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Un-Affirmative Action: The Persistence of Anti-Black Racism in the Higher Education System of Postcolonial Brazil

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in the Department of Political Science and International Studies

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Under the mentorship of
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ABSTRACT

Public education systems institutionalize the socialization process which directly disseminates cultural and national values and assimilates the population through mass education. But how does colonial-era anti-Black racism persist in the higher education institutions of contemporary postcolonial societies? Using the Federative Republic of Brazil as a case study, I examine the effects of incomplete decolonization, anti-Blackness, and the role of history, economics, and pedagogy on social outcomes that exclude and marginalize Black and other minority groups. The Brazilian higher education system follows a pattern centered around anti-Black racism which serves to disempower Black, Brown, and Indigenous populations during the colonial and postcolonial eras. This qualitative study examines three key components that form the higher education system in Brazil: the legacy of historical institutions like slavery, exclusive economic practices, and pedagogical barriers that affect the accessibility and experiences of University students. A survey of undergraduate Brazilian students at the *Universidade de Brasília* (UnB) examines the effectiveness of affirmative action and racial quota policies in a contemporary postcolonial context, as well as knowledge of and experience with these policies. This study observes how historical, economic, and pedagogical factors contribute to the pattern of persistent colonial structures that enable and perpetuate anti-Black racism in Brazil's institutions of higher education.

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Introduction

Consider this scenario. A child is raised by their parents over the course of 18 years until the child becomes a legal adult. During this period, the child is taught to abide by certain social rules, adhere to particular codes of conduct, and accept the same status quo of their parents and the society in which they grow and develop. However, when this child becomes an autonomous adult, capable of forging their own path in life, do they truly become fully independent of the customs, conduct, and beliefs, that their parents instilled in them as a child? The answer to this question is no. The child still carries with them into adulthood some of the biases and lessons learned from their caregivers. Could the same phenomenon occur beyond the individual level and apply to the colony-empire relationship as well?

The effects of European imperialism and colonization on the metropole-periphery dynamic, could be comparable to the parent-child relationship described above. Throughout the colonial period, the values, institutions, and governing frameworks of the empire (metropole) were imposed on its colony (periphery) in such a way that it was supposed to function as an extension of the empire itself. These three components upon which a colony is developed or "raised" are woven so deeply into its social structure that upon achieving political independence from its imperial "parent," a postcolonial society may not fully depart from them. Just like the autonomous child who still carries some of their parent's principles and practices into adulthood, even contemporary postcolonial societies may still carry with them the legacy of their colonial predecessor.

Given this possibility, does a postcolonial status truly mean that an independent former colony is actually decolonized? Well, not exactly. By nature of its definition,

"postcolonial" refers to the temporal status that occurs after the end of colonial rule, as well as the visible consequences of such rule on the society itself (Gandhi, 1998). "Decolonial," on the other hand, refers more directly to a colonial society's transition process of becoming a state completely independent and self-sufficient from the rule of a former imperial power (Mignolo, 2018). Complete decolonization implies and requires not only total separation from the imperial political structure, but also from the Eurocentric colonial principles, hegemonic values, and social practices that inherently served to subjugate one or more particular groups during the colonial period. This distinction is important because if a society undergoes an incomplete process of decolonization, the result is a postcolonial society that does not operate fully independently of the colonial influences from which it supposedly diverged. The unfortunate reality is that the enduring colonial legacies of structural inequality and systemic anti-Black racism may continue to influence the development of postcolonial societies through institutions of socialization, such as the education system. Mass education, in particular, is a medium through which colonial-era hegemonic values and standards could be directly disseminated into a population.

The Federative Republic of Brazil (Brazil) provides a unique example that demonstrates the effects of this phenomenon. As a former settler colony and extractive economy under Portuguese control, Brazil's distinctive but tightly interwoven history with slavery and anti-Black racism resulted in a strong, self-reinforcing, and racialized hierarchical social structure that has persisted even within its contemporary institutions. During its colonial period, Brazil imported approximately four million African slaves – the largest amount compared to other plantation colonies that similarly relied on slave

labor. Slavery in Brazil was long-standing, lasting for approximately 300 years and was not abolished until 1888 when Brazilian elites determined that slavery and the exceptionally large population of Black people were detrimental to the determinism of the country. "In 1798, the Afro-Brazilians, slave and free, were twice as numerous as the white population," which was a cause for white elites' concern that "Brazil's future racial composition...would affect the distribution of power" (Skidmore, 1999, 56). As a result, "the overwhelmingly white Brazilian elite… believed the country's only hope was to become racially whiter (*branquear*), thus resembling the powerful nations of the North Atlantic" (Skidmore, 1999, 57). This sentiment led to Brazil's systematic attempt to "whiten" its population by incentivizing European immigration. Despite these efforts, however, Brazil still has a population that largely consists of people of African and mixed descent, the majority of whom were "displaced from land and labor…as the government gave Brazilian-born whites [and] primarily European immigrants, employment, housing, education, and other financial opportunities and advantages" (Johnson and Heringer, 2015, 1).

The preservation of institutional structures that reinforce anti-Black principles which maintain the colonial-era status quo even after independence and the abolition of slavery, results in long-lasting consequences that continuously marginalize people of Black and Indigenous descent. Identifying the ways in which this phenomenon reinforces and self-perpetuates anti-Black racism in the framework of higher education is key to dismantling long-term discrimination in the postcolonial education system.

Identification of this problem and its causes is essential for two reasons. First, making a problem visible by acknowledging that it exists in the first place is the initial

step in the problem-solving process; and second, recognizing the specific nature of the problem and its causes would allow for appropriate solutions to be developed. Therefore, identifying how anti-Black racism is self-sustained in the postcolonial higher education system can enable the implementation of more holistic solutions and opportunities for racial redress instead of applying surface-level remedies that address anti-Black racism as a symptom rather than the problem itself.

So, how does colonial-era anti-Black racism persist in the higher education institutions of contemporary postcolonial societies? This study investigates the extent to which history, economics, and pedagogical frameworks influence the structure of the education system, and how these factors perpetuate the colonial legacy of anti-Black racism within Brazilian institutions of higher education. The research conducted in this study draws upon scholarly works on decolonization (Mignolo, 2018), postcolonialism (Fanon, 1961), racialization (Telles, 2004), and anti-Blackness in the Brazilian context (Alves, 2018). Throughout this study, I also examine the effectiveness of affirmative action policies implemented at the *Universidade de Brasília* (UnB)[1] which are aimed at mitigating the effects of anti-Black racism at the university level. Understanding the persistence of anti-Black racism as a deeply entrenched colonial inheritance may be the key to creating more equitable institutions in postcolonial societies around the world.

Literature Review

European imperialism, colonization, and Eurocentrism are critical factors in the development of the contemporary postcolonial world and its culture. If the hegemonic

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[1] Translation: University of Brasília

nature of European colonization was a thread, it has already woven itself so intricately and deeply into the fabric of postcolonial societies that it is nearly indistinguishable. Colonization's imposition of assimilationist policies, establishment of racialized social hierarchies, and development of social and economic institutions to support them have substantially affected contemporary postcolonial institutions and their functions. To understand the extent to which colonialism's legacy of subjugation and discrimination persists in contemporary postcolonial institutions of higher education, specifically, it is imperative to examine the following: (1) the distinction between concepts of race and color, (2) the concept of Blackness and how anti-Black, Eurocentric sentiments manifested into anti-Black racism during the colonial period, (3) the ways in which these racialized constructs contribute to the maintenance of structural inequalities in the public education system, and (4) the contemporary mitigation efforts, such as affirmative action, to redress the historical consequences of these racial constructs.

Color vs. Race vs. Blackness

To fully understand the extent to which anti-Black racism permeates contemporary postcolonial institutions, we must first understand what Blackness means, and particularly, whether "Black" refers to a person's race or color. Depending on the cultural context, the definitions of race and color can be blurred beyond recognition, especially if the two words are used interchangeably. Therefore, it is imperative to understand each word independently of the others.

According to Dr. Edward Telles (2012, 1163), "color… describes physical differences that are used in society as markers of social distinction, while race…is neither visible nor measurable and…varies from place to place." These physical differences also

vary in significance depending on the heterogeneity of a particular society's population, and because of its surface-level characterization, color may be used to socially categorize people regardless of their culture or lived experiences. Color is "seen as merely descriptive, [but] it also elicits a racial ideology where [people] are keenly aware of human color variation, which they often place on a naturalized hierarchy of worth" (Telles, 2012, 1163). In simplest terms, color focuses on phenotypic variation and is used to distinguish one group from another almost solely based on physical characteristics.

On the other hand, race is a social construct based on phenotypic differences, but it evolved to use those differences in a way that made biased assumptions about unobservable characteristics such as intellectual and physical abilities as well.

> "The term 'race' was [originally] used to distinguish populations in different areas on the basis of different physical characteristics that had developed over time, such as skin color, facial features, and other characteristics… [but] recent behavioral and social science evidence supports the… notion that race is a construct based on observable physical characteristics that have acquired socially significant meaning" (National Research Council, 2004, 26-27).

In the early 18th century, race was used as an attempt by European thinkers "to explain the somatic and cultural diversity of peoples encountered in the early stages of European imperialism and settler colonialism… and [over time], the scientific justification of racial differentiation… took on its greater force of legitimacy with the acceptance of polygenism in the beginning of the nineteenth century" (Barder, 2019, 211). Race, therefore, is a pseudoscientific concept that, when combined with polygenic ideas that "human races were separate biological species," led to the development and justification of racial hierarchies (Barder, 2019, 211).

Regardless of whether a postcolonial society chooses to place more emphasis on race or color, Eurocentrism enables colorism by placing physical color variations on a

binary spectrum that disproportionately associates Black or dark skin with things that are "bad" and white or light skin with things that are "good." The degree of a person's "Blackness" can determine the extent to which they are placed at an automatic structural and hierarchical disadvantage in almost any postcolonial society. Although the term linguistically refers to skin color, unlike the two aforementioned concepts, "Blackness," is a cultural category that is primarily used in reference to people of African descent and their common lived experiences. Dr. Sefa Dei describes Blackness as:

> "A conception of what Black subjectivity and identification signifies and symbolizes in society… more than racial identification. It is knowledge about Black culture, politics, and an understanding of the history of Black and African people's experiences… [which includes] the delegitimization of Black and African bodies… [as well as] the subject of Black disposability [and] the apparent state's disregard for Black People's welfare and aspirations" (Sefa Dei, 2018, 119-120).

Despite the comprehensiveness of Blackness, over time, it has been deliberately oversimplified to the point of being a single-dimensional racial identity that is simultaneously oppressed, appropriated, and consumed according to the dominant group's palatability or preferences. This phenomenon is referred to as anti-Blackness.

Anti-Blackness is an ideology that results from "the negative stereotypes about the Black community that [arose] from the dogmatic representations of Blacks as an inferior race" (Nighaoui, 2017, 362). Anti-Blackness has unearthed a paradoxical situation in which "Blackness is fashionable and can be appropriated, packaged, commodified, and consumed… while [still being] found repulsive and reprehensible" (Sefa Dei, 2018, 120). The apparent love-hate relationship and fear that dominant groups possess with regard to Blackness is directly conducive to disproportionately negative and racialized associations of Black people with issues of poverty, violence, and criminality.

These negative conflations affect how Black people view themselves and influence acts of racial prejudice and discrimination. Such anti-Black sentiments are usually manifested in different forms of anti-Black racism, which are discussed later.

<u>Racial Classification & Structural Inequalities</u>

Collectively, race, color, and Blackness are concepts that serve as a guide for understanding the role of anti-Blackness in this case study examining postcolonial society of Brazil. In order to understand these concepts in the Brazilian cultural context, we must first examine its basis for racial categorization. The racial classification system used in Brazil is substantially different from that used in the United States, "where race is based on hypodescent (or "one drop" rules). Brazilian racial boundaries [are] more imprecise because they are highly influenced by socioeconomic status… [and] Brazilians would be able to move across distinct racial categories when socially mobile" (Silva & Paixão, 2014, 200). This concept of movement across distinct racial categories is referred to as *racial mobility,* and it does not exist within the American cultural context.

Unlike the United States, Brazil considers itself to be a *racial democracy*, continually distinguishing itself from "the segregationist policies and conflicts in the U.S. South and to South African apartheid laws" (Silva & Paixão, 2014, 179). For example, during the 20th century in the United States, the "one drop rule" was the dominant principle for racial classification and operated under the pretense that having at least one ancestor who is Black would result in all of their descendants to be classified as Black. However, due to Brazil's history of widespread miscegenation, it is difficult to distinguish between races based on heritage alone, so racial classification is determined instead by individuals' self-identification based on their own physical characteristics. The

difference here is that in the U.S., a person's racial identity is based primarily on their

heritage, whereas in Brazil, a person's racial identity is based on how they self-identify

according to how they perceive their own physical characteristics. Consequently, in

Brazil, "discrimination and prejudice… [are] not about race, that is based on ethnic or

racial origin as in the United States, but rather about phenotype" (Silva & Paixão, 2014,

179-180).

To further demonstrate this phenomenon, the Project on Ethnicity and Race in

Latin America (PERLA) uses different types of racial categorization, including "racial

self-identification…according to census categories; [and] racial categorization…

according to color palette scale and hair type" (Silva & Paixão, 2014, 201). By analyzing

these racial classification methods, the PERLA survey found that there was a strong

correlation between race and education: "Those whose skin color was ranked medium

had an average of 7.0 years of education…in contrast, those whose skin color was rated

as dark had, on average 6.3 years of education, or nearly 1.6 years less than those rated as

light… only the differences between the light and dark groups were statistically

significant" (Silva & Paixão, 2014, 203-205). This survey also found a similarly strong

correlation between self-identified color and access to white-collar jobs.

According to another PERLA survey conducted in 2010, "the benefits [associated

with] being white related to structural advantages (jobs and opportunities), while for the

Black and Indigenous, they were largely based on stereotypes (better musicians, better in

sports, happier). [Additionally,] only 5.8 percent of interviewees identified Blacks as

having *any* advantage in public policies, while 14 percent mentioned whites as being

favored by public policies" (Silva & Paixão, 2014, 210). Importantly, the same survey

also found that "more than 80 percent of respondents declined to identify any disadvantages related to being white in Brazil," compared to 40 percent when asked about being Black and 50 percent when asked about being Indigenous. When asked about advantages, however, the responses were almost completely reversed and concluded that "the advantages of whiteness and structural disadvantages of Blackness seemed to be largely accepted [by Brazilians]" (Silva & Paixão, 2014, 211). Similar surveys conducted by PERLA in 2010 yielded similar results regarding "situations of socioeconomic discrimination" (Silva & Paixão, 2014, 211-214).

The perceived bias toward Whiteness and against Blackness is "manifest in the creative deployment of 134 racial categories Brazilians use to avoid the term *Black*… such as *café-com-leite, moreno, cor-de-burro-quando-foge*,[2] [which] suggest that rather than engaging in false consciousness, dark-skinned Brazilians know the cost of being Black and thus try desperately to detach themselves from it" (Alves, 2018, 20). The term with which Brazilians choose to self-identify their perceived level of "Blackness," whether categorized as "Negro" (Black), "Pardo," (Brown) or "Moreno" (dark-skinned), determines their likelihood of being predisposed to certain structural disadvantages within the implicit racial hierarchy of Brazil.

The Legacy of Colonial Brazil's Extractive Economy

Brazil was colonized by the Portuguese in 1500 and remained under Portuguese control until 1822. The northeastern coastal region of Brazil, mainly between present-day Bahia and Rio de Janeiro, was the first to be occupied. The 322-year colonization era was characterized by a "series of colonial resource booms [which] involved, at various

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[2] Translation: Coffee with milk (café au lait), dark-skinned (brown), the color of a fleeing donkey.

historical moments and locations, the production of various commodities, such as sugar

cane, gold, rubber, tobacco, cocoa, and cotton, among others" (Naritomi, 2012, 396). The

sugar cane boom, also known as the "century of sugar," lasted from about 1570 to 1670

and had an especially enduring economic legacy in the northeastern region of Brazil.

> "The sugar economy was a plantation system built on three essential elements: '*latifundio*' (a large estate with a single owner), monoculture, and slave labor. Sugar cane brought the large rural estate and the patriarchal and slavery-based society to Brazil… The [resulting] sugar cane society was built on social inequality, and very small economic and political elites with concentrated powers… [among whom] the local landed aristocracy [were] invariably white" (Naritomi, 2012, 399).

The extractive sugar cane society was constructed to favor white, European

senhores de engenho.[3] The concentration of power in the hands of local [white] elites

shaped the political landscape and provided the necessary conditions for "the overruling

of state power and *de jure* institutions by economic power and *de facto* institutions ran by

the elites themselves [through] landed aristocracies" (Naritomi, 2012, 400). The effects of

these conditions persisted throughout colonial, postcolonial, and to some extent,

contemporary Brazil. In fact, "current variation in local [Brazilian] institutions is traced

back to the colonial origins of municipalities… [and] extractive episodes in colonial

Brazil can be seen as historical shocks to institutional development" (Naritomi, 2012,

418). This is especially evident in the historical development of Brazilian educational

institutions.

To fully consider the consequential impact of extractive socioeconomic systems

on education in colonial and postcolonial Brazil, it is imperative to understand the goals

and purposes of Portuguese colonial education. For Brazil, "three main themes dominated

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[3] Translation: sugar mill lords

the colonial educational discourse: *assimilation* of the Indigenous to the Portuguese culture; the *creation* of an Indigenous working force through practical education; and the *nationalization* of the Indigenous population, through the historical civilizing mission of the Portuguese towards the primitive peoples" (Madeira, 2005, 47). The main goal of Portuguese colonial education was "the construction of civility and the formation of a 'new man' (Fonseca, 2016, 169). In the context of these colonial aspirations, the operational definition of education fundamentally changed. The colonial period "emphasizes the idea of education in relation to the formation of citizens for the good of the state and its order, reinforcing therefore a definition of education as *formation*" (Fonseca, 2016, 170). Because of the shifting understanding that "such formation would only be possible through formalized and institutionalized instruction, the role of education [became] a control mechanism of behavior… in order to control disorders [among the population]" (Fonseca, 2016, 182). The population in question here is anything but general. "Many attributed the situation [of social disorder and incivility] to the large population of African origin and their descendants, 'naturally' prone to indiscipline and insolence" (Fonseca, 2016, 180). Reformative, assimilationist, and civilizing education exclusively targeted Black, Brown, and Indigenous Brazilians; the extractive economy and diversion of financial resource allocations away from these groups, which will be examined and later discussed in greater detail, helped ensure that this would remain the only extent to which education was allowed to reach them.

The "general outlook [of the Portuguese colonial primary education system] closely followed the French educational structure by distinguishing between schools for the indigenous population and schools for Europeans and assimilated [natives]"

(Madeira, 2005, 48). In short, the colonial education system in Brazil instituted some degree of segregation, although this was not explicitly denoted in any municipal legislation. For Brazilians, this separation was justified as a matter of class, economic immobility, and circumstance, and was not considered a direct consequence of government actions. This is only partially true.

Several studies investigating the persistence of racial prejudice and inequalities in Brazil have concluded that "racial discrimination had largely been replaced by class discrimination, which [Brazilians] believed was the main cause of Black exclusion" (Silva & Paixão, 2014, 180). Because a person's self-identified race or ethnicity does not *explicitly* inhibit Black, Brown, and Indigenous people's social or racial mobility, most Brazilians do not perceive race to be at the root of socioeconomic inequality issues. Being Black doesn't *make* a person poor, but rather, it increases their odds of being so almost exponentially. According to Valente:

> "Race is an additional factor that superposes class. Nonwhite children have higher odds of being poor and are more likely to suffer poverty than white children; their odds of attending school are less than those of white children, and when they do attend, they attend public schools which are not as academically strong as the private ones attended by [their white counterparts]; they are less likely to pass the *vestibular* [nationalized entrance exam] and attend university… [and] the resulting low educational achievement leads them towards low-paying jobs… making it impossible for them to compete and move up the socioeconomic ladder" (Valente, 2017, 853).

This cycle of low educational achievement, low-paying jobs, and lower socioeconomic status is self-perpetuating, and demonstrates the positive correlation between socioeconomic status and education level in Brazil.

Decolonization and the Pedagogical System

If colonial independence is the equivalent of an 18-year-old adult becoming independent of their parents, then decolonization is equivalent to that transition from being under parental control and influence to full adult autonomy. "Decolonization is the undoing of colonialism…[the] process by which colonies become independent of the colonizing country" (Mignolo, 2018, 120), and is considered an essential component of a country achieving independence. According to Frantz Fanon, "Decolonization [also] implies the urgent need to *thoroughly* challenge the colonial situation" (1961, 2). Therefore, a colony's complete autonomy and total 'independence' theoretically entails not only *political* independence, but also economic, cultural, social independence. However, the decolonization process does not occur independently of colonial influence. Dr. Sefa Dei (2018, 124) alleges that by consistently encouraging Afro-descendants to forcibly "mimic Eurocentric theories" based on the idea that "prestige and value [are] accorded to [Whiteness and Eurocentricity] in colonial and postcolonial education, institutional [educational] settings systematically reproduce social inequalities." This *colonial mimicry* is perpetuated by education systems that continuously delegitimize Blackness by inaccurately and inadequately representing the Black, African, and Indigenous experiences and failing to teach them about themselves while depriving many of the chance to reach their full potential. This is where pedagogies are considered to have massive impact and why colonial influence is an important factor to consider regarding the education system.

"Pedagogy is understood…as an essential and indispensable methodology grounded in…the social, political, epistemic, and existential contexts of struggle that leaders and peoples…create the directive lines of their action [educational, political, and

of liberation]" (Walsh, 2018, 88). Pedagogies and curricula are aspects of the educational institutions and systems that continue to actively promote the narrative of Black inferiority - anti-Blackness - which effectively translates itself into a perpetuation of the racialized social hierarchy that condemns Black people to the bottom of the social ladder. Pedagogies, especially in mass public education, contribute directly to the formation of a civil society, which, "although not homogeneously white… is essentially anti-Black" (Alves, 2018, 3). This is because the pedagogical force of collective memory and ancestral knowledge is important for the development of a shared cultural identity and the sustenance of nationhood within a country. However, intentional exclusion of the Black experience from curricula and pedagogies by federal education standards results in a "[postcolonial] society where Black people are increasingly 'disembarked,' dislodged, and evicted from their own sense of being, memory, and place, and from their network of origins, of extended family, and of relations" (Walsh, 2018, 94). In this way, educational systems promote anti-Black narratives through enculturation practices and pedagogies that normalize anti-Black standards and values inherited from colonial social structures.

Discrimination and disparities in structural advantages between white and Black people in Brazil are indicative of a persistent standard of racial stratification. In the education system – and particularly that of higher education – this disparity can have substantially detrimental effects that confine Black Brazilians to lower societal standards, restrain their chances for upward social mobility, limit their employment opportunities, and hinder their prospects of access to and success in higher education.

Keeping in mind Valente's idea that race superposes class, as well as the negatively correlated relationship between Blackness and socio-economic mobility,

understanding the disparities in higher education requires an examination of public education at the primary and secondary levels. "The quality of education in the public sector is very poor throughout Brazil" (Valente, 2017, 857) due to historically imbalanced education spending among Brazilian states which varies tremendously even between public and private institutions. "Prestigious institutions at the primary and secondary levels are in the *private sector*" which is substantially more expensive for historically disadvantaged Black and Indigenous people in the North and Northeast regions of Brazil (Valente, 2017, 852). The colonial structures in place that restricted socioeconomic mobility and accessibility left most Black Brazilians unable to send their children to better, private schools because it was unaffordable. This trend persists throughout elementary, middle, and high school levels of education. The quality of one's primary and secondary education are a determinant of whether or not they will attend and succeed in their pursuit of post-secondary education at university.

Due to the drastic underrepresentation of Black Brazilians at the university level, affirmative action policies and racial quotas for Black students were initiated to mitigate the historical disadvantages they faced. However, the implementation of such policies does not fully dismantle the anti-Black structural barriers that kept Black students from attending university in the first place. This is because affirmative action policies that are aimed at increasing the numerical representation of marginalized students only address a symptom of their underrepresentation, but not the root of the problem itself. By failing to address the socioeconomic barriers that have historically served to decrease the quality of public education at the primary and secondary levels, affirmative action falls short of its

ambitious goals of thoroughly improving the inclusive representation of marginalized students in these institutions.

The goal of my research is to determine the historical, economic, and pedagogical ways in which anti-Black racism persists in Brazil's postcolonial higher education system. Additionally, this research reveals whether affirmative action and racial quota policies made a substantial difference in the experiences of Black Brazilians in terms of the testing and admissions process, as well as their representation on campus, in the classroom, and in their specific program curricula. If these policies successfully provide these marginalized students opportunities to overcome structural barriers that historically excluded them from federal universities, then we can understand their effectiveness in mitigating the impacts of institutionalized anti-Black racism in the education system.

Theory

The research conducted for this study uses two main theoretical perspectives. The first is postcolonialism, which examines the cultural, economic, and political legacies of colonization and imperialism. For my research, I did not use the hyphenated form of "post-colonialism… [which is used] as a decisive temporal marker of the decolonizing process… [and] implies chronological separation between colonialism and its aftermath" (Gandhi, 1998, 3). Rather, for the purpose of investigating the perpetuation of anti-Black racism throughout postcolonial Brazil, I used the unbroken form of postcolonialism, which "is more sensitive to the long history of colonial consequences… [and better conceptualizes] the complex condition that attends the aftermath of colonial occupation" (Gandhi, 1998, 3-4). This implies that the decolonial transition in many postcolonial

societies did not occur independently of the influence of their former colonizers, and consequently, the newly reformed governments and institutions maintained colonial-era standards of racial inequality. The theoretical perspective of postcolonialism used throughout this study examines the historical, economic, and institutional structures of contemporary Brazilian higher education as a product of the enduring colonial legacy that perpetuates anti-Black racism.

The second theoretical perspective that I used for my research is anti-Blackness. Anti-Blackness is not explicitly defined, but the definition and application of Blackness itself can be used to define it in a specific context. Blackness refers to a complex cultural category that incorporates the lived experiences of descendants of the African Diaspora and the social implications of their physical and cultural characteristics. In *The Anti-Black City,* Dr. Jaime Alves asserts that anti-Blackness manifests as "economic marginalization, residential segregation, police terror… mass incarceration, and killings by the police" to illustrate how these forms of anti-Black racism are "directly produced or energized by the state" (Alves, 2018, 2). Therefore, for the purposes of investigating anti-Black racism in the Brazilian education system in this study, I am defining anti-Blackness as *the essence of a structure or practice that serves to exclude or further marginalize Black and dark-skinned people from a particular space.*

Similar to the manifestations of anti-Blackness that contribute to the prevalence of anti-Black racism in policing, the institutional frameworks which operate within the education system also perpetuate anti-Black racism by maintaining conditions that lead to racialized, anti-Black social outcomes. These outcomes include but are not limited to implicit and explicit racial discrimination in the learning environment, systematic

limitations and restrictions on access to higher education, and underrepresentation of

Black people at the university level. To investigate this phenomenon and these social

outcomes, I specifically examine the historical, economic, and pedagogical aspects of the

Brazilian higher education system, as well as the extent to which contemporary

affirmative action and racial quota policies are effective in mitigating the consequences

of enduring colonial-era anti-Black racism.

Based on current research, there are several factors that contribute to the

persistence of colonial-era anti-Black racism in Brazil's higher education system

including but not limited to unequal funding, accessibility bias, standardized testing, and

affirmative action policy shortcomings. These factors often result in social outcomes that

substantially benefit lighter-skinned Brazilians more than their darker-skinned

counterparts. This is most notable when applied to historically marginalized populations

of Black people in Brazil. This study examines the following hypothesis:

> *H_1: If higher education is a place of continued colonialism, then evidence of anti-Black racism will be present in historical, economic, and pedagogical contexts that led to the institution's development.*

Methodology & Research Design

This research project consists of a qualitative case study conducted in three parts.

The first part of the study consists of a historical analysis of unequal educational funding

throughout Brazilian states in different regions. By investigating the role of colonial

Brazil's extractive economy, this study determines how it directly contributed to the

minimization of Black Brazilians' access to and success in higher education.

The second part of this study examines the importance of testing modality and the implicit bias accompanying the administration of the standardized national exam, the *Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio* (ENEM). This step is accomplished by collecting and analyzing the content of annually published ENEM tests obtained from the *Ministério da Educação* (MEC).[4] Data from the ENEM can determine the types and levels of bias existing within the test that determines whether Brazilian students can attend federally funded public universities. This part of the study consists of an analysis of secondary source data obtained from previous ENEM analyses.

The third part of this study involves the distribution of an anonymized, bilingual questionnaire to undergraduate Brazilian students attending the *Universidade de Brasília* (UnB). The questionnaire was conducted using the Qualtrics survey platform and gathers primary source data from students regarding perceived marginalization and knowledge of affirmative action policies at the institution. It has been reviewed and approved by the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board under tracking number H20464. The title of the questionnaire is *Perspectivas sobre Politicas de Ação Afirmativa Modernas no Ensino Superior no Brasil*[5], and it consists of 20 questions designed to elicit demographic and experiential data from undergraduate students (see Table 1). From the responses to open-ended questions, conclusions can be drawn about the effectiveness of integration initiatives and policies like affirmative action in mitigating the legacies anti-Black racism at UnB. The questionnaire was administered in both English and Brazilian Portuguese because, according to the ENEM testing protocols, students are tested on their proficiency in Portuguese and one other foreign language, either English or Spanish. This

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[4] Translation: Ministry of Education
[5] Translation: Undergraduate Perspectives on Modern Affirmative Action in Brazil

bilingual provision was essential to procuring response data from the sample population because it helped increase response rates by ensuring that student participants still had the opportunity to complete the questionnaire in Brazilian Portuguese even if they are not proficient in English.

The higher education system in Brazil is the case being observed for signs of implicit anti-Black racism in its structure both before and after implementation of affirmative action and racial quota policies. The population sample consists of Brazilian undergraduate students who are currently enrolled in a federally funded public university, and the units of analysis are those students specifically enrolled at UnB in the *Distrito Federal* (DF).[6] Brazil was chosen as a case study for two reasons. First, countries with a substantial African diasporic population are the most likely to have a racialized social structure. Latin American countries, especially Brazil, imported large numbers of slaves from Africa who consequently experienced extensive racial discrimination or social exclusion both before and after slavery was abolished. In Brazil there are 27 federative units – 26 states and the DF. Some of these states are more densely populated with Black Brazilians than others; consequently, these states often report higher rates of racialized social outcomes such as poverty, lower literacy rates, and decreased access to higher education than their demographic counterparts. Second, Brazil has a unique history as a European settler colony. Settler colonies have a primary goal of establishing political and economic dominance over the indigenous populations they seek to control; the establishment of racial hierarchies like the one that exists in Brazil, which appears to

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[6] Translation: Federal District. The DF functions as both a state and municipality, and it houses the country's current capital as well as the federally funded and regulated public university, UnB.

value whiteness over Blackness, is often a prerequisite for European settlers to establish superiority.

For this study, I am looking for relational patterns between (a) different aspects of the Brazilian higher education system that have been notably influenced by the colonial legacy of anti-Black racism and (b) the outcome of perceived and experienced marginalization. The three aspects of higher education that I am investigating for signs of anti-Black racism are (1) the historical role of colonial Brazil's extractive economy and its impact on education funding; (2) the ENEM as a pedagogical structure that can hinder the accessibility of higher education; and (3) the UnB affirmative action policy and its perceived impact on university students' experiences of marginalization or the lack thereof. Given my operational definition of anti-Black racism — the essence of a structure or practice that serves to exclude or further marginalize Black and dark-skinned people from a particular space — any evidence of marginalization or exclusion of Black people through any of these three aspects would therefore indicate the presence and persistence of anti-Black racism within the institutional structure.

Analysis

As discussed in previous sections, the education system at all levels is an institution designed to fulfill two essential services: (1) assimilating people within a society to the dominant culture and, ideally, (2) equally equipping all citizens with the knowledge and tools they need to be successful. However, the factors that contributed to the development of Brazilian institutions of higher education over time have caused them to fall short of performing the system's second essential service. Drastic imbalances in

resources and funding, implicit biases in standardized testing practices, and numerous

shortcomings of affirmative action policies collectively impact the overall educational

experience for Black students. The following sections discuss these specific factors and

how they perpetuate the hegemonic colonial practices that divest Black Brazilians of the

opportunities and advantages that are offered to their counterparts of European descent.

<u>Historically Imbalanced Funding & Resources</u>

During the period of Brazil's First Republic (1889-1930), the Constitution

decentralized institutional fiscal responsibilities and export taxes, which "triggered

changes in the development trajectories of states" (Mussachio, 2014, 733). The resulting

variation in fiscal revenues across states over time correlated with a variation in

education expenditure at the state level as well. Essentially, "states that exported

commodities at higher prices could collect more revenues per capita and could – if they

chose – spend more on education" (Musacchio, 2014, 731-733). Conditions that

originated from initial colonial settlement and exploitation patterns, such as the

prevalence of slavery and the sugar cane economy, "led to the creation of specific

political institutions that, in turn, determined how much provincial elites and politicians

wanted to invest in mass education" (Musacchio, 2014, 733). Data also shows that states

with larger enslaved populations were significantly less likely to invest in mass

education.

This phenomenon is evident in literacy rate disparities among Brazilian states.

"Improvement in literacy rates was uneven across states, with states such as São Paulo

improving literacy from 18.8 percent to 52.1 percent of the population, and others such as

Maranhão, Mato Grosso, or Bahia keeping literacy rates at 20 percent" (Musacchio,

2014, 733). In the latter three states, this data indicates that in spite of their large, overwhelmingly Black populations, only 20 percent of the entire population was educated to the point of literacy. This exemplifies anti-Black racism because political and economic barriers in those states structurally reduced access to education for Black Brazilians to such an extent that even in states where they constitute the largest portion of the population, the literacy rate is still extremely low. This limitation serves to further marginalize and exclude Black Brazilians from the basic education that is needed to even qualify for admission to institutions of higher education.

Examining the interconnectivity of race in class issues is also important because structural changes in government did not translate into explicit efforts to level the playing field for marginalized Brazilians. Despite the 1824 Brazilian Constitution decentralizing the provision of education, "the collection of revenues, mostly coming from foreign trade, was highly centralized… [and] under such a political system, whatever resources provincial elites spent on public elementary education went to pay for schools that mostly educated their own children or those of other elites" (Musacchio, 2014, 735). In this way, the expansion of elementary education "benefited the white and mixed-race elites" and it did not grow in all states at the same rates. There is no specific evidence to determine whether "elites in [states with large slave populations explicitly] discriminated against Blacks when they set up new schools, but… most of the education expenditures in those states went to schools in the cities that Blacks rarely attended" (Mussachio, 2014, 752-753). This exclusionary tactic of selective funding serves to perpetuate anti-Black racism by further marginalizing and excluding Black Brazilians from access to high-quality public education in certain states.

Essentially, the price of export commodities is positively correlated with the state collection of tax revenues (i.e., higher export prices equals greater export tax revenue). States with higher export tax revenue and comparatively *fewer* slaves before abolition had substantial incentives to increase education spending. Those states are expected to "end up having better education outcomes such as higher literacy and enrollment rates or more schools" (Musacchio, 2014, 756) because elites are more likely to invest in these institutions when there is a smaller Black population, unlike states in which slaves constituted the numerical majority. According to Musacchio:

"There are two hypotheses that can explain the correlation of slavery with lower education spending… First, it could be that pure racism led the elites, who were mostly white, to spend less on education… Second, it could be that the states in which slavery prevailed had a more unequal distribution of economic assets and political power and therefore the elites preferred not to expand public education because it could expand the voting population and, thus, disrupt the political status quo" (Musacchio, 2014, 755).

Either way, economic elites in Brazil had incentives to invest in public education when it benefitted their demographic the most and to withhold funding when Black populations were viewed as a threat to the existing social order.

To fully summarize the link between slavery and uneven educational development across Brazilian states, there are three key points to consider: (1) Institutional changes such as fiscal decentralization determined major changes in the development trajectory of states – the resulting mismanagement or selective allocation of government funds resulted in severe social, economic, and educational underdevelopment that further marginalized populations of Black people. (2) Rapid increases in tax revenues did not translate into increases in educational expenditure in all states, but only in those that had egalitarian [not elitist or exploitative] institutions – states with elitist institutions and exploitative economies like slavery were less likely to invest in education because of the

overwhelming population of Black people. (3) Improvements in education did not translate into broad improvement of human capital accumulation for the masses, and because "[education expenditure] was mostly targeted at educating white and mixed-race Brazilians, former slaves and Blacks in general did not benefit from the expansion of public education between 1889 and 1930" (Musacchio, 2014, 757-760). Throughout colonial and postcolonial Brazilian history, the public education system had not diverged completely from the colonial model that valued the education of whites more than Blacks. Therefore, the public education system, including higher education, still maintains colonial characteristics that reinforce anti-Black racism through standards of implicit discrimination and minimization of education funding for the nonwhite Brazilian demographics. The resulting underrepresentation of nonwhite and especially Black Brazilians is indicative of the historically and economically systematic efforts to exclude them from educational spaces. This exclusion further marginalizes Black Brazilians and therefore exemplifies a form of anti-Black racism.

Standardized Testing & Accessibility Bias

One of the primary ways in which historically disadvantaged groups have been effectively underrepresented in higher education is by the *vestibular* – the nationalized university admissions exam. For most public universities in Brazil, the vestibular takes the form of the *Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio* (ENEM),[7] which is linked to the Unified Selection System (SISU) and "[administered] yearly to graduating seniors and high school graduate students. Many universities use the ENEM score as a supplement to their admission exam while others use it as the sole criterion for admission" (Valente,

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[7] Translation: National Exam of Secondary Education

2017, 854). The ENEM was created in 1998 and was originally designed "to evaluate the educational system in Brazil, but eventually, it replaced traditional university entrance exams," and unlike its predecessors, the "ENEM is built to evaluate not the knowledge of content, but competencies and abilities developed during secondary education" (Venticinque & Whitworth, 2018, 96). "Each exam consists of ten foreign language questions (students choose five questions in either Spanish or English), 175 questions on other subjects, also multiple-choice, and one writing task, for a total of 186 questions per exam" (Venticinque & Whitworth, 2018, 98).

Despite the assumed objectivity of the ENEM, the test has been strongly criticized for its incorporation of inherent and arbitrary regional and class biases. ENEM questions reflect a significant "regional and metropolitan bias [due to] an emphasis on news from the richest southern regions of the country, as opposed to the North and Northeast, [which] defeats the purpose of creating an exam [that] uses current events as a way to contextualize content... [because] the issues faced by the Southeast student were featured in the ENEM, while issues faced by the student from the North were ignored" (Venticinque & Whitworth, 2018, 106). The North and Northeast regions of Brazil have populations with the highest concentrations of Black and Indigenous Brazilians. These regions and their municipalities are also substantially poorer in terms of overall regional GDP and the Human Development Index (HDI) due to the historically extractive economies and patterns of investment discussed in earlier sections.

Noting that the ENEM plays a substantial role in the admissions process, according to my questionnaire, *Perspectivas sobre Politicas de Ação Afirmativa Modernas no Ensino Superior no Brasil,* despite evaluating their performance on the

ENEM as relatively average, 11 out of 20 respondents found the overall admissions process to be at least somewhat or extremely difficult (see Graph 1). Two UnB students expressed their concerns about the difficulty of the ENEM in this process in the following two statements (see Table 3).

"The tests don't actually measure one's level of knowledge within the subject, it only measures how fast [one can] judge items, read and guess an alternative."

"I think the most difficult part would have to be the [number] of subjects we have to study to do well on the entrance exam. Over 14 different subjects in two days of examination, as well as an essay portion."

The ENEM also poses a particular challenge for students from a low socioeconomic background, a condition which applies overwhelmingly to Black and Indigenous Brazilians in the North and Northeast regions of the country. "Socioeconomic variables have an impact on student's [ENEM] performance. As income increases, students perform better on the ENEM exam" (Valente, 2017, 860), which demonstrates a positive correlation between socioeconomic status and academic performance. Additionally, the education level of the student's parents is positively correlated and directly indicative of the student's projected academic performance. The problem here is that these disparities are due to historical standards of excluding Black and Indigenous people from educational environments and limiting investment in their educational institutions, which results in poor quality of education overall. For these reasons, "nonwhite students have lower ENEM scores and rate their overall quality of education more negatively than white students. [These] differences among racial groups in perceived quality of education and ENEM performance affect the ability of Afro-descendants to get into college and perpetuate the inequality cycle in Brazil" (Valente, 2017, 860).

The ENEM functions simultaneously as a gatekeeper and a pedagogical barrier. There are two problems with standardized tests like the ENEM. First, standardized tests assumed to be objective; the ENEM is designed and intended to filter qualified students into the university system based on their merit and performance, but the bias existent in its format and content results in poorer testing outcomes for nonwhite students. According to Roithmayr (2014, 77), "standardized testing is an institutional practice [that] originated in racist assumptions about race and ethnicity… to prove that IQ correlated with skin color, that whites were more intelligent." Such assumptions have frequently been used to justify the exclusion of Black and other nonwhite students from educational settings, a practice which serves to further disadvantage them. Second, standardized tests are part of an institutional feedback loop that produces "increasing returns to power… in which 'victors' (or colonizers) at one stage impose institutional solutions that reflect and entrench their interests, thus biasing outcomes in the next round… [which] reproduces unfair advantage over time" (Roithmayr, 2014, 80-81). The disparity in testing outcomes between white and nonwhite students over time indicates that the ENEM still disproportionately marginalizes and disadvantages Black Brazilians from higher education institutions based on their ability to perform well on the test. By maintaining a pseudo-meritocratic system that favors white students more than their nonwhite counterparts, the persistent bias in standardized testing contributes directly to the perpetuation of anti-Black racism.

Affirmative Action & Contemporary Student Experiences

The Brazilian school environment itself fosters two types of racial discrimination: "(1) underrepresentation of *nonwhites* at the university level and in private schools, and

(2) race [being] considered an element of inferiority" (Valente, 2017, 851). The Brazilian federal government attempted to rectify racial disparities and inequities in the education system in a variety of ways, but "the most visible and controversial project of racial redress was the implementation of racial redress in the form of racial quotas" (Silva & Paixão, 2004, 181). UnB became the first federal university in 2004 to adopt an affirmative action policy that uses admissions and racial quota strategies to increase enrollment of students from underrepresented groups. In 2005, under President Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva's administration, the federal government implemented the *ProUni - University for All Act*, which "promotes the exchange of scholarships in private scholarships… depending on the student's income" (Araujo, 2012, 33). The main problem with the ProUni Act, however, is that it focuses on increasing enrollment of underrepresented students, but "it does not guarantee retention and conclusion of courses" (Araujo, 2012, 34). Since certain academic disciplines are dominated by white people, Black students are at a significant disadvantage in terms of their odds of success and program completion without proper protocols in place to guarantee their retention. ProUni is an ineffective strategy because, instead of producing more Black graduates, it functions under the guise of helpfulness by simply increasing the enrollment of underrepresented students in white dominated universities and academic programs.

"In 2012, the Brazilian Supreme Court, unanimously in favor of affirmative action and new legislation, mandated that all federal universities enact affirmative action policies, [requiring] 50 percent quotas for public high school students and sub-quotas for Afro-Brazilians (browns and blacks)" (Mitchell-Walthour, 2015, 133). Despite this legal endorsement of affirmative action, surveys have found that "those who are whiter and

have higher education and higher incomes are the least supportive of affirmative action"
(Mitchell-Walthour, 2015, 138). On a national level, "Afro-Brazilians with higher
education are [also] less supportive of it" (Mitchell-Walthour, 2015, 149). Similar
responses were received regarding racial quotas, which are considered both a form of
affirmative action and "a form of reparations for past injustices and discrimination
against Afro-Brazilians" (Mitchell-Walthour, 2015, 136). Although respondents'
education levels were often useful indicators for predicting support for affirmative action,
the study does not investigate much further into specific reasons why Brazilian people,
especially Black Brazilians, would choose not to support an initiative whose goal is to
increase equitable access to higher education for disadvantaged groups including
themselves. This phenomenon masks racial discrimination by disguising it as a
socioeconomic problem, something needed by poor people rather than by Black people,
which is not exactly the case – especially according to current Brazilian students
themselves. Whether positively or negatively, affirmative action and racial quota policies
directly impact the Brazilian student experience.

My questionnaire, *Perspectivas sobre Politicas de Ação Afirmativa Modernas no
Ensino Superior no Brasil* yielded 20 complete responses from students currently
enrolled at UnB. The questionnaire was distributed with the intention of receiving a
diverse set of responses; although students came from different disciplines, mostly within
the hard sciences (see Table 2), the overwhelming majority of respondents self-identified
as white (see Chart 1). Throughout this research project, students were asked about their
familiarity with affirmative action policies, their experiences with marginalization, and
the shortcomings of affirmative action overall.

When asked about their familiarity with affirmative action policies at UnB, all of the respondents expressed that they were at least slightly familiar with the affirmative action policies and at least aware of what its history and purposes are (see Chart 4). In addition to being aware of affirmative action, a majority of respondents considered affirmative action to be an effective policy in general. However, these sentiments did not match the lived experiences of the students. According to the questionnaire, students still reported feeling marginalized "in the classroom, in labs, and some parts of campus" (see Table 4). Lack of representation, whether among faculty or student populations, is a visually experienced form of marginalization that especially affects students who self-identify as Black. One student explained how they felt marginalized in their department because "the majority of faculty in the Communications Department at UnB are white" (see Table 4). Representation among students was a major contributing factor to the marginalization of another student who provided the following response in English:

"In my first semester of Psychology, I found myself in a room of more than 60 students, where 5 were black who came from public schools. All the others came from private schools in Brasília and already had well-established relationships. While I came from another city and had always studied in public schools, the difference between black and white people was a shock to me. This made me very depressed and I felt very isolated in the course." (see Table 4).

Lack of representation as a form of marginalization presents an anomaly for this study because it directly contradicts the assumptions of what affirmative action actually accomplishes. Affirmative action at UnB functions as a racial quota policy. It aims to improve the representation of minority students by increasing the number of *low-income* students, many of whom *happen to be* Black due to the colonial period's legacy of exclusion. It works by reserving a proportion of open seats for Black, Brown, and Indigenous students upon admission; however, the policy does not address other means of discrimination that hinder the retention of minority students.

Black students may feel less welcome in the higher education environment for reasons other than numerical representation. There is inadequate representation of nonwhite Brazilians in the curricula as well. The absence of visibly successful Black professionals in their discipline, the lack of Black and female representation in academic courses and programs, and the overwhelming prevalence of Eurocentrism are concerns mentioned by student respondents as issues that must be overcome in order to improve their curricular experiences (see Table 5). Student participants in the questionnaire were then asked what else, besides affirmative action policies, could be done to improve accessibility and inclusivity for underrepresented students (see Table 6). In summary, the students provided the following suggestions:

(1) Diversify testing protocols to use evaluation of other abilities in order to
    determine eligibility for university.

(2) Increase representation in courses; show the work of people from
    underrepresented groups to help motivate and assist current students.

(3) Improve the efficiency of the racial quota calculation; implement affirmative
    action at the primary and secondary education levels, where racism begins
    to be internalized.

(4) Provide financial support and more opportunities for low-income students and
    students from underserved areas who are very likely to be Black.

These proposals, offered by the student respondents themselves, are aimed at reducing marginalization, exclusion, and essentially anti-Black racism. By increasing Black and minority student representation, improving the amount of financial support they were denied over time, and restructuring pedagogical barriers that limit their access

to higher education can significantly mitigate and even reverse the effects of colonial-era anti-Black racism. The students recognize that the problem that exists in the university structure is rooted in Brazil's racially discriminatory history. They also recognize to some extent that affirmative action alone does not do enough to fix the effects of anti-Black racism because its focus on recruitment but not retention or representation serves to minimize and marginalize Black and nonwhite Brazilians' presence in the university environment. This inability to mitigate the effects of anti-Black racism on a deeper level only serves to perpetuate it and continuously keep Black and nonwhite Brazilians excluded and marginalized from higher education.

Conclusion & Further Research

Ideally, higher education is intended to be an institution that provides equal opportunities for advancement and socioeconomic mobility for all people in contemporary postcolonial societies. Funding and resources, standardized testing, and affirmative action policies are supposed to be objective and equitable, but the persistence of underlying anti-Black racism in these structures completely undermines their outward intentions. The results of this research project have revealed that the higher education institutions of postcolonial Brazil are not entirely free of the anti-Black sentiments inherited from the colonial period. Remedial solutions like affirmative action and racial quotas were offered to mitigate the drastic underrepresentation and marginalization of Black and other minority Brazilians at the university level. However, such proposed solutions fall short of their goal because the colonial legacies of slavery and Eurocentrism, economic exclusion, classism, colorism, and biased pedagogical barriers

have never been thoroughly resolved or addressed. The entire framework that constitutes the public education system in Brazil, at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels has never been fully decolonized, and that limits the potential effectiveness of policies like affirmative action.

Decolonization is a long and tedious process that takes much more than a revolution and a declaration of political and economic independence - it takes social and cultural independence as well. Policies like affirmative action have the potential to be used to facilitate the decolonization process, but to do so, they must be revised to address the structural, socioeconomic barriers that underlie issues of underrepresentation and marginalization. Overall, this research project has found that ineffective affirmative action policies contribute directly to the persistence of anti-Black racism in institutions of higher education over time because it fails to address the systemically and structurally racist barriers that limit opportunities for Black, Brown, and Indigenous people in Brazil.

Although this study examines a few notable integrational policies like affirmative action, ProUni, and racial quotas, further research would need to investigate political influences of different government administrations in Brazil to understand how support for such legislation changed over time. Such findings may reveal that radical changes in governance and social politics are needed in order to dismantle inequitable and racist barriers and fully decolonize the Brazilian education system. This study found that anti-Black racism has persisted throughout the Brazilian higher education system in a multitude of ways and has impacted the lives of Black students since the colonial period.

If any postcolonial society wants to decolonize, become *truly* independent of its imperial "parent," and mitigate the legacies and consequences of the anti-Black racism it

inherited, it must reject the anti-Black, racist colonial-era status quo that continues to influence its institutions. By doing so, it can make ostentatious integration policies like affirmative action more effective and achieve a more egalitarian social structure that benefits all people, regardless of their racial or ethnic identity.

**Table 1 -** List of Questions from the Questionnaire, "*Perspectivas sobre Politicas de Ação Afirmativa Modernas no Ensino Superior no Brasil*"

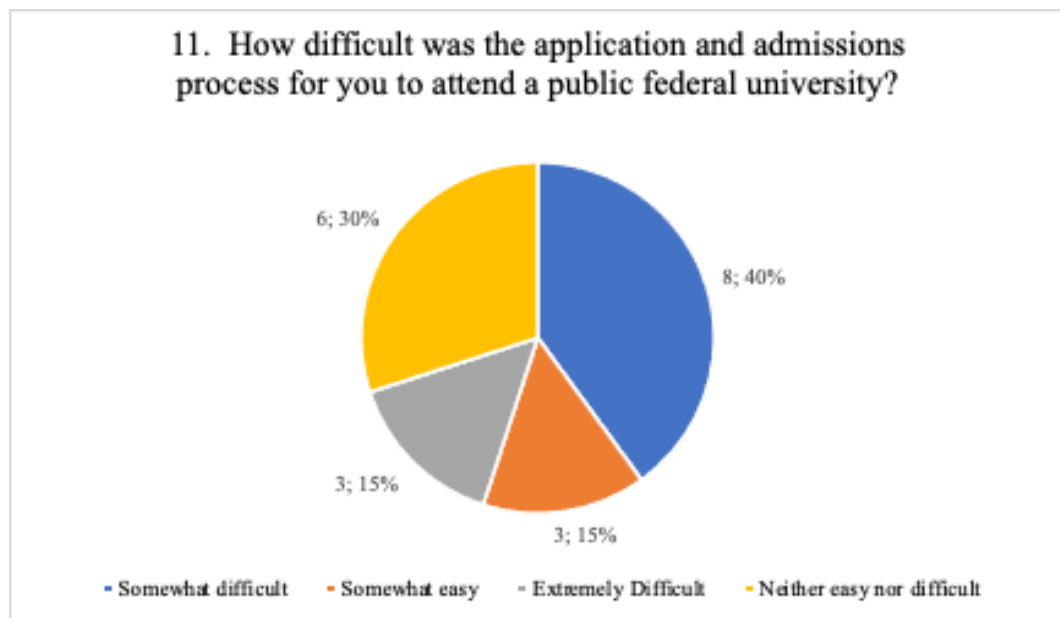| Number	Question
1	How old are you?
2	What is your gender?
3	According to Brazilian federal census categories, which racial or ethnic categories do you self-identify with?
4	Which public federal university do you attend?
5	What was the highest level of education completed within your household at the time you began attending university?
6	Are you the first in your immediate family to attend university?
7	Did you begin university immediately after completing high school?
7a	If "no," please indicate how long after high school you began university.
8	What is your academic program of field of study?
9	Did you take the ENEM or other exams to gain admission to your university?
10	How do you rate your performance on the ENEM or other entrance exam(s) you took?
11	How difficult was the application and admissions process for you to attend a public federal university?
12	How satisfied are you with the overall representation of your racial or ethnic group on campus?
13	How well are members of your racial group represented in your courses or area of study?
14	How familiar are you with the history and implementation of affirmative action policies at your university?
15	How effective do you think affirmative action policies are in general?
16	Were there any aspects of the university admissions process that were especially difficult or confusing for you?

16a	If "yes," please describe them here.
17	Describe any experiences where you felt marginalized, underrepresented, or discriminated against in your courses or on campus while enrolled in university.
18	Throughout your educational career, do you feel that information regarding your racial or ethnic group was adequately represented in curricula?
19	What specific aspects of your racial or ethnic group do you feel are missing from your curricula? Please indicate them here.
20	Besides affirmative action policies, what else do you think can be done to improve accessibility and inclusivity for underrepresented students?

**Chart 1 –** Racial/ethnic demographics of UnB student respondents.
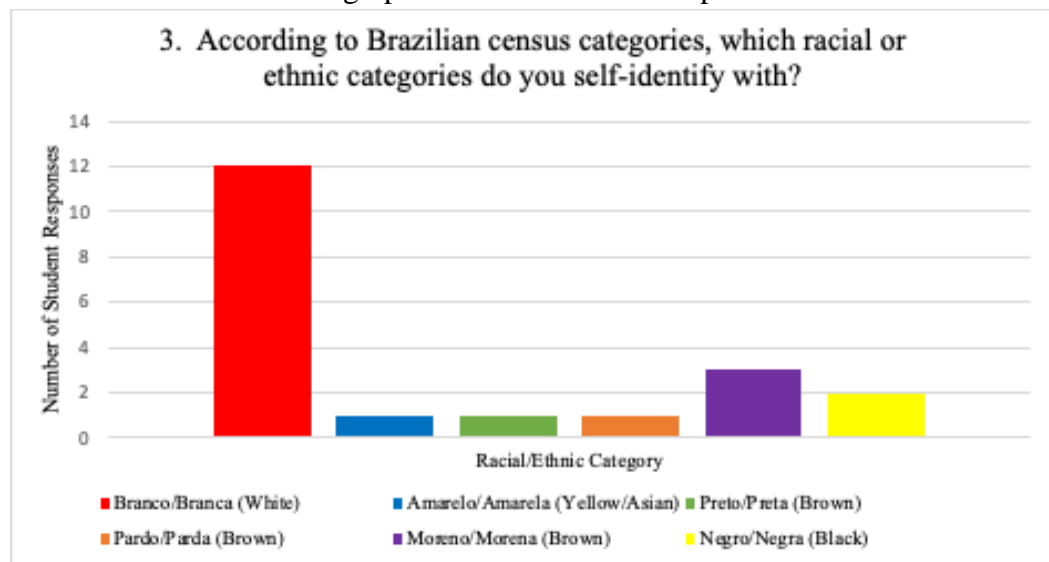
Graph 1 – UnB student's evaluation of the difficulty of the application and admissions processes for attending university.


11. How difficult was the application and admissions process for you to attend a public federal university?

- 6; 30%
- 8; 40%
- 3; 15%
- 3; 15%

- Somewhat difficult - Somewhat easy - Extremely Difficult - Neither easy nor difficult

Table 2 – UnB student respondents' academic disciplines, most of which are in hard sciences rather than social sciences.

| 8. What is your academic program or field of study?	
Português do Brasil	**English**
Comunicação	Communication
Comunicação social - Audiovisual	Social communication - Audiovisual
Jornalismo	Journalism
Engenheiro químico	Chemical Engineering
Física	Physics
Comunicação social	Social Communication
Pedagogia	Pedagogy
Ciências Biológicas	Biological Sciences
Geociências	Geosciences
Ciências Sociais	Social Sciences
Ciência Política	political science
Geofísica	Geophysics
Ciências Sociais - antropologia	Social sciences - anthropology
Audiovisual	Audio-visual
Psicologia	Psychology
Ciências Sociais	Social Sciences
Ciências Biológicas	Biological Sciences
Engenheiro químico	Chemical engineering
Graduação em química	Chemistry graduation
Química	Chemistry
Engenheiro químico	Chemical Engineering

Chart 2 – UnB students' satisfaction with representation of their racial/ethnic group.
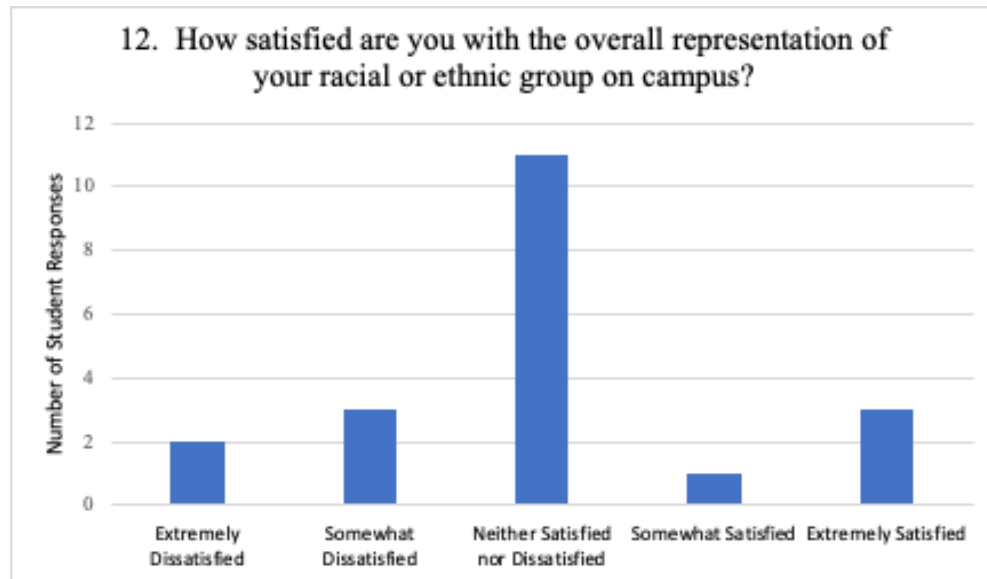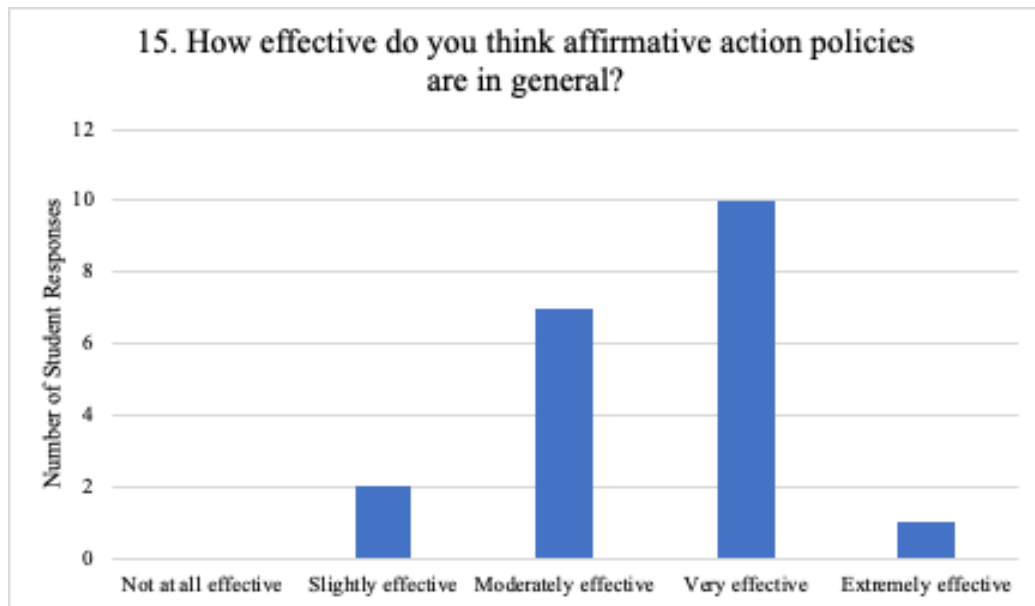

Graph 2 – UnB student's perceived representation of their racial/ethnic group in their courses and area of study.
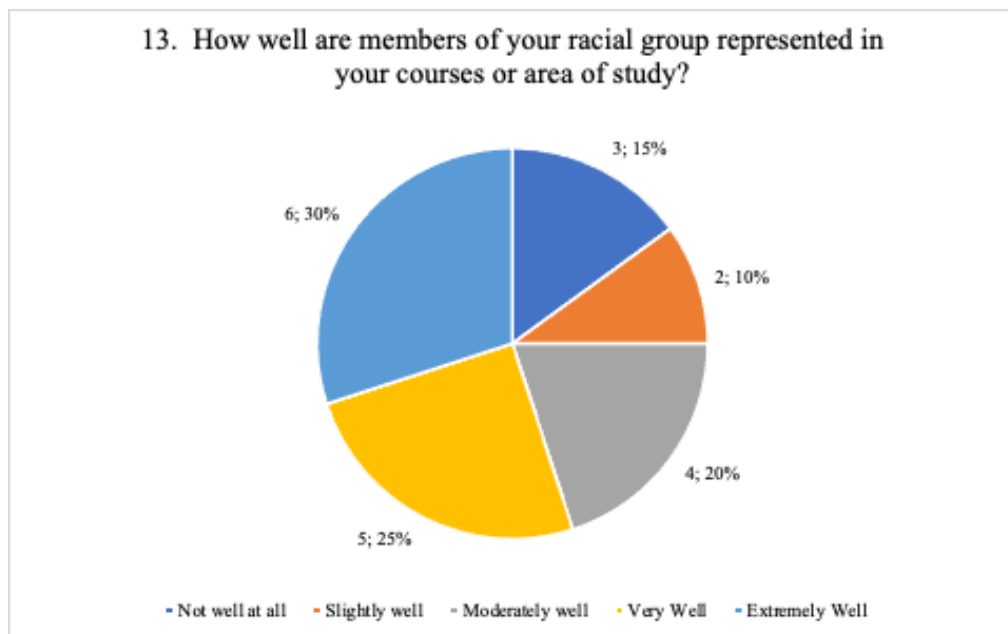
Chart 3 – UnB students' familiarity with the history and implementation of affirmative action policies at the *Universidade de Brasília*.
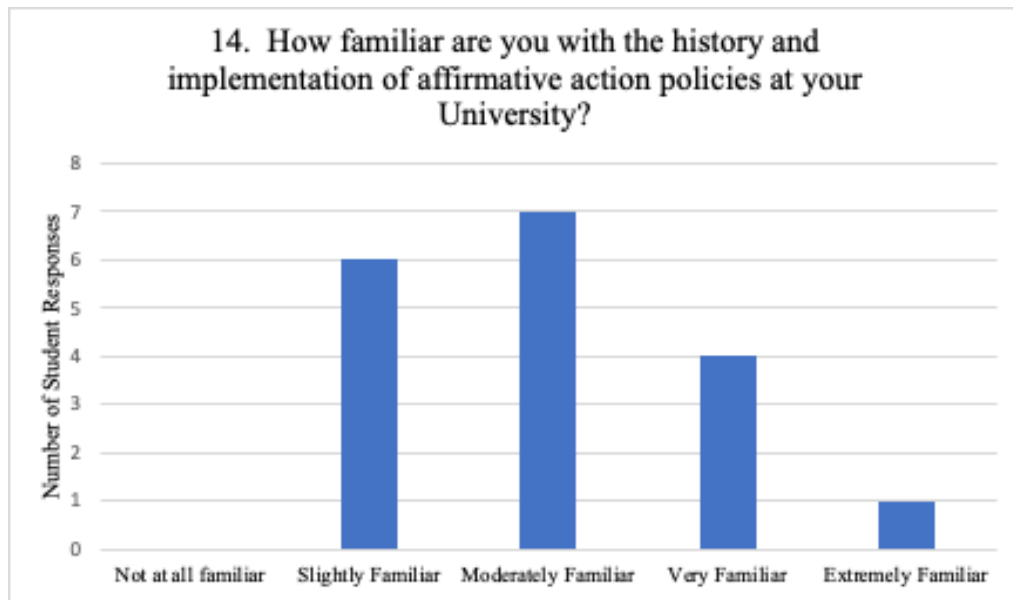
Chart 4 – UnB students' evaluation of general effectiveness of affirmative action policies.

Table 3 – UnB Student's identification of difficulties in the admissions process.

16. Were there any parts of the university admissions process that were especially difficult or confusing for you?

■ Yes ■ No

16a. If "Yes," please describe them here. **	
Português do Brasil	**English**
Tem mais diversidade no local de estado acesso à informação, prazos e complexidade dos editais	There is more diversity in the state location access to information, deadlines and complexity of notices
Acesso à informação, prazos e complexidade dos editais	access to information, deadlines and complexity of application announcements
	The tests don't actually measure one's level of knowledge within the subject, it only measures how fast can one judge items, read and guess an alternative
Algumas coisas são bem confusas ainda	Some things are still pretty confusing.
Dificuldade com matéria altamente abstrata, e nao pratica.	Difficulty with highly abstract material, and nothing practical.
A existência de um processo seletivo da própria universidade e também a possibilidade de recorrer a assistência estudantil.	The existence of a selection process at the university and also the possibility of using student assistance.

	I think the most difficult part would have to be the amount of subjects we have to study to do well on the entrance exam. Over 14 different subjects in two day of examination, as well as an essay portion.

** Shaded entries indicate that a student responded in English, so translation was not needed.

Table 4 – UnB students' descriptions of experiences where they felt marginalized, underrepresented, or discriminated against while enrolled in university.

17. Describe any experiences where you felt marginalized, underrepresented, or discriminated against in your courses or on campus while enrolled in university. **	
Português do Brasil	**English**
Na sala de aula, nos laboratórios, em algumas partes dos campi.	In the classroom, in labs, and some parts of campus.
Em nenhum momento pois sou branco.	Never did this happen since I am white.
	I don't think I've been discriminated against or anything.
Nenhuma	None.
Há pouca inclusão de pessoas trans.	There is very little inclusiveness for trans people.
Nunca ocorreu comigo	This never happened to me.
Nunca me senti	I never felt this.
Nunca tive problemas desse tipo.	I never had these types of problems.
Comentarios agressivos pelas costas (ouvi falar)	(I heard about) aggressive comments made behind people's backs.
A FAC - Faculdade de Comunicação da UnB possui majoritariamente pessoas brancas.	The majority of faculty in the Communications Department at UnB are white.

No meu primeiro semestre de Psicologia, eu me vi em uma sala de mais de 60 alunos, onde 5 eram negros e vinham de escolas públicas. Todos os outros vieram de escolas particulares de Brasília e já tinham relações bem estabelecidas. Enquanto eu, vim de outra cidade e sempre estudei em escolas públicas e a diferença entre pessoas negras e brancas foi um choque para mim. Isso acabou me deixando bem depressivo e eu me sentia bem isolado no curso.	In my first semester of Psychology, I found myself in a room of more than 60 students, where 5 were black who came from public schools. All the others came from private schools in Brasília and already had well-established relationships. While I came from another city and had always studied in public schools, and the difference between black and white people was a shock to me. This made me very depressed and I felt very isolated in the course.
Apenas por ser transgênero, onde tive meu nome social e pronomes desrespeitados ou ignorados diversas vezes pela burocracia e professores da universidade, sempre tendo problemas de inconsistência nos documentos e menções.	Just for being transgender, where I had my name and pronouns disrespected or ignored several times by the university's bureaucracy and faculty, I was always having problems with the inconsistency in documents and references.

Table 5 – UnB students' explanations of what they believe is missing from their curricula and academic programs.

19. What specific aspects of your racial or ethnic group do you feel are missing from your curricula? Please indicate them here.	
Português do Brasil	**English**
Mais pessoas negras de sucesso na comunicação.	More successful black people in communication.
Faltam referências! não vemos mulheres nas ementas, não vemos profissionais pretos nas ementas, nem homens nem mulheres! dentro das salas de aula também, tenho 2 professores pretes, se muito.	References are missing! we don't see women on the syllabi, we don't see black professionals on the syllabi, neither men nor women! inside the rooms Also, I have 2 black professors, if a lot.
Não sei.	I do not know.
	I don't know, but I've never seen those being mentioned.
Nenhuma	None.
Sou de exatas então não temos matérias que envolvam esse tipo de coisa.	I am from the hard sciences, so we don't have content that involve this type of subject matter
Na verdade, quase que só tem conhecimento do meu grupo etnico, em algumas disciplinas.	In truth, almost only there is knowledge about my ethnic group in some subjects.
Falta falar mais sobre a real História do Brasil. O que, consequentemente, já incluiria o meu grupo étnico/racial.	There is little discussion about the real history of Brazil. What, consequently, would already be included in my ethno-racial group.
Não estudamos nada sobre Black Psychology, ou sobre psicologia latino americana. O foco das disciplinas é em uma Psicologia americana e/ou Eurocentrada.	I never studied anything about Black Psychology, or about Latin American psychology. Classes focus on american and/or Eurocentric Psychology.

	It would be more of a representation case, more than anything really. Lack of female representation in cases regarding industrial aspects of the course.

*** Shaded entries indicate that a student responded in English, so translation was not needed.*

Table 6 – UnB students' suggestions for what else could be done to help marginalized student populations aside from affirmative action policies.

20. Besides affirmative action policies, what else do you think can be done to improve accessibility and inclusivity for underrepresented students? **	
Português do Brasil	**English**
Incluir representatividade dentro das matérias, mostrar o trabalho de pessoas desses grupos, e fortalecer a cultura da Extensão, para motivar e fazer as/os jovens chegarem à esses espaços.	Include representativeness in the courses, show the work of people from these groups, and strengthen the culture of outreach, in order to motivate and assist young people achieve in these spaces.
Estudos sobre isso desde o ensino fundamental.	Studies about this since primary school.
	First, a better way to enter university, with more diverse tests, to evaluate other kinds of abilities, and to give knowledge, rather than robotic memorizing of information. With this, the educational system, more specifically the elementary and high schools, might start to enhance its curricular components so that it makes classes more useful and interesting.
Mais banheiros sem gênero/neutros para pessoas trans, programa de cotas para pessoas trans.	More genderless / neutral bathrooms for trans people, a quota program for trans people.
Creio que um processo mais eficiente de apuração das cotas raciais no processo de admissão seria um bom passo inicial.	I believe that a more efficient process of calculating racial quotas in the admission process would be a good first step.
É necessário que se amplie a discussão sobre o racismo e a desigualdade social dentro das universidades. Muitos estudantes ainda vivem em bolhas sociais e cheias de preconceito.	It is necessary to broaden the discussion on racism and social inequality within universities. Many students still live in social bubbles that are full of prejudice.

É necessário apoio financeiro para os estudantes de baixa renda e aumentar os alojamentos estudantis gratuitos para quem tem baixa renda.	Financial support is needed for low-income students and increased free student housing for low-income students.
Políticas de acao afirmativas em escolar particulares, para coletivizar o ensino desde a infância, onde os possíveis racismos ou discriminações começam a ser internalizados.	Affirmative action policies in private schools, to collectivize schooling from a young age, where possible racisms or discriminations start to be internalized.
Mais oportunidades para as pessoas periféricas, que, por consequência de um passado racista, em sua maioria, são Negras.	More opportunities for people from underserved areas, who, as a result of a racist past, are mostly black.
Políticas de assistência estudantil mais inclusivas, acessíveis e efetivas. Não adianta simplesmente garantir o ingresso dos estudantes, mas também a permanência. Especialmente na Universidade de Brasília, a assistência estudantil existe, mas é algo extremamente concorrido e complexo. Muitos alunos não conseguem suporte à acabam tendo que desistir de seus cursos.	More inclusive, accessible and effective student support policies. It is not enough to simply guarantee the student enrollments, but also that they stay. Especially at the University of Brasilia, student support exists, but it is extremely competitive and complex. Many students do not get support and end up having to withdraw from their courses.
Corpo docente, coordenação e reitoria com presença significativa de pessoas não-brancas, além do currículo e bibliografia.	Faculty, staff, and administrators with a significant number of non-white people, besides the curriculum and bibliography.
	Having more stem programs for women in general, including minorities, with more minorities represented.

** Shaded entries indicate that a student responded in English, so translation was not needed.

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