

ARTICLE

Affirmative Action (AA) Students in the Medical School at Santa Catarina Federal University: Intersections of Race and Class¹

EDUARDO VILAR BONALDI¹

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7945-101X>
<eduvilarbon@gmail.com >

LUAN VIRICIMO¹

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-1393-1784>
<l.viricimo@gmail.com>

¹ Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, SC, Brazil.

ABSTRACT: Our text points to the diversity in racial identities and class origins observed among AA students in the medical school at UFSC/Florianópolis, Brazil. This diversity is explored based on the analysis of both socioeconomic and self-declared racial data available for the beneficiaries of the AA policy in this career, as well as the eight in-depth interviews conducted with AA students in such highly selective course during the second semester of 2023. After discussing part of the literature on racial relations, whiteness, and affirmative action in the country, we seek to reconstruct the different intersections of race and class experienced by three of our black interviewees: one from a 'low' social background and two from a 'lower middle' background. In this way, we aim to show how these intersectional positions shape both the 'material' and 'symbolic' conditions and strategies of permanence reported by these interviewees, as well as how such interviewees deal with their possible feelings of 'social and racial displacement' in the main medical course of one of the 'whitest' states (Santa Catarina) in the country.

Keywords: affirmative action, medical schools, sociology of education, racial relations and whiteness.

ESTUDANTES COTISTAS NO CURSO DE MEDICINA DA UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA: INTERSECCIONALIDADES DE RAÇA E CLASSE

RESUMO: Nosso texto aponta para a diversidade nas identidades raciais e nas origens de classe observadas entre estudantes cotistas do curso de medicina da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC/Florianópolis). Tal diversidade é elaborada a partir da análise tanto dos dados socioeconômicos e de autodeclaração racial, disponíveis sobre os beneficiários da política de cotas no curso, quanto das oito entrevistas (abertas e em profundidade) realizadas junto a estudantes cotistas nessa elitizada carreira universitária, durante o segundo semestre de 2023. Após discutir a literatura sobre relações raciais, branquitude e política de ação afirmativa no país, buscamos reconstruir as interseccionalidades de raça e classe, vivenciadas por três de nossos entrevistados negros: um de origem social baixa e dois de extração média-baixa. Dessa maneira, procuramos evidenciar como tais posições modulam as condições e as

¹Article published with funding from the *Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico* - CNPq/Brazil for editing, layout and XML conversion services.

estratégias de permanência material e simbólica relatadas por esses entrevistados, além de seus eventuais sentimentos de “deslocamento social e racial” no principal curso de medicina de Santa Catarina, uma das unidades federativas mais brancas do país.

Palavras-chave: ação afirmativa, curso de medicina, sociologia da educação, relações raciais, branquitude.

ESTUDIANTES DE ACCIÓN AFIRMATIVA EN EL CURSO DE MEDICINA DE LA UNIVERSIDAD FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA: INTERSECCIONALIDADES DE RAZA Y CLASE

RESUMEN: Nuestro texto señala la diversidad en las identidades raciales y en los orígenes de clase observados entre estudiantes beneficiarios de cuotas en la carrera de medicina de la UFSC/Florianópolis. Dicha diversidad se elabora a partir del análisis tanto de los datos socioeconómicos y de autodeclaración racial, disponibles sobre los beneficiarios de la política de cuotas en la carrera, como de las ocho entrevistas (abiertas y en profundidad) realizadas con estudiantes beneficiarios de cuotas en esta elitista carrera universitaria, durante el segundo semestre de 2023. Tras discutir parte de la literatura sobre relaciones raciales, blanquitud y acción afirmativa en el país, buscamos reconstruir, entonces, las diferentes interseccionalidades de raza y clase, vividas por tres de nuestros entrevistados negros: uno de origen social “bajo” y dos de extracción “media-baja”. De esta manera, procuramos evidenciar cómo tales posiciones interseccionales modulan tanto las condiciones y estrategias de permanencia “material” y “simbólica” relatadas por estos entrevistados, como ellos manejan sus eventuales sentimientos de “desplazamiento social y racial” en el principal curso de medicina de una de las unidades federativas más “blancas” del país.

Palabras clave: acción afirmativa, curso de medicina, sociología de la educación, relaciones raciales, estudios de la blancura.

INTRODUCTION

This text reconstructs the profiles and trajectories of beneficiaries of affirmative action policies in the medical course at the central campus of the *Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina* (UFSC/Florianópolis), through the recombination of quantitative and qualitative research procedures (Small, 2010). From a quantitative perspective, we sought to highlight the distribution of family income, maternal education, and self-declared race among quota students based on two sets of data obtained from different instances of the university, which will be presented later. From a qualitative perspective, we aimed to reconstruct the primary (family) and secondary (school, work, and university) socialization itineraries of eight affirmative action (AA) students through in-depth interviews conducted throughout the second semester of 2023, totaling 14 hours of recorded material and 149 pages of full transcripts of the interviews. Both the quantitative and qualitative data point not only to a reasonable diversity in class origins but also to the multiple racial identities and experiences of such AA students who declare themselves as black, mixed-race, or white in this historically selective university career in Brazil (Scheffer et al., 2023).

To reflect on the intersectionalities between race and class, as experienced by students in this elite course, we also intend to discuss the recent literature produced on race relations and affirmative action policies in Brazil. As we will demonstrate, this literature addresses the *material and symbolic*

conditions of permanence experienced by Black and/or low-income students (Santos, 2017; Ganam and Pinezi, 2021), through studies based on in-depth interviews which have been conducted in different careers and public higher education institutions over the past few years (Santos, 2017; Ganam and Pinezi, 2021; Dantas, 2025 and Viricimo, 2025).

According to Dyane Santos (2017) and Eliana Ganam and Ana Pinezi (2021), for example, the dynamics of *material permanence* for these students involve the (individual and family) conditions for reproducing their economic needs through: a) the dilemma of reconciling work and university; b) the eventual (financial and moral) support capacities by the family group; and c) the university student assistance policies, whose importance was also pointed out by Edilza Sotero (2022). In this context, such material factors condition the objective availability of time, among poor and/or black university students, to participate in curricular and extracurricular activities from which they can internalize their dynamics of *symbolic permanence* in the university environment, incorporating or resignifying the values and meanings inherent to their university and professional identities in formation (Santos, 2017; Ganam and Pinezi, 2021, pp. 6-10).

This literature also points to how the *symbolic permanence* of Black students involves different strategies of sociability and identity affirmation through which these students confront situations and risks of racial discrimination, frequently documented in this recent bibliographic production (Santos, 2017, p. 11-12 and p. 47; Dantas, 2025, p. 104-16). Among these strategies, the literature first pointed to the *sociability among equals*, that is, to the practices of (partial or total) restriction of the networks of contacts and friendships of AA students to Black and/or low-income classmates, as a form of social protection against possible symbolic violence in the university environment (Santos, 2017, p. 14). In parallel, other studies have emphasized the importance of the participation of non-white students in *Black collectives*, that is, in forms of collective action characterized by horizontal structures of power and the intensive use of social networks, which stimulate: a) the emergence of a body aesthetic aimed at revaluing the phenotypic traits of Blackness among the participants of these collectives (Guimarães et al., 2020, 321-322); b) *the decolonization of curricula* (ibid.), that is, the intellectual demands aimed at including Black authors in academic discussions; and c) the *social control* over the local implementation of affirmative action initiatives (Santana and Vaz, 2018), as a way to curb fraud in racial quotas, generally understood as occurrences in which white individuals illegitimately claim belonging to the Brazilian mixed-race category of “pardos”, who are also considered as part of the Black population in Brazil and, therefore, eligible for the affirmative action policies in the country (Silva et al. 2020).

After discussing this literature, we present the socioeconomic and racial diversity observable among AA students in the Medical School at UFSC, based on the available data produced by the University. To make this diversity intelligible, we will use Bourdieu's categories of *survivors of school super-selection* (2014, pp. 43-44) and *petit-bourgeoisie of execution* (2007a, pp. 329-333). As we will see, these categories indicate the different class origins identified among students of low social extraction (the *survivors of super-selection*) and lower-middle class (the *petit-bourgeoisie of execution*, in Bourdieu's terms).

In the third part of the article, we reconstruct the primary and secondary socialization itineraries of three of our eight interviewees. First, we follow how Juliano (30 years old, self-declared black in the interview and son of a former domestic worker with incomplete elementary education) experiences the challenges to his *material and symbolic permanence* in the course, from the intersectional position of race and class experienced by him, that is, through the resources and strategies available to

black and working-class students (*survivors of school super-selection*, in Bourdieu's terms). In this context, we see how Juliano expresses feelings of *social and racial displacement* (Guimarães et al., 2020, p. 313), both because of his condition as a low-income student and as a Black student in an elitist course, such as medicine. Finally, in light of these subjective perceptions of displacement, we will follow how the interviewee seeks to adapt to the dress codes and public presentation of himself in the course environment. Furthermore, we will also see how he describes his practices of *sociability among equals*, as identified in the literature discussed above.

We will also follow the case of Lauro: a 27-year-old young man, self-declared Black in the interview, son of a father who is a “former metalworker” and a mother who is a “bakery manager”. Due to his parents' occupational position and education (both with completed high school education), we will see that Lauro's socialization and educational conditions associate him with the figure of the *petit-bourgeoisie of execution*, according to Bourdieu's terms. We will then observe how this interviewee, from a lower-middle-class social background, can benefit from the support network of his extended family (an aunt), who resides in the metropolitan region of Florianópolis. As Lauro states, by residing in his aunt's “big house,” who has a domestic worker, he is relieved of both housing and food expenses, as well as of the need to dedicate time to household chores. Thus, these conditions of *material permanence* ensure him the necessary availability to participate in different experiences of *symbolic permanence* within the university. In this sense, Lauro demonstrated the highest degree of integration into curricular and extracurricular activities, declaring his participation in the Academic Center, the Athletic Association, and the Athletic Association's drumline. Therefore, his intersectional position of race and class (a Black student, but from a lower-middle-class social background) manifests itself through less intense feelings of social and racial displacement, with less recourse to strategies of *sociability among equals* compared to Juliano, for example.

Finally, we will follow how Jairo, a 24-year-old from the state of Goiás who self-identified as “pardo” during the interview, claims to have acquired racial awareness regarding the “subtleties” (his terms) of treatment and perception to which he has been exposed in the significantly whiter federative unit of Santa Catarina compared to his state of origin (Goiás). This process of racial literacy was also stimulated, according to him, by his troubled friendship with a classmate who was “Black, an activist, and well-educated,” according to the interviewee's definition. After the end of this relationship, Jairo stated that he was a victim of “colorism” on the part of his former friend, who allegedly began to publicly question whether he was “Black enough” to be considered as “pardo” and, therefore, to have entered through racial quotas. Jairo's case will then be used to reflect on the tensions generated by the degree of ambiguity associated with the figure of the Brazilian mixed-race category of “pardo” in the context of affirmative action policies in the country (Costa and Schucman, 2022).

Therefore, we will initially discuss the literature on race relations, whiteness, and affirmative action in Brazilian higher education. We will then mobilize Bourdieu's categories of *survivors of school super-selection and of the petit bourgeoisie of execution* to make intelligible the low and lower-middle social extractions observable among AA students in medicine at UFSC. In the third part of the article, we will seek to reconstruct the profiles and trajectories of the interviewees Juliano (self-declared Black and of low social extraction), and Lauro and Jairo (self-declared Black and “pardo”, respectively, and of lower-middle social extractions). Throughout this last section, we will finally reflect on the intersectionalities of race and class experienced by the three AA students selected from our interviews. In the conclusion, we will synthesize the main ideas and arguments of the article.

LITERATURE ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, RACE RELATIONS, AND WHITENESS IN BRAZILIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Affirmative action can be defined as any public or private initiative that establishes differential conditions of access to opportunities or rights for members of disadvantaged social groups (Feres Jr. et al., 2018, p. 13). In this sense, they are responsible for suspending, on an exceptional basis, the constitutional principle of *formal equality* among citizens, to produce *substantive equality* among individuals of different origins and conditions (id., p. 31). In countries that have adopted comprehensive affirmative action policies (such as India, South Africa, the United States, and Brazil), the justifications for such policies permeate the promotion of values and attitudes such as: a) the *inclusion* of marginalized groups; b) the *redress* of historical inequalities; or c) the *diversity* of participation and representation in higher education, the labor market, public administration, or parliamentary politics (id., pp. 28-40).

In Brazil, affirmative action policies expanded significantly across various public higher education institutions during the first decade of the 2000s. This expansion was characterized by the adoption of diverse models for reserved places, typically combining socioeconomic criteria (such as family income or educational background) with forms of racial self-declaration (Lima and Campos, 2020, p. 247). Following the unanimous decision of the Supreme Federal Court (STF) concerning the constitutionality of affirmative action in 2011, the federal government approved the Quota Law (Law 12.711/2012). This law standardized affirmative action policies for federal educational institutions, consolidating the integration of socioeconomic and racial criteria to define the categories of reserved places.

In this context, the Quota Law reserves half of the available spots in all courses and shifts of federal higher education, technical, and technological institutions for graduates of public high schools. Additionally, it establishes that half of these reserved spots be allocated to graduates from public schools whose per capita family income is less than 1.5 times the minimum wage². Furthermore, the law requires that the total number of reserved spots reflect the percentages of Black and Indigenous individuals in the federal unit where each educational institution is located. Finally, quotas for people with disabilities (PWDs) were also introduced through Law 13.409/2016, and for quilombola populations through Law 14.723/2023.

Analyzing the impacts of affirmative action, Luiz A. Campos and Fernando Peixoto demonstrated that students from the poorest three-fifths of the Brazilian population occupied only 20% of the places in public higher education institutions in 2001, while this figure rose to 52% in 2021 (Campos and Peixoto, 2025). During the same period, Black and Indigenous students also jumped from 31% to 52.4% of enrollments in these institutions, according to the authors. In this context, medical courses were among those most transformed by the implementation of affirmative action due to the lower levels of participation of Black or low-income students before the introduction of these policies (Senkevics and Mello, 2022, p. 214).

In the context of our research, Santa Catarina was one of the states with the smallest Black population in the country, according to the last two national Demographic Censuses. In the 2010 Census, 15.5% of the population in the state declared to be Black, while in the 2022 Census, this percentage

² Subsequently, Law 14.723/2023 revised the low income threshold to per capita values equal or less than one minimum wage.

reached 23.29%. Given the racial composition of Santa Catarina's demographics, UFSC stands out as the federal university that most rapidly achieved parity between the Black population residing in the state and the percentage of Black students enrolled throughout the 2010s (Tragtenberg et al., 2025).

The significance of affirmative action policies for the inclusion of Black students in the medical course at UFSC becomes evident when we examine self-declaration data on race among students, provided by the course coordinators. In the first semester of 2023, of the total number of students regularly enrolled in the course (both the AA and the non-AA students), 69.85% identified as White, 18.3% as the Brazilian mixed-race category of "Pardos", and 5.67% as "Pretos" (the Brazilian census category for dark skinned Black individuals). Among the 113 "pardos" and the 35 "pretos", it is noteworthy that the majority entered the program through the racial quotas. Specifically, there are 97 AA students among the 113 "pardos" students and 24 AA students among the 35 "pretos", as shown in the table below.

TABLE 1 - Self-declared race among students enrolled in the medical course at UFSC (1st semester of 2023)

	White	"Pardos"	"Pretos"	Asian	Indigenous	Not declared	TOTAL
Enrolled students ("quota students" and "non-quota students")	431(69.85%)	113 (18.3%)	35(5.67%)	8(1.29%)	22(3.56%)	8(1.9%)	617(100%)
Only "quota holders"	151(54.75%)	97(35.16%)	24(8.69%)	1(0.36%)	0	3(1.08%)	276(100%)

Source: Author's elaboration, based on data provided by the medical course coordination.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the literature on race relations and affirmative action in the country addresses the *material and symbolic conditions of permanence* (Santos, 2017) experienced by Black and/or low-income students, through in-depth interviews with diverse student profiles in different careers and public higher education institutions (Santos, 2017; Ganam and Pinezi, 2021; Sotero, 2022; Dantas, 2025; Viricimo, 2025). Despite the undeniable centrality of economic conditions, Ganam and Pinezi observed how the figure of the poor student cannot be reduced to their material needs, since the satisfaction of material urgencies "(...) can free this subject for other undertakings that constitute a good school education, the construction of identity and affirmation in the world" (Portes, 2001, p. 177 apud Ganam and Pinezi, 2021, p. 7).

In this way, the dimensions of the material and symbolic permanence of poor and/or Black students can be separated only for analytical purposes, since they are inextricably intertwined in the university experiences of these students (Santos, 2017; Ganam and Pinezi, 2021). It is in this sense that the conditions of reproduction of the material life of these students objectively define the time available for them to participate (or not) in formative experiences of teaching, research, or sociability, from which Black and low-income students can incorporate or resignify the values and meanings inherent in their university and professional identities in formation, thus ensuring their symbolic permanence in the academic environment.

Thus, the literature argues that the (individual and family) conditions for the reproduction of the material life of low-income students involve: a) the dilemma of reconciling work and university, especially among students who already occupy the roles of providers in their family groups; b) the support capacities (material or moral) by the family group, involving both eventual financial aid and the distribution of household chores or care for relatives in a vulnerable state, such as children or the elderly;

and, finally, c) the policies of scholarships and university aid aimed at both student assistance and academic integration through participation in research and extension projects (Santos, 2017; Ganam and Pinezi, 2021; Sotero, 2022).

The strategies and conditions for *material permanence* vary significantly among quota students in medicine from low and lower-middle social backgrounds. In the context of students from working-class backgrounds (low social extraction), Juliano's story shows how he became a *working student* (Romanelli, 2000) while still in high school. He developed a *practical approach* of how to balance study opportunities and income generation, which helped him navigate his long and uncertain educational journey. This *practical approach* was renewed when he began his first course at UFSC in mechanical engineering. During this time, he became familiar with both the possibilities of academic scholarships (research, extension, or internship) and financial aid aimed at supporting students (Sotero, 2022).

This analysis focused on students from lower-middle-class backgrounds, specifically examining how Lauro and Jairo benefited from the *moratorium on work* (Bonaldi, 2018). This moratorium refers to their families' ability to relieve them of the need to work during and after high school. As a result, they were able to develop a *positive attitude towards education*, which is a characteristic of the social mobility strategies embraced by the *petty-bourgeoisie* (Bourdieu, 2007a, pp. 329-333). In the university context, the interviewees continue to dedicate themselves fully to their studies thanks to paternal financial assistance (in Jairo's case) or the material support network of the extended family (in Lauro's case, at his aunt's house).

When reflecting on the conditions of *symbolic permanence* in elite higher education courses, the literature highlights the possible feelings of *social or racial displacement* (Guimarães et al., 2020, p. 313) experienced by beneficiaries of affirmative action policies in the face of the idealized profile for medical students in public institutions, composed of white students from high-income backgrounds, graduates of elite private schools and, not infrequently, sons or daughters of doctors, as we will see later. Both in the university dimension and in the professional field, we can affirm that the medical career was one of the most characteristic strongholds of *whiteness* in the country, understood as the implicit (that is, not verbalized) belief in the superiority of white and Europeanized stereotypes and phenotypes, which ensure repeated material and symbolic privileges to individuals classified as white in Brazil (Shucmann, 2020). In this context, the report "Medical Demographics in Brazil, 2023" indicated that seven out of ten medical students identified as white in 2019, while the same proportion of resident physicians (i.e., physicians undergoing training in different specialties) also identified as white in 2022 (Scheffer et al., 2023, pp. 117-147). Dyane Santos, in turn, demonstrated that even in university environments with a high presence of Black students – such as the Health Sciences Center (CCS) at the Universidade Federal do Recôncavo Baiano (UFRB), which has approximately 80% Black students – these students may refer to elitist courses as places for "white people" (2017, p. 42).

In this academic context, *whiteness* is expressed through at least two types of racial discrimination reported in the literature: a) the structural interconnections between "color" and lower social status, which cause Black students in medical courses to be mistaken for nursing assistants in university hospitals or for students in humanities courses (with a higher proportion of "non-whites") on university premises (Santos, 2017, pp. 11-12); and b) the hygienist claims (made by course professors) regarding the suitability of curly or braided hair for the practice of medicine and/or contact with patients in hospital environments (id., p. 47 and Dantas, 2025, pp. 104-16).

On the other hand, the literature also highlights the multiplicity of strategies for sociability and identity affirmation through which Black students seek to react to the symbolic violence of a racial nature. While Santos pointed to *sociability among equals* as dynamics of interaction in which quota students seek protection and symbolic integration in elitist university environments (2017, p. 14), Marcia Dantas (2025, p. 106-7) showed the relevance of “Negrex” (a collective of Black university students) to the academic integration experiences of her interviewees in the medical course at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). Among other authors, Antônio S. Guimarães, Flávia Rios, and Edilza Sotero (2020) state that *Black collectives* are characterized by horizontal interactions among their members, the intense use of social networks, and the public organization/expression of common demands such as, for example, a) the emergence of a body aesthetic aimed at revaluing the phenotypic traits of Blackness (Guimarães et al., 2020, 321-322); b) *the decolonization of curricula* (ibid.), aimed at including Black authors and/or epistemologies of African origin; and c) *social control* over the implementation of affirmative action policies (Santana and Vaz, 2018), preventing the occurrence of fraud in racial quotas, understood as occurrences in which white individuals illegitimately claim belonging to the Brazilian mixed-race category of “pardos” (Silva et al., 2020).

In our interview material, we will explore issues raised in the literature on race relations and affirmative action, focusing on how the intersection of race and class influences the diverse experiences and racial identities of quota students in the medical program at UFSC/Florianópolis. We will firstly highlight the case of Juliano, who identifies as Black and comes from a low socioeconomic background. He shares intense feelings of *social and racial displacement* due to both his financial situation and his identity as a Black student. Through his experiences, he describes his *sociability with equals* and the strategies he employs to adapt to the course's dress codes and public self-presentation, all aimed at minimizing situations of racial discrimination. On the other hand, the experience of Lauro, who also identifies as Black and comes from a lower-middle-class background, illustrates how his intersectional position influences his perceptions of *social and racial displacement* in the course, as well as his *peer interactions*. Finally, we will examine the case of Jairo, who identifies as “pardo” and comes from a lower-middle-class background. His case reveals how Brazilian mixed-race students navigate the complexities of their identity within the context of affirmative action policies in the country (Costa and Schucman, 2022).

However, before beginning to reconstruct the profiles and trajectories of these three interviewees, it is still necessary to understand in more detail the diversity of class origins observed in the available socioeconomic data on quota students and interpreted from Bourdieu's categories of *survivors of school super-selection* ([1964], 2014, pp. 43-44) and of *petit-bourgeoisie of execution* ([1979], 2007a, pp. 329-333).

TWO CLASS ORIGINS: THE SOCIOECONOMIC DIVERSITY OF QUOTA STUDENTS IN MEDICINE/UFSC

Examining the diversity of profiles and trajectories of students in selective careers (such as medicine and law) in elite French schools between the 1960s and 1980s, Pierre Bourdieu presented, in different works, three observable class profiles. In the book “Homo Academicus” ([1984], 2013), he portrayed the privileged profile of students who directly benefit from professional hereditary strategies (p. 86). This profile is composed of the sons and daughters of “*dynasties of lawyers and doctors*” (ibid.), who incorporate not only the specific cultural capital of the career but also the social and symbolic capital

linked to surnames (of their parents or relatives) known in their respective circles. According to the author, a surname known in the medical field can transmit, for example, not only a network of relationships (that is, social capital) already established among practitioners of a particular medical specialty but also a potential clientele, which could pass from one generation to another in these *dynasties of doctors*, which Bourdieu discussed.

Nevertheless, not all students in medical courses at prestigious French or Brazilian institutions fit the socially idealized profile for this career. In his text “School Trial and Social Consecration,” Bourdieu briefly discusses ([1989], 2015, pp. 70-72) two profiles of students from low-income (popular) and lower-middle-class (petty bourgeois) backgrounds who, exceptionally, gained access to selective careers in elite French schools. Bourdieu treats these two class profiles interchangeably, arguing that both students from popular classes and those from *petty-bourgeois* backgrounds incorporate a predisposition towards a *fascinated adherence* to elite schools (ibid., 71-75). He suggests that such predispositions are evident in how these students internalize the cultural arbitrariness imposed by elite institutions, as well as in their high propensity for educational investment. Consequently, this *fascinated adherence* to elite schools often overshadows the relative insufficiency of the economic and cultural capital they possess. Despite the objective and subjective challenges associated with educational mobility, Bourdieu contends that students from both popular and petty-bourgeois backgrounds gradually become capable of meeting the dual technical and symbolic expectations inherent in the pedagogical processes and social rites of consecration typical of elite schools (ibid., pp. 71-75).

While Bourdieu addressed such profiles indiscriminately in the text mentioned above, we can refer to earlier texts (in the areas of sociology of education and culture) in which the author sought to reconstruct the particularities of each of these profiles and of their trajectories in the social space and in the field of education. In “The Conservative School” ([1966], 2007b, p. 52), for example, Bourdieu presents the “survivors of school superselection” as agents originating from the popular classes, that is, sons and daughters of urban manual workers, characterized by low levels of economic and cultural capital. According to the author, these *survivors* incorporated *secondary advantages* in their primary or secondary socialization processes, such as: a) having been born into family groups with fewer children; b) having, within their family circles, models of socialization embodied by acquaintances or relatives who had already established longer trajectories in the educational field; or c) having absorbed the effects of the actions of teachers in basic education, who transmitted positive professorial judgments to the families of these survivors, who, in this way, begin to invest their meager resources (material and symbolic) in the schooling of such children. In this way, Bourdieu affirms that the incorporation of these *secondary advantages* would be at the origin of the ruptures between the statistically exceptional trajectories of the *survivors of super-selection*, on the one hand, and the most statistically probable (among working-class youth) school dropout trajectories, on the other.

In turn, students from *petty-bourgeois* backgrounds are the sons and daughters of *routine non-manual* employees, characterized by family socialization and schooling conditions supported by the moderate levels of cultural and economic capital previously accumulated by their family groups (2007a, pp. 329-333). For the author, these *routine non-manual* occupational positions encompass labor functions related to the repetitive execution of activities of a technical or administrative nature. Furthermore, such non-manual work activities are conducted in hierarchical positions (middle or lower rank) in public or private bureaucracies.

In short, *petit-bourgeoisie* parents experience social and educational trajectories marked by prior ruptures with the social and symbolic universe of the popular classes, without, however, having managed to achieve their social and occupational insertion into the upper middle classes, that is, into the educated fractions of the dominant classes that command and supervise them in public or private bureaucracies (ibid.). According to Bourdieu, these social and educational paths, interrupted and frustrated throughout the trajectories of *petit-bourgeoisie* parents, are expressed in expectations and strategies of social mobility lived *by proxy* (id., p. 331), that is, delegated and projected onto their sons and daughters, since “(...) the time frame for access to the coveted good [the social positions desired by the parents] exceeds the time frame of a human life [the life of the parents themselves]” (ibid.). In this context, Bourdieu argues, then, that the parents of this class fraction “(...) are much more rigorous than other classes (...) in everything concerning the education of their children” (ibid.), transmitting both *ascetic rigorism*, as well as the generating principle of the action and perception schemes re-actualized by their children in the social space and the *school/cultural goodwill*, which manifests itself through the submissive and disciplined adherence to cultural arbitrariness and school investments imposed by the educational field (2007a, pp. 298-300).

Therefore, on the one hand, Bourdieu presents the students in selective university programs who come from low social backgrounds (the sons and daughters of urban manual workers with low levels of economic and cultural capital) and, on the other hand, students in such selective programs who come from lower-middle backgrounds, that is, the sons and daughters of *routine non-manual* employees who possess moderate levels of economic and cultural capital. These two class profiles are found both in the socioeconomic diversity revealed by the data we will analyze and in the qualitative reconstruction of the profiles and trajectories of our interviewees. Thus, we will begin to present this argument by presenting and analyzing the socioeconomic data relating to the 147 candidates approved in the Affirmative Action Program (PAA) of the entrance exams for the medicine program at UFSC/Florianópolis, between the years 2018 and 2022³.

In this sense, TABLE 2 shows indicators of a reasonable socioeconomic diversity among the beneficiaries of the quota policies in the course, based on the data provided by the university. From the point of view of family income, one third (33%) of the quota holders declared low income – understood here as the sum of all sources of family income, self-declared by the candidate in the questionnaire as equal to or less than three minimum wages (MWs). On the other hand, a minority (about 12%) declared high income, estimating the sum of all sources of income of their family group as greater than 10 MWs.

From the perspective of maternal education, 28% of the mothers of quota students have low levels of education, having studied only up to elementary school, as declared by their children. On the other hand, more than a third of the mothers of quota students (38%) surprisingly presented high levels of education, possessing completed or incomplete higher education, according to the questionnaire respondents. In this sense, more than a third of quota students in the program would not be the first generation in their families to achieve higher education.

³This data originates from the completion of the socioeconomic questionnaire by these candidates as part of the registration process for the institution's semester entrance exams between 2018 and 2022. It is worth clarifying that UFSC distributes 70% of its places – across all its campuses, courses, and shifts – through its own entrance exam, reserving 30% of the places for the Integrated University Selection System (SISU), which uses the results obtained in the National Higher Education Exam (ENEM).

TABLE 2 – Family income and maternal education of those admitted through the PAA program to the UFSC/Florianópolis medical school in entrance exams between 2018 and 2022

Family income	Up to 3 MWs	From 3 to 10 MWs	Above 10 MWs	Total
Absolute number of approved candidates	49	81	17	147
Percentage	33.33%	55,1%	11,57%	100%
Maternal Education	Studied up to elementary school.	Up to high school	Up to higher education	Total
Absolute number	42	49	56	147
Percentage	28.6%	33.3%	38.1%	100%

Source: Author's own elaboration, based on data provided by the Permanent Vestibular Commission (COPERVE) of UFSC.

Relating this data to the figure of *survivors of super-selection*, as pointed out by Bourdieu, we can consider that the indicators of low income (family income up to 3 minimum wages) and low maternal education (education up to complete or incomplete primary education) suggest that about one third (33% in the case of family income and 28% in the case of maternal education) of quota students in medicine are associated with this low social extraction. On the other hand, we can consider that the other indicators of intermediate and high family income and maternal education point to the fact that most quota students in the course would be closer to the Bourdiesian figure of the *petit-bourgeois of execution*.

Our semi-structured, in-depth interviews organized different blocks of questions about the primary (family) socialization and the successive dimensions of the interviewees' secondary socialization, that is, their experiences of progressive insertion into the school system, the labor market, and finally, the university system. Reconstructing the profiles and trajectories of the interviewees, based on the main sociocultural characteristics manifested throughout the interviews (see TABLE 3 below), we observed that Juliano and Marcia are explicitly associated with low social extraction, that is, with the figure of the *survivors of super-selection*. On the other hand, Jairo, Marina, Tales, Pedro, and Lauro are associated with lower-middle extraction, that is, with the figure of the *petit-bourgeoisie*, while the interviewee Fernando was associated with a transitional profile between such opposite poles.

TABLE 3 – Summary of the main sociocultural characteristics presented by the interviewees

Fictitious name and class position	Self-declared gender and racial identification, age, and course phase.	Parents' occupation and education level	Educational trajectories	Work experience	Number of entrance exams taken
Jairo(lower-middle social extraction)	Male, "pardo", 24 years old, 7th semester.	Father: Military police officer, with a college degree.Mother: Teacher and public-school principal, with a secondary education degree.	Shool up to 6th grade in a private school; 7th and 8th grades, in a state school.High school in a military college.	He did not have to work. He only did odd jobs to cover extra expenses for leisure.	5
Marina(lowe r-middle social extraction)	Female, white, person with disability, age not mentioned, 10th phase.	Father: miner, with a high school.Mother:history teacher, with a bachelor's degree and specialization.	Elementary and middle school was partly done in a public school, and partly in a private school.High school at the Federal Institute of Santa Catarina (IFSC/Criciúma), with a technical degree in building construction.One year of a private preparatory course.	She did odd jobs, such as providing Artificial Intelligence (AI) training for a website. As she explains: "nothing fixed or weekly".	3
Tales(lower-middle social extraction)	Male, "pardo", 25 years old, 10th grade.	Father: Security guard at a private company, with a completed high school education.Mother: Teacher with a secondary education degree.	Elementary, middle, and high school education in public and state schools.Three years of private preparatory courses.	He participated in the Young Apprentice Program during high school. During the course, he reported doing "odd jobs here, odd jobs there."	3
Marcia(low social extraction)	Female, racial identity not mentioned, 31 years old, 4th phase.	Father: gold prospector, with incomplete elementary education.Mother: domestic worker, with elementary school education.	Elementary, middle, and high school education in public and state schools.Four years of private preparatory courses.	She began her working life right after high school (at age 18), reporting that she worked as a secretary and cafeteria clerk.During the course, she received scholarships and living allowances, reporting that she occasionally taught classes for an online tutoring platform for medical students.	14
Pedro(lower-middle social extraction)	Male, white, 27 years old, 4th phase.	Father: civil servant, with a university degree in accounting.Mother: an engineer who has "always worked in human resources management".	Elementary school at a private school.High school at the Federal Institute of Santa Catarina (IFSC/Florianoópolis), with a technical degree in electronics.Two years of a private preparatory course.	He worked as an English teacher during his college entrance exam preparation course and, during the vacations, as a freelance assistant to his uncle installing residential awnings.During the course, he stated that he was unable to balance studying and working.	2
Juliano(low social extraction)	Male, Black, 30 years old, 4th phase.	He never knew her father.Mother: domestic worker and later hairdresser, with incomplete elementary education.	Elementary, middle, and high school education in public and state schools.Did not attend preparatory courses.	He began his working life while still in high school (at age 17), working as a "jack-of-all-trades" in a pizzeria, a salesperson in a mall store, and an office	9

Fictitious name and class position	Self-declared gender and racial identification, age, and course phase.	Parents' occupation and education level	Educational trajectories	Work experience	Number of entrance exams taken
				assistant. During the course, he received scholarships and financial aid.	
Fernando (transition profile between low and medium-low extractions)	Male, white, 22 years old, 6th semester.	Father: machine operator, completed high school. He doesn't mention his mother in the interview.	Elementary and middle school at a public school. High school at the State Technical School (ETEC of Sorocaba/SP). One year of the preparatory course for university entrance exams.	After finishing high school, he considered working; however, his father said: "They [the family] would struggle financially, but he wasn't going to work."	2
Lauro (medium-low extraction)	Male, Black, 27 years old, 5th phase.	Father: Metalworker, completed high school. Mother: Bakery manager, completed high school.	Elementary and middle school in a municipal school. High school at a State Technical School of São Paulo (ETEC), with a technical degree in computer science from a Federal Institute in the same state - IFSP. Three years of private preparatory courses.	He never had to work at any point in his career.	9

Source: Author's own elaboration based on interview transcripts.

As seen in TABLE 3, Juliano and Marcia were associated with low social extraction (that is, with the figure of the *survivors of superselection*) because they presented primary and secondary socialization processes marked by the following sociocultural conditions:

- a) Single-parent family groups, headed by mothers (manual workers with low educational attainment), overburdened by the urgent demands of family provision obligations;
- b) Poor and disorganized schooling in municipal and state establishments;
- c) *Student-worker* status (Romanelli, 2000) since high school, internalizing a *practical sense* focused on balancing resources and opportunities to study and earn income throughout their educational trajectories;
- d) Longer and more uncertain educational trajectories compared to students from lower-middle-class backgrounds, characterized by a greater number of entrance exams taken before entering medical school (UFSC/Florianópolis).

On the other hand, Jairo, Marina, Tales, Pedro, and Lauro were associated with the lower-middle class (that is, the figure of the *petit-bourgeoisie of execution*) because they presented primary and secondary socialization processes marked by the following sociocultural conditions:

- a) Parents with secondary or higher education, working in *routine non-manual positions*, explicitly invested in their children's educational strategies;
- b) Primary education completed in the private network and secondary education in technical schools, such as the Federal Institutes (IFs) and the State Technical Schools of São Paulo (ETECs), or military

colleges⁴;

c) Beneficiaries of the *moratorium on work* during adolescence (BONALDI, 2018), therefore enjoying the suspension of the need to work during and after secondary education, due to family support that enables, in this way, the incorporation of schooling investment strategies among the interviewees.

The interviewee, Fernando, was associated with a transitional profile between low and lower-middle income levels due to the intermediate sociocultural conditions that would have guided his family's socialization and schooling itineraries. Thus, he presented his father as a manual worker (machine operator, with a high school education), who nevertheless acted as a strategic guide and guarantor of his son's educational investments, encouraging his enrollment in the ETEC (Technical School) in the city of Sorocaba/SP⁵.

In the following section, we will reconstruct the primary and secondary socialization itineraries of Juliano and Lauro, highlighting how different intersectionalities of race and class affect the subjective perception of *social and racial displacement* among our interviewees. Next, Jairo's case will be addressed to discuss how a Black student from a lower-middle-class background experiences the ambiguity of the Brazilian mixed-race category of “pardo” in the contemporary context of affirmative action policies in the country.

Juliano: a black university student from a working-class background (low social extraction).

Juliano never knew his father. When he was in primary education, his mother used to work as a domestic servant, marrying the father of her half-sister during his childhood. His mother's husband worked in sales and paid for her to take a hairdressing course, but convinced her to leave the job market. Under these conditions, the divorce (which occurred during Juliano's adolescence) disrupted the family's economic life, leading to a temporary situation of hardship and dependence on neighbors in a poor neighborhood in a city in the interior of Goiás. The interviewee recounted then his mother's efforts to open a small hair salon in that city. After Juliano finished high school, the family moved to the capital of Santa Catarina, where his mother reopened a small salon.

Under these unstable conditions of family socialization, the interviewee attended disorganized and precarious municipal and state schools. Regarding elementary school, Juliano recalls school lunches limited to “milk and biscuits,” while the “rotating classes,” motivated by the regular lack of teachers, as well as the disuse of the school's chemistry lab (due to lack of equipment), featured prominently in his memories of high school. The academic discouragement of his high school classmates was illustrated by the account of an incident in which a student expressed interest in studying medicine

⁴Nascimento et al. (2020) showed that federal secondary education (largely composed of the network of Federal Institutes, the IFs) performed comparably to private schools in the National High School Exam (ENEM), even though its student body is characterized by a lower socioeconomic level and greater ethnic-racial diversity when compared to the student body of Brazilian private schools. According to the authors, these performance levels are systematically higher in relation to state public schools due to two factors: 1) the student selection mechanisms applied by some of these federal colleges (such as the *entrance exams (vestibulinhos)* that regulate access to these establishments) and 2) the better infrastructure and teaching work regime observed in these colleges.

⁵According to G. Perosa, C. Kerches and F. Lebaron, among the fifty public schools in São Paulo with the best performance in the ENEM in the last decade, 43 were ETECs (2015, p.112).

in response to a teacher who had inquired about the career plans of the students in the class. Immediately, the boys in the class mocked the girl, stating that she would be “too stupid” for that. Observing this reaction, Juliano then preferred to remain silent about his aspirations for the same career in that school environment.

The aspiration to study medicine was not welcomed, not even by his mother. The interviewee recounted his mother's “disappointed look” when he revealed his desire to study medicine. According to him, his mother barely knew of the existence of public (and therefore free) universities, commenting that the family would not be able to afford the costs of such an elitist course. The lack of family support due to low levels of economic and educational capital was also mentioned by the interviewee Marcia (31 years old, daughter of a domestic worker, originally from the state of Amazonas). Thus, the cases of the interviewees from working-class backgrounds (Juliano and Marcia) contrast with the support networks (material and moral) provided by lower-middle-class family groups, as we will see in the cases of Lauro and Jairo.

Throughout high school, Juliano also began his working life, becoming a *working student* (Romanelli, 2000), even before completing basic education. The interviewee reports having worked as a “jack-of-all-trades” in a pizzeria, as a “salesperson” in mall stores, as an “office assistant,” and as an “English teacher,” during and after high school. The last occupation mentioned led us to consider both the self-taught dispositions incorporated by Juliano and his *practical sense* geared towards alternating study and income-generating opportunities, as we will see below.

In this context, Juliano acquired fluency in the language independently by studying materials available in his school library. On his own initiative, the interviewee also began studying for medical school entrance exams (using content accessible online) a few years after finishing high school, while working as an “office assistant.” After repeated unsuccessful attempts to be accepted, Juliano chose a less selective but still quite traditional course: mechanical engineering at UFSC. As he explains, this career had an acceptance rate about 40% lower than the highly competitive medical course at the University. P. Bourdieu and J.C. Passeron extensively demonstrate that reconversions in the “choice” of university career are common among agents originating from the popular or petit-bourgeois classes, configuring themselves as strategies for readjusting individuals' subjective expectations to their objective conditions of access to higher education (2014, pp. 15-46).

Having entered mechanical engineering as an affirmative action (AA) student, Juliano states that the course improved his knowledge and skills in the fields of mathematics and natural science and also familiarized him with the possibilities of academic scholarships (for research, extension, or internships) and student assistance grants or aid. By accessing these benefits, the interviewee revealed that he was even able to make modest savings that would later be reinvested in his last attempt to enter medical school.

Although he liked the engineering course, Juliano stated that a bout of illness convinced him to retake the entrance exam for his originally desired course. Therefore, he suspended his studies and invested his savings in study materials and resources for the exams. Through his efforts and improved performance in the exact sciences, he finally secured a place in medical school, having taken nine different entrance exams during this last period of attempts (two years, according to him).

After completing four semesters of engineering, the interviewee reports not having experienced academic difficulties in the medical course. According to him, medicine is academically less

demanding than engineering, and professors are more open and helpful for possible extracurricular contacts. Nevertheless, his status as a Black student from a low-income background is expressed in various feelings and accounts of *social and racial displacement* within this university environment. These feelings and accounts manifest, as we will see, the challenges inherent in Juliano's *material and symbolic permanence* in the course. Thus, he discussed during the interview that the technical and symbolic disadvantages arising from being the only one in his class who could not afford a *Littmann* stethoscope, which he estimated cost around R\$900. According to the student, using a cheaper stethoscope has caused him technical difficulties in learning to distinguish the different murmurs or noises of internal organs, such as the heart and lungs. Furthermore, the inexpensive stethoscope also seems to be one of the symbolic discrepancies that distances Juliano from the idealized figure of the medical student, since the *Littman* would be the stethoscope that “every doctor has,” as he stated. Therefore, at the moment of the interview, he declared he was saving money to acquire the desired equipment as soon as possible.

Regarding feelings of *racial displacement*, Juliano fears being prevented from entering the classrooms at the University Hospital (HU) by security guards, since he does not “physically look like a doctor” (his words). At this point in the interview, Juliano concluded that it would be necessary to “dress well.”⁶ These statements evoke the interconnections he experiences between the challenges to his *material and symbolic permanence* in the course. In this context, to avoid prejudiced associations between color and lower social status, the interviewee feels compelled to invest money “even in everyday clothes.” Therefore, the challenges to the *symbolic permanence* of a Black student intersect with the challenges to his *material permanence*, forcing Juliano to invest his meager financial resources in symbolic forms (“dressing well”) of public self-presentation in face-to-face interactions within the course environment (Goffman, 1951).

This strategy reveals the different ways of confronting the unspoken predominance of white stereotypes and phenotypes in university environments (Schucman, 2020). If the literature has pointed, on the one hand, to a *new Black aesthetic* – emerging, above all, among female and LGBTQ+ students who participate in *Black collectives* (Guimarães et al., 2020, 321-322) – Juliano's account suggests, on the other hand, the internalization of adaptation strategies to the norms and standards that govern dress codes and ways of presenting oneself publicly in this university environment, intending to avoid situations and risks of racial discrimination.

To cope with his feelings of *social and racial displacement*, Juliano also highlights the importance of a phenomenon referred to in the literature as *sociability among equals*. This term describes the preference for forming closer friendships with colleagues who share similar socio-racial backgrounds (Santos, 2017, p. 14). In this context, Juliano discusses his friendship with a fellow student who has also benefited from affirmative action. Like him, this friend is one of the few individuals who openly identifies as an AA student in all academic settings she attends. This contrasts with some of their peers who, according to Juliano, do not publicly acknowledge their status as beneficiaries of affirmative action.

The intersection of race and class that Juliano, a Black student from a low-income background, experiences affects both his *material and symbolic permanence*. This intertwining of challenges

⁶Transcribing this excerpt from the interview in full, Juliano reported that: “So, you need to invest money even in everyday clothes, you can't just wear anything, people look at you differently! Then there's the fact that you don't physically look like a doctor, so if you're not well-dressed, they might even prevent you from entering the classroom, the security guards. There's a lot of that issue.”

exacerbates his feelings of *social and racial displacement* and influences the strategies he employs to adhere to dress codes and navigate social interactions with his peers. In the following section, we will examine Lauro's case, a Black student from a lower-middle-class background, to illustrate how his intersectional position shapes his perceptions of *social and racial displacement* as well as his strategies for achieving *material and symbolic permanence*.

Lauro: a black university student from a lower-middle-class background.

Both of Lauro's parents have completed high school. During his childhood, his father worked as a “metalworker,” while his mother seems to have experienced relative mobility within the *lower middle class*, going from “cashier supervisor in a supermarket” to “bakery manager” (at the time of the interview). These moderate amounts of capital (cultural and economic) provided the interviewee with modest, albeit stable, paths of socialization and schooling, characterized by significant advantages compared to socio-educational trajectories originating from the working classes.

Throughout most of his elementary and middle education, Lauro studied in municipal schools in the city of Hortolândia (SP). Unlike Juliano's self-taught approach to learning English, Lauro had access to a private English course, which he attended continuously from the 4th grade of elementary school to the first year of high school, at a State Technical School of São Paulo (ETEC) in the capital. Concurrently, he completed a technical course in computer science at a Federal Institute (IF), and also attended three years of preparatory courses for university entrance exams after finishing high school. Thus, during the four years following his secondary education, the interviewee sought admission to medical school at public higher education institutions. According to him, his performance on the National High School Exam (ENEM) progressively improved during this period, though it did not guaranteed him the desired place. At the end of those four years, Lauro opted to enroll in a less selective course – the biotechnology course at the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar) – updating the career choice reconversion strategies pointed out by Bourdieu and Passeron (2014, pp. 15-46).

However, Lauro did not give up on medicine. He continued to take the ENEM exam annually until he was finally accepted at UFSC/Florianópolis during his seventh semester of biotechnology. According to him, the decision to change courses was quite difficult since “(...) I was almost graduating, I had a guaranteed internship, a nearly guaranteed job.” However, upon receiving an invitation from his aunt to live in her home in the Florianópolis metropolitan area, Lauro decided to actually switch courses.

The support of the extended family, which provided him with a place to live in his aunt's large house and access to a domestic worker, created favorable conditions for the interviewee's *material and symbolic permanence*. Unlike Juliano, he did not report having access to student assistance grants; however, these *material permanence* conditions ensured that he had the time needed to engage in various extracurricular activities. He participated in the Academic Center, the Athletic Association, and the drumline of the Athletic Association. These activities allowed him to establish a sense of belonging in a rather elitist academic environment, reinforcing his *symbolic permanence* in the course.

As we saw in Juliano's case, family support networks are far from being enjoyed by all AA students. Even so, Lauro seems to normalize his favorable *material permanence* when he states that “(...) there's always a family member, a relative, a boyfriend, a cousin, an uncle, a husband, a wife” who would

provide financial assistance to quota students, including helping them acquire (according to his account) a *Littman* brand stethoscope: a technical and symbolic device that externally signals medical identity, as we saw in Juliano's case.

Based on favorable conditions of material and *symbolic permanence*, Lauro reported less intense feelings and perceptions of *social and racial displacement* within the course environment. In this sense, despite recognizing the elitism of the student body, he argues that “(...) 90, 95% of the people [that is, the other medical students] are talkable,” even stating that “(...) the richest in [my] class are the humblest in my opinion, they are good people.” This assessment of his high-income classmates differs sharply from Juliano's perception, who repeatedly observed the ignorance and insensitivity of his classmates regarding the income limitations he experienced.

Regarding perceptions of *racial displacement*, Lauro expressed the initial anxiety he felt upon moving to Santa Catarina, an “extremely white state” (in the interviewee's words), where he ironically described the feeling of “(...) leaving Brazil and entering Europe” upon arriving by bus in the capital of Santa Catarina, coming from São Paulo. At this point in the interview, Lauro stated that his fear of experiencing prejudice did not materialize and that “everything was perfect” (in the interviewee's words) during his adaptation to the city and the course. However, when asked if there were professors who treated affirmative action students differently, he presented a case in which he suffered explicit racial discrimination at the University. According to him, a professor in the course used to present hypothetical scenarios to the class, pointing and asking a specific student in the room: “So, doctor, what would you do in this case?” However, when addressing Lauro (who wore his hair in braids at the time), the professor jokingly asked him, “And you, Rastafarian, what would you do?” Lauro reported having directly confronted the professor, who did not refer to him in that way again. According to the interviewee, however, such behavior would be typical of the minority of professors and students whom he described as “fucking racists” who personally oppose to affirmative action policies. During the interview, however, we noted that Lauro no longer wore his hair in braids. Instead of affirming a *new Black aesthetic* among participants in Black collectives in university environments (Guimarães et al., 2020, 321-322), could the change in Lauro's appearance be a possible indicator of adaptation strategies to the codes of public self-presentation (Goffman, 1951) prevalent in the medical field?

Expressing nuanced perceptions regarding possible feelings of *social and racial displacement*, Lauro also seemed to resort less intensely to strategies of *sociability among equals* compared to the other interviewees. In addition to affirming his friendly collegial relationships with both AA and non-AA students in the course, he also reported that, among his two closest friends, one had entered through affirmative action, while the other had entered through open competition.

We will now present the last case that we discussed in the text. By reconstructing Jairo's socialization and schooling trajectories, we can then follow how this “pardo” student, from a lower-middle-class background, experiences the ambiguity of the Brazilian mixed-race category in the context of affirmative action policies in the country (Costa and Schucman, 2022).

Jairo: a “pardo” student from a lower-middle-class background.

Jairo is the son of a military police officer with a college degree and a mother with a high school diploma and a teaching certification, who worked as a vice-principal and principal in early

childhood education schools. According to Jairo, his mother experienced a process of *symbolic devaluation* of her educational qualification (a teaching certification)⁷, which led her to work independently, delivering pizzas, in the interviewee's terms. From the first minutes of the interview, Jairo also revealed his troubled relationship with his father, due, among other factors, to his sexuality. On the one hand, the fact of “being gay” proved to be a source of latent tensions between the two in the small and conservative hometown of the family, located in the interior of Goiás. On the other hand, the interviewee also acknowledges how his father has methodically guided and supported Jairo's and his older brother's educational trajectory, enabling him to access medical school.

After completing part of their elementary education in private schools in their hometown, their father mobilized his network of contacts (as a military police officer) to ensure that Jairo and his brother had the opportunity to complete their secondary education at the prestigious Military College of Goiânia. Both were then sent to the capital of Goiás, where they lived in a rented house shared between them and their cousins who had arrived in Goiânia to pursue secondary or higher education. According to Jairo, the costs of the house were shared between his father and uncles.

His father's support also included the three years of preparatory courses Jairo attended before being accepted into the medical program at UFSC/Florianópolis. After visiting the city and meeting a friend who studied at UFSC, Jairo stated that he focused his efforts on being accepted into the institution, since Florianópolis seemed to offer a more open and safer environment for a gay man compared to his hometown. However, gaining admission through affirmative action quotas for Black people and moving to a predominantly white state constituted a complex process, not only of adapting to the city and the course but also of progressively identifying with his mixed-race identity, according to his account.

Having defined the phenotypic nature of Brazilian racial classifications, Oracy Nogueira stated that “the conception of white and non-white varies, in Brazil, according to the degree of miscegenation, from individual to individual, from class to class, from region to region” (2006, p. 294). In this context, Eliana Costa and Lia Schucman pointed to the processual character of racial identifications, since such *affective pairings* with a given racial identity occur from the relationships progressively established between an individual and the other subjects and racial contexts in which that individual is inserted throughout their trajectory through social and geographical space (2022, p. 476-7). Thus, Jairo revealed that his racial identification process was decisively influenced both by the move to a predominantly white state and by the troubled relationship with a classmate who was “black, activist, and well-educated,” in the interviewee's words.

First, Jairo highlighted the contrast he experienced when leaving the state of Goiás (36.24% white population, according to the 2022 Census) and arriving in Santa Catarina (76.28% white, according to the last Census): “(...) since I'm from Goiás, color there isn't so obvious, because everyone is kind of brown, kind of yellow there... So, there isn't that difference! Here in the south, the difference is striking, most people are white, blond, red-haired.” Amidst this contrast, Jairo then met a “black and activist” friend in medical school who, according to him, was very important in his racial identification process. As he recounts, after a disagreement with his classmates, because of an “idiot professor” (the interviewee's terms), his friend persuaded him that he might be a victim of unequal treatment because of

⁷Bourdieu refers to *symbolic devaluation* as the process by which a school qualification, massified or downgraded in the educational field, loses its social value, that is, its capacity to be reconverted into symbolic and economic capital by its holders (2007c).

his color and sexuality. Recalling this episode, the interviewee recounted his friend's words:

[Imitating his former friend, the interviewee modulates his voice to reproduce the following dialogue] “Jairo... you know they're treating you this way because you're Black and gay, because if you were white and straight, they'd be applauding you and saying you're the best.” [Resuming his perspective on the episode, the interviewee argues]: But I had never suffered racism in my life. And she said: “Jairo, don't say that, don't say you've never suffered racism, you're just too innocent and don't see things, you can't say you haven't suffered racism.” After that day, I started paying attention to some details, to some subtleties that, really, you see that people treat you a little differently!

After a disagreement with this friend, Jairo claimed to have been the victim of “colorism” (his terms) on her part. He said that his former friend then began to publicly question whether he was “(...) black enough to have entered through affirmative action,” threatening to report him for alleged fraud in the selection process. This episode caused Jairo intense psychological suffering, as we can see in the excerpt below:

(...) When I went to the university restaurant for lunch or dinner; when I left the medical school bubble; when a university student with darker skin than mine sat next to me; I felt bad, I went home, I cried, I started to question myself, I started to... "Should I really be here? Am I taking someone else's place?"

As discussed by Flavia Rios (2019), colorism involves a series of discourses and practices that create divisions within the Black population, often downplaying the prejudice experienced by Black individuals with lighter skin, who are generally acknowledged as “pardos” in Brazil. On the other hand, Black intellectuals, such as Lélia Gonzalez and Sueli Carneiro, have emphasized the wide range of skin tones present among the non-white population in our country. They, along with other Black thinkers, have highlighted the need for an inclusive racial consciousness within the Brazilian Black movement, which sought to acknowledge and represent individuals of various phenotypes, including both brown and Black people, throughout the 20th century (Carneiro, 2004; Gonzalez, 2018). With the emergence of the Brazilian Unified Black Movement (MNU) in the late 1970s, this inclusive racial consciousness became a political strategy aligned with Brazil's redemocratization process, as it sought to establish a Black movement representing the country's demographic majority, in contrast to North American racial consciousness, which largely developed around movements representing demographic minorities in the United States⁸ (Silva et al., 2020, p. 344).

Observing Jairo's case, we can note that the perception of *social and racial displacement* among “pardos” students can manifest itself through the levels of ambiguity and indeterminacy of this category, resulting from the historical process of miscegenation in Brazilian society, which was driven by the *ideology*

⁸While the Black population accounts for about 13% of the American population (according to data from the 2020 US Census), the Black Brazilian population accounts for about 56% of Brazilians, according to our latest Census.

of whitening throughout the 19th and part of the 20th centuries (Skidmore, 1976, p. 81 apud Costa and Schucman, 2022, p. 471). In this context, *sociability among equals* (Santos, 2017, p. 14) can represent, **albeit exceptionally**, risks of contesting the legitimacy of the racial identification of mixed-race university students by Black colleagues who incorporate the “theory of colorism,” as Jairo expressed it. Despite this painful incident, Jairo was one of the interviewees who has also emphasized how his friendships with other AA students structured important academic and emotional support networks for his continued studies.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout the text, we seek to highlight the diversity of class origins observed among Black students in the main medical course in Santa Catarina, one of the whitest states in the country. To reconstruct these profiles, associated with low and lower-middle social extractions, we mobilize Bourdieu's categories of *survivors of school super-selection* (2007b, p. 52; 2014, 43-4) and of the *petit-bourgeoisie of execution* (2007a, p. 329-333), respectively.

As we pointed out throughout the text, the reconstruction of the profiles and trajectories of three Black students (Juliano, Lauro, and Jairo) revealed how the intersectionalities of race and class modulate: a) their strategies for *material permanence* (Santos, 2017; Ganam and Pinezi, 2021); b) their perceptions of *social and racial displacement* within the course environment (Guimarães et al., 2020, p. 313); and c) their multiple strategies for dealing with these feelings and perceptions of displacement, ensuring the dynamics of *symbolic permanence* of these interviewees within this elitist academic universe.

In this context, through the reconstruction of the profiles and trajectories of the interviewees associated with the lower-middle class (Lauro and Jairo), we observed how their strategies for *material permanence* are structured by the support networks (material and moral) provided by their family groups. On the one hand, we followed how living in his aunt's house freed the interviewee, Lauro, from both the need to generate income and domestic chores, giving him the necessary time to participate in different curricular and extracurricular activities. Through participation in these activities, the interviewee thus constructed his experiences of *symbolic permanence*, demonstrating a high degree of integration into the course, even though he was the victim of an explicit act of racial discrimination, as we observed in the episode in which the professor referred to him prejudicially as “rastafarian” in the classroom.

In Jairo's case, the strategies for *material permanence* are ensured by the regular financial support from his father throughout his son's educational trajectory until he enters medical school. Nevertheless, Jairo's case also showed us how the feelings of *social and racial displacement* of a “pardo” university student can involve both inequalities in perception and treatment by white people (the “subtleties” that the interviewee stated he progressively perceived during his social and academic experience in Santa Catarina

and at UFSC) and the eventual acts of “colorism” (a term used by the interviewee himself) that seek to delegitimize progressive racial identification, that is, the affective pairing of mixed-race individuals with black racial identity (Costa and Schucman, 2022, p. 477).

In Juliano's case, we saw how a Black university student from a low-income background experiences feelings of *social and racial displacement*, sometimes linked to his low-income status (being the only one in his class who couldn't afford a *Littmann* stethoscope), and sometimes to his intersectional condition as a Black and poor student, as the interviewee pointed out when lamenting the need to invest in “everyday clothes” to avoid the risk of being barred by security guards from the HU classrooms, since he didn't “physically look like a doctor,” in his words. Finally, while *peer-to-peer sociability* practices seemed less important to Lauro, in the cases of Juliano and Jairo, they were reported as fundamental to ensuring their experiences of *symbolic permanence* in the medical course at UFSC/Florianópolis.

Therefore, by reconstructing the intersectionalities of race and class, we hope to have contributed to the recent literature on race relations, whiteness, and affirmative action, reaffirming, like other researchers in the field, the need to produce and circulate “(...) completely open, yet rigorously critical and self-critical ethnographic studies that focus not only on collectives, but also on Black and white students, staff, and professors in their university and academic journeys” (Guimarães et al., 2020, p. 324).

REFERENCES

- BONALDI, Eduardo V. Tentando “chegar lá”: as experiências de jovens em um cursinho popular. *Tempo Social*, v. 30, n. 1, p. 259-282, 2018. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11606/0103-2070.ts.2018.119387>. Acesso em: 30 nov. 2025.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre. *A distinção: crítica social do julgamento*. São Paulo: Edusp; Porto Alegre: Zouk, 2007.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre. A escola conservadora: as desigualdades frente à escola e à cultura. In: NOGUEIRA, Maria Alice; CATANI, Afrânio (org.). *Pierre Bourdieu: escritos de educação*. 9. ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2007b, p. 39-65.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre. Classificação, desclassificação e reclassificação. In: NOGUEIRA, Maria Alice; CATANI, Afrânio (org.). *Pierre Bourdieu: escritos de educação*. 9. ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2007c, p. 145-184.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Homo Academicus*. 2º ed. Florianópolis: Editora da UFSC, 2013.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre; PASSERON, Jean-Claude. *Os berdeiros: os estudantes e a cultura*. Florianópolis: Editora da UFSC, 2014.
- CAMPOS, Luiz A.; LIMA, Marcia (org.). *O impacto das cotas: duas décadas de ação afirmativa*. São Paulo: Autêntica, 2025.
- CARNEIRO, Sueli. Negros de pele clara. *Portal Geledés*, 25 mai. 2004. Disponível em: <https://www.geledes.org.br/negros-de-pele-clara/>. Acesso em: 30 set. 2025.
- COSTA, Eliane S.; SCHUCMAN, Lia V. Identidades, identificações e classificações raciais no Brasil: o pardo e as ações afirmativas. *Estudos e Pesquisas em Psicologia*, v. 22, n. 2, p. 466-484, 2022. DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.12957/epp.2022.68631>. Acesso em: 30 nov. 2025.

GANAM, Eliana A. S.; PINEZI, Ana K. M. Desafios da permanência estudantil universitária: um estudo sobre a trajetória de estudantes atendidos por programas de assistência estudantil. *Educação em Revista*, v. 37, 2021. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/0102-4698228757>. Acesso em: 30 nov. 2025.

DANTAS, Marcia M. R. *Políticas de ação afirmativa: um estudo sobre a inserção no mercado de trabalho dos cotistas egressos de medicina da UFRJ em 2022*. 2025. 152 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Educação) – Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2025.

GOFFMAN, Erving. Symbols of social class. *The British Journal of Sociology*, v. 4, n. 2, 1951. Disponível em: Symbols of Class Status on JSTOR. Acesso em: 28 nov. 2025.

GONZALEZ, Lélia. *Lélia Gonzalez: primavera para as rosas negras*. São Paulo: UCPA Editora, 2018.

GUIMARÃES, Antônio S. A.; SOTERO, Edilza C.; RIOS, Flavia M. Coletivos negros e novas identidades raciais. *Novos Estudos CEBRAP*, v. 39, n. 2, 2020. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25091/s01013300202000020004>. Acesso em: 30 nov. 2025.

NASCIMENTO, Matheus M.; CAVALCANTI, Claudio J.; OSTERMANN, Fernanda. Dez anos de instituição da Rede Federal de Educação Profissional, Científica e Tecnológica: o papel social dos institutos federais. *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos*, v. 101, n. 257, p.120-145, 2019. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24109/2176-6681.rbep.101i257.4420>. Acesso em: 30 nov. 2025.

NOGUEIRA, Oracy. Preconceito racial de marca e preconceito racial de origem: sugestão de um quadro de referência para a interpretação do material sobre relações raciais no Brasil. *Tempo Social*, v. 19, n. 1, p. 287-308, 2007. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0103-20702007000100015>. Acesso em: 30 nov. 2025.

PEROSA, Graziela S.; LEBARON, Frederic; KERCHES, Cristiane. O espaço das desigualdades educativas no município de São Paulo. *Pro-Posições*, v. 26, n. 2 (77), 2015. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/0103-7307201507705>. Acesso em: 30 nov. 2025.

RIOS, Flávia. O que o colorismo diz sobre as relações raciais brasileiras? *Portal Geledés*, 28 nov. 2019. Disponível em: <https://www.geledes.org.br/o-que-o-colorismo-diz-sobre-as-relacoes-raciais-brasileiras/>. Acesso em: 23 mar. 2024.

ROMANELLI, Geraldo. Famílias de camadas médias e escolarização superior dos filhos – o estudante-trabalhador. In: NOGUEIRA, Maria Alice; ROMANELLI, Geraldo; ZAGO, Nadir (org.). *Família e escola: trajetórias de escolarização em camadas médias e baixas*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2000.

SANTANA, Livia M.; VAZ, Sant'Anna. Comissões de verificação e o direito à (dever de) proteção contra a falsidade de autodeclarações raciais. In: DIAS, Gleidson; TAVARES JR., Paulo Roberto (org.). *Heteroidentificação e cotas raciais: dúvidas, metodologias e procedimentos*. Canoas: IFRS – Campus Canoas, 2018, p. 32-68.

SANTOS, Dyane Brito Reis. Curso de branco: uma abordagem sobre o acesso e a permanência de estudantes de origem popular nos cursos de saúde da Universidade Federal do Recôncavo da Bahia (UFRB). *Revista Contemporânea de Educação*, v. 12, n. 23, p. 31-50, 2017. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20500/rce.v12i23.3229>. Acesso em: 30 nov. 2025.

SCHUCMAN, Lia V. *Entre o encardido, o branco e o branquíssimo: branquitude, hierarquia e poder na cidade de São Paulo*. São Paulo: Veneta, 2020.

SCHEFFER, Mario et al. *Demografia médica no Brasil 2023*. São Paulo: FMUSP; AMB, 2023.

SENKEVICS, Adriano; MELLO, Ursula. Balanço dos dez anos da política federal de cotas na educação superior (Lei n. 12.711/2012). *Cadernos de Estudos e Pesquisas em Políticas Educacionais: Estratégias do Plano Nacional de Educação II*, v. 6, p. 209-232, 2022. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24109/9786558010531.ceppe.v6.5384>. Acesso em: 30 nov. 2025.

SILVA, Ana Claudia C.; CIRQUEIRA, Diogo; RIOS, Flavia; ALVES, Ana Luiza M. Ações afirmativas e formas de acesso no ensino superior público. *Novos Estudos CEBRAP*, v. 39, n.2, 2020. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.25091/s01013300202000020005>. Acesso em: 30 nov. 2025.

SMALL, Mario. How to conduct a mixed methods study: recent trends in a rapidly growing literature. *Annual Review of Sociology*, v. 37, p. 75-86, 2011. Disponível em: <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-soc-081309-150106>. Acesso em: 28 nov. 2025, 2010.

SOTERO, Edilza. O desafio da permanência estudantil no contexto das ações afirmativas: o caso da Universidade Federal da Bahia. *Vértices*, v. 24, n. 3, p. 725-743, 2022. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.19180/1809-2667.v24n32022p725-743>. Acesso em: 30 nov. 2025.

TRAGTENBERG, Marcelo H. R.; FIGUEIRÓ, T. H.; BOING, A. F. O perfil dos estudantes da UFSC. In: CAMPOS, Luiz A.; LIMA, Marcia (org.). *O impacto das cotas: duas décadas de ação afirmativa*. São Paulo: Autêntica, 2025.

WAINER, Jacques; MELGUIZO, Tatiana. Políticas de inclusão no ensino superior: avaliação do desempenho dos alunos baseada no Enade (2012–2014). *Educação e Pesquisa*, v. 44, 2018. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1517-9702201612162807>. Acesso em: 30 nov. 2025.

VIRICIMO, Luan. “Há diferenças entre os iguais?” *As trajetórias dos estudantes ingressantes pelo Programa de Ações Afirmativas na UFSC nas carreiras de Medicina e Pedagogia*. 2025. 196 f. Tese (Doutorado em Sociologia) – Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, 2025.

Submetido: 10/04/2024

Preprint: 13/09/2024

Aprovado: 12/23/2025

Section editor: Juliana Batista dos Reis

DECLARATION ON DATA AVAILABILITY

The research dataset is published in the article.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1 - Participation in all stages of the research, writing of the article.

Author 2 - Participation in all stages of the research, review of the article.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.