

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FOR BRAZILIAN GRADUATE SCHOOLS: PATTERNS OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

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Abstract Brazilian graduate studies are marked by intense regional, ethnic-racial and economic inequalities, which led to the beginning of the debate about the creation of affirmative action for students belonging to historically excluded groups in graduate programs and public universities. The literature on affirmative action and public policy rarely analyzes the specifics of the agenda-setting process and the formulation of these policies, or the reasons why affirmative action for graduate became important for the universities and the government, which alternatives have been chosen and what the main actors involved in the process. This paper aims to contribute to the literature of public policy and explain how the creation of affirmative action resulted in the change of the traditional selection process carried out by graduate programs. The research was based on (a) an analysis of the selection notices of 2,763 academic graduate programs of public universities published until January 2018, (b) a survey for the collection of quantitative data on graduate programs and c) semi-structured interviews with selected actors from some programs and representatives of CAPES and MEC. The analysis points that the deeper institutional changes - the modification of student selection criteria - are the result of endogenous and incremental processes that occur in the absence of critical moments. There is a strong resistance to more substantive changes in the selective processes due to the importance of academic merit and excellence, as well as the uncertainty about the impacts to the CAPES evaluation grade.

Keywords: affirmative action; graduate studies; public university; agenda-setting; institutional change.

INTRODUCTION

In the last decades, the Brazilian system of higher education undergone several transformations, mainly related to the creation of affirmative action policies and the extension of the access of students from public schools, low income and self-declared blacks, browns (*pardos*) and indigenous students to undergraduate courses. Until affirmative policies began to be established in 2003, seats in public universities were filled almost entirely by white students and graduates of private schools, especially in the most prestigious courses. In 2012, the creation of racial and social quotas was considered constitutional by the Supreme Court of Justice (STF) and, later, the National Congress approved Federal Law 12.711/2012, which establishes that all federal institutions of higher education and technical courses must reserve seats for blacks, browns (*pardos*) and indigenous people, students of public schools and low-income.

However, although the public policy has promoted the diversification of the student body in universities, the same is not observed in the faculty. Despite the lack of systematic data on the racial makeup of the faculty and researchers of Brazilian public universities, it is possible to note that the system is strongly marked by regional, ethnic-racial and economic inequalities (Artes, 2016; CGEE, 2012; FCC, 2015; Paixão, Rossetto, Montovanele, & Carvano, 2010; Rosemberg, 2013; Venturini, 2017). In fact, full access to

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academic careers and linked to the reproduction of knowledge depends not only on obtaining an undergraduate degree, but also on the completion of graduate courses, especially masters and doctorates.

Higher education plays a fundamental role in the allocation of opportunities in Brazilian society and is one of the main avenues of upward social mobility (Fernandes, 2001; Marteleto, 2012; Ribeiro, 2006, 2011, 2017; Ribeiro & Schlegel, 2015). As access to higher education has become more democratic in recent years, the completion of undergraduate courses has less impact and is not sufficient in the competition for positions of higher prestige and remuneration, concluding postgraduate courses is considered as a differential of professional qualification and can expand the possibilities of social ascension. Thus, if affirmative action policies aim to promote equal opportunities in a society marked by acute inequalities, such as the Brazilian one, then it is necessary that they also include postgraduate education, which is nowadays the access road to careers of high social status and remuneration.

Affirmative action have already been adopted for entry into some graduate courses (masters and doctorates) of public universities, but such measures are little known and suffer from the lack of analysis by the academic literature, with few studies dedicated to understand how they work in practice and how they were structured by decision-makers as public policies that impact the selection of students by the graduate programs (Hochschild, 1998, pp. 347–350). The literature on affirmative action and public policies rarely analyzes the specificities of the agenda formation process and the formulation of these policies, nor the reasons why affirmative action for graduate studies have become important for universities and for the federal government, which alternatives have been chosen and who are the main actors involved in the process. In the United States, for example, Liliana Garces (2012, p. 9) highlights the paucity of work on the effects of affirmative action bans in some states caused on graduate admissions and argues that this may stem from the specialized nature of graduate schools, in which admission criteria vary by area of study and data sources on student admission are limited.

In fact, in Brazil, undergraduate courses are spread throughout the national territory and in several types of higher education institutions, and graduate courses are highly concentrated in the Southeast region, especially the courses considered of excellence. Whereas in the undergraduate level the selection of students is defined by the university and valid for all courses, in the graduate level each program has autonomy to define the format, the periodicity and the criteria of the selection of masters and doctoral students.

In this sense, this paper seeks to enrich the academic discussion on the subject of affirmative action for graduate studies and to contribute to the public policy literature and explain how the creation of affirmative action resulted in the change of the traditional selection process carried out by the graduate programs.

The research was developed from a simultaneously empirical and theoretical effort, using several sources of evidence (Brady & Collier, 2010; Kellstedt & Whitten, 2013; King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994; Seawright, 2016). The collection of empirical data was parallel to a deepening of the theoretical study of subjects related to the institution of affirmative action for graduate courses and patterns of institutional change.

Empirical research involved quantitative and qualitative steps. The first stage corresponded to a survey of graduate programs and public universities that adopted affirmative action. The analysis was limited to academic graduate programs (masters and doctorates which represent 83.2% of the total

programs of the country)² and those accredited and recommended by CAPES in the last four-year evaluation, which are programs with grades 3 to 7³. The criteria defined allowed the analysis of representative data of 2,763 graduate programs, which correspond to 79.6% of all academic programs and 66.2% of all programs in the country. The time cut off adopted was from January 2002 to January 2018, long enough to capture all the moments of the "life" of this public policy.

Once the research cuts were defined, the next part consisted of verifying which programs had created affirmative action. Given that each program has the autonomy to define its selection criteria and that there is no unified basis of selection notices, it was necessary to carry out a survey of selection calls for all academic graduate programs with grades 3 to 7 of public universities. From the list of programs of the CAPES four-year evaluation published on September 19, 2017, the application guides were searched on the websites of each program. It is important to note that the calls for some programs were not located in the websites and we did not get answers in contacts by e-mail or telephone, which is why they were coded as having no affirmative action. Finally, all the application guides were analyzed and those containing affirmative action were separated and codified as the following characteristics: (a) university; (b) name of the program; (c) program code according to CAPES data; (d) area of knowledge; (e) type of affirmative action; (f) beneficiaries; (g) type of public institution (federal, state or municipal); (h) CAPES grade; (i) state (UF) and (j) region.

Finally, although much information about affirmative action policies for graduate courses is available in public documents, a purely documentary analysis did not prove sufficient to obtain the main information necessary for the in-depth analysis of the origin and the process of formulation of these policies (Cellard, 1997). Therefore, I set out to carry out in-depth interviews with selected actors from some programs, universities and representatives of CAPES and MEC to collect qualitative data and cross-refer to the information obtained in the initial research and in the survey (Dexter, 1970; Gray Paul S.; Williamson, 2007; Harvey, 2011; Hochschild, 2005; Kapiszewski, 2015; Lamont & Swidler, 2014; Mosley, 2013; Rathbun, 2008). At the end, 34 interviews were held. The scripts of all blocks were previously tested with academics and public administrators before their use in the field (Leech, 2002; Mosley, 2013). The interviews were transcribed and coded (Aberbach & Rockman, 2002; Kurasaki, 2000) in the NVivo software and then the information rewritten in the form of a case study narrative (Bleich & Pekkanen, 2013; Hochschild, 2005; Kapiszewski, 2015).

OVERVIEW OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FOR GRADUATE STUDIES

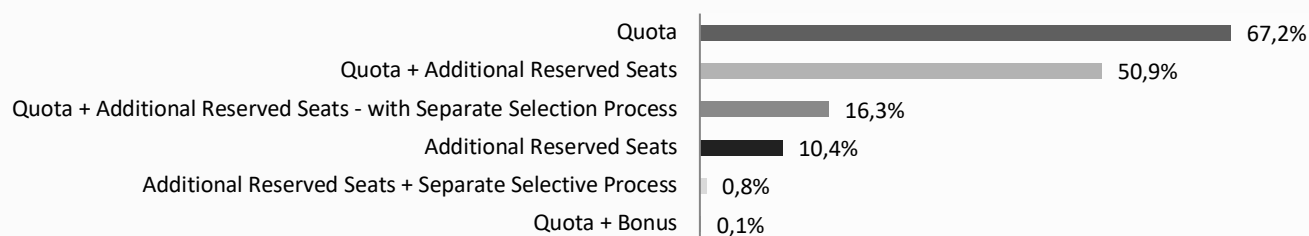
² The *stricto sensu* programs are currently divided into academic programs (masters and doctorates), professional programs and professional programs in national network. However, Brazilian graduate studies are strongly linked to research activity. There are 4,175 *stricto sensu* graduate programs accredited by CAPES in Brazil.

³ Currently, graduate programs (masters, doctorates and professional masters) are evaluated by CAPES every 4 years and receive grades distributed between 1 and 7, meaning (a) "programs that receive grades 1 and 2 has canceled operating permits and recognition of the Masters and / or PhD which he offers", (b) note 3 indicates "regular performance, meeting the minimum quality standard" and is the minimum grade for a program to start or continue to operate, (c) grade 4 represents a good performance, (d) grade 5 is the maximum mark that can be received by programs that only offer masters courses; (e) grades 6 and 7 are attributed to programs with a high international standard of excellence and (f) grades 7 are those with a clearly outstanding performance of the others. CAPES's evaluation of the graduate program is an important instrument for granting of aid by national development agencies and international organizations, since the higher the program score, the greater the number of scholarships and grants available. For example, programs with grades 6 and 7 are entered into the CAPES Academic Excellence Program (Proex) and receive a budget allocation that can be used according to program needs and priorities in any of the support modalities offered, such as scholarships, resources for investment in laboratories, tickets, events, publications, among others. In consequence, eventual reduction of the note may impact the number of scholarships and funding for research.

The study of the process of creation of affirmative action by graduate courses presents several practical difficulties, among which the great number of academic programs recognized by CAPES (2,763 programs) and the fact that each program establishes own standards and criteria for the selection of their students. Thus, unlike what happens in research on undergraduate courses, in which each university annually publishes a single guide with the rules of the selective process of all its courses, in the graduate courses each program is responsible for publishing its application guides, whose periodicity and date of publication is quite variable⁴. Thus, to analyze the creation of affirmative action at this educational level, it was necessary to carry out a survey⁵ of all the application guides of 2,763 academic graduate programs published until January 31, 2018. The data collected indicate that in January 2018 there were already 737 academic graduate programs with some form of affirmative action⁶, which represents 26.4% of all programs.

Among the 737 graduate programs with affirmative policies analyzed, 67.2% apply the quota system exclusively, in which a percentage of the available positions is reserved for certain groups. In addition to this modality of quota, other programs have chosen to create additional seats, which are reserved for candidates who meet the required requirements. Although they do not receive the name "quota", it is a form of reserved seats with the only difference that the number of openings of ample competition remains the same, being a milder variant of quota. We also note the adoption of mixed formats, in which there are quotas for certain groups and additional seats destined for other group(s) of beneficiaries. In addition, there are programs in which all candidates, regardless of the reserved seats, are submitted to a selective process regulated by a single call with all the admission rules and criteria. Other programs, in turn, have chosen to submit the candidates to the reserved seats for separate selection processes and regulated by different calls and with rules that are different from the wide competition. Finally, only one graduate program created quotas for certain groups and also provides bonuses for these candidates in certain stages of the selection process. This shows that the bonus modality adopted previously in the undergraduate courses was ignored in graduate policies, not without reason, since studies indicate that the bonuses provide a slow racial inclusion in relation to the quotas (Venturini, 2015, 2016, Venturini and Feres Júnior, 2018).

Graph 1 - Proportion of type of affirmative action adopted (N = 737)



Source: own elaboration

In the policies for undergraduate courses, the main beneficiaries are students graduating from the public middle and high schools, followed by low-income candidates and ethnic-racial groups (blacks, browns and indigenous), especially in federal universities due to Law 12,711/2012. The data collected indicate that

⁴ There are programs that have only one annual selection process, while others conduct up to two selections per year.

⁵ The survey was carried out from September 2017 to January 2018.

⁶ I obtained the calls of applications of 2808 academic graduate programs (masters and doctorates) of Brazilian public universities. The percentages refer to a total of 2763 programs in operation and grades 3 to 7 in the last CAPES four-year evaluation, with grades 1 and 2 being excluded due to the cancellation of their operating authorizations.

this situation does not occur in graduate courses, in which black students are the main beneficiaries, being the target of 687 initiatives, which corresponds to 92% of the policies analyzed. In addition, most of the analyzed programs also have measures in favor of brown candidates (91.3%), indigenous (90.4%) and with disabilities (78%). Although to a lesser extent, there are also policies in favor of students of low socioeconomic status (9.1%), *quilombolas*⁷ (17.8%), transsexuals and transvestites (10.4%) and holders of humanitarian visas (refugees) (0.5%). It is noted, therefore, that the main targets of graduate policies are black students, browns and indigenous, which demonstrates a change from undergraduate courses, in which social quotas have long been the majority (Feres Júnior, Daflon, & Campos, 2011).

The analysis of the form of institution of the affirmative policies by the graduate programs is relevant since it allows us to identify the institutions that created these policies by their own initiative and those that were forced to do so. The origin of the change initiative indicates whether there was a real desire for change and transformation of the institution, as well as being directly related to the type of institutional change promoted by decision makers. The data collected allowed us to identify four ways of institution and approval of policies:

- Programs that create affirmative action because of resolutions of the University Council valid for all graduate courses of a certain university (73.1%);
- Programs that created affirmative action on its own initiative and decision of its members (17.9%);
- Universities and programs that have created affirmative action in compliance with state laws (8.6%); and
- Programs that created affirmative action by decision of its members, but at the initiative of external bodies, such as the calls of the Ford Foundation and the Carlos Chagas Foundation (FCC) (0.4%).

Until the cut-off date of the present research (January 2018), I identified quota policies in graduate studies approved by the University Councils of 16 public universities.

One of the main aspects of the debate about the creation of affirmative action for graduate courses is the concern with the programs' academic excellence. Although it is not possible to say with certainty that the change of criteria in admissions would result in a reduction of excellence, there are concerns about impacts on the programs' quality and CAPES evaluation, due to the supposed need to extend the deadlines for defending theses and dissertations, student achievement and the impact of their publications, among others (De Fiori et al., 2017). Therefore, the best evaluated programs could present greater resistance to the creation of affirmative action policies due to the concern with their quality and the evaluation made by CAPES.

The survey crossed affirmative policies with the grade obtained by the graduate programs in the last CAPES four-year evaluation. Most of the programs that created affirmative action have grades 3 (30%) and 4 (41%), while only 11.5% of the initiatives implemented by programs with grades 6 (7.6%) and 7 (3.9%), those with the highest standard of excellence according to CAPES.

Also, studies show that although access to the university has been democratized, and there has been a significant increase in the number of blacks and browns, there was no equal access to all careers: areas less valued by the labor market, such as the Humanities and Applied Social Sciences included more than the hard areas (Ribeiro e Schlegel, 2015). Thus, one of the variables analyzed in the research is the

⁷ A *quilombola* is an Afro-Brazilian resident of quilombo settlements first established by escaped slaves in Brazil. They are the descendants of Afro-Brazilian slaves who escaped from slave plantations that existed in Brazil until abolition in 1888.

distribution of affirmative policies to graduate courses in the different areas of knowledge, according to the way CAPES defines them⁸.

It should be noted that the areas of Human Sciences and Applied Social Sciences have the highest number of graduate programs with affirmative action, with 43.5% and 33%, respectively. Next, the areas of Linguistics, Arts and Letters appear with 30.8% and Multidisciplinary with 25.9%. The areas of Agrarian Sciences, Biological Sciences, Health Sciences and Exact and Earth Sciences present percentages in the range of 21% to 24%. The area with the lowest proportion of programs with affirmative action is Engineering, with 20.3%.

When analyzing only the programs that instituted affirmative action on their own initiative, disregarding those that created by legal determination or university council resolutions, it can be seen that the programs in the areas of Human Sciences and Applied Social Sciences continue to be those with greater number of policies within this form of institution (50% and 20.1%, respectively).

It is also noted that in the area of Engineering, no graduate program created affirmative policies on its own initiative and the programs only created these measures as a consequence of resolutions of university councils (16.4%) and of state laws (83.6%). This shows that programs in this area are more resistant to changing their selective processes and creating affirmative policies, only doing so when they are forced by their universities or by law. Respondents from Engineering and Agrarian Sciences areas opposed the creation of affirmative action because they understood that these policies violate the principle of merit and consider that the existing inequalities in universities (undergraduate and graduate) are social and not racial.

PATTERNS OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

The reservation of seats in the entering class of most graduate programs that adopted affirmative action does not exclude the traditional phases of evaluation from the admissions process. However, while those policies aim at including individuals from underprivileged groups, it is very likely that some of these traditional procedures are highly exclusionary, what affects the effectiveness of inclusive policies (Santos, 2010). It is known that low-income applicants or those from indigenous groups are commonly eliminated in the first stages of the process due to the requirement of proficiency in foreign languages. Moreover, some proposals highlight that the barriers to access faced by blacks would not be removed simply through the creation of additional seats, but that the adoption of other measures would be necessary, such as the reduction of score minimums. In relation to indigenous people, it has been argued that it is important to consider the specificities of their educational process and intercultural schooling as well as the fact that students from indigenous groups have demands and needs that are different from those of students from non-indigenous groups (De Fiori et al., 2017; Marques et al., 2017).

Some programs have considered the obstacles faced by vulnerable groups in accessing graduate school when the new policy was formulated, and they altered their admissions processes, considering the reduction of score minimums, the exemption from exams for indigenous candidates, the application of new criteria for the verification of proficiency in a foreign language, among others.

⁸ The areas are: Exact and Earth Sciences, Biological Sciences, Engineering, Health Sciences, Agrarian Sciences, Applied Social Sciences, Human Sciences, Linguistics, Letters and Arts and the Multidisciplinary area.

Considering that affirmative action and inclusive policies directly affect an institution – graduate school, the departments and their rules for application and admission – it is relevant to explore institutional changes that have been required, proposed and/or implemented.

This section of the paper explores the institutional transformation of graduate programs following the adoption of affirmative action policies using the typology developed by Thelen and Mahoney (2010) about forms of institutional change, institutional characteristics that allow for changes, and the role of each agent of change.

Some questions that guide this analysis are: what types of change in graduate school admissions processes have been promoted by the creation of affirmative action? What institutional characteristics and properties allow for change? Who are the agents of change? To what extent has the creation of spaces for discussion and other mechanisms impacted policy design and resulted in institutional change?

In order to identify and classify different types of change, this research involved the analysis and codification of application guides of 137 graduate programs that took the initiative to create their own affirmative action. The main stages of the process and the criteria for admission have been codified and used to build a scale of change that enables the identification of the number of alterations related to affirmative action policies.

INSTITUTIONS AND SOURCES OF CHANGE

The concept of institution is central to approaches that seek to understand processes of institutional change. The literature offers many definitions for institutions (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991a; Jepperson, 1991). Ostrom (2005, p.3) conceptualizes institutions as prescriptions used to organize forms of repetitive and structured interaction, including those within the family, neighborhood, markets, associations and governments in all scales. Individuals who interact in circumstances structured by rules often face choices about which actions and strategies to adopt, and these choices have consequences for themselves and others. Scott (2001, p. 48), on the other hand, describes institutions as cult-cognitive, normative and regulating elements that provide stability and meaning to social life. For North (1990, p. 3), institutions are “the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction”. Therefore, institutions reduce uncertainty by providing a structure for daily life and incentives to political, social and economic exchange.

The literature also conceptualizes institutions as distributive instruments loaded with power implications (Hall, 1986). Despite the many differences, almost all definitions of institutions treat them as relatively durable elements of social and political life (rules, norms, procedures) that structure behavior and cannot be easily or instantly altered. According to Powell (1991, p. 197), what has been institutionalized tends to be quite stagnant and resistant to change, given the fact that change is costly and difficult.

In the context of this analysis, affirmative action affects an institution directly, namely the graduate programs and their admissions processes, as they have the power of influencing the selection of people who might become part of the group of researchers and future professors of the country, a space currently occupied by a particular dominant group in ethno-racial, social and regional terms.

In Brazil, graduate programs have been historically accessed and occupied predominantly by an intellectual white elite, in which prevailed the notion of pure meritocracy, without any consideration to the rather asymmetric distribution of opportunities within Brazilian society and to the obstacles faced by certain groups to access this educational level. There is, consequently, a tendency for continuity and maintenance

of the same criteria and admissions process, once these have been seen as sufficient to achieve the desired outcomes by the actors involved and to the preservation of the resources channeled to these programs (Mahoney, 2000; Pierson, 2000, 2004, 2015, 2018).

This tendency for continuity is also noticed in the collection of data, as there is a scarcity of information about the participation of different ethno-racial groups at this educational level. Analyses based on the demographic statistics developed by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) confirm that graduate school has been predominantly occupied by white people and that it is tainted with enormous regional, ethno-racial, and economic inequalities (Artes, 2016; CGEE, 2012; FCC, 2015; Paixão et al., 2010; Rosemberg, 2013; Venturini, 2017a).

As any other institution, graduate programs and their admissions processes have rules that directly affect the allocation of resources, and therefore, they are involved in several disputes related to the distribution of these resources. As Schattschneider (1960, p. 66) argues, “the definition of the alternatives is the supreme instrument of power” and the creation of affirmative action, in many cases, has consequences to the distribution of resources related not only to the available seats, but also to the preferential allocation of scholarships to certain groups and the evaluation of programs. Many actors who oppose the creation of these policies argue that they can negatively impact the evaluation of graduate programs by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) and, therefore, the number of available resources and research funds to those institutions. Given the scenario, there is a lot of uncertainty in relation to these policies, what has contributed to the resistance to change expressed by many of the actors involved. Thus, understanding the sources and the different types of change that have been generated by affirmative action policies is crucial.

The literature sustains that the process of institutional change can be the result of external or internal shocks, as well as abrupt or incremental shocks. For a long time, institutionalism, in all its aspects – sociological, rational choice and historical – was mainly dedicated to processes of abrupt changes brought by external shocks. In order to explain the circumstances of change, historical institutionalists have, in many occasions, emphasized “critical junctures”, understood as periods that open opportunities to the agents to change the development trajectory of a policy or an institution, what results in a new path of development that will then persist for a long period of time (Capoccia, 2015; Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007; Katznelson, 2003).

Capoccia (2015, pp. 147–148; 2007) points out that the analysis of critical junctures is closely related to the notion of path dependence, according to which institutional arrangements established in a certain moment in history become deep-rooted due to their capacity to shape incentives, world views and resources of actors and groups affected by the institution⁹. For Pierson (2004, p. 21), path dependence refers to social processes that exhibit positive feedback, or in other words, to processes according to which the benefits of current activities increase throughout time when compared to other possible options, as the costs of change are high because of the element of uncertainty. Therefore, increasing returns explain why actors have very strong incentives to focus on a single alternative and to proceed on a particular path (Pierson, 2004, p. 23). That is why, after they are created, institutions are difficult to change, considering that many times a very rigid form has been incorporated into the design of institutions in order to reduce uncertainty and increase stability (Pierson, 2004, p. 43).

⁹ On path dependence, see: Mahoney, 2000; Pierson, 2000, 2004, 2015.

Considering all these challenges to institutional change, an important line of research about the subject resorted to a discontinuous model of change, in which long periods of stability are periodically disturbed by external shocks that open space to sudden institutional changes, involving, in many cases, the collapse of a set of institutions and their replacement by others (Baumgartner e Jones, 1993). Thus, “critical junctures” are often attributed to great exogenous shocks, such as wars or economic crises, that act as catalyzers of lasting institutional changes (Pierson, 2004, p. 135).

In the case of affirmative action in graduate programs, it is possible to note the influence of an external element that served as inductor to the creation and diffusion of these policies throughout the country. The executive order issued by the Ministry of Education (MEC) nº 13/2016 established that federal institutions of high education should present proposals about the inclusion of blacks, browns, indigenous people, and students with disabilities into their graduate programs. After the publication of the executive order, many graduate programs started to create and implement affirmative action in their admissions processes. Although this decision had only established that the programs should present proposals for inclusion, many graduate programs and universities understood that the creation of affirmative action was mandatory. Thus, despite the fact that it does not represent an exogenous shock as conceptualized by the literature, the executive order could be considered an external element to the graduate programs and universities that acted as an incentive, influencing the creation of an increasing number of measures towards the inclusion of underprivileged groups in the last two years.

In relation to universities that approved resolutions establishing that all graduate programs should implement affirmative action in their admissions processes, documents and other information collected in interviews show that in 64% of the cases, policies were created in response to the executive order.

It should be noted that in one of the universities that were interviewed, the Dean’s office was already in favor of the creation of affirmative action and it saw the order as an opportunity to convince the departments to approve a policy to the entire university¹⁰. Therefore, the interpretation of the order as mandatory by universities and graduate programs can be considered a situation that opens space for actors to alter the existing rules and to finally implement policies that they agree with, but that have not implemented before due to the strong opposition of other actors in a different scenario (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010, p. 4).

In other 4 universities (36%) in which the resolution was approved, a policy of affirmative action was created before the publication of the executive order and it has been motivated by the request of specific graduate programs that wanted to respond to students’ demands and the pressure from social movements. The Federal University of Goiás (UFG), for instance, was the second in the country to approve a resolution establishing that all programs should create this kind of policy. According to an article published by actors who were involved in the process of formulating these policies (Diniz Filho, 2016) and to an interview with a representative of the university, the institution started to debate about this subject in August 2014 because one of the graduate programs (Social Anthropology) aimed to adopt ethno-racial quotas and, due to this request, the policy was the subject of an extensive debate that resulted in the approval of a norm that was applicable to the entire university¹¹.

As the data shows, even after the publication of the executive order n. 13/2016 and its interpretation by many programs and universities as a mandatory requirement, until January 2018, only 26,4% of all graduate programs in public universities have implemented some form of affirmative action in their

¹⁰ Interview with a representative of the Federal University of Pelotas (UFPEL), August 3, 2018.

¹¹ Interview with a representative of the Federal University of Goiás (UFG), July 5, 2018.

admission processes. In addition to that, even though the executive order has resulted in a sudden increase of programs with affirmative action policies, many of these programs were already going through a process of change since 2002.

The data also indicates that deeper institutional changes – the modification of criteria for admission – are the result of endogenous and incremental processes, in which actors who were favorable to affirmative action were able to bring in the transformations.

As an example, in 2012, the graduate program in Social Anthropology of the National Museum, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (PPGAS-MN/UFRJ) became a reference when they approved affirmative action. The policy has been introduced as a response to graduate students' complaints about the lack of blacks and indigenous students in their cohorts. The proposal was presented in 2007, submitted to several editions over the years and finally approved by the collegiate board in 2012. This is an example in which the proposal for the modification of the admissions process met strong internal resistance, what resulted in a long process of discussion before the approval of the policy. As DiMaggio and Powel (1991b) assert, some organizations respond more promptly to pressure (internal or external), while others only transform after a long period of resistance.

Therefore, the exogenous shock model does not seem appropriate to explain affirmative action in graduate programs, once the publication of the executive order cannot be considered a significant external shock. Additionally, as indicated by Thelen (2003, p. 209), the exogenous shock model does not consider that some institutional arrangements are more resistant than others to change even when facing external shocks. This would explain why most forms of institutional change occurs in the absence of critical junctures, and in most cases, endogenous mechanisms are more influent than those derived by exogenous shocks. It does seem like this is the case of affirmative action in graduate programs in Brazil, because, despite the publication of the executive order n.13/2016, many graduate programs in public universities have not bothered to discuss the issue in their collegiate units.

It is worth noting that there is resistance to more substantial changes in admission processes. The understanding of some scholars who were interviewed is that there is great uncertainty about the possible impact that these modifications could cause on the score attributed to the graduate program by CAPES, and consequently, how this could translate into less resources or funding available for research and affect the status of the program in the academic field.

It is then necessary to make use of a model that comprehends a systematic theory of institutional change and that complements the analyses of punctuated equilibrium and path dependence with mechanisms that capture the logic of institutional evolution and change, as the model developed by Thelen (2004; 2003, 2009a) and others (Hacker, Pierson e Thelen, 2015; Mahoney e Thelen, 2010; Streeck e Thelen, 2005).

TYPES OF CHANGE

Our goal in this section is to identify the different types of change that happen in graduate programs and their admission processes through the creation and adoption of affirmative action. In order to do so, it is important to not only classify the types of change, but also to develop analyses that are capable of identifying the sources of change and which institutional characteristics allowed the actors to make such modifications. It is also necessary to understand the role played by the supporters and challengers of the

institution in relation to each type of change, in order to explain why and how a particular type of change occurs in detriment of others.

In most programs that adopted affirmative action, quotas do not exclude the traditional stages of the admission process, such as required proficiency exams in foreign language, written exams, interviews, the presentation of research projects, curriculum and publication evaluation, among others. However, if these policies aim at the inclusion of individuals from underprivileged groups, some of these traditional procedures have a high potential of exclusion and they can affect the efficacy of these policies. It is argued that low-income and indigenous students, for instance, are often eliminated in the initial stages of the admission process, especially due to the requirement of proficiency in foreign languages. Santos (2010) approaches this issue when discussing the process of creation of a research field in Human Rights at the Law School at the University of São Paulo (USP) and the implementation of a policy of quotas. In this program's admissions process, the first stage consists of an eliminatory exam that attests the candidate's proficiency in foreign languages. The author explains that after the creation of the new field of research and the implementation of quotas, 61 students applied to the reserved seats, but only 4 were approved in the foreign language exam. This scenario resulted in the questioning of the admissions process before the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP) of the State of São Paulo and the opening of an investigation, in which the MP recommended the reduction of the minimum score at the proficiency exam in foreign language as a way to enable the fulfillment of the seats allotted to these groups.

Some proposals indicate that the obstacles to the access of blacks would not be removed only through the creation of reserved seats, and other measures would need to be adopted, such as, for instance, the reduction of score minimums. In relation to indigenous people, the proposals that have been presented have argued for the importance of considering the specificities of the education process and intercultural schooling as well as the fact that these people are systematically submitted to processes of invisibilization and have demands and needs that are different from the demands and needs of afrodescendants and others (De Fiori et al., 2017; Marques et al., 2017).

In this context, the changes that occurred in graduate programs and their admission processes due to the creation of affirmative action are analyzed according to the typology developed by Streeck and Thelen (2009b) and Mahoney and Thelen (2010), who identify the existence of four types of institutional change based on the *locus* of transformation: displacement, layering, drift, and conversion.

Displacement

Displacement occurs when old rules and practices are removed and replaced by new models that were previously unknown or ignored (Mahoney e Thelen, 2010; Streeck e Thelen, 2005). This type of change can be abrupt and implicate in an unexpected change with the collapse of institutions and their replacement by new rules. Displacement can also be a gradual and slow process, when newly introduced rules and institutions compete with older rules instead of immediately overthrowing them.

Layering

Layering occurs through a process of differentiated growth (Streeck, Thelen, 2005, p. 23), in which minor modifications are introduced and coexist with old practices (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010, p. 15). In contrast to displacement, the process of layering does not involve the creation of totally new rules and

institutions, but it is connected to the occurrence of alterations, revisions and additions to the existing rules¹². Mahoney and Thelen (2010, p. 17) understand that layering may result in substantial changes if the amendments alter the logic of institutions to the extent that it “compromises the stable reproduction of the original ‘core’”. The authors use the example of “adding a voucher option to an existing school system while maintaining other features intact” and how this could result in changes in the structure and in the funding of these schools.

Thelen (2003) points out that the process of institutional evolution through layering can be exemplified by the work of Eric Schickler (1999, 2001), whose research about the American Congress illustrates a pattern of institutional change that combines “elements of lock-in and innovation”, considering that institutions of the Congress evolved through the inclusion of new institutional arrangements within pre-existing structures. According to the author, “institutional innovators accommodated and in many ways adapted to the logic of the preexisting system, working around those elements they could not change” (Kathleen Thelen, 2003, p. 226). According to Mahoney and Thelen (2010), the process of layering usually occurs when the actors do not have the capacity to actually change the original rules or to create new rules or institutions or a clear alternative system, as it is the case with displacement. The actors act within the existing system and add new rules without disposing of the old rules. However, the process of layering may result in big changes in the long term.

Another example offered by Thelen (2003) is related to constitutions, which are, in general, marked by an institutional rigidity with rules to the amending processes that demand great proportions of votes. When this is the case, we may say that constitutions evolve through a process of layering, in which the institutions are adapted to the new circumstances, but a great part of their core is preserved (Kathleen Thelen, 2003, p. 228).

Drift

Drift can be identified in situations in which the rules remain formally unchanged, but their impact (or effects) changes as a result of changes in external conditions (Hacker, Pierson & Thelen, 2015; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010; Streeck & Thelen, 2005; Thelen, 2004). Therefore, drift occurs when external transformations alter the result of the rules without any change to the rules themselves (Hacker, Pierson & Thelen, 2015, p. 184). In other words, the incidence of processes of drift depends on how sensitive the effects of an institution are to the context (Hacker, Pierson & Thelen, 2015, p. 180). There are cases in which the inaction of actors can have the effect of altering substantive results. Some authors offer as an example the phenomenon of changes in the population distribution of electoral districts in some democracies and how this can cause problems of dissociation, distorting the results of the election by increasing the representation of particular constituencies. In these cases, politicians who avoid reviewing the limits of the districts in the face of population movements end up promoting change through drift, since their inaction alter electoral results (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010, p. 17).

Conversion

In conversion, the rules also remain formally unchanged, but they start to be interpreted and promulgated in different ways, what makes the existing institutions to be redirected to new purposes, transforming the roles that they play and their functions (Hacker, Pierson & Thelen, 2015, p. 185–186;

¹² Tullia G. Falleti (2009), for instance, sustains that reforms in the Brazilian health system between 1964 and 1988 were the result of a process of institutional change through layering.

Mahoney & Thelen, 2010; Thelen, 2003, p. 228, 2004, p. 36). Hence, when actors find themselves before a set of new problems, they are able to confront them by taking advantage of the ambiguities that are inherent to institutions in order to convert the institution to new goals, functions and purposes. Instead of changing institutional rules, actors start to use them in different ways and to redirect the institutions to functions and goals that are different from those that initially inspired their creation (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010, p. 17–18).

Thelen (2003, p. 229) offers the example of a process of redirecting institutions and their apparatuses involving social policies against poverty and unemployment in the United States described by Margaret Weir. Weir's (1992) work shows that Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" program has been originally conceived as a program tackling poverty that did not include issues of racial discrimination, but given the ascension of civil rights movements, the president saw the opportunity to channel the resources to Afro-American communities.

Changes in graduate programs

The data shows that there are programs that have considered the obstacles encountered by many groups to access graduate courses when formulating affirmative action policies, such as the reduction of score minimums, the exemption of indigenous candidates from foreign language exams, the application of new criteria for attesting proficiency in foreign language to all candidates, among others. Therefore, it is important to understand what types of change have been promoted by the creation of affirmative action in the admission processes in graduate programs.

In order to do so, application guides of 137 graduate programs that adopted affirmative action policies by their own initiative have been analyzed with the aim to verify if there were any other measures beyond quotas or additional seats created in favor of the beneficiaries. First, the main characteristics of the admissions processes of these graduate courses have been listed. Following that, codes have been created in order to identify the particular characteristics that were subject to modifications in favor of certain groups and those that remained the same and applicable to all candidates.

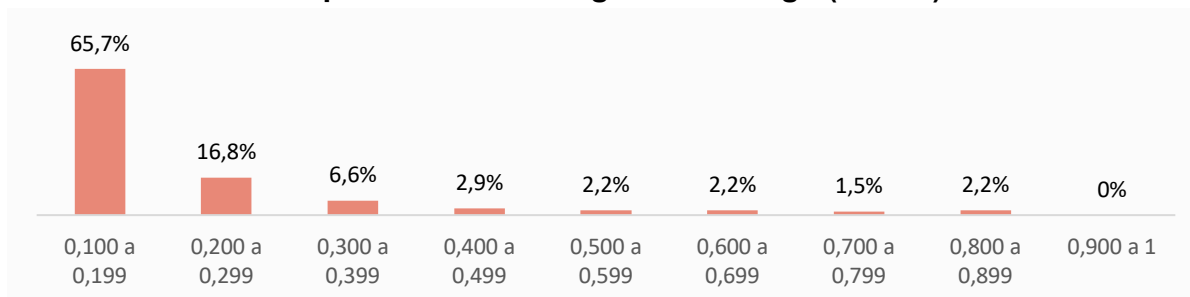
Subsequently, the degree of change (GM) have been established based on the ratio between the number of changes (m) and the number of characteristics of the admission process (c), according to the formula below:

$$GM = \frac{m}{c} = \frac{m_1 + m_2 + m_3 + m_n}{c_1 + c_2 + c_3 + c_n}$$

Subtitle:

GM : degree of change m : the sum of changes c : the sum of characteristics of the admission process

The data about the degree of change of all the programs that adopted affirmative action by their own initiative have been transformed into a scale of change (EM) whose variation is between 0,1 and 1. By analyzing the distribution of the degrees of change, it can be noticed that 89,1% of the programs made changes in less than 40% of the characteristics of their admissions processes. In 65,7% of the cases, the change varies between 10% and 19,9%. The proportion of the programs that went through more significant changes or higher than 40% is very low (10,9%).

Graph 2 – Ratio of degree of change (N=137)

Source: personal elaboration

Based on the collected data, it is possible to notice the presence of two main forms of institutional change in graduate programs: displacement and layering.

Cases of displacement

In affirmative action in graduate programs, the modality of displacement manifests itself in cases in which the traditional admission process is mostly or totally modified to adequate itself to the needs and obstacles faced by certain groups, such as the indigenous. This means that it is not merely related to the reservation of seats to students of certain groups, but also to the alteration of several rules and criteria in the admissions process in order to make it more inclusive.

It has been considered displacement any case in which the graduate programs altered more than 70% of the criteria for admission in favor of certain groups, meaning those that present a degree of change equal or superior to 0,7. The data in the graph 35 above shows that only 3,6% of the programs have degrees of change superior to 0,7, what corresponds to only 5 graduate programs.

In these cases, the programs did not limit themselves to the adoption of policies of reserving seats or creating new ones, but they modified several stages of the admission processes, such as the reduction of score minimums (*notas de corte*)¹³ to certain groups, the creation of new rules to attest proficiency in foreign language, the expectation of preference in the distribution of scholarships, among others.

First, it is noticeable that among the 5 programs with a high degree of change, 3 programs are in Social Anthropology, and 1 program is in Sociology and in Anthropology. The graduate program in Social Anthropology from USP, for instance, is the one that presents the highest degree of change: 0,889.

This indicates what the literature denominates isomorphism, that is, isomorphism constitutes a process that forces an organization to look like other organizations shaped by a similar set of conditions (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991a, p. 66). DiMaggio and Powell (1991b, p. 70) sustain that organizations have the tendency to utilize as models the practices of other organizations in their field that they perceive as more legitimate or successful. In addition to that, the growth of professional networks in a certain field makes new organizational models to be rapidly disseminated. In this sense, the uncertainty or the lack of information about affirmative action compels the programs to mimic practices that have been established by other programs in the same field, what may result in higher homogeneity within certain domains and great conformity to bigger organizations or to those with more significant status within the field.

¹³ Score minimums may refer to the minimum scores that an applicant must achieve in order to be approved in each stage of the admissions process or the general score that has been established as a condition for final approval.

In 3 out of 5 programs with processes of change classified as displacement, the rules for admission have been divided into two different application guides. One was directed to the larger pool of candidates and to seats reserved to some other categories and the other one directed exclusively to the admission of indigenous students. In PPGAS-MN/UFRJ's case, with a degree of change of 0,7, the first proposal of affirmative action elaborated by the collective of students and presented to the coordination of the program in 2007 exposed the reasons why so many candidates ended up not being admitted into the program¹⁴ and highlighted that the obstacles to the access of blacks would not be removed only with the creation of additional seats. It would be necessary to adopt other measures, such as the reduction of score minimums. The proposal could have been received and archived by the coordination, given the understanding of the problem (the low number of blacks and indigenous amongst faculty members and students) as irrelevant. However, there was an effective process of policy formulation between 2007 and 2012, characterized by the discussion of the original proposal and of possible alternatives until the definition of the final proposal. The proposal was the subject of an extensive process of discussion that involved the participation of a great number of actors with different roles, opinions and perspectives¹⁵. The resolution approved by the collegiate of the program established that the program would offer, yearly, (a) a percentage of seats (minimum of 20%) reserved to afro-descendant candidates who opt to be considered under this category, who would have a lower minimum score (of 5 points¹⁶) in all stages, and (b) additional seats reserved to indigenous (whose number would be stipulated according to the demand¹⁷) who would be submitted to a differentiated admission process, in which there would be no exams of specific subjects, nor the translation of texts in foreign language (Venturini, 2017b).

Cases of change through layering

The modality of change through layering can be identified in cases where the traditional admission process to the graduate program is not completely modified in order to adapt to certain groups, but it is sustained while it coexists with new rules that have an inclusive nature. As in cases of displacement, application guides have been analyzed and the modifications that have been realized in each stage of the admissions process have been codified according to Table 1.

As previously mentioned, the external element (executive order 13/2016) resulted in an increase in the number of programs with regular or additional seats reserved to affirmative action. Nevertheless, in a great number of cases, there have been no changes in the traditional criteria for admission and those applying under the categories contemplated by the new policies have been submitted to the same stages and rules that apply to other candidates.

Amongst graduate programs that approved affirmative action independently, the ones with degrees of change varying between 0,1 and 0,19 are those in which the only change in the admissions process was the expectation of creation of quotas or additional seats to certain groups. But no other adjustments have been made in the process by the programs exhibiting the above-mentioned degrees of change.

¹⁴ The two reasons were: (a) the applicant was approved with a score that was superior to 7 (seven) in the three eliminatory phases, but s/he would not be positioned well enough in the ranking to be admitted; or (b) the applicant did not achieve the minimum score of 7 (seven) in order to be approved in any of the phases and was rejected.

¹⁵ The proposal was discussed in meetings between students and faculty members, in seminars with specialists in affirmative action, with representatives of social movements and with blacks and indigenous students from undergraduate and graduate programs.

¹⁶ The minimum score for applicants who are not opting for affirmative action is 7.

¹⁷ The Resolution establishes that the minimum of seats should be respected for the masters and one seat should be reserved for the PhD in each admissions process.

A great number of programs within this particular range indicate the occurrence of what has been called mimetic isomorphism – the adoption of standardized response to uncertainty – and coercive isomorphism – change as direct response to an order or governmental demand (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991a, p. 67–69). In mimetic isomorphism, there is a tendency to the imitation of existing and viable models that are also inexpensive in situations in which the organization finds itself before a problem with ambiguous causes and unclear solutions. In the case of graduate programs, one should notice that the majority of the programs that created affirmative action adopted a model of quotas that is largely disseminated in admissions processes in undergraduate programs. The coercive isomorphism, in turn, results from formal or informal pressures from other organizations or governmental organs of which the organization depends. These pressures can be seen as a form of coercion, as in the case of the executive order n. 13/2016, interpreted as a binding order from MEC to compel graduate programs to create affirmative action.

Furthermore, it is also possible to sustain that the adoption of the modality of quotas and the preservation of other stages in the admissions process represent a case of path dependence, once the benefits and positive results of this modality in undergraduate courses offer the actors strong incentives to use the same alternative instead of thinking in other solutions designed specifically to graduate programs, as this would demand resources, time and it would increase uncertainty (Pierson, 2004, pp. 21–23).

In 19 universities that approved affirmative action to all their graduate programs, there are 4 in which applicants from groups contemplated by affirmative action policies are submitted to the same rules and criteria applied to other applicants, and the programs are not authorized to create rules that differentiate the minimum score required from all candidates. According to an interviewee from the Federal University of the South Border (UFFS):

But we, in graduate programs, honor a policy in which we consider as crucial the merit of each candidate in the admission process, understand? [...] And how would we select blacks students admitted to graduate school is that they need to deserve, to be approved in a competitive admission process. And we do not have two separate processes. We have not created an admission process for blacks, and we have not created one for indigenous. They participate in an admission process with all the others [...].¹⁸

In other universities, graduate programs have the autonomy to define their own criteria for the selection of their new students, and it would be possible, in principle, to establish different score minimums.

Degrees of change between 0,2 and 0,299 indicate that two stages or characteristics of the process have been modified. In cases presenting degrees of change within this range, it is noted that, beyond the creation of quotas or additional seats, programs reduced the score minimums to certain groups that were benefited by these policies or they adjusted the criteria for applicants within these groups to attest proficiency in foreign languages.

In some programs, all the stages of the admissions process remain the same, but in order to be admitted, candidates applying through affirmative action are offered a lower minimum score. This is the case of the programs in Economic Science and Economic Development at the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP), Social History at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), among others.

Besides the reservation of seats and the issue of score minimums in admissions processes, some programs resorted to other measures related to the obstacles to the inclusion of vulnerable groups in graduate school. In degree changes between 0,3 and 0,399, for instance, amongst the three modifications

¹⁸ Interview with a representative of the Federal University of the South Border (UFFS), July 6, 2018.

that have been observed, it should be highlighted the non-applicability of certain stages and criteria for the selection of new students to particular groups, such as the exemption of indigenous candidates from the written exam or the foreign language exam.

The importance of being proficient in foreign languages and to prove this kind of skill in the admission process is evidenced by the fact that a great portion of the literature is written in foreign languages, especially in English, and by the fact that many books and articles have not been translated yet. Thus, proficiency in foreign language would be relevant to define the quantity and the quality of the literature students will have access to, and to enable participation in international conferences and symposiums, as well as publication in foreign journals.

In the application guides analyzed, it has been noted that some programs dismissed candidates applying through affirmative action and others from underprivileged social groups from taking foreign language exams. The group that benefited the most with this decision has been the indigenous, which has been dismissed from having to prove proficiency in foreign language or could consider Portuguese as a foreign language, since the applicants within this group may have their native languages as first languages.

Among the inclusive measures that have been applied to all candidates (who opt or not for affirmative action), it is possible to highlight: the concession of a longer deadline to all candidates approved in the process to attest proficiency in foreign language; the possibility of taking a new test after a established period of time; and the approval in a foreign language exam as part of a classifying stage of the admission process instead of eliminatory. The graduate program in Social Anthropology at USP is one of the examples in which the applicants – opting or not for affirmative action – have a longer deadline to proof proficiency in foreign language. According to the application guide, candidates should go through an exam to attest proficiency in a foreign language before they apply to take their qualifying exams, what usually happens in the second year, or fourth semester, of their graduate courses. In the graduate programs in Economic Science and Economic Development at UNICAMP, proficiency in foreign language is only a requirement for the thesis or dissertation defense, what allow students to learn or improve their knowledge in foreign languages during the master or PhD programs.

It should also be highlighted that many of these institutions offer instrumental courses in foreign languages to applicants who opt for affirmative action and who have not been approved in their first attempt to take the test, such as the graduate program in Sociology at University of Brasília (UnB). According to the application guide, if the applicant opting for the reserved seats is not approved in the first exam, the program offers a free instrumental course in foreign language that should be taken between the first and the second exam.

Moreover, some programs altered their rules for the distribution of scholarships – often tied to the classification of candidates in the admission process, in order to establish that those applying through affirmative action will have the priority in the allocation of scholarships. This demonstrates that, besides the adjustments in the admissions process, some programs are concerned in creating measures addressing the likelihood of beneficiaries to stay enrolled. The creation of policies geared towards the permanence of these students in the programs is crucial to guarantee the effectiveness of policies that seek to increase access to socially vulnerable groups, such as indigenous, *quilombolas*, and low-income students. In his discussion of the policy that has been approved by the Institute of Philosophy and Human Sciences at UNICAMP, Mário Augusto Medeiros da Silva (2016, p.177) points out that some of those who are admitted to graduate school through quotas come from other institutions and other places in the country, what makes it necessary to think not only in scholarships, but also in policies of student housing. Policies that aim to

ensure that students will have the condition to complete their studies and get the degree, such as scholarships, student housing and dining services, can also become an incentive to a larger inflow of students from different parts of the country, expanding not only social and ethno-racial diversity, but also regional. However, the creation of policies for students to stay enrolled have been mentioned as a challenge by the actors involved in the formulation of affirmative action policies in graduate programs, especially in a scenario of economic crisis and of reduction of resources allocated to scholarships and research funding in general.

The data shows that 9,5% of the programs that created affirmative action independently have published the rules for the admission of students in separate application guides. One of them contains the rules to all candidates applying through affirmative action, and the other would specifically address indigenous people or other groups.

The graduate program in Social Anthropology at UnB has a separate admissions process for indigenous applicants, but in contrast to PPGAS-MN, the ones who opt for the affirmative action are submitted to a classifying oral exam and an exam in interpretation and comprehension of English texts. It is also possible to take a new exam in case the first attempt is not successful.

In addition to admissions processes that are specific to indigenous applicants, some programs also apply such measures to applicants with disabilities. The graduate program in Linguistics (PPGL) at the UnB offers 6 seats to deaf applicants, who take their exams in sign language and have more time to conclude both their exams in sign language and their written exams. Despite the high percentage of programs that created quotas for candidates with disabilities, the inclusion of this particular group is not limited to the adaptation of the exams and the consideration of the difficulties of communication and dislocation of applicants during the process. It becomes necessary to consider more effective ways to welcome these groups into the universities, such as the creation of real conditions for accessibility in the buildings (adapted restrooms, ramps, elevators, etc.), technological apparatuses that enhance communication (printers in braille, trained professionals in Brazilian sign language, etc.) and the training of people for receiving these individuals.

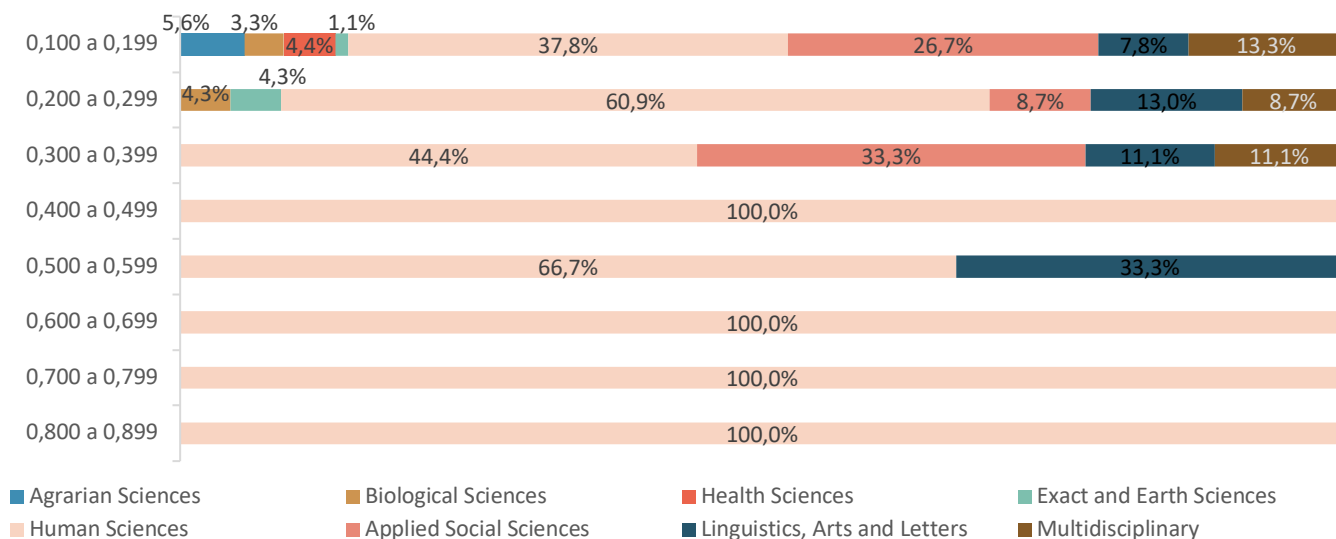
WHAT EXPLAINS EACH TYPE OF CHANGE?

The data indicates that most public universities and graduate programs have gone through processes of change classified as layering and that there are only a few cases of displacement in which we observe almost a total transformation of their admissions processes due to the consideration of the many barriers faced by certain groups. But why?

As Thelen (1999, p. 397) suggests, institutions are built upon a set of ideational and material bases that open up or not opportunities for change. The collected data shows some factors that have somehow contributed to not only the approval of affirmative action, but also to the alteration of the criteria for admission. The first factor is the field of knowledge the program is inserted in. The data shows that graduate programs in Human Sciences or Humanities have made the most significant changes. The graph 2 illustrates that all the programs that presented a degree of change of 0,6 or higher are within this field. It must be noted that this general area of study is predominant in all degrees or change. Besides Humanities, the next field of research presenting higher levels of change is Linguistics, Modern Languages and Arts, with 33% of the cases presenting a degree change of 0,5. In lower degrees of change, there is greater distribution amongst the different fields of knowledge. From degree 0,100 to 0,199, there are programs in 8

areas, and from degree 0,200 to 0,299 in 6 areas. Finally, from degree 0,300 to 0,399, there are 4 different areas of knowledge.

Graph 4 – Distribution of the programs that created affirmative action autonomously according to degree of change and field of knowledge (N=136)



Source: own elaboration.

The predominance of human sciences seems to be related to its proximity to themes of social, ethno-racial, and gender inequality. During the interviews, it was possible to notice that the programs in Humanities in general (Human Sciences, Social and Applied Sciences, Linguistics, Modern Languages and Arts) had much more information about the obstacles that certain groups face in their journey to access education, especially higher education, what would allow greater recognition of the existence of the problem in graduate programs and of the need to do something about it.

In addition to this, the programs in these fields, in general, saw the admission of students from a variety of backgrounds as beneficial, or something that could help them to improve scientific research. This means that those interviewed in these fields suggested that diversity was important to enable new problems and methodological approaches to be presented and researched, something that has not been considered in programs in the fields of Engineering, Agricultural Sciences, Exact Sciences, and Earth Sciences.

To test the hypothesis of the influence of the program area on the degree of change, a statistical model was used for categorical data, specifically logit regression. As the variable degree of change was not categorical, it was first transformed into a categorical variable with two values: (1) "low degree of change" corresponding to degrees equal to or below 0.167 and refers to programs that changed only one characteristic of admission process (such as the reservation of seats) (2) "medium/high degree of change" that is equivalent to degrees greater than 0.167 and programs that have made more than one change in their admissions processes.

Model 1 examines the association between the dependent variable "degree of change" and program areas (independent variable). Model 2 adds the independent variable "grade", which is equivalent to the program grade in the CAPES evaluation. The results of both models suggest that belonging to the area of Human Sciences increases the probability of the program presenting a high degree of change. The areas

of Applied Social Sciences and Letters, Linguistics and Arts also have positive effects on the degree of change. Of course, there are unmeasured variables that can influence the variation in a program's degree of change. However, the purpose here is to demonstrate that the "area" variable has an effect on the degree of change, which may be related to the proximity of these areas to issues that affect the target social groups of affirmative policies in graduate school. In addition, the fact that the greater degrees of change are from programs in the area of Anthropology also points to the occurrence of path dependence, since the fact that programs of excellence in this area have made substantive modifications makes other programs in the area to have strong incentives to execute the same or similar changes.

Table 1 - Logit models for knowledge area effect (1) and CAPES grade (2) on the degree of change

Dependent variable	Logit Models	
	Model 1 Dichotomous degree of change	Model 2 Dichotomous degree of change
area_CH (Human Sciences)	3.933*** (1.019)	4.083*** (1.023)
area_CSA (Applied Social Sciences)	2.780*** (1.064)	3.043*** (1.070)
o.area_CA (Agricultural Sciences)	-	-
o.area_CB (Biological Sciences)	-	-
o.area_CS (Health Sciences)	-	-
area_LLA (Letters, Linguistics and Arts)	2.798** (1.100)	2.902*** (1.104)
area_MU (Multidisciplinary)	1.124 (1.227)	1.423 (1.232)
CAPES grade		0.466*** (0.117)
Constant	-5.984*** (1.001)	-7.712*** (1.123)
Number of observations	1,261	1,261

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p <0.01, ** p <0.05, * p <0.1

Source: personal elaboration.

The data clearly corroborates the understanding that the programs that changed more significantly were the ones in Social Anthropology, whose major changes in the admission processes have been in favor of indigenous applicants. It could be argued that the proximity of these programs to these ethnical groups allowed not only the identification of the problem (absence or low participation of indigenous people in graduate programs), but also the consideration of the specificities of this groups in the design of affirmative action. In the case of the program in Social Anthropology at USP, for instance, participants in the process highlighted the importance of considering the differences in indigenous schooling and the benefits that their presence could bring to the field.

Dealing with the access of indigenous students and other 'minorities' has the goal of defending the equality [of opportunity] in the access to higher education as a right, aside from the fact that access has been unequally achieved, and without even recognizing the specificities of indigenous people and the historical construction of the debate around the indigenous differentiated system of education and the proposals of interculturality. [...] The different modes of social organization and education of indigenous people, described briefly above, generate demands and needs to indigenous students that are different from those of black students, who have been submitted to other forms of marginalization. To turn invisible their presences and specific demands represents a setback to the achievements of rights recently celebrated in this sphere [of education]. (De Fiori et al., 2017, pp. 72–73)

In the field of Health and Multidisciplinary Sciences, those who were interviewed also highlighted the proximity of their fields to the agendas linked to the inequalities.

Now the field of collective health, I do not know if you are acquainted with, [...] this is for us an issue, which is a matter of inequality, inequity, social inequality and inequity, this is an issue for the field of collective health, so there is no need for a great debate, people agree that there is inequality and that it is social, economic, and that it is reflected in the population, it is reflected in the university, it is reflected in the access to the consumption of goods, services, to rights. This is something that is very clear to my field [...]. So there is no need for great debates in relation to this. (Interview, CS1, 2018).

Another factor linked to field of knowledge is the matter of research groups and their proximity to different social groups. Many interviewees indicate that the importance of the admission of certain groups and the modification of the admission processes have been emphasized by professors and students who were engaged in research groups with themes like social stratification, indigenous languages, gender and sexuality, migration, among others.

Another aspect related to the area of the programs and which was pointed out as relevant by some interviewees is the realization of debates and discussions about the proposals and alternatives with scholars from other programs and universities, students, and members of social movements.

One of the hypotheses this research intended to validate was that the realization of debates and discussions about affirmative action, its justifications and possible impact result in greater probability that the criteria for the admission of new students will be altered. Despite the fact that the data in the survey is not significant enough to demonstrate the importance of this factor, it was possible to verify that 44,3% of the programs responded positively to the question about the realization of debates. Of those who confirmed having realized debates, 60,5% pointed out that the debates resulted in modifications in the original proposal of the program, and amongst these, 27,5% indicated that criteria for admission have been adjusted.

This factor was strongly emphasized in the interviews, as the programs where the level of changes were beyond the creation of reserved or additional seats had realized some kind of debate with third parties or outside their own collegiate units¹⁹.

Debates and meetings have been emphasized as important for the construction of a proposal with a substantive support from the academic community, such as the case of the programs of Interviewee SA1. The interviewee CSA 1 highlighted that the debates were relevant so that the pros and cons of the proposal could be discussed carefully and because there was a group of scholars that wanted more information before making a decision. Therefore, in these cases, the debates have been used to enlighten those who

¹⁹ In this case, we define as 'third parties' people who do not participate in the discussions at the level of the collegiate of the program or higher organs of the university.

had not been in contact with the subject and wanted to understand why affirmative action were important, its benefits and disadvantages.

Michele S. Moses (2016) sustains that opportunities for dialogue and deliberation about affirmative action before the decisions in the ballot initiatives in Colorado contributed to greater information and comprehension of the contested values, increased the public understanding, and promoted the will of the people to reconsider their points of view and increase communication between opposing sides in relation to the matter. According to her, in cases involving moral disagreements, such as decisions about affirmative action, public deliberation exerts a relevant role in the production of more effective and equitable educational policies.

In a similar vein, Lawrence and Suddaby (2006, p. 247) argue that the diffusion of innovations in a particular field – such as graduate school – involve an intense institutional work on the part of the actors who must persuade the decision-makers to take a decision on the merits of the innovation, so that they can comprehend how this action could be applied to the organization. In addition to this, the approval of innovations involve the removal or reduction of suppositions and beliefs that are central to institutions, once there are costs to those who move away from the rules and norms, as well as risks associated to innovation and differentiation (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006, p. 237).

In relation to policies facilitating access to graduate school, as mentioned above, some cases have been identified in which the realization of debates between scholars, students, researchers of the subject, and members of social movements contributed to the approval of those policies and to the alteration of criteria in the admissions process.

WHY ARE GRADUATE PROGRAMS RESISTANT TO CHANGE?

In relation to affirmative action in graduate school, the reduction of the score minimums or the application of different criteria to particular groups of applicants in admissions processes is, many times, seen as challenging to the ideals of merit and academic excellence.

In several interviews, the actors mentioned that the creation of affirmative action should involve the “maintenance of academic merit”. According to an interviewee at UFMG:

Many people said that, that graduate school has to meet expectations and it only sustains itself by meeting these academic goals. [...] And we did what stood out: we will not give up merit. In other words, we do not have any question in our policy that allows a program to offer different exams to applicants of the larger poll and those applying through quotas. What exists is a reservation of seats to blacks in the regular application guide that we prepare and we made a separate application guide with additional seats to indigenous applicants and applicants with disabilities who require special accommodations to take exams, but if the [graduate] course prepares an exam, requires a project and analyses C.V., it will do the same to all applicants and he will have to make the 60% of the score, or he is not approved in the process. That was the guarantee that academic merit will be preserved.²⁰

The data and the information that have been collected until this point demonstrate that one of the most disputed points about affirmative action in graduate school is the concern with academic excellency of graduate programs. In relation to the policies implemented by the Institute of Philosophy and Human Sciences (IFCH) at UNICAMP and by the program in Social Anthropology at USP, many objections have

²⁰ Interview with a representative of the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), June 21, 2018.

been raised about a possible reduction in the quality and excellency of the program due to the creation of quotas (De Fiori et al., 2017; Silva, 2016, p. 170).

Many interviewees indicated that the modification of the criteria for admission probably would be contrary to such arguments on merit and academic excellency, what would lead to a rejection of these policies by the programs and universities. Therefore, some interviewees argue that the best available strategy at the moment of the formulation of the policy was to promote change through layering. In other words, the most adequate strategy was to approve quotas or additional seats and to keep the criteria and existing rules, so that the question of affirmative action could be developed and, in the future, it could be possible to discuss more substantial chances. According to interviewee UFG 2:

The idea was that it was better to advance this way than to get in a discussion that could lead to more resistance with regards to the question of merit and of quality and of all. From what 'privilege' is being created, right? [...] So, we created a general norm that applies to everyone and that perhaps is not yet the ideal. Maybe not, it is not the ideal, it is not the best, but it is the possible one.²¹

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The paper aimed to explain how the creation of affirmative policies resulted in the modification of the traditional selection process carried out by graduate programs in order to identify the different types of change based on the typology developed by Thelen and Mahoney (2010).

The data indicate that most programs with affirmative action did not make significant changes in their admission processes. However, there are programs that, in addition to reserving seats, considered the barriers faced by the beneficiary groups in the access to the postgraduate course and modified the stages of the selective processes.

The exogenous shock model as an inducer of institutional changes is not appropriate to explain the affirmative action of graduate courses, since the edition of the executive order cannot be considered a great exogenous shock as conceptualized in the literature, representing only an external factor to the programs that served as an incentive and influenced the creation of these measures in recent years. Such a model does not take into account the fact that some institutional arrangements are more resistant to change even in the face of external shocks.

The analysis of the application guides of 137 graduate programs allows us to conclude that the deeper institutional changes - the modification of the student selection criteria - are the result of endogenous and incremental processes that occur in the absence of critical moments. In addition, there is resistance to more substantive changes in selection processes because of the uncertainty about the impacts that this could cause to the CAPES assessment score and, consequently, to the amount of resources and funding available for research and the status of the program in the academic world. The proportion of the most significant changes that represent a change of more than 40% of the selection criteria is low (10.9%), while most of the analyzed programs modified only one criterion.

There are two forms of institutional change in postgraduate programs: displacement and layering. The mode of displacement occurs in the cases in which various rules and criteria of the selection process are modified in order to make it more inclusive and to adapt to the needs and barriers faced by certain groups, such as indigenous people. The displacement processes were considered as having a degree of

²¹ Interview with a representative of the Federal University of Goiás (UFG), July 23, 2018.

change equal to or greater than 0.7, which corresponds to only 3.6% of the analyzed programs, all in the area of Human Sciences.

The remaining programs (96.4%) underwent through layering processes of change, which manifests itself in cases where the previous selection procedure is maintained and coexists with new rules of an inclusive nature. These are, in general, the programs whose only change was the provision of reserved seats or additional seats for certain groups. The large number of programs with this degree of change point to the occurrence of mimetic isomorphism and coercive isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991a, pp. 67-69), as well as a case of path dependence, since the benefits of this modality (quotas) in undergraduate courses and its returns make the actors have strong incentives to use the same alternative instead of thinking of other solutions designed specifically for the graduate level. Several interviewees explained that modifying admission criteria faced resistance on the grounds of merit ideals and academic excellence, so the best strategy available was to promote layering changes and wait for a maturation of the issue.

Regarding the factors that contributed to the change in the criteria of the selection process, the main factor is the area of knowledge in which the program is inserted, since the most significant changes are from programs in the area of Human Sciences. This seems to be related to the proximity to social, ethnic-racial, and gender inequalities, as well as the presence of research groups and their proximity to vulnerable groups. The realization of debates and discussions about the proposals was also highlighted as important for the construction of the projects and convincing the academic community.

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