



## Whiteness and its Expressions in the Career of Higher Teaching

*Branquitude e suas Expressões na Carreira de Magistério Superior*

*La Branquitud y sus Expresiones en La carrera de la Enseñanza Superior*

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### ABSTRACT

This paper aims to broaden the discussion of the results of a Master's in Education research on the reflexes of whiteness in Brazilian higher education, based on two central aspects: "the expression of whiteness in the career of higher education" and "white privilege". Through a theoretical framework that discusses institutional racism in education in the light of critical studies of Brazilian and American whiteness, we seek to identify the racial integration process of the Federal University of Ouro Preto (UFOP) from 1969 (the institution's founding year) to 2019, locating, in the under-representation of non-whites, the expression of whiteness in the institution, as well as in the process of implementing Law No. 12.711/14, which institutes the Vacancy Reserve for Blacks (RVN) in the federal civil service. The discussion opens the way for the analysis of aspects related to the racialization of subjectivity and the "privilege of race", which were analyzed based on excerpts from an interview carried out with an effective teacher for 20 years at the institution. The results found reiterate the complexity of the theme and can become even more dense when included in decision spaces. This demonstrates that the objective understanding of racial inequalities in the university needs objective instruments to understand their effect, but these must go together, with a broad and transparent dialog, with the professors, favoring "racial self-awareness" and, therefore, enhancing institutional transformations.

**Keywords:** Whiteness; Institutional Racism; Education; Subjectivity.

### RESUMO

Este artigo tem como objetivo ampliar discussão dos resultados de pesquisa de mestrado em Educação acerca dos reflexos da branquitude no ensino superior brasileiro, a partir de dois aspectos centrais: "a expressão da branquitude na carreira de magistério superior" e o "privilégio branco". Por meio de um referencial teórico que discute o racismo institucional na educação à luz dos estudos críticos da branquitude brasileira e estadunidense, buscamos identificar no processo da integração racial da Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto (UFOP) de 1969 (ano de fundação da instituição) até 2019, localizando, na sub-representação de não brancos, a expressão da branquitude na instituição, assim como no processo de implantação da Lei nº12.711/14, que institui a Reserva de Vagas para Negros/as (RVN) no funcionalismo público federal. A discussão abre caminho para análise de aspectos da racialização da subjetividade e do "privilégio de raça", que foram analisados a partir de trechos de entrevista realizada com uma docente efetiva há 20 anos instituição. Os resultados encontrados reiteram a

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complexidade do tema e podem se tornar ainda mais densos quando incluídos em espaços de decisão. Isso demonstra que a compreensão objetiva das desigualdades raciais na universidade precisa de instrumentos objetivos de compreensão do seu efeito, mas estes devem caminhar juntos, com diálogo amplo e transparente, junto aos docentes, favorecendo a “autoconsciência racial” e, logo, potencializando transformações institucionais.

**Palavras-chave:** Branquitude; Racismo Institucional; Educação; Subjetividade.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo tiene como objetivo ampliar la discusión de los resultados de una investigación de Maestría en Educación sobre los reflejos de la blancura en la educación superior brasileña, a partir de dos aspectos centrales: “la expresión de la branquitude en la carrera de la educación superior” y “el privilegio blanco”. A través de un marco teórico que discute el racismo institucional en la educación a la luz de estudios críticos de la branquitude brasileña y estadounidense, buscamos identificar el proceso de integración racial de la Universidad Federal de Ouro Preto (UFOP) desde 1969 (año de fundación de la institución) hasta 2019, ubicando, en la subrepresentación de los no blancos, la expresión de la blancura en la institución, así como en el proceso de implementación de la Ley N ° 12.711 / 14, que instituye la Reserva de Vacantes para Negros (RVN) en el ámbito de lo servicio público federal. La discusión abre el camino para el análisis de aspectos de la racialización de la subjetividad y el “privilegio de la raza”, los cuales fueron analizados a partir de extractos de una entrevista realizada con un docente efectivo durante 20 años en la institución. Los resultados encontrados reiteran la complejidad del tema y pueden volverse aún más densos cuando se incluyen en los espacios de decisión. Esto demuestra que la comprensión objetiva de las desigualdades raciales en la universidad necesita instrumentos objetivos para comprender su efecto, pero estos deben ir de la mano, con un diálogo amplio y transparente, con los profesores, favoreciendo la "autoconciencia racial" y, por tanto, potenciando la institucionalidad. transformaciones.

**Palabras clave:** Branquitude; Racismo institucional; Educación; Subjetividad.

## Introduction

The purpose of this article is deepening discussions resulting from a Masters Program research, conducted between years 2018 and 2020, in the graduate program in Education of a federal higher education institution of the State of Minas Gerais, where the research subjects were the faculty of the Federal Higher Education System.

Based on the bibliographic research concerning racism in Brazil, we have identified elements that corroborate the perspective that racism structures and systematically organizes the social, political, economic, cultural and psychological levels (ALMEIDA, 2019). Therefore, we sought to set a conceptual anthropological retrospective of “race”, clarifying the elements of natural sciences that served for classifying peoples into groups (MUNANGA, 2003), following the update of these theories from the biological field to a cultural scope. The way the concept is installed, in current research, as a sociological analysis category reveals to



us how this phenomenon was established based on a difference relation, a long time before it was the subject of study by science.

Based on the relations in Brazil between colonizers and the landowners, observing studies that address Portuguese colonial violence, a process for neutralizing cultural, social, phenotypical, life-style differences, etc. is established. A racism without race, however, very close to its domination ideology, which appears as the result of a process of neutralization of social phenomena, present both in matters of race and economy and in matters of gender (GUIMARÃES, 1995).

Upon examining the matter in the field of education, the infamous condition of racial inequality imposed on us a reflection on the relations between racism neutralization processes in federal public universities based on acknowledgment. As argued by Nilma Lino Gomes, the Brazilian higher education system is primarily based on the spreading of racist culture constructs, which “have affected not only the field of intellectual production but society overall, but in a specific way, the lives and trajectories of children, teenagers, young and adult black men and women, including the scope of education” (GOMES, 2010, p. 423).

Based on the legal and historic frameworks of institutionalization of formal education, to the access of black students and professors in higher education (Law 12.711/2012 and Law 12.990/2014), we contemplate the social tension that emerges in light of the demand for new pedagogic pacts, the imperative need to teach African-Brazilian culture (Law 10.639/2003) and native-Brazilian culture (Law 11.645/2008) to the benefit of racial integration. This is a process of institutional disputes that Maria Aparecida Bento (2014a) identifies as institutional Whiteness. This idea allows this article to go slightly beyond the already proposed analysis and shed light on racial relations in education based on subjective characteristics.

We expect, in this study, to contribute to productions that question colonial domination structures, based on our sights set on the subjects that operate the maintenance of the social normalization in institutions. From a reflection on ethnic-racial relations applying to subjects directing higher education, the faculty, mostly white men and women, we can restructure a more inclusive education model that is less resistant to differences.

## 1. University and Institutional Racism

The history of institutionalization of education in Brazil presents a scenario of inequalities related to historical life conditions of the black population in the country, updated to current parameters of racism. The meritocracy class speech produced a public university more and more distant from the popular layers, and consequently, away from the less privileged. According to Almeida (2018, n.p)

racial inequality is a characteristic of society and not solely due to individual racist groups, but fundamentally because institutions are homogenized by certain racial groups who use institutional mechanisms to impose their own interests.

In the scenario of racial inequality in education, the Unified Black Movement (MNU), especially the segment of black feminists, was very important to the education access democratization process, beginning in the 1990s, on a Basic Education level, and was responsible for mobilizing visibility against racism and the dominant school ideology in the 1980s, by leveling criticism on the “didactic book, curriculum, training of teachers, etc.” and, at a later time, they passed to carry out “concrete action” (GONÇALVES; SILVA, 2005, p. 217).

Elitist and whitened public higher education potentially reflects knowledge that privilege these perspectives, which Petronília (2003) also refers to as “institutional racism”. Whereas producing exclusion of blacks from the university, this type of racism has also restricted interaction of knowledge, world views and technology. According to the Institutional Racism Fighting Program, this sort of racial distribution is also defined as the “collective failure of an organization or institution in providing professional services, adequate to people according to their color, culture, racial or ethnic origin” (BRASIL, 2009, p. 157).

The direction of the defense of multiracial higher education is, to Carvalho (2006), the very possibility of facing academic racism. And this is the line intellectual blacks and anti racist whites, including those in the field of education, adopted and strengthened throughout the 2000s, the agenda of the black movement, which encompasses racial quotas in higher education, as means of social justice, of historic reparation, and of guaranteeing civil rights





and fighting institutional racism. As highlighted by Jesus (2011, p. 14), in his thesis, that quota policies are not synonyms of affirmative action “provided that they concern one modality among several possible actions - having been the first ones claimed by the Brazilian black social movement”.

The MNU has impacted institutionalized agencies, not only in making claims, but also in assisting them. As reported by Silva (2011), the core of the faculty, researchers, militants and their academic productions were assisted by several educational agencies, based on the creation of a Multi-Ministry Work Group for Valuing Black Population, of the Ministry of Justice (GTI), through a Decree of November 20, 1995, for the purposes of developing policy for valuing the Black Population. It was repealed on November 5, 2019. This GT was primarily composed by members of the MNU (eight representatives) and by one representative of each segment (Ministries of Justice; Culture; Education and Sport; Planning and Budget; Foreign Relations; Health; and Employment and Labor). Throughout the 1990s and in the early 2000s, MNU representatives shared their knowledge and leaned on the political space for building multi-technical education, which resonated, at first, on the National Curricular Parameters (ethnic-cultural diversity as a value, the transversality of the theme, the formation of basic education teachers).

Concerning the democratization of access to public higher education, a study conducted by Santos (2010) highlights that the pioneering initiatives that launched discussions on “quotas” in universities in Brazil, since 1985 (UNB) were intensified in the early 2000s, and continued further into 10 more years when, in 2012, was passed Law 12.711.30<sup>3</sup>, which specifically provides for the system of destination of spots in federal universities and in federal technical and trade school level institutions, for black, mixed-race and native-Brazilian students who have attended high school fully in public schools, or who have an income level equal or below 1.5 minimum monthly wage *per capita*. The “Quota Act” is usually approached as exclusively favoring the black population, which reveals ignorance of the legislation, which, in addition to trying to repair inequalities in a diverse group, including “poor whites”, disregards the proportionality that causes students to compete for specific spots, which can become more contested than those open for everyone.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2016, the law was amended for including persons with disabilities (Law 13.409 of December 28, 2016).

Racial diversity, in academia, means the plurality of thought, materializing Eurocentric knowledge among one among others also possible, at the same time unveiling that the valuation of one perspective in detriment of another is one of the forms of expression of institutional racism. These mobilizations, to Gomes (2019), do not concern only curricular changes, but a political-educational articulation, which we can transpose as a new nation project, and consequently a project for the university system. The conditions for production of knowledge of the black movement toward emancipation produced racially referenced analysis, which contributed for establishing a decolonizing black concept, which challenges the cannon of hegemonic thought and adds other interpretations of reality (GOMES, 2019).

To Maria Aparecida Bento (2014b), two characteristics stand out among the difficulties in institutionalizing policies for promoting racial equality: “the power relations” and the “racial hierarchies structured in the scope of an institutional level”. That is an observable condition, moreover, according to the author, in the way affirmative policy are easily mischaracterized upon implementation, a phenomenon analyzed in the scope of affirmative action policy directly impacting Brazilian higher education, as limits for affirmative policy in light of subjectivity (NUNES, 2020). According to the researcher, one has to consider that, in the process of subjectification of the faculty, their way of reading the world is socially and historically constructed, it relates to the experiences they had and influences their positions, actions and productions. Precisely for being considered a process, subjectivity also becomes a powerful channel for producing displacements in fighting against racial inequality.

## 2. **Whiteness:** reflections for Federal Higher Education Institutions

All of us, who are white, benefit on a daily basis, in an illicit way, from living in a racist reality. There are countless privileges, small, medium and great, which help us have an edge and concentrate more resources. To the extent Brazilian racism operates in the day-to-day lives, whites are daily favored by some capital (social, economic, cultural) that has been unequally distributed according to racial criteria: less waiting time to be served in a public space, a letter of recommendation, important connections in the labor market, psychological reinforcement of personal image, or a new source of income. Being white in Brazil is taking daily advantage over blacks. Even through there are no races in the biological



sense of the term, social representation of the difference is phenotypically racialized – all we have to do is watching television, from telenovelas to advertisement. (CARVALHO, 2003, p. 174-175)

Racism, a structural phenomenon in Brazilian society, permeates interpersonal and institutional levels, impacts whites and non-whites, however, in different ways (advantages x disadvantages). Provided that our proposal is to analyze the Brazilian higher education federal system, it seemed imperative to us understanding the very place faculty occupies in this process. Differently from other institutional spaces, faculty in higher education enjoy academic autonomy, as well as organization of the functioning of universities, instituted by democratic election processes, such as for the office of Dean and boards and heads of department. These characteristics have been fundamental for including in the agenda of institutions the black movement agenda toward access to higher education. This is a fissure in the structure that allows us, 21 years after the first public debate regarding reserving education spots for non-whites, to analyze the paths of the fights that transformed a condition previously considered to be set in stone.

Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto (UFOP), the field of our research, was not among the education institutions that implemented the reservation of spots for blacks, before the enacting of Law 12.711/12. The debate mobilized by the community of Ouro Preto-MG, a city constituted by a 70% black population, started in 2003, resonated across a cycle of actions on the theme in the both the communities internal and external to UFOP, which was finally voted in 2008, with the prevalence of exclusively social arguments (SANTOS, 2011, 2015; FAGUNDES, 2020). According to Adelina Nunes (2020), before 1969, the year of opening of UFOP, and 2008, the university faculty was predominantly formed by white males, a condition that did not change in the institution upon the increase in the higher education teaching spots as a result of the Federal Universities Expansion and Restructuring Program – REUNI. The researcher highlights, moreover, that in the institution, there is a considerable number of abstentions relative to racial self-identification, which becomes a challenge for deeper analysis of this phenomenon, as we will attempt to present in this study.

Underrepresentation of the nonwhite population in decision-making positions, as higher education faculty, in light of discussions on institutional whiteness (BENTO, 2016), allows us

to access a cycle of reproduction and preservation, in line with the conservative character of the institutions and which also work as a “race privilege” maintenance instrument. “The organization rejects diversity of conducts and thought. It resists racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation diversity and others in positions of authority. And the lack of diversity causes the deterioration of reflection and creativity (BENTO, 2016). In the perception of Bento, which we corroborate, homogeneities “in positions of authority in institutions are not good symptoms of a society that claims to be democratic” (BENTO, 2016, p. 17). To the author, what lies at the core of the alliance between whites and males, in opposing changes of the racial division and gender barriers, is the wish to keep and expand their privilege.

From the perspective of race relations in the context of federal education institutions, it is imperative to reflect on the power of whiteness, understand this power as “a network where white individuals are consciously or unconsciously exercising it in their day-to-day lives through small techniques, procedures, phenomena and mechanisms that constitute specific effects and places of racial inequality” (SCHUCMAN, 2012, p. 23). The organization of the university, the establishment of rules, procedures, as well as the development of research and training of professors and other self-employed professionals (doctors, architects, psychologists, engineers, etc.) comes from those who hold positions in higher education faculty.

Due to whiteness and institutional racism, among other violent systems of normalization and exclusion of differences, it is necessary to move toward recognizing the way of living, differentiating “the nature of the organization and the structures it adopts, as well as to understand that which does not vary and that which can be transformed” (BENTO, 2014b p.19). In this sense, we propose identifying in our analysis the aspects present in the actions of faculty in higher education signaling the aspects of that which “still does not vary” and of that which “has been transformed”.





## 2.1 Race integration in higher education faculty

The reality of Brazilian higher education, predominantly composed of white people, is the subject of notorious public debate and has already been stressed in the beginning of this article as part of the justification that moves our investigations on the theme of race relations. This reality is not restricted to the career of higher education faculty members in the federal education system in the country, because it permeates all the structure of public servants, and is inversely proportional to the presence of racial diversity – the higher the social prestige of the office and the higher the compensation levels, the lower the number of nonwhites holding that position. For the scenario of facing the inequities of these jobs, statistical data is the guiding instrument in developing actions for promoting racial equality, such as achieved by the milestone that was Law 12.990 of 2014.

The law enacted in 2014 reserves exclusively for the black population 20% (twenty percent) of spots offered in public contests for office of public servants in the scope of the federal government, its agencies, public foundations, state companies and state-controlled entities. This determination seeks to change in the medium to long-term the composition of higher education faculty positions, favoring the constitution of more plural, inclusive higher education institutions that represent the differences.

To that effect, the self-identification of race by faculty members feeds the database for monitoring, controlling and validating this affirmative action policy. That allows, for instance, understanding whether the established percentage had a significant effect and in which institutions, allowing for statistical calculations, considering the current structure of each institution and the average time that will take each one to reach equity in representation. Due to the intensive debate in the last decades, we may consider we currently live in a process of theoretical and conceptual maturing in different areas (education, health, legal, cultural, social communication, environment) which helps this social transformation process. Since this data was collected throughout history (whether or not mandatory), the collected categories are related to social factors and historical and political scenes of each period. That impacts the census (PIZA, ROSEMBERG, 1999), as well as the level of access of the population to the critical debate concerning race identity.

Having said that, by proposing to present here the race integration process at UFOP from 1969 to 2019<sup>4</sup>, the aspects listed were taken into consideration as limits for analysis. But the relevance of making this data public to society and the need for reflecting on the condition this data is treated today indicated the pertinence of the proposal.

Table 1  
Race, Gender and decade - absolute value

Skin Color/Ethnicity <sup>5</sup>	Gender	Total group	by 1969 1978	1979 1988	1989 1998	1999 2008	2009 2018	2019
Color/ethnicity not identified	Women	126	0	4	25	42	55	0
	Men	230	4	23	45	72	86	0
White	Women	160	0	1	4	7	143	5
	Men	206	2	2	7	9	178	8
Mixed-Race	Women	45	0	1	2	4	36	2
	Men	86	0	1	6	7	72	0
Black	Women	10	0	0	1	0	8	1
	Men	10	0	0	1	0	8	1
Indigenous	Women	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Men	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Yellow	Women	3	0	0	0	0	3	0
	Men	2	0	0	0	0	2	0

The data analyzed was made available by the Administration Assistant Deans Office (PROAD) of UFOP, through a formal application to the Coordination of People Management, and, after a signed consent, was collected data on skin color/ethnicity, gender, academic unit, assigned sector, academic class, hiring year, title and work shift. Based on this data, we built,

<sup>4</sup> In a search in “open data” of the university in October 2021, was observed the inclusion of the documents “Profile of public servants - Faculty and Technical-Administrative” and the “Faculty List”, created on 03/04/2021, which include the race self-identification of the public servants. The database can be “previewed”, however, the attempt to *download* it presents problems: data does not show and there is no specific instructions as to how to *download* the file, thus rendering unfeasible, for the purposes of this study, making a quantitative update of the analyzed data. Despite that, it is, without a doubt, an important milestone for the open data policy. Another important data included in this portal was “Public servants holding offices preferably reserved (quotas) offices, included on 01/21/2021.

<sup>5</sup> Nomenclature used by the institution in the form for filling out registration information, included in the item “Hiring Documents”: <https://concurso.ufop.br/documentos-para-contratacao>.



for this article, a table focused on the evolution of the access of nonwhite population to a career in higher education faculty in UFOP.

Based on the tables prepared, we may note that the ratio relative to the gender and race profile in UFOP'S faculty career is distant from the representation of diversity in this career. From the 879<sup>6</sup> faculty members with tenure identified with PROAD, 39.13% identified as female (344) and 60.86% as male (535). As to race, the profile is 41.64% of professors from “white” skin color/ethnicity (160 women and 206 men), “Black<sup>7</sup>” skin color/ethnicity 17.18% (55 Women and 96 Men), Native-Brazilian (0 Women and 1 Men), “Yellow” skin color/ethnicity (3 women and 2 men).

The table allows us to observe that gender and race inequality is a historic condition of the studied university, and from the 1990s on, it was a milestone for the inclusion of women. However, the large number of faculty members who did not self-identify in terms of race makes it impossible to us have a more accurate perception of the hierarchic implications between white and nonwhite females, white and nonwhite males. This is a condition experienced and observed by researcher Kimberlé Crenshaw (2002) in the movement of American black women and of those in other cultures. These are “invisible discriminations”, which, in the case of African-American women, represented a double silencing of their claims in the black movement: due to gender tensions in the relations with black men and in feminism, due to racism tensions in the relation with white women. In this context, the concept of intersectionality also operates as the analysis method in crossing different systems of normalization capable of aggravating inequalities.

Considering the relation between gender and the number of individuals who did not self-identify in terms of race/ethnicity (126 women and 230 men) in proportional term, we identified a higher abstention among women (57%) compared to men (42,99%). Pointing to a direction of educational action for ethnic-racial relations able to facilitate “racial self awareness”<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Data received on February 4, 2019, comprehending professors that were hired until January 9, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Grouped herein according to the guidelines of the Racial Equality Statute and Methodology of IBGE, the categories that refer to the black population.

<sup>8</sup> As we can see the in the study of Adilson Santos (2011) and Isabela Fagundes (2020) at UFOP, different educational actions are developed on the theme of ethnic-racial relations and inclusion of differences, but these do not directly encompass the process of “racial self-awareness” and the target public is not the staff. By

Despite the fact this is a partial view, it becomes clear, upon observing the data, that higher education teaching, despite resulting from a contest-selection course, is still characterized by homogeneity of whiteness and the power of whiteness, factors that are related to historic inequalities. The experience of Doctor Black Women in the university, as observed in the research of Silva and Euclides (2018), is marked by racism and sexism, especially when they adopt a stance engaged with the theme in their departments. Racial hierarchies in relations between peers have still not been approached in depth in this research, but they seem to be a relevant element to be investigated from the light of institutional whiteness. Inter-subjective and interpersonal processes emerging from the work relations between white male/white female, black male/black female, between black and nonwhite faculty members show that there are differences in the dynamics of these work relations. How does that happen after receiving professors from policies that reserve spots for blacks? A little of what was possible to observe in the field interview in this regard will be presented hereinafter.

In the last two decades, UFOP considerably expands its staff in a period when debates on race relations was intensive in university communities and in black social movements. However, that has not reflected on a decrease in the number of racial self-identification abstentions. Considering whiteness as power on an institutional level, in federal, state and private universities, we must consider that the optional filling out of public interest information, as well as the possibility of marking “not informed”, is a disservice to the agenda of promoting racial equality. When asked to whom this partial data on this question serves, we come close to what Bento (2014b) warns relative to conducts considered “technical and political” in institutions, but they express “fear of the other”, of the inclusion of difference and of new perspectives.

Concerning individuals who self-identified in terms of skin color/ethnicity in this period (1999-2008 and 2009- 2018), black male and female professors at UFOP occupied

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observing the descriptive work of these actions carried out between 2003 and 2019 at UFOP, conducted by Isabela Fagundes (2020), actions carried out by black students and professors targeted college students themselves and the continued formation of an external public. A low institutional recognition of these actions is indicated, despite the recognition that the institution has been receiving on a national level concerning the development of affirmative action policies, the institution does not count on a specific administrative body.





between 2009-2018 the number of higher education teaching spots (11) the white racial group had already reached in the previous decade, calling attention to the fact that in the decade in question, no self-identified black male or female joined the faculty. The fact that UFOP'S personnel information registry does not use the same categories set by the Racial Equality Statute adopted by IBGE (White, Black, Mixed-Race, Native-Brazilian, Yellow) the fact that completing this information is not mandatory weakens research dedicated to that study. Searching registration information of other institutions<sup>9</sup>, we can see other standards, despite the fact this is the one used by the National Educational Studies and Research – INEP (LABORNE, 2014).

The period with the higher number of hiring of black male and female professors at UFOP coincides with the decade that comprehends the Law that reserved spots for blacks. Observing the research developed by Isabela Fagundes (2020) in the same institution analyzed herein, concerning heteroidentification commissions, we can see how the process of implementation of Law 12.990/2014 was, as well as the check procedure, complementary to the self-identification. That has allowed to us to ascertain that, after the enacting of the aforementioned Law, were opened, until 2018 a total 192 spots<sup>10</sup> for tenured professors. Of these spots, 39 were directed to spots preferably reserved for blacks and in these contests, there were 33 male or female applicants approved. Twenty of these applicants were referred for vetting by the committee, following instructions set by legislation, however, two did not show (Public Notice 75/2016 and 24/2018). The 18 applicants to did appear before the committee had their race self-identification granted. According to the researcher, until 02/06/2020 10 professors were named, coming from the quota reservation policy (FAGUNDES, 2020).

Based on the historic racial integration series of UFOP, also considering the limits of comparison of the objectives in the period, between the researches addressed herein, we see there is, indeed, the hiring of 19 black faculty members, whereas in the period analyzed in this article, in light of data provided by PROAD, hiring of a total 44 black faculty members is

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<sup>9</sup> Universidade Federal do Ceará <<https://progep.ufc.br/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/dados-cadastrais-jul-18.pdf>>; Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro: <[https://pessoal.ufrj.br/images/Novo\\_Formul%C3%A1rio\\_de\\_Atualiza%C3%A7%C3%A3o\\_Cadastral\\_-\\_SCA.pdf](https://pessoal.ufrj.br/images/Novo_Formul%C3%A1rio_de_Atualiza%C3%A7%C3%A3o_Cadastral_-_SCA.pdf)>

<sup>10</sup> The research informs having searched data referring to Hiring Processes until 08/12/2019. We chose to include in this article only data corresponding to the same time frame analyzed herein.

shown. That indicates to us, in this line of proposition of instruments for monitoring this affirmative action policy, the need for implementing, in addition to the standardization of the categories used for collecting data. In addition to the alignment with other instruments for a common purpose (IBGE), it is necessary to differentiate the form of admission of the professor (spots reserved for blacks, minus spots reserved for persons with disabilities or those open for all). After all, it is possible to identify that black professors choose to apply for the public office contests in open-for-all spots.

A study prepared by Mello and Resende (2019), for the purpose of monitoring the process for implementation of Law 12.990/2014, monitored Public Regulations for contests for tenure professors in the 63 public federal universities between June 09, 2014 (date of enacting of the Law) and January 31, 2018, identifying that only 9 institutions complied, at that time, legislation as provided. And UFOP was not among them. Upon resuming examination of the study of FAGUNDES (2020), we have identified three situations that allow us to bring it closer to the context of the institution: i) use of drawing as means of complying with the guidance of the Prosecutor General's Office, adopting the Regulations for ensuring RVN (Spots Reserved for Blacks), since application of the law is conditioned to the contest offering the number of spots equal or above 3 (indicating there was an understanding of the internal tensions concerning implementation of the Law that reserved spots for black applicants); 2) annulment of the context applying the RVN, in the Medical School of the institution. The researcher herself indicates that the measure was disproportional in the face of what had transpired:

PROAD voted to approve the results, disqualifying applicants to violated procedure. But the proposal that was effectively approved by CUNI was to annul the entire contest. Therefore, spots reserved for blacks in a selection process for tenured professors in the School of Medicine was canceled, in a decision where one may question to what extent the annulment of the entire process was not a strategy to suppress spots reserved for black faculty members in the School of Medicine of UFOP. (FAGUNDES, 2020, p. 113)

And 3) lawsuit filed by an applicant approved in open-for-all spots against UFOP, on the grounds of having allegedly being damaged by the calling of a faculty member approved



and named, from a RVN: the “case was dismissed without prejudice, because the applicant that questioned the procedure was called for being invested, due to a vacancy in the Department of Education, and thus, losing her cause of action, requested it be dismissed, for having lost its purpose” (FAGUNDES, 2020, p.127)

Racism produces an “anti-black” society, where whiteness is institutionally translated in the attempt to postpone an already late racial integration, as seen in the excerpts above. The enacting of Law 12.990/2014 is, without a doubt, a progress in affirmative action policies in public office, proposed by Law since 1983 – a historic and substantial reparation for the black population. However, the complexity of the scenario this group finds in accessing RVC is at least ambiguous, and exposes the white power and fragility, not only at UFOP, as indicated by the study of Mello and Resende (2019). In our field of study, we sought to raise new questions as means of opening the paths to understanding and working toward institutional transformation.

### 2.1.2. White Privilege and Higher Education Teaching

According to Adilson Moreira (2007, p. 147), privilege is “any title, sanction, power, advantage or rights ensured to one individual for belonging to one group or groups whose characteristics are represented as ideal”. It is a mechanism of exclusion that operated through discriminatory systems granting benefits to the group that represent the ‘ideal’ and identification with the minority or majority groups. I.e., it is a collective process resulting from socialization. In this sense, race privilege, in light of structural racism, has been systematically benefiting white people, the reference group, but, since it defends the white racial group, that group is also the producer of “more direct mechanisms of discrimination and production of speech that propagates racial democracy and whitening” (SCHUCMAN, 2012, p. 14) which exempt white people from responsibility.

Privilege has been also observed by the Plaintiff internal in the white racial group, showing the complexity of the discussion in light of other meanings of differences, such as differences in cultural origin, regional origin, gender, phenotype and class:

this white ideal, internalized by all of those with different “degrees” of whiteness, operates to favor those phenotypically “white” in detriment of those “less white” in different levels of social relations, i.e., the more someone looks closed to a black or native-Brazilian, the more their image stands out from that this generalized system of status attribution defines as beautiful, desirable or admirable. (SCHUCMAN, 2012, p. 87)

In critical studies on Brazilian whiteness, physical and symbolic privileges have been more commonly studied between white and black groups. In light of racial inequality, physical privileges are more objective, however, not less complex to approach. That dates back to the appropriation of all the wealth the enslaved African diaspora produced to the benefit of colonizers and wealth that to this day generate symbols and historic heritage to the heirs of colonization, such as economic, education, employment advantages, resulting of the symbolic privileges, significant psychological, aesthetic and moral privileges attributed to the white phenotype (BENTO, 2014a).

Although aesthetic superiority is a trait of whiteness, the race characterizes more subjective aspects in the lives of the white and shapes their expectations, perceptions and answers, from an early age. According to Robin Diangelo (2020, p. 81), being white guarantees “an initial benefit of the doubt as to whether or not belonging to a group [minority]”. This condition grants psychological advantages to white people, translating into financial results. “If race as not a question, I will be able to focus my work and productivity and be seen as part of the team” (DIANGELO, 2020, p. 81). There is, for white people, a responsibility exemption, a result of white supremacist culture, granting a state of “racial relaxation of emotional and intellectual space that people of color cannot have as their day goes by” (DIANGELO, 2020, p. 80). That is observed in the excerpt below, from an interview with Professor Márcia, professor and *stricto sensu* researcher on the University staff since 1999, working in the area of Life Sciences and who self-identifies as mixed race, but perceives being identified by others as white.

(...) so, there is an entire discussion of these things which sometimes my generation did not think of, so I think we lived in a very large comfort zone. In think of my story in basic education, how may black





classmates I had, and that's funny because I had two black classmates and my best girlfriend and another friend my father though was my boyfriends since I was young, and I began to see that one finished High School and took a technical course with me, the other finished High School and then stopped, and then me, then me, right? Recently I started thinking, but why?! If we, who were together until eighth grade, and went on and grew apart, lived in the same neighborhood, sometimes when I visit my mother and I meet them, I see how life took different paths, different directions. And then you ask, is if the choices, was it really a matter of skin color, of prejudice, of difficulty of access, that limited the journey of these people?

The use of the “comfort zone” definition appears in other excerpts of the interview with similar meanings, as a justification of the whiteness covenant in faculty and the attributions it confers in higher education. That has contributed for only after 25 years of formation a “racial self-awareness” begins to build and people start reflecting on their experiences and opportunities, considering possible disadvantages a black friend, with a identical school journey as you up to High School or Trade School, or a female black friend who only kept up with you until 8th grade may have had due to the fact they are black. That displaces your own speech, often restrictive to class inequalities. Despite color not being recognized by the professor as a significant difference market, she can tell apart her faculty department colleagues who took spots reserved for blacks

because, in fact, we open the positions setting a quota for someone... right? For blacks, for mixed-race, for native-Brazilians, but we... well... sometimes you don't expect that spot to be filled, right?!(hum hum) We, we put that there as if that was already present in our environment and then comes a person with a... who ...

They have a stance, a clarity, I think they even provide some reverse education, they teach us some things we sometimes just do not pay attention to, right?

the colleagues [black faculty members] I have here are very good, it looks like they are better than the others, it seems this trajectory strengthens and makes them great, I don't know if they already come with such a differentiator. It's funny, it looks like that child who stays on the corner, and has to call the attention of the father, right?! So, they really come with a very interesting posture of excellence, and that called by attention. (...) but as soon as I saw those two, what called my attention is that they are very good, very committed people. And so, I think that maybe they carry it, right? that responsibility or maybe they have that higher commitment.

Language, safe for expressing complex hierarchic racial dynamics, expresses whiteness, such as in the highlighted excerpts: “sometimes we don’t expect that quota will be filled, right?!”, “we put it there as if that was already in our environment”. White federal higher education is made of decisions that were made, and, even if we recognize education inequalities that befall the black population, we cannot move away from what Bento (2014b p.x) warns to institutions: “If, in the processes of choice and selection that are purportedly neutral the choice always falls on people from a certain racial, economic and social profile, there is problem with the criteria, since the country has a large and rich human diversity.”

We have identified in the use of expressions such as “reverse education” indication of a natural sense of transmission of knowledge, which made by black professors, reverses that flow, in the attribute “clarity” a significant positive value that also seems to express surprise. We read that behavior as a transfer, to blacks, of the responsibility to mobilize the issue and, at the same time, exemption from responsibility concerning racial questions. We observe, moreover, the selectivity and silence regarding the lack of nonwhites, highlighted in the excerpt “we don’t pay attention, right?”. Is present, moreover, a fictional interpretation, displacing racial inequality in the trajectories of white and nonwhite higher education professors into hierarchizing values, the logic of domination and race privilege: “they are better than the others” “this trajectory strengthens them”.

In the effort to empty out racial tensions present in relations between black and non-black faculty members, the pressure is on blacks to individually deconstruction the inferiorizing attributes ascribed by racism to their race group: “maybe they do carry it, right? that responsibility”. Fragments that seem to bring out the sense of self-preservation of race privilege, or, as addressed before, an expression of the whiteness covenant. This phenomenon, in light of Márcia’s self-identification, presents us with a crossroads in our analysis, because the professor who self-identifies as mixed-race - which, according to Brazilian legislation, would include her in the same racial group as blacks - may be part of the aforementioned covenant.

In the perspective of Diangelo (2020), black people may have white solidarity experiences, silence in the face of everything that “exposes the advantages of the white



position regarding the tacit agreement to remain racially united in protecting white supremacy” (DIANGELO, 2020, p. 83). The difference in this case is that it becomes a behavior that reacts to whites’ inaction in the face of racial injustice as a survival strategy. The violation of white solidarity comes with a cost (both psychological and physical): “speaking openly about racism would ruin the mood or would threat our career [whites] ascension” (DIANGELO, 2020, p. 84). Silencing does not operate in this sense, as denial of racism or its metaphors, but as contact with that reality does not cause an opposing action, favoring racial hierarchies and maintaining privileges.

In the Brazilian context, it is greatly relevant to observe the internal hierarchies of racial groups. Schucman (2012) investigated hierarchy between whites, identifying the phenotype as a border of whiteness, outlining other significant traits that help compose “racial self-awareness”, such as differences in ethnicity, regional origin, gender, phenotype and class, something between “whites”, “grubby” and the “very white”.

this white ideal, internalized by all of those with different “degrees” of whiteness, operates to favor those phenotypically “white” in detriment of those “less white” in different levels of social relations, i.e., the more someone looks closed to a black or native-Brazilian, the more their image stands out from that this generalized system of status attribution defines as beautiful, desirable or admirable (SCHUCMAN, 2012, p. 87).

As indicated by Diangelo (2020), racial ideology favors the idea that a sense of belongingness is developed by white people naturally, an experience of always having their racial group represented in neutral environments, with social prestige in a true “feelings of a warm and welcoming white world”. This feeling makes “racial self-awareness” difficult and, in light of the discomfort this coming to consciousness creates, it is common for whites choosing to avoid racial discomfort.

I self identify as mixed-race, yeah... I think we end up... this definition, it is very subjective and is ultimately based on history, right?! My parents, in my family, on my father’s side, I have relatives ranging from blond to black, so, it’s really quite a mix. And I am mixed-race. (...) I think it depends a great deal on the environments, I think usually people don’t identify me as mixed-race, they identify me as white.

To Jesus (2019, p. 131), social belongingness in the country “is a negotiation that takes place in different socializing environments and which necessarily passes through the definition others assign to the racial belongingness of each one”. That reveals that more objective initiatives (diagnosis, effective instruments) expand their potential based on subjective action (conversation circles, clinical workshops, talks), mobilized through dialog in the process of institutional interventions.

### Final Remarks

Scientific productions regarding whiteness, especially in Brazil and in the United States, have been contributing to the recognition of aspects radicalized in the subjectivity and in the behavior of whites, historically held as “natural”, reflections of their self-determination as a role model for humanity. That evidences the collective and identity-based character of race and its intersectionalities (gender, class, age, region, among others). Inter-racial crossing can be mediated by new knowledge that has arisen, which cooperates for understanding this complex structure that is being updated by social transformation.

Although white faculty members are benefited by race privilege involuntarily, since subjectivization are experienced in a society organized by race over 500 years ago, the lack of actions that deconstruct these hierarchies means, in and of itself, maintaining them. Inspired in Bento (2014b), we can believe that greater racial integration contributes to including new perspectives in the career of faculty members and in the functioning of the institutions, however, white privilege with the implication of white and nonwhite needs to be deconstructed.

We follow the path of questioning the higher education faculty structure, recognizing these individuals enjoy substantial autonomy in the organization and direction of universities, a place that also favors access to knowledge, ensures better working conditions relative to teaching and other stages of education and counts on investment in research and continuation of education on a national and international level. Therefore, in this sense, including in this process other aspects which, favoring “racial self-awareness” itself, assign a new meaning to





constructs naturalized within education institutions and which correspond to whiteness logic, even if set forth in “technical” standards/rules.

The complexity of the themes presented herein, with emphasis on higher education faculty demands a reflexive and active position in the face of racial inequality, such as opening the possibility of understanding the impact of race privilege and also concerning other minority groups. Opening the possibility of dialog on race privilege in this space, toward a new institutional and social covenant, seems to be a powerful path for doing away with the “fear” and feelings of anguish present in “racial discomfort”, contributing to establishing more authentic relations in the development of the work of professors in the classroom, in research, in coordinations, in heading departments, in being assistance Deans, as well as in boards, in other institutional levels.

In an organized fashion, black movements (internal and external to the institution) have claimed and invested in an education project including and sustaining the presence of black population, culture, tradition and ancestry. One may say that they have played the role of the State in promoting care and well-being of this entire population. Black faculty and students have also been collectively organizing inside the university, moving forward with this historic fight. In this process, they knowledge transforms society, facilitates critical training appropriate to a complex reality, causing legitimate claims of plural individuals to emerge. Is incumbent on non-black faculty to take a stand, and on a day-to-day basis, making themselves available for contributing to this new covenant.



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