

# **Reconversão cultural nas narrativas dos egressos do Programa de Ações Afirmativas: estudo relacional na Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS)**

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## **Resumo**

Esta pesquisa tem como tema central as narrativas dos egressos do Programa de Ações Afirmativas da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul - UFRGS, suas trajetórias sociais, e possibilidade de construção do conhecimento, e reconversão do capital cultural e *habitus*. A pesquisa abrangeu o período de ingresso dos cotistas entre 2008 e 2012. O percurso teórico teve como foco as Categorys de *habitus*, classe e capital cultural da obra de Pierre Bourdieu. O percurso metodológico utilizado foi de uma pesquisa quantitativa e qualitativa, do tipo bibliográfica, documental e exploratória a partir da história oral. Foram enviados questionários *online* para todo universo de diplomados, contudo a amostra desta pesquisa se concentrou em 155 diplomados e foram realizadas ainda entrevistas temáticas com 10 egressos do Programa. Os dados obtidos revelam que a experiência vivida pelos alunos cotistas nessa amostra proporcionou uma ressignificação no seu capital cultural e *habitus*.

**Palavras-chave:** Ações Afirmativas. Capital Cultural. Egressos. *Habitus*. Memória.

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# **Cultural reconversion in narratives of graduates from the Affirmative Actions Program: a relational study at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS)**

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines narratives of graduates from the Affirmative Actions Program of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) in Brazil, focusing on aspects such as their social trajectories, the possibility of building knowledge, and the reconversion of their cultural capital and *habitus*. The research covered the entry of quota students in the period between 2008 and 2012. The theoretical framework focused on the categories of *habitus*, class and cultural capital from Pierre Bourdieu. The methodology was both quantitative and qualitative, of bibliographic, documentary and exploratory type, based on oral history. Online questionnaires were sent to the entire universe of graduates; however, this research focused on a sample of 155 graduates, and thematic interviews were also carried out with 10 graduates from the Program. The data obtained reveal that the experiences lived by the quota students in this sample resignified their cultural capital and *habitus*.

**Keywords:** Affirmative Actions. Cultural Capital. Graduates. *Habitus*. Memory.

# **Reconversión cultural en las narrativas de exalumnos del Programa de Acción Afirmativa: un estudio relacional en la Universidad Federal de Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS)**

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## **Resumen**

La presente investigación posee como eje central las narrativas de los egresados del Programa de Acciones Afirmativas de la Universidad Federal de Rio Grande do Sul – UFRGS, sus trayectorias sociales, así como la posibilidad de construcción del conocimiento y reconversión del capital cultural y *habitus*. El estudio comprendió el período de ingreso de los egresados con cuotas entre 2008 y 2012. El marco teórico estuvo basado en las categorías de *habitus*, clase y capital cultural de Pierre Bourdieu. El enfoque metodológico utilizado fue el de una investigación cuantitativa y cualitativa, de tipo bibliográfica, documental y exploratoria, a partir de la historia oral. Fueron enviados cuestionarios *online* para todo el universo de diplomados, sin embargo, la muestra de la investigación se concentró en 155 diplomados, además, fueron realizadas entrevistas temáticas con 10 egresados del Programa. Los datos obtenidos revelan que la experiencia vivida por los alumnos con cuotas en esta muestra proporcionó una reconversión de su capital cultural e *habitus*.

**Palabras clave:** Acciones Afirmativas. Capital Cultural. Egresados. *Habitus*. Memoria.

## Introduction

In 2012, when the new Affirmative Action Policy was approved and the process of implementing quotas at UFRGS began, a research project was proposed with the general objective of analyzing the trajectories of graduates from the UFRGS Affirmative Action Program through their memories and examining the constitution and conversion of Cultural Capital and *Habitus* based on oral history narratives. To achieve this general objective, specific goals were established: to partially analyze the Affirmative Action Program at UFRGS and its impact on the trajectories of its graduates; to analyze the academic experiences of the graduates through memory narratives; and to discover, within these narratives, the process of knowledge construction and cultural conversion of the actors involved, which confers symbolic efficacy according to Bourdieu (2009).

The theoretical framework of the study was based on social memory narratives and the categories of *habitus*, social class, and cultural capital, from the perspective of social space and field. The methodological approach was a quantitative and qualitative research, including bibliographical, documentary, and exploratory types. Affirmative actions are inherently aimed at historical reparation, addressing the significant portion of the population in countries with large inequalities who live on the margins of their citizen rights and face discrimination. Thus, addressing this topic adds not only scientific and academic relevance but also social significance.

The article is divided into sections, including this introduction, followed by theoretical and methodological frameworks, analyses based on defined categories, and conclusions. At the end, the references used are listed.

## Theoretical Framework

### 1. Social Memories

It is important to highlight that although the theories of Candau (2012), Pollak (1992), and Gondar (2005) align closely with the interests of this research, it is also necessary to reference the studies of Maurice Halbwachs (1990), who is considered the principal theorist in the field of Social Memory studies. Despite differing viewpoints among these theorists, the goal is not to standardize their analyses but to use their contributions to the understanding of memory construction in the most effective way possible. These authors approach memory by considering it from a human, social,

cultural, and political dimension, viewing it as a cultural asset transmitted socially from generation to generation.

Halbwachs (1990) posits that memory is a reconstruction of the past supported by elements borrowed from the present. The author explains that, in order to reconstruct a set of memories, it is necessary for old memories to adapt to our current perceptions (memory frameworks). Only then can we recognize them. He asserts that our perceptions rely not only on our own memories but also on those of others, which provides confidence in our recollections. Even though individual recollections may differ, there is a common relationship among the events.

According to Halbwachs (1990), the reconstruction of memories occurs through social frameworks that represent the worldview of social groups. These frameworks serve as tools for collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past that aligns with the prevailing mentality of society at any given time. The author emphasizes that individual memory always exists within the context of collective memory, as memories are formed within a group. The best way to recall is by returning to the groups we reference. Through these groups, a community of thought is established, where individuals momentarily adopt the group's point of view, share their memories, and encounter ideas and ways of thinking that they might not have developed alone. The strength of these social relationships within groups is what animates the images that constitute memories.

[...] Our memories remain collective, and they are recalled to us by others, even when they involve events in which only we were involved, and with objects that only we have seen. This is because, in reality, we are never truly alone (HALBWACHS, 1990, p. 26).

According to Halbwachs (1990), memories are always the result of images augmented by external evocations, making them a collective process within a social context. Collective memory, as the author posits, exists at the intersection of the individual and the collective, between the psychic and the social. Jô Gondar (2005), in her studies on social memory, assumes that it is a complex, unfinished concept in constant construction, characterized by transdisciplinarity. Memory, according to Gondar, is a construction that does not lead us to reconstitute the past but rather to reconstruct it from questions posed to it, to ourselves, and our current perspectives, more than from the freshness of past events. Gondar (2008) proposes thinking about memory as a relation, allowing for the possibility that both the past and new situations or encounters can be remembered or reinvented, thus highlighting the polysemy of memory.

Candau (2012) addresses the relationships established between dimensions of memory in the

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construction of identities. The author emphasizes that memory strengthens identity on both individual and collective levels. From an anthropological perspective, he asserts the importance of analyzing how memory manifests according to individuals, groups, or societies. To this end, Candau proposes a taxonomy of different manifestations of memory. He aligns with Bourdieu (2009) in distinguishing memory into three levels: Protomemory, defined as incorporated social memory (*habitus*); Evocative memory or proper memory, considered as a form of recollection or recognition related to beliefs, sensations, feelings, and encyclopedic knowledge; and Metamemory, which consists of claimed memory, the representation we make of our own memories, the recognition of our own memories, and what we say about them.

Pollak (1992) describes the constitutive elements of individual or collective memory and asserts that memory is selective, as not everything is recorded or retained, and is also a constructed phenomenon (consciously or unconsciously). According to Pollak, what individual memory records, represses, excludes, or recalls is the result of an organizational effort. The emergence of certain memories often depends on the possibility of being heard and/or the circumstances at the moment of recalling those memories. There is a constant interaction between lived experience and what can be articulated, and the transmission of these "obscure" or "silenced" memories often depends on opportunities for these narratives to gain credibility in the public sphere. Next, we will explore the theoretical concepts and notions of Bourdieu (1996, 2004, 2009, 2011).

## **2. *Habitus*, Social Class, and Cultural Capital According to Pierre Bourdieu**

To understand the concepts of *habitus*, social class, and cultural capital, it is essential to first grasp the notions of social space and field. Bourdieu (1996) defines social space as an invisible space of distinct and coexisting forces that organizes the practices and representations of social agents. Within this space, individuals or groups come closer to or distance themselves from one another according to their social positions. According to Bourdieu, the field of struggle constitutes an area within the social space where agents develop their strategies to maintain or improve their social position.

The space of social positions is translated into a space of positioning through the mediation of the space of dispositions (or *habitus*); in other words, the system of differential separations that defines the different positions within the two main systems of social space corresponds to a system of differential separations in the properties of agents (or classes constructed as agents), that is, in their practices and the goods they possess [...]. (BOURDIEU, 1996, p. 21, Authors' emphasis)

According to Bourdieu (1996), social space is divided into two main dimensions, which correspond to Economic Capital and Cultural Capital. He suggests that the more common these dimensions are, the closer the agents are to each other, and the less common, the more distant they are. This proximity or distinction is influenced by social conditioning and the mediation of *habitus*, which Bourdieu (1996, p. 21-22) defines as “[...] this generating and unifying principle that translates the intrinsic and relational characteristics of a position into a unique lifestyle, that is, into a unique set of choices of people, goods, and practices.”

The term *habitus*, adopted by Bourdieu (2004), is used to differentiate from common concepts such as /habit/, /custom/, /praxis/, /tradition/, and mediates between structure and action. It denotes the system of durable and transferable dispositions that functions as a generating and organizing principle for practices and representations, associated with a particular class of conditions of existence. According to Bourdieu (2004), *habitus* generates a logic, a practical rationality, that is irreducible to theoretical reason. It is acquired through social interaction and, at the same time, is the classifier and organizer of this interaction. It conditions and is conditioned by our actions. As a durable system of dispositions to perceive the world, to act upon it, and to think about it in a certain way, *habitus* is both a product of successive stages of socialization (structured structure) and a generator of practices, values, and ideas that guide action (structuring structure). It has an autonomous dynamic and both engenders and is engendered by the logic of the social field.

One can describe the social field as a multidimensional space of positions, such that any current position can be defined in terms of a multidimensional system of coordinates, where the values correspond to the values of different relevant variables: agents are thus distributed within it, on the first dimension, according to the overall volume of capital they possess, and on the second dimension, according to the composition of their capital [...] (BOURDIEU, 2009, p. 135).

The position that a given agent occupies in the social space is defined by the position they hold in different fields, according to Bourdieu (2009). That is, the positions acquired in the social field are closely linked to the distribution of powers (economic, cultural, social, symbolic) that operate in each of these fields. The interaction within the social space—which is tied to the recognition of the subject and their practices and representations by certain groups that identify as close and, consequently, distinguish themselves from others who are distant—enables the construction of Theoretical Classes in Bourdieu's approach (1996). It should be clear here that, according to Bourdieu's logic, the categorization of class differs from Marx's definition of class by understanding

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social classes: “[...] as a social space, a space of differences, in which classes exist in some way in a virtual state, dotted, not as a given, but as something that needs to be created” (BOURDIEU, 1996, p. 27). Bourdieu explains that classes, for him—in the logical sense of the term—are characterized by

[...] conjuntos de agentes que ocupam posições semelhantes e que, colocados em condições semelhantes e sujeitos a condicionamentos semelhantes, têm com toda a probabilidade, atitudes e interesses semelhantes, logo, práticas e tomadas de posições semelhantes (BOURDIEU, 2009, p. 136).

Bourdieu (2009) asserts that the perception of the social world is a result of a dual social structuring. The objective side is socially structured by authorities related to agents or institutions, forming combinations of very unequal probabilities. The subjective side is structured by perceptual and evaluative schemas that can be employed at a given moment, and these schemas are embedded in language and shaped by symbolic struggles, reflecting the state of symbolic power relations, either more or less transformed.

According to Bourdieu (2009), the meaning of the position occupied in the social space is linked to the practical domain of the overall social structure. Therefore, social reproduction, understood as a system of practices (conscious or unconscious) through which agents seek to maintain or improve their position in social space, depends on the overall volume of economic, cultural, and social capital, the structure of this capital, and the state of the reproduction system (BOURDIEU, 1979, as cited in MENDES; SEIXAS, 2003). Given that the social space is divided into fields where struggles based on specific interests occur, all participants in this struggle act to reproduce the social space (MENDES; SEIXAS, 2003).

[...] Bourdieu (1989) argues that the limit of a field is defined by the extent of its effects. This means that an individual or an institution is considered part of a field if they experience or produce effects within it. Additionally, there is a transfer of energy between fields, and the power held in one field can potentially be amplified in another (MENDES; SEIXAS, 2003, p. 106).

In the same vein, Pinto (2005), Mendes and Seixas (2003), and Ortiz (1994) argue that different positions in the social space correspond to lifestyles, which are systems of differential deviations that symbolically translate differences objectively inscribed in conditions of existence. The lifestyle would be the same practical operator, the habitus, expressing the objective needs of which it is a product. Social class is not reduced to mere location within social relations of production or even to a position in the economic field, although Bourdieu's theory is based on a definition in terms of

power and privilege (Mendes & Seixas, 2003). The authors assert that it is the symbolic struggles within and between fields that reflect the dynamic nature of social life, which is complex and irreducible to any unidimensional analysis. Within this dynamic, Symbolic Capital comes into play as the recognized power, whether institutionalized or not, held by a group, class, or class fraction (BOURDIEU, 2001 apud MENDES; SEIXAS, 2003).

Bourdieu's theory of social classes is an agonistic theory, where the fields of the global social space are permeated by ongoing struggles of classification, declassification, and reclassification. These struggles are driven by the strategies of individuals, groups, classes, and class fractions to maintain their relative social position or to ascend to a higher social status (MENDES; SEIXAS, 2003, p. 108).

Of the three dimensions proposed by Bourdieu for social space (the volume of capital, the structure of capital, and the trajectory of capital), where the volume of capital consists of a set of capitals (economic, social, cultural), what is most relevant for this research is cultural capital, which includes both inherited and acquired cultural capital. According to Bourdieu (1999), Cultural Capital, which encompasses knowledge, skills, and information, corresponds to the set of intellectual qualifications produced and transmitted by family and educational institutions, and it presents itself in three forms: The embodied state: as a durable disposition of the body (e.g., how one presents oneself in public); The objectified state: as the possession of cultural goods (e.g., owning works of art); The institutionalized state: sanctioned by institutions, such as academic degrees.

Almeida (2007) states that understanding the concept of cultural capital is crucial for grasping the symbolic dimension of the struggle between different social groups, considering that the struggles for the legitimization of social and cultural practices distinguish the power differentials of groups through the possession of dominant culture. From this premise, it can be inferred that cultural capital is closely related to the effects of domination, and the disputes arising from attempts to obtain legitimate/dominant culture from some groups over others occur in social space, as it is within this field that individuals or groups come closer or move away according to their social positions. According to Bourdieu (1996), cultural capital is a concept that highlights a new type of capital, a new social resource, a source of distinction and power in societies where the possession of this resource is a privilege of a few: "The dominant or legitimate symbolic systems in a given social configuration are those constructed and operated by the groups that have managed to place themselves in a dominant position" (CUNHA, 2007, p. 505).

Bourdieu and Passeron (2013) argue that it is through intellectual learning and, in particular,

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through educational formation that a thinker participates in their society and era. They further assert that each individual owes their set of fundamental schemas to their type of schooling, which will be internalized and will serve as a principle for the selection of further acquisitions, based on the schemas of organization of thought of these individuals. The author clarifies that it is naive to ignore that the school, by its operational logic, modifies the culture it transmits, as its express function is to transform collective legacy into an individual and common unconscious.

As a "forming force of habits," the school provides those who are directly or indirectly subjected to its influence not so much with particular and specialized schemas of thought, but with a general disposition that generates particular schemas capable of being applied in different fields of thought and action, which can be referred to as cultivated *habitus* (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 2013, p. 211, Authors' emphasis).

Every act of cultural transmission necessarily implies the affirmation of the value of the transmitted culture; this means that all teaching must largely create the need for its own product and thus establish the culture it is responsible for transmitting as a value or as the value of values (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 2013). This indicates that a person's relationship with their culture will depend on the conditions under which they acquired that culture. Considering that cultivated individuals owe their culture to the school, the cultural integration of the cultivated class may be threatened by the differentiation of schools or by effective segregation that benefits the more privileged classes, both economically and culturally, potentially triggering a situation of cultural schism, in the words of Bourdieu and Passeron (2013).

The school does not only serve to consecrate the 'distinction' in the double sense of the term of the cultivated classes. The culture it transmits separates those who receive it from the rest of society through a set of systematic differences: those who possess the cultured knowledge (in the anthropological sense) conveyed by the school have a system of categories for perception, language, thought, and appreciation that distinguishes them from those who only had access to learning through the obligations of a profession or what was transmitted through social contacts with their peers (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 2013, p. 221).

Bourdieu (2011) asserts that it is within the social dynamics that the trajectories of groups or individuals are embedded in struggles, efforts, or strategies to maintain, increase, or modify their capital and class position. The possibility of converting one type of capital into another is referred to by Bourdieu as strategies of conversion.

[...] The conversion of capital held in a particular form into another form that is more accessible, more profitable, and/or more legitimate, given the current state of the reproduction systems, tends to lead to a transformation of the capital structure (BOURDIEU, 2011, p. 122).

Conversions are reflected in different shifts within the social space. According to Bourdieu (2011), social space allows for two types of movements: vertical movements, which can be ascending or descending within the same vertical sector of the space, i.e., within the same field; and transverse movements, which involve shifting from one field to another, meaning converting one type of capital into another. Pinto (2005) notes that Bourdieu's framework allows for consideration of how trajectories whether vertical or transverse can lead to interventions in the modal or individual trajectories of actors, potentially mitigating social inequalities and correcting mechanisms of discrimination and social exclusion. In this context, Silva (1995) suggests that Bourdieu, by describing the educational situation, paves the way for viewing schools as environments conducive to cultural social mobility, leading to affirmative actions.

### **3. Affirmative Actions**

The Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education – LDB (Law No. 9,394, of December 20, 1996) has been in effect for many years, responsible for regulating the country's education system (structure and functioning), defining the goals to be achieved, and consolidating the federative nature of Brazilian education. Education, as a cultural product legitimized by elite culture throughout history, was reinforced by educational institutions and perpetuated social inequalities. Inclusive education in Public Universities has been considered key to equal access and opportunities for less privileged classes.

Relating the concept of inclusive education to Brazilian higher education, particularly public universities, it is evident that the principle of quality education as a right for all remains an aspiration to be achieved. Ferrari and Sekkel (2007) state that Brazil chose to build an inclusive educational system by agreeing with the World Declaration on Education for All at the UNESCO World Conference in 1990. According to the authors, by signing the Salamanca Declaration (UNESCO, 1990), Brazil reaffirmed its commitment to addressing issues related to inclusion and exclusion in education. Profound transformations were implemented in the Brazilian educational system, with changes in legislation and the creation of national educational guidelines in the pursuit of inclusive education. In higher education, practices aimed at inclusive education are strongly linked to social inclusion through affirmative actions. Compensatory policies, as a form of inclusive public policy, aim to mitigate the difficulties faced by certain social groups in accessing services and exercising their rights.

The term affirmative action arrived in Brazil, according to Moehlecke (2002), with a variety of meanings, reflecting the debates and historical experiences of different countries. Its origins, according to the author, are in the United States. Subsequently, countries such as India, Malaysia, Australia, Canada, Nigeria, South Africa, Argentina, Cuba, and parts of Western Europe experienced this concept. In Brazil, according to Moehlecke (2002), there are records of the topic since the country's redemocratization, when social movements began demanding more specific actions from the government concerning race, gender, and ethnicity.

Understanding the need for affirmative actions in our society requires considering Brazil's historical formation and the residual effects on certain social groups, which have long been marginalized from social services and rights. Specifically regarding the quota system in Brazilian universities, Oliven (2009) reports that the debate gained social relevance only after the III World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance held in South Africa in 2001. The crucial years for the establishment of affirmative actions in Brazil, according to Carvalho (2016), were 2003 and 2004, when quotas were implemented at UERJ and UNB, respectively.

The decision by the Supreme Federal Court (STF) provided institutional security for higher education institutions that had already implemented affirmative action policies as well as for those deliberating on the topic. In 2012, Law No. 12,711/2012 was enacted, approving the quota system through reserved spots in Federal Educational Institutions, and Decree No. 7,824/12 regulated it. Normative Ordinance No. 18/2012 from the Ministry of Education established the basic concepts for applying the law, allowing higher education institutions to implement the quota law gradually, provided that by the 2013 entrance exam, at least 12.5% of the offered spots were reserved. By 2016, 50% of the spots in undergraduate courses at Federal Universities had to be reserved for quota students. Additionally, a 25% quota for low-income students and spots for Black and Indigenous students were established, based on IBGE data on demographic presence by state.

The Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul is one of the first federal universities to adopt an Affirmative Action Program in 2007. Following the approval of the Quota Law, the adjustment of universities to legal norms has impacted the Affirmative Action Policies already implemented in the country.

## Metohdology

According to Bourdieu (1989), the construction of methodology should proceed from an active and systematic stance, breaking away from the passive empiricism that validates pre-existing common sense assumptions. He suggests constructing a coherent system of relations to be tested as such. The phases of the research were:

**Phase 1:** This research was applied, exploratory, and descriptive. The procedures used included bibliographic research and documentary research, utilizing quantitative data through questionnaires and qualitative interviews. The research employed a methodological approach of Thematic Oral History, which guided the instruments (interviews and questionnaires) used, as it recognizes that “[...] thematic oral history is almost always used as a technique, as it often involves dialogues with other documents” (MEIHY, 2005, p. 162). The research focused on the period from 2008 to 2012, which represented the first phase of the Program, examining only graduates and alumni from the quota system. Challenges related to generalization and comparative studies must be considered.

**Phase 2:** The universe of quota students, up to the second semester of 2015, comprised 1,862 graduates<sup>3</sup>. Of this total, 155 responded to the questionnaire; 66% were female, 33% male, and 1% preferred not to specify their gender. Ages ranged from 20 to 66 years, with the highest concentration between 25 and 30 years. Regarding entry into UFRGS, 85% came from public schools, and 15% were self-declared Black, Brown, or Indigenous from public schools. Most respondents (150 in total) were residents of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, while 3 were from Santa Catarina, 1 from São Paulo, and 1 from Ceará. Among the questionnaire respondents, 52 undergraduate courses were represented. The profile of the sample was relatively distributed, with a majority being female, from public schools, residing in Porto Alegre, and with a predominance in the field of Letters.

**Phase 3:** Ten graduates were interviewed, self-nominating for participation; among them, 5 came from public schools and 5 were self-declared (Black, Brown, or Indigenous). The interviews took place at UFRGS in 2016. Of the 10 interviewees, 80% were female and 20% male. Ages ranged from 23 to 35 years, with the highest concentration between 23 and 25 years. The respondents' municipalities were represented as follows: the majority were born in Porto Alegre (80%) and 100% currently reside in Porto Alegre/RS. The content analysis was conducted based on Bardin (2011), and

<sup>3</sup> Data Provided by the Affirmative Action Coordination (CAF) in March 2016.

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Bourdieu's (1989) research methodology demonstrated that the social world should be understood relationally rather than realistically. During the research, some limitations were encountered.

## Analysis of the Research

Supported by the relevant theoretical framework and the research conducted through questionnaires and interviews, the reconstruction of trajectories narrated by alumni aimed to understand whether there was a conversion of cultural capital among these individuals. To achieve this, several categories were established. **Table 1** visually clarifies these categories and subcategories:

**Table 1** – Analysis Categories and Their Subcategories.

<b>Category 1</b> The Affirmative Action Program at UFRGS	Diversity Program Maintenance Retention
<b>Category 2</b> - Memories and Practical Experiences in the Trajectories of Graduates	Previous Memories Practical Experiences
<b>Category 3</b> - Cultural Capital	Cultural Capital of Origin Acquired Cultural Capital/ <i>Habitus</i> /Reconversion

Fonte: Elaborado pelas autoras (2017).

However, before moving on to the analysis of the categories, we chose to present the profile of the research participants (155 questionnaire respondents and the 10 participants in the oral history interviews). The analysis of the listed categories follows.

### Category 1. The Affirmative Action Program at UFRGS

The first category aims to assess whether the program institutionalized by UFRGS had an impact on the trajectory of the group of graduates defined in this research. Being one of the pioneers to approve an Affirmative Action Program among federal universities in 2007 (Decision No. 134/2007-CONSUN), in 2006, UFRGS established a Special Committee composed of members from the University Council – CONSUN and the Council for Teaching, Research, and Extension – CEPE to present a proposal on Affirmative Actions. According to Bourdieu's logic (2011), the education

system is still characterized by legitimizing class differences and reproducing the social structure. Thus, it contributes to the distribution of cultural capital among classes, reinforcing social inequalities.

The education system reproduces the structure of the distribution of cultural capital among classes (and class fractions) more effectively when the culture it transmits is closer to the dominant culture and when the method of inculcation it uses is less distant from the familial method of inculcation. Since it operates through a communicative relationship, pedagogical action aiming to inculcate the dominant culture cannot escape (even partially) the general laws of cultural transmission, according to which the appropriation of the proposed culture (and consequently, the success of the learning endeavor sanctioned by educational qualifications) depends on the prior possession of the means of appropriation only to the extent that it explicitly and expressly provides, in the pedagogical communication itself, the essential tools for successful communication, which, in a class-divided society, are distributed quite unequally among children from different social classes (BOURDIEU, 2011, p. 306).

For Bourdieu and Passeron (1975), the issue of meritocracy is a way to disguise the process of symbolic violence<sup>4</sup> that occurs in the transmission of content and the valuation of school knowledge, as it does not address the needs of less privileged classes. According to these authors, the university system enshrines class inequalities by promoting social privilege as "innate talent" or "individual merit," thereby disguising the legitimization of privileges under the guise of apparent equality of opportunity.

To mitigate class inequalities, UFRGS's affirmative action policy was considered a gateway to the achievements of Decision No. 134/2007, which was approved by the UFRGS University Council for the implementation of the affirmative action program. The approved percentage was 30% of the total vacancies, with 50% of these 30% reserved for students who self-declared as Black and coming from public schools. The same decision established the creation of 10 annual slots for the admission of indigenous students through a specific selection process<sup>5</sup>. Another important aspect of the approved policy was that any vacancies not fully filled by self-declared Black students could be allocated back to candidates from public schools. This allowed for the complete filling of the reserved spots for the affirmative action group.

For monitoring the Program, the same Decision established the Affirmative Action<sup>6</sup> — Program Monitoring Committee tasked with proposing support and assistance measures for

<sup>4</sup> Form of violence exercised by the body without physical coercion, which causes moral and psychological harm.

<sup>5</sup> According to Article 12 of Decision No. 134/2007-CONSUN, the distribution method for indigenous vacancies would be defined by the Council for Teaching, Research, and Extension – CEPE.

<sup>6</sup> Article 11 of Decision No. 134/2007-CONSUN.

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affirmative action students and the Indigenous Students<sup>7</sup> Monitoring Committee. Soon after, the constitutionality of the racial quota system adopted by UFRGS since 2008 was also approved. It was established that this Quota Policy would be in effect for 10 years, subject to revision by the University Council, and the creation of an Affirmative Action Program Monitoring Coordination – CAF. On August 30, 2012, Law 12.711 was published in the Official Gazette, which addressed admissions to federal universities and federal technical high schools (Quota Law), sanctioned by the President of the Republic, just a few days after the Affirmative Action Policy at UFRGS was renewed through Decision No. 268/2012. The Quota Law also ensured that by 2016, 50% of the places in undergraduate courses would be reserved for quota students.

Since its approval, the legislation has undergone numerous updates. These updates included new forms of admission and replaced the term "negros" (blacks) with "pretos e pardos" (blacks and browns) to comply with current legislation, making the calling and ordering process more dynamic and transparent. A fundamental point to highlight is that none of these numerous changes to the Affirmative Action Policy Decision of the University altered its initial pillars. These pillars were, in addition to providing access to graduates from Public Schools, to ensure that 50% of the approved quota percentage was allocated to self-declared Black/PPI students<sup>8</sup>, representing a higher percentage than that stipulated by Law 12.711.

In proposing to analyze social space and symbolic space, based on his studies, Bourdieu (1996) believed that it was not possible to capture the deeper logic of the social world without immersion in the particularities of an empirically situated and dated reality. His studies differ from those who believe that it is possible to present the principles of constructing social space and its mechanisms of reproduction from a model of universal validity. The author argued that the real differences separating both structures and dispositions/*habitus* in social space must be sought in the particularities of collective histories, rather than in the singularities of natures or souls. He believed that the set of social positions, at any given moment in each society, is linked through a relationship of homology to a set of activities or goods, defined relationally.

[...] It is necessary to be cautious not to transform into necessary and intrinsic properties of any given group the characteristics that pertain to them at a specific moment, based on their position in a given social space and in a particular situation of available goods and practices (BOURDIEU, 1996, p. 18, Authors' emphasis).

<sup>7</sup> Article 11 of Decision No. 134/2007-CONSUN.

<sup>8</sup> The expression PPP stands for Black or Brown and Indigenous person, a category regulated by the Quotas Law.

Bourdieu (1989) argued that there was a rupture from previous conditions, marking the new social space within the field with the power relations of different agents. Classes, as represented by Bourdieu, occupy similar positions, being products of an explanatory classification that allows for predicting the behavior of a new, likely class—agents who have overcome obstacles in their pursuit of social positions. This space created at UFRGS through the affirmative action policy is a space of possibilities, a geographic space where changes are measured by the time of ascent and reconversion of a set of agents who, until recently, were outside this relational field. This struggle in the political field became present in the university, as it normalized the social mechanisms that produce and reproduce the separation between politically active and passive agents (dominants and dominated). In this sense, the field of forces is like a field of struggles, aiming to transform the power relations and conferring the university field its structure at a given moment.

Regarding the subcategory **Diversity**, the questionnaire respondents, based on their experience as affirmative action students, believed that UFRGS was promoting ethnic-racial and social diversity in the university environment. Specifically, 37.4% strongly agreed, 39.4% agreed, 10.3% disagreed, and 5.8% strongly disagreed. When analyzing only the responses from the 10 interviewees, the results concerning diversity were: 70% agreed, 10% strongly agreed, and 20% disagreed.

Overall, students recognize the importance of the program's implementation and the promotion of ethnic-racial and social diversity that has been occurring over the past nine years. It is observed that those students who were still in undergraduate studies after 2012, the year when the policy was evaluated and renewed through Decision 268/2012, witnessed an increase in diversity and a new profile of students at UFRGS. As highlighted by Egress 3: "I think the truly positive aspect is the diversity. I've never seen the University so diverse among students, in terms of colors, social conditions—who would have imagined being here" (EGRESSA 3).

Bourdieu's concept of educational selectivity is closely linked to the structure of class or class fraction distribution, as the educational system reproduces the legacy of cultural goods accumulated and transmitted to those who have the means to appropriate these goods. Although offered to all, according to Bourdieu (2011, p. 297), "cultural goods as symbolic goods can only be understood and possessed as such by those who hold the code to decipher them." It is important to note that Bourdieu's theory of social classes (1996) refers to an invisible space, which he calls social space, where the practices and representations of agents are organized according to their positions and the

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principles of differentiation of economic and cultural capital. Social space can be understood as a space of positioning through the mediation of *habitus* or the system of differential separations, where different social positions are defined.

When asked whether UFRGS provided conditions for the maintenance and guidance necessary for the adequate academic-pedagogical development of affirmative action students, 12.9% strongly disagreed, 37.4% disagreed, 20% agreed, 4.5% strongly agreed, and 25.8% had no opinion. When focusing on the responses from the 10 interviewees, the results were: 70% disagreed, 20% agreed, and 10% were undecided, indicating significant dissatisfaction among students regarding the support they expected from the institution for academic-pedagogical guidance.

It was observed that almost all interviewees expressed dissatisfaction and even specific complaints about the program's ineffectiveness in ensuring adequate academic-pedagogical monitoring and development at that time. Egress 4 reported never receiving a questionnaire to check if she needed any help. According to Bourdieu (2011), such an education system provides access to specific types of information and training only to those who already possess the conditions for successful transmission and inculcation of culture. Thus, it does not provide everyone with what it demands of all, i.e., linguistic and cultural competence and a deep connection with culture and language. These instruments, described by Bourdieu, can only be produced through familial education that transmits the dominant culture.

Egress 10 believes that support for academic-pedagogical issues is crucial for affirmative action students: "Because I cannot complain, I studied in a very good high school" (EGRESSA 10). According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1975), ignoring categories segmented by criteria such as social origin, gender, or characteristics of past schooling, as is often done, overlooks the awareness of all the variations these criteria produce in the educational environment. For the author, students from popular or middle-class backgrounds who enter higher education are often more challenged than other students, as they need to demonstrate academic competencies that were largely not developed in their previous educational experiences or familial *habitus*.

Regarding student assistance, the interview confirmed how crucial this support was for the group of affirmative action students: "[...] the aids within UFRGS are fundamental; they really are. Both for me and for many others" (EGRESSA 4). This account can be linked to Bourdieu's concept of Capital in his model of class structure. The predominance of economic and cultural capital among agents is directly related to the potential for converting these acquired capitals, through Class *habitus*, into their trajectories. In the case of UFRGS, it is understood that the opportunities provided by

assistance policies enable affirmative action students to increase their initial capital by allowing them to focus solely on their academic life, thereby maintaining stability in their academic trajectory.

. The other subcategory to be analyzed pertains to retention. When asked in the questionnaire if UFRGS had promoted actions to support the retention of affirmative action students, the responses were as follows: 12.9% strongly disagreed, 25.8% disagreed, 8.4% strongly agreed, 31% agreed, and 22.6% had no opinion. Among the respondents, 40% agreed, 10% strongly agreed, 30% disagreed, and 20% were undecided. It is evident that half of the respondents believe that UFRGS has promoted actions to support retention.

When analyzing this subcategory from the interviews, a slightly different picture emerges compared to the questionnaire responses. Many of the statements included critiques regarding retention issues. However, one description stands out: “[...] We know there are students who wouldn't have been able to enter the university without this access, but the issue isn't just about entry; it's about staying. For me, that's the fundamental point” (EGRESSA 10).

There are many aspects of the trajectory of affirmative action students that need to be considered and addressed in the actions of welcoming, monitoring, developing, and assisting these students. The analysis shows that the program has had an impact on the trajectories of the graduates and has made significant progress regarding inclusive policies and ethnic-racial relations in the university environment. Nevertheless, the analyzed documents and the narratives of the graduates highlight the need for improvements in various aspects of the policy.

## **Category 2. Memories and Practical Experiences in the Trajectory of Graduates**

The second category to be analyzed concerns the memories and experiences lived by the graduates throughout their academic journey. According to Bourdieu's (1996) studies, the cultural practices of individuals are largely shaped by their life trajectories. These trajectories, marked by differences in origin and opportunities, influence the acquisition and transmission of cultural goods and the composition of Cultural Capital. The life trajectory of this group of affirmative action students is guided by their practical experiences and the familial and cultural heritage acquired and transmitted, presented in this research through memories and narratives.

Thus, it is believed that the same experience lived by different individuals during their trajectory may have been experienced and presented in these narratives in entirely distinct ways. According to Bourdieu (1996), it is in social space that the differentiated positions of each individual are defined based on their place in the distribution of a specific type of capital. To analyze the

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academic trajectories of the graduates, it is understood that it would not be sufficient to address only the memories of the years they spent at UFRGS as affirmative action students, as social relations are seen as a product of each individual's prior experiences.

When reflecting on their experiences prior to entering UFRGS, most interviewees recalled the difficulties they faced in accessing higher education. Some evoked their family's financial conditions, having always studied in public schools with low-quality education and poor infrastructure and staffing conditions. Many compared this with private schools and the level of education among students from higher social classes, as well as their socioeconomic conditions and the challenging competition with these students for entry into a highly competitive federal university like UFRGS. Analyzing how these memories emerged in the graduates' speeches reveals, based on Candau's studies (2012), that each life story attributes significance to events according to the individual's identity or *habitus*.

Some records of the difficulty in accessing public university mentioned earlier were organized and presented in the graduates' speeches in a more subdued manner, as observations of an unequal social reality where class differences affect almost all aspects of social life. Other accounts expressed feelings of exclusion, sadness, or helplessness in facing that reality, such as: "[...] we couldn't afford it. We still can't afford to pay for college, these things" (GRADUATE 3).

From this interpretation, it is understood that the memorial construction, evoked through the narratives of some interviewees, allowed for the surfacing of certain repressed or marginalized memories. These memories may have been brought out by psychological aspects of their personal experiences or by perceiving an opportunity to share their unheard memories, allowing them to move from the "unsaid" to contestation and claim, as suggested by the narrative Pollak (1992).

According to Bourdieu (1996), the perception of reality shared by a particular group is reflected in the social positions where decisions are mediated by *habitus*. All interviewees (100%) referred to their parents' professions and, for some, their academic background as well. Candau (2012) notes that in Brazil, the manipulation of memory by white people involves maintaining the memory of slavery as a means of subordinating black individuals. This perspective helps in understanding Egressa 10's references. It is also crucial to highlight that some interviewees mentioned the death of parents or relatives, which influenced their trajectories as affirmative action students. According to Candau (2012, p. 138), ways of "speaking about family" and establishing a genealogical memory are always "[...] emblematic of a disappearing or subterranean cultural identity," but vary between peasants, bourgeoisie, nobility, or middle classes.

Egressa 5, in her interview, expressed a close relationship with her peers: “[...] I didn’t see it as ‘Oh, they here, me there.’ It was very equal. They had the same difficulties as I did; they were very simple people” (EGRESSA 5). Pollak (1992) argues that memory is a fundamental element of both individual and collective identity. Egressa 10's and Egressa 5's remarks about acceptance and relationships with peers and professors reinforce Pollak's concepts regarding identity construction. Initially, Egressa 10 did not feel like an “outsider” at the university. However, as she identified more with her group, she felt that the entire group could be considered “outsiders,” which made her feel comfortable, reinforcing her class *habitus*.

Analyzing Egressa 6's reflections on interactions within UFRGS, Candau's (2012) taxonomy of memory comprising protomemory, memory of evocation, and metamemory can be applied. This taxonomy aligns with Bourdieu's concept of Cultural Capital, which he categorizes into embodied, objectified, and institutionalized forms. In this case, Egressa 6's memory reflects metamemory because her recollections involve choosing whether or not to disclose her affirmative action status in different university environments. Candau (2012) asserts that metamemory is closely tied to identity construction, as it encompasses the acknowledgment and articulation of personal particularities, interests, gaps, and achievements linked to one's past.

The way each graduate recalled these memories is tied to their *habitus*, which Bourdieu (1996) describes as translating the intrinsic and relational characteristics of a position into a lifestyle. The graduates' memorial accounts addressed two distinct aspects of extracurricular activities. The manner in which these memories were evoked revealed much about each student's lifestyle and how they navigated their academic paths within the university.

### **Category 3. Cultural Capital**

The intention of this subcategory is to examine whether the questionnaires and interviews reveal the relationship that Bourdieu described in his studies about the school environment and the social origin of individuals in the formation of Cultural Capital. According to Bourdieu (2003), educational institutions reinforce social reproduction when they award titles and recognition to those belonging to more privileged social classes, allowing social inequalities to be perpetuated and concealed under the veil of personal aptitude or meritocracy, without considering the social, cultural, and economic issues of individuals. Social inequalities are closely linked to individuals' origins and how family capital is cultivated to complement educational capital in the formation of Cultural

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Capital. According to Bourdieu (1999), Cultural Capital encompasses both knowledge, skills, and information, and the set of intellectual qualifications produced and transmitted by family and educational institutions, as illustrated by the account: “I believe that, compared to other colleagues I had at UFRGS and who I know are UFRGS students, I had privileged conditions even though I studied in public schools, the structure at home was very, very important for my education. [...]” (EGRESSO 5).

The transmission of family capital, which is incorporated by agents in an imperceptible or unconscious manner, transforms into *habitus*, allowing these individuals to grow and carry with them this cultural heritage, which will be reflected at all educational levels. For this reason, when children from lower classes enter the same academic environment as children from educated classes, there is a reality shock for those students who did not receive the dominant cultural values from their families. As expressed in the following narrative: “[...] I actually felt like a fish out of water when I entered. Everyone knew what the course was about, everyone had traveled, were fluent in English, were very educated people, and I felt like the Ugly Duckling of the group” (EGRESSA 4).

According to Bourdieu (1989), the internalization of a destiny objectively determined by the students' social origin is reflected in the experiences of failures or successes in their environment, but also in the teacher's appreciation and attitude, who, consciously or unconsciously, takes into account the social origin of their students, correcting what might be abstract in a prognosis solely based on the assessment of academic results.

Bourdieu (1989) asserts that the mechanisms determining the continuous elimination of students from disadvantaged classes, attributing responsibility to differences in “gifts,” are actually linked to the transmission of certain cultural capital and ethos, which will contribute to defining attitudes towards cultural capital and the educational institution. When referring to ethos, the author means what he himself defined as *habitus*, that is, a system of implicit, deeply internalized values.

[...] the influence of the family environment on academic success is almost exclusively cultural. More than the diplomas obtained by the father, and even more than the type of schooling he pursued, it is the overall cultural level of the family group that maintains the closest relationship with the child's academic success (BOURDIEU, 1998, p. 7).

Bourdieu understands that it is the overall family action that influences the formation of the cultural capital of heirs. However, the parents' level of education combined with economic aspects will allow a greater influence on their children's academic competence. The professional activities reported by the parents of the 10 interviewees varied significantly. From this, it can be inferred that

the educational and professional background of the parents directly affected their children's participation in affirmative action programs. Bourdieu (1989) also states that for an accurate evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages transmitted by the family environment, it is necessary to consider not only the parents' cultural level but also the ancestors on both sides of the family. Another aspect that should also be considered regarding family cultural inheritance, in addition to social origin, is the way this capital is transmitted and the importance of the parents' attitude towards their children's future education.

The attitudes of members of different social classes, whether parents or children, and particularly the attitudes towards school, school culture, and the future offered by education, are largely expressions of the implicit or explicit value systems that they owe to their social position (BOURDIEU, 1989, p. 7).

According to Bourdieu (1989), social ascension cannot occur when the objective chances of success are minimal. However, regarding the middle classes, the author emphasizes that, being considered a transitional class, they are the ones most strongly adhering to educational values, as they foresee reasonable chances of meeting social success expectations.

Unlike children from lower-class backgrounds, who are doubly disadvantaged in terms of cultural assimilation and propensity to acquire it, middle-class children owe their families not only encouragement and exhortations for academic effort but also an ethos of social ascent and aspiration for success in and through education. This ethos enables them to compensate for cultural deprivation with a fervent aspiration to acquire culture (BOURDIEU, 1989, p. 8).

From the analyses, it is inferred that the Affirmative Action Program at UFRGS is enabling individuals from lower social classes to match the middle classes regarding opportunities for cultural acquisition and social ascent. This program allows families to experience a new perspective on the potential that completing a degree at UFRGS through quotas can offer their heirs' future. Based on the responses, it is possible to determine whether the graduates who benefited from the quota program perceived an increase in cultural capital during their academic journey and if this experience reflected in the acquisition of a new *habitus*.

According to Bourdieu (2011), the relative weight of familial education versus formal education varies depending on the recognition and teaching given to different cultural practices by the school system. Cultural consumption, which Bourdieu (2011) evaluates through activities such as attending theater, concerts, or museums, shows that the legacy of cultural goods accumulated and transmitted belongs to those who have the means to access them. By analyzing the cultural consumption of quota students in this sample before and after their entry into UFRGS, one could infer

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that the university provided these students with the tools to appropriate symbolic goods fundamental for expanding their original capital, incorporating these new practices and acquiring a new *habitus*.

It is evident that there is a set of activities that began to be part of these students' daily lives upon their entry into UFRGS, which may characterize the acquisition of new cultural practices added to their inherited cultural capital. These additions can be understood as incorporated cultural capital since, according to Bourdieu (1999), the familial context/heritage significantly influences the definition of children's educational futures and combines with school learning in the composition of this capital. The incorporation of this capital occurs through a process of inculcation and assimilation, which becomes internalized and part of the individual only through a long investment. It then constitutes a *habitus*, which must be personally acquired because it cannot be transmitted or inherited. "The *habitus*, as the term indicates, is both acquired knowledge and a possession, a capital [...] the *habitus*, the *hexis*, indicates the embodied disposition, almost postural" (BOURDIEU, 2009, p. 61, Authors' emphasis).

For Bourdieu (1996), the function of the *habitus* concept is to account for the unity of style that links the practices and goods of a singular agent or a class of agents. It is through the *habitus*—a generating and unifying principle that the intrinsic and relational characteristics of a position in a unique lifestyle will be translated (a set of choices regarding people, goods, practices). *Habitus* is differentiated but also differentiates and generates distinct and distinctive practices. The interviews also revealed a shift in cultural practices of quota students following their entry into UFRGS and the acquisition of a new *habitus*, which allowed these students to envision new possibilities for their trajectories.

Graduate 5 also reported that upon entering the course, they discovered and found themselves in university-related activities and in research, which motivated them to pursue an academic career. They had the opportunity to enter a Master's program and obtain a CAPES scholarship, which they currently pursue. According to Bourdieu (2011), there is an inseparable relationship between field and *habitus*. The field represents a space of possibilities where agents interact based on their positions within the field's structure and where their strategies relate both to the available capitals and the goals to be achieved, whether to conserve or transform their position in the field. These strategies, understood by Bourdieu (2011) as strategies of social reproduction, are strongly related to the volume of capital (economic and cultural capital), the structure or composition of this capital, and the trajectory of the capital (conversion). These three axes define the construction of class, according to the author.

In Bourdieu's logic, class construction is a function of an interdependent articulation of various constitutive factors, with different weights at different times and social spaces. [...] These 'social spaces' shape and are shaped by a particular *habitus*, which in turn triggers a set of social practices and representations, projected into, among other spheres, the educational, professional, and familial spheres (PINTO, 2005, p. 2, Authors' emphasis).

In addition to the new cultural and social practices adopted by the scholarship recipients, the importance of the educational diploma is evident. The educational title serves as a form of social perception, a perceived entity guaranteed as a right. It is an institutionalized symbolic capital, both legal (and not merely legitimate) (BOURDIEU, 2009). Among the 10 graduates interviewed, 6 were pursuing a Master's degree at UFRGS, 1 was pursuing a second undergraduate degree, and only 3 graduates were not currently engaged in academic activities; however, one was working in her field of study, while the other two were still studying. According to Bourdieu (2009), the positive or negative returns granted to agents through official titles, as distinctive marks, denote the value of their position within a hierarchically organized system of titles, thereby contributing to the determination of relative positions among agents and groups.

Returning to Pierre Bourdieu's premise that the educational institution represents the subtlest and effective form of social reproduction by reproducing class privileges in a veiled manner that appears neutral, it is now pertinent to reflect on the analyses conducted in the research. Understanding the trajectories of these scholarship students through their memories, i.e., the content remembered and reconstructed from their experiences within and outside the university, was fundamental in visualizing the impacts of these experiences on the incorporation of a new *habitus* and the transformation of their cultural capital. Although the responses should not be considered as universal truths or generalized, since it was not possible to reach all graduates, this sample is a reliable and enlightening source for the research problem. The following conclusions can be drawn:

The implementation of the program had an impact on the graduates' trajectories, being considered a positive action as it brought significant progress to inclusive policies and ethnic-racial relations within the University. However, based on the graduates' narratives and the analyzed documents, there is a need to improve fundamental aspects of the policy, including the maintenance and retention of students in the program. The studies related to the second category concluded that the most significant experiences in the academic trajectory were influenced by their previous and family experiences, but these experiences were internalized in the construction and transmission of acquired cultural goods, which were crucial in acquiring a new Cultural Capital and, consequently, a

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new *habitus*.

In the analysis of the Cultural Capital category, the acquisition of new cultural practices as well as the experiences lived during the undergraduate program and the effects these changes had on personal and family life provided these students with new symbolic assets. These were fundamental for the incorporation of a new *habitus* and, consequently, the transformation of their overall cultural capital. It is believed that Affirmative Action policies, within an inclusive education context, are intervening in the social trajectories of many students who are discriminated against or excluded from educational spheres. It can be inferred that this social transformation aligns with what Bourdieu termed rational and universal pedagogy; for him, this would be the only way to offer and transmit to everyone the knowledge and skills required by the school, thereby addressing real inequalities in education and culture.

## Final considerations

The final considerations of this work offer a small contribution to the need for improvements in various aspects of the affirmative action policy. This topic was highlighted in the statements of the graduates, particularly regarding the conditions for maintaining the Program and the need for actions that ensure the retention of scholarship students at the University.

Although Bourdieu and Passeron (1975) developed a rational and universal pedagogy as a means to address real inequalities in education and culture, it is believed that an ideal scenario would be a new educational context in Brazilian public education. This context should increasingly implement inclusive public policies that do not attempt to homogenize knowledge, teachers, or students. Diversity in voices, colors, customs, origin, beliefs, and sexual orientation should be valued and respected, ensuring that everyone has the full conditions to develop intellectually, personally, and socially.

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