
14 CF: when she got here, we were like **what -are you doing here girl**  
15 Bf: LYeah (.) and  
16 like (.) no one, no one would have thought (.) it was like, a year that  
17 my mom was like Bebelá (1) I cried all the tears  
18 I could (.) that I wouldn't do it wasn't going back, you know (.) and  
19 Like (1) my friend Bebelá watch out not to get into

- 20 Depression
- 21 Ff: L@(.)@
- 22 Bf: Because like it or not it's a pain
- 23 Jf: L I was like that
- 24 Bf: because you see your friends getting ahead and all and you're
- 25 **there?** like it or not you get kind of eh: you think you're kind of
- 26 different you know (2) so like it began in my classroom eh: I
- 27 -was still in second grade and my friends- were in third grade and then
- 28 (They'd do some) heavy teasing (3) saying things and
- 29 all and I'd be like ah-ha (had to go through that embarrassment) and like
- 30 my mom to this day she still rubs it in (.) she's ((coughing)) kind of
- 31 rubbing it in my face (1) because, I got a **poor** grade and (2)
- 32 because=in=fact I flunked in Portuguese you know (.) I got four
- 33 points four points (.) she's like gee Bebelá **four points in**
- 34 **Portuguese** (1) you're a **failure** (1) she's like kind of rubbing it in
- 35 my face (.) you're a **failure**, (1) then I turned to her ((pounding the
- 36 table)) if I had eh: if I hadn't failed (.) what did I say (2)
- 37 oh I replied something to her but -I could see that anytime she might
- 38 slap me in the mouth
- 39 Ff: @(.)@

Interacting with the group, Bebelá addresses the subject of grade failure to exemplify, based on her own case, the “requirements” and the “many demands” that came to determine her student status at some point in her path in upper secondary education. Requirement and demand are expressions of an institutionalized standard operating on these females’ school experience, being imposed as a norm. Failing upper secondary second grade is prior to Bebelá being transferred to evening school, and it provides the backdrop for addressing the collective problem of habitual misfit, of a break with an established school career standard.

Bebelá defines grade failure as a “slip”, a personal failure to practically maintain a *habitus* that had so far seemed well-adjusted in view of her remarkable performance since first grade (“No one would ever imagine I would fail”). At the time, Bebelá could not find an alternative to solve the problem, *i.e.*, something that reversed her grade failure situation, so she elaborated the experience subjectively (“I cried”). The intense emotional suffering experienced by the student is one of the effects of breaking with the standard and the sense of normality that it generates, which justifies the young woman’s perception of herself as a “kind of different” student as she realized that by failing the grade, she now occupied a lower category in the symbolic order of school classification. We cannot deduce that her enrollment in evening school was motivated by this perception, but Cecília’s surprise seeing her school mate in evening school documents a common representation about the profile of students who attend evening schools and their habitual misfit situation.

Several embarrassments come after a grade failure, such as sanctions and penalties caused by disrupting the norm. At the beginning of the school term, for example, when Bebelá was still in second grade, her third-grade friends – who, as far as we can assume, studied in the same class

as her and then progressed to the next grade – returned to her classroom to make fun of her or do some “heavy teasing” about her situation. The “ceremonies of moral degradation” (Garfinkel, 1956, p. 420, own translation) that started at school became common also in the context of family relations, clearly represented in depreciation practices (“rubbing it in my face”) and in her mother’s recurring efforts to characterize her daughter as an inferior identity (“you’re a failure”), and to bring up her poor performance in studies as a way of penalizing her for her “slip”.

### Reproducing school standards in family relations: The eldest daughter theory

The incorporation of standards was only imposed as an expectation when setbacks and faults crossed these young women’s school journeys, and this was reproduced even in the schemes of orientation triggered by mothers and grandmothers in their monitoring of their daughters’ and granddaughters’ student careers. From then onwards, school standard elements were assimilated by the family’s moral order (Sarti, 1994) in the form of obligations assigned to a specific position in the kinship structure, or rather, obligations assigned to the eldest daughter role (passage Upper Secondary Education, lines 59 to 80):

- 59 Bf: But that’s right (.) there are expectations at home to this day  
 60 because I’m the eldest in everything you know (.) this and  
 61 that my mom (.) oh: she keeps saying this and that (.) but  
 62 let her talk I don’t even care (.) I’ll just turn my back  
 63 Ff: L@(.).@  
 64 Bf: She keeps saying this and that **you gotta study you gotta**  
 65 **study you gotta study, you gotta study? you gotta**  
 66 **study? you gotta study gotta study?** that’s all that’s all  
 67 Lf: LIn my home  
 68 you had this thing my mom **look** you get a good grade  
 69 Bf: LThat’s  
 70 all (.) but it’s not like my grandmother used say you gotta  
 71 study dear (.) you gotta do this be that (.) you see the  
 72 daughter of so and so she’s a well-behaved student (.) -she’s  
 73 doing this and that and this and that °I say no,  
 74 granny -sure° (1) like it or not it’s too much expectation in  
 75 upper secondary (2) even more in the last grade? you have  
 76 to secure your diploma  
 77 Lf: LAnd there’s this thing  
 78 look while you’re -sleeping someone -is studying (.)  
 79 **I wanna sleep for God’s sake I don’t wanna**  
 80 **study ’til I drop**

The eldest daughter theory, which appears in part of the schemes of orientation of the group Party, translates the expectation into family morality terms which are imposed on domestic

groups' everyday relations. This theory's premise is based on the idea that eldest daughters should set the example for the other siblings, especially regarding commitment to their school career. From this angle, the level of expectation during upper secondary education seems to be directly related to the position occupied in the kinship structure, *i.e.*, the fact that one is the eldest daughter. Or rather, "the eldest in everything". The indefinite pronoun "everything" seems to indicate not only their age, but also the scope of a certain school longevity, since among her siblings, Bebela is the child who has the most advanced education level, because she is about to complete upper secondary education.

The school standard, when converted into a domestic moral order (Lahire, 1997), requires these female youths to keep practices that enhance the execution of a normative identity related to excelling in studies – summarized in the "well-behaved student" figure – and which, in a way, is linked with how her role as a daughter is assessed. However, students have difficulty implementing this orientation figure into practice during their school experience ("I don't wanna study 'til I drop"), even though they have subjectivized as their duty to secure the family's first high school diploma. In cases such as Bebela's, where her mother's orders are displaced to a sphere of extreme devaluation or approached with a practical, contempt attitude ("I'll just turn my back"), the eldest daughter theory operates, at the communicative level, as a scheme of orientation that justifies her decision to finish upper secondary education and continue her studies in an evening school. There is no adherence to the school standard and to the performance of excellence it stipulates; on the contrary, her practices in this period are characterized by other dispositions.

### Comparative synthesis

The comparative analysis of the two group discussions analyzed here showed that the students' collective *habitus*, which is processed in experience settings specific to the youth phase, is tensioned and expanded when challenged with the normative expectations and demands facing these youths as they transition to the evening shift – not only demands from the school, but also the set of pressures they experience in family relations, especially for consistency and compliance with an institutionalized school career standard, exemplified in the well-behaved student figure.

The struggle for an upper secondary school diploma and the fulfilment of a mandate established by the family moral order, without making an exceptional path or fully adhering to the exemplary student identity who sacrifices rest hours for the sake of school performance, are typical components of the frame of orientation of the group Party and are implicated in their school experience. Likewise, the youths' practices in group Pressure are also formed in refusing the well-behaved student identity, even though their conception of a normal school career, granted by enrolling in regular education, is present in their collective orientations. This refusal materializes in postponing future decisions related to academic or professional endeavors until after secondary education, as exemplified in Babi's account: "every day someone different will ask me what I want to be, what I want to study, . . . Gee I haven't even left school yet cool it".

In both groups we found that the youths' relationship with upper secondary education, as well as with other areas of life, is mediated by the perspective of an abstract other who holds the school standard seal and is legitimized as a benchmark to which the youths' conduct must be oriented. The acts of expectation and pressure by this other are the means of reproduction of the school standard. In interacting with this other, sometimes personified in someone close to them,

such as parents and teachers, the youths subjectivized certain meanings and normative horizons that are at the center of a public narrative about the school's social role at this stage: a pressure cooker that should speed up the maturing process towards full social integration.

As ultimately indicated by the data, we cannot affirm that the institutionalized standard of school career development is a norm that is exclusively imposed on the female school experience, even if one of its symbolic expressions, the well-behaved female student figure – or the good female student, as Carvalho (2004) pointed out – comes from gender expectations that establish specific socialization experiences for girls, especially in the context of economically disadvantaged families (Carvalho et al., 2016). Only a relational perspective, one that includes analyzing boys' school experience, would make the school standard's gender aspects visible.

Thus, the existence of specificities in the school experience of boys and girls attending evening upper secondary education is more a theoretical assumption than empirical evidence observable in the data we produced in the field. To confirm that habitual misfit is an orientation that is socio-genetically related to student gender, we would need horizons of orientation representative of male students' practice, *i.e.*, cases where the misfit cannot be observed or manifests differently.

### Final considerations

For the young females we interviewed, the transition to evening school during upper secondary education meant a new situation that is to some extent disappointing. The construction of experience at this stage and in this shift is labelled by a certain disenchantment, either because the desired expectations for “normal” school career development did not materialize, or because the youths were not prepared to experience a new reality, which involves committing to responsibilities so far unknown in their lives, such as the mandatory designing of projects to be carried out after they have accomplished their studies.

This study showed that the crisis forming the school experience in upper secondary education, a crisis derived from tensions between school socialization processes and youths' subjectivation, can be explained, from a praxeological perspective and for the case of evening school, by what we reconstructed, based on a comparative analysis, as habitual misfit, a kind of conjunctive experience that connects these students. It is not just an intentional and critical distance from the roles and values traditionally defined by school institutions, in this case those related to the student craft. The incongruities between school *habitus*, which is linked to an institutionalized standard of student career development in upper secondary education, and the *habitus* that is shaped in the sphere of everyday relations between peers begin to appear in this period and impact the construction of school experience, even among those who have rough paths and, in theory, do not share the school standard.

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### Note on authorship

Hamanda Pontes – Fieldwork, data analysis, writing – original draft, review, and editing.

Wivian Weller – Project advisor, data analysis review, and writing – original draft.

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