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## Closing the Gap: Affirmative Action and College Adjustment in Brazilian Undergraduate Universities

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*We tested differences in college adjustment between students admitted to a Brazilian undergraduate university through the standard entrance process (nonquota students), and those admitted under the affirmative action selection process (quota students). Participants consisted of 494 college students (27.1% quota students) from 2 public universities from South Brazil. Data was analyzed through independent *t* tests. Results indicated there were no differences between quota and nonquota students regarding college adjustment as measured by Academic Experiences Questionnaire – Reduced Version (AEQ-r). We discuss new perspectives on the stereotyping and controversy quota students face individually and in a societal context.*

Brazil, being a social democratic country, is unique in the academic admission process when compared to other nations. While most Western nations admit students based on a variety of measures (SAT score, extracurricular activities, life experience, and written essays), the Federal University system in Brazil admits students who pass the

*vestibular*, a competitive standardized exam used specifically for entrance into federal Brazilian universities. Those who pass the exam are granted free tuition to what is considered the most prestigious form of higher education in Brazil, since federal universities are usually better ranked than other regional or private institutions according to evaluations made by the Ministry of Education. Each university has its own rules for admission. Some use their own specific exams while others use a more recent national ranking system based on an exam given annually by the Ministry of Education. Other institutions combine both forms of admission testing. Those candidates who apply for institutions that use the national ranking system take only the national exam; however, many institutions still use their own *vestibular*, at least for part of the vacancies that are offered. Regardless, there are very few vacancies offered for the overwhelmingly growing demand for high-quality, tuition-free public education. Although private sector education had considerable growth in the last decade, most people are unable to pay the high

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tuition fees (McCowan, 2007). Besides this, the general quality of education provided by federal public universities is considered better in comparison to other institutions. Because of this, preparation for the entrance exams into Federal University often starts as early as elementary school and continues through high school with outside preparation courses in areas like foreign language, Portuguese, literature, math, chemistry, biology, physics, among others. Candidates from wealthier backgrounds who have access to private education (at the elementary and high school levels) as well as prep courses, have greater chances of entering the university (Francis & Tannuri-Pianto, 2012).

In Brazil, access to higher education is highly associated with family income, which in turn is associated with disparities and racial prejudice. Income distribution in Brazil is highly unequal with its Gini index—a measure of income distribution—ranking 19th highest in the world (Central Intelligence Agency, 2014). Disparities affect people of color especially: among the poorest 10%, 75% are people of color, although they represent 54% of the Brazilian population. Similarly, the university system reflects these social disparities. Historically, university students have been unequally distributed in terms of social, racial, and economic class. In fact, race, socioeconomic status, and gender are considerable barriers to college attendance and achievement (Francis & Tannuri-Pianto, 2012). Those most able to afford higher education are the same students entering the best schools with free tuition. Considering that the *vestibular* (or its equivalent national exam) is the greatest barrier to college entry, Brazil's approach to affirmative action is directly applied through this exam by allocating admission spaces specifically to economic and racial/ethnic minorities.

According to Skrentny (1996), the term

*affirmative action* comes from the requirement that official institutions take affirmative steps towards making positive changes in their applicant selection pools. It is meant to provide mechanisms that enable an equitable representation among those hired or admitted. In Brazil, the quota system was implemented in 2012 so that a greater diversity of students could access higher education (Felicetti & Morosini, 2009). The objective was to minimize difficulties for those (who by virtue of historical inequalities) found it impossible to enter the higher education system (Santana, 2010). Currently, 50.0% of the vacancies in each selective competition for entry into the undergraduate public university system are reserved for students entering through the quota system. This proportion of quotas was established by law, starting with 12.5% in 2012 and reaching 50.0% in 2016. All quotas are exclusive for students from public schools; however, these quotas are first split in two groups according to family income: low-income candidates (50%) and higher-income candidates (50%). In each of these groups another split is made: half of the vacancies are reserved for people of color (Black, mixed race, and Indigenous), and the other half are intended for those who do not qualify for the quotas or that do not want to apply for the quotas (Brasil Governo Federal, 2012). It is important to note that not all people of color qualify for the quota system since quota candidates must have studied in public schools (elementary and high school levels). Depending on the institutions rules, quota candidates with exam scores comparable to nonquota candidates can occupy nonquota vacancies, leaving more opportunities to minorities.

As in other parts of the world, significant controversy around affirmative action exists. Those that justify affirmative action programs take the stance that it corrects the effects of past discrimination, prevents future discrimination,

and increases diversity (Edley, 1996). On the other hand, those that disapprove of affirmative action argue that it compromises university quality because opportunities are not allocated to the most meritorious candidates. This is seen as constituting reverse discrimination which lowers the odds of admission for what are considered “better qualified” students, and often results in stigmatization of students who benefit from the quota system. Quota students are often seen as unqualified, regardless of individual qualifications (Aberson, 2007; Menin, Shimizu, Silva, Cioldi, & Buschini, 2008), since they have been educated in public schools and usually are from a lower socioeconomic status. On the other hand, nonquota students are looked at as more determined, hardworking, and successful than quota students (Menin et al., 2008). Aligning with these stereotypes, affirmative action programs can exacerbate racial stigmas and maintain current power dynamics in structural equalities by upholding thoughts and behaviors in this type of rationalization. Quota students are viewed as a threat to the already existing “minority privileged class” in Brazil (Sousa, Bardagi, & Nunes, 2013). In addition to the existing controversy, those who enter as quota students in public universities are simultaneously faced with stereotypes that not only influence how they are seen by their fellow nonquota students, but how they view themselves (Smedley, Myers, & Harrell, 1993; Sousa et al., 2013). The heightened psychological burden that quota students experience can ultimately threaten their contributions and performance in the academy. They may possess low self-esteem, confidence issues in classrooms, and even diminished ability to form social groups or friendships in the university. For these reasons, we chose to focus on college adjustment as a variable of the persistence and success that students will experience throughout their academic career

(A. Santos, Mognon, Lima, & Cunha, 2011).

The academic term *college adjustment* refers to the need of individuals to adjust to the university environment when they enter an institution of higher education. The process of adjustment incorporates student attitudes towards their course of study, their ability to establish new friendships, the presence or absence of stress and anxiety in the face of academic demands, and the bonds developed by the student with the university (Baker & Siryk, 1984). Students with the ability to integrate both socially and academically from the beginning of their studies are more likely to grow intellectually and personally than those facing more difficulties during this transition into college life (Teixeira, Dias, Wottrich, & Oliveira, 2008). At the same time, poor institutional commitment, social adjustment, and emotional adjustment are each thought to increase the likelihood that a student withdraws for nonacademic reasons. Therefore, in addition to variables of success, such as grade point average and standardized test scores, college adjustment can have a direct effect on retention rates (Credé & Niehorster, 2012).

Previous studies have addressed college adjustment in Brazilian quota and nonquota students (P. Santos, 2013; Sousa et al., 2013; Stenert & Hutz, 2010; Zorzi, Bardagi, & Hutz, 2009). One study reports that students evaluate their academic experiences in a positive way, which suggests good college adjustment (Stenert & Hutz, 2010); however, results are not consistent when researchers compared college adjustment of quota and nonquota students. While one study showed no difference in general college adjustment of quota and nonquota students (Zorzi et al., 2009), others showed significant differences: lower interpersonal adjustment in quota students (Sousa et al., 2013; Zorzi et al., 2009), higher satisfaction with their majors in quota students, higher perceptions of

difficulties in quota students (P. Santos, 2013; Zorzi et al., 2009), and lower satisfaction with their performance in quota students (P. Santos, 2013). In short, although some evidence suggests that there is college adjustment impairment in quota students (perception of difficulties and interpersonal adjustment), they seem to appreciate their academic experience. It is unclear if these inconsistencies may be accounted for by methodological differences or the vast regional, economic, and cultural differences found throughout Brazil. In this study, we used the same instrument to assess college adjustment as Sousa et al. (2013) in a sample from a smaller city.

The aim of this study was to test if there were differences between students admitted to Brazilian undergraduate university through the standard entrance process (nonquota students), and those admitted under the affirmative action selection process (quota students) regarding college adjustment. Considering that stereotypes may influence how quota students are seen by nonquota students and how they see themselves (Smedley et al., 1993), we hypothesized that quota students would present lower scores on personal and interpersonal dimensions of college adjustment. We also hypothesized that quota students would present lower scores on study dimensions of college adjustment, because they may not have had access to private secondary education and prep courses, which in turn would hinder them from performing well once they join higher education.

## METHOD

### Participants

Participants were 494 college students aged 18 to 47 years ( $M = 23.37$ ;  $SD = 5.26$ ; 63.0% women) from Universidade Federal de Santa Maria and Instituto Federal Farroupilha. These institutions are located in two different

“university towns” (Santa Maria and Julio de Castilhos) in Southern Brazil. These are small to medium size cities that attract many students from other cities around the state who leave their homes to study in these institutions. In fact, in this sample only 43.6% reported living with their parents. Participants who had enrolled in university through affirmative action (quota students, that is Black, mixed race, or Indigenous students from public schools and with low family incomes) correspond to 27.1% of the whole sample in this study ( $n = 134$ ). Among the quota subsample ( $n = 360$ ), non-White students represented 34.3%. Unfortunately, no institutional records were available regarding the institutional quota/nonquota distribution, nor the race/ethnicity composition of the population. As data were collected during the implementation of the quota system established by law (in 2013), we believe the sample roughly represents the population characteristics (according to the law, not until 2016 should we expect 50% of the students to be quota students and, among these, 50% to be non-White). Regarding self-reported ethnicity, 80.9% of the whole sample reported to be White, 11.6% mixed race, 6.7% Black, 0.4% Indigenous, and 0.4% Asian. Participants who had studied in public high school correspond to 84.3% of the sample, while 14.1% studied in private high school, and 1.6% studied in *supletivos* (Brazil’s equivalent program to General Educational Development in the United States). As for undergraduate majors, 14.2% studied veterinary medicine, 13.0% accounting, 11.9% special education, 9.9% business administration, 8.7% speech therapy, 6.9% grain production, 6.5% nursing, 6.5% information systems, 6.3% agribusiness, 6.1% biological science, 5.7% performing arts, and 4.5% math. Most students were in their first year (51.2%) or final year (35.0%).

## Procedures

Questionnaires were administered collectively in 24 different classrooms of undergraduate students during scheduled times with professors. The combined number of undergraduate students in both universities was 20,000. Authorization was obtained from coordinators of each department randomly selected. About 600 students were informed about the objectives and procedures of the study and invited to participate; 494 responded. Data collection began only after participants signed the consent form, which was separated from the questionnaire to guarantee the anonymity of the participants. Research was previously approved by the Research Ethics Committee from Federal University of Santa Maria, protocol CAAE No. 12378213.9.0000.5346.

## Instruments

*Sociodemographic Questionnaire.* Information about the universities, undergraduate courses, gender, age, skin color, high school type, whether they were studying in the major they wanted, and whether they enrolled through affirmative action were collected to identify quota and nonquota students.

*Academic Experiences Questionnaire – Reduced Version (AEQ-r).* The AEQ-r (Granado, Santos, Almeida, Soares, & Guisande, 2005) assesses college experiences that may make the adjustment to college difficult. The original version is Portuguese and has five dimensions according to the factor analysis run by the authors (Almeida, Soares, & Ferreira, 2002). In this study, we used the version adapted to Brazilian college students, which presents the same five dimensions (Granado et al., 2005). Items are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*Nothing to do with me*) to 5 (*Everything to do with me*). The questionnaire includes 55 items organized in five subscales: (a) Personal (emotional

stability, optimism, decision making, and self-confidence); (b) Interpersonal (relationship with classmates, establishing friendships, and asking for help); (c) Career (career perspective, feelings regarding the undergraduate course, and perception of competences); (d) Study (study habits, use of learning resources, test preparation, and time management); and (e) Institutional (feelings regarding the university, knowledge and appreciation of the infrastructure). Cronbach's alphas in the validation study were .84 for Personal subscale, .82 for Interpersonal subscale, .86 for Career subscale, .78 for Study subscale, and .77 for Institutional subscale (Granado et al., 2005). In our study, Cronbach's alphas were .87 for Personal subscale, .86 for Interpersonal subscale, .89 for Career subscale, .76 for Study subscale, and .68 for Institutional subscale.

## DATA ANALYSIS

We first recorded negatively worded items and averaged items of each scale in order to compute individual scores. We used chi-square to check if quota was associated with gender, racialized minority status (Black, Indigenous, mixed race, and Asian), high school type, and studying desired major. We did not examine the association between income and quota status, because information about income was not collected. Independent *t* tests were used to check if there were differences between quota and nonquota students regarding the dimensions of college adjustment (no violations of normality and homoscedasticity assumptions were detected). Regression analyses were conducted including quota, racialized minority status, and high school type as predictors of each dimension, in order to control for possible confounding effects. The significance level adopted was  $p = .05$ .

## RESULTS

Table 1 presents lower and higher scores, means, and standard deviations for the five dimensions of AEQ-r. We observed higher means in institutional, career, and interpersonal subscales for all students. All subscales of the instrument presented reasonable internal consistency.

We checked if quota was associated with gender, racialized minority status, high school type, and studying desired major. As seen in Table 2, chi-square showed no association between quota and gender and quota and studying desired major; however, as expected, there was a statistically significant association between quota and racialized minority status and quota and high school type. Although the percentage of students of color (mixed race, Black, Indigenous, and Asian) is higher in the quota group (34.3%) than in the nonquota group (13.4%), White students were the majority in both groups (65.7% of quota and 86.6% of nonquota). When it comes to high school type, students who attended public schools were the majority of both the quota group (94.7%) and nonquota group (80.4%), even though the percentage is higher for the quota group.

As seen in Table 1 quota students showed higher means in Personal, Career, Study, and Institutional subscales than nonquota students; however, independent *t* tests showed no statistically significant differences between quota and nonquota students regarding any dimensions of college adjustment.

To control for possible confounding effects of racialized minority status and high school type, complementary analysis using multiple regression were conducted using these two variables and quota as predictors (forced entry method). All regression models (one for each dimension of AEQ-r) were nonsignificant: Personal,  $R^2 = .001$ ,  $F(3, 457) = .17$ ,  $p = .916$ ;

TABLE 1.  
Comparison of the Subscales of the Academic Experiences Questionnaire – Reduced Version Among Students

Subscale	All Students (N = 494)		Quota Students (n = 134)		Nonquota Students (n = 360)		$\alpha$	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i>		
	Lower	Higher	M	SD	M	SD						
Personal	1.07	4.93	3.62	0.72	3.67	.679	3.61	.740	0.87	-0.861	472	.390
Interpersonal	1.17	5.00	3.80	0.67	3.79	.666	3.80	.667	0.86	0.086	479	.932
Career	1.08	5.00	3.90	0.70	3.94	.700	3.88	.711	0.89	-0.830	478	.407
Study	1.67	5.00	3.60	0.61	3.66	.621	3.57	.615	0.76	-1.464	486	.144
Institutional	1.63	5.00	3.93	0.60	3.97	.601	3.92	.603	0.68	-0.879	492	.380

TABLE 2.  
Association Between Quota and Gender, Skin Color, High School Type, and Studying Desired Major

		Quota Students (%)	Nonquota Students (%)	$\chi^2$	df	p
Gender	Female	59.7	64.2	0.84	1	.361
	Male	40.3	35.8			
Skin Color	White	65.7	86.6	27.77	1	<.001
	Others	34.3	13.4			
High School Type	Public	94.7	80.4	16.20	2	<.001
	Private	3.8	17.9			
	<i>Supletivo</i>	1.5	1.7			
Studying Desired Major	Yes	80.0	73.7	2.06	1	.152
	No	20.0	26.3			

Interpersonal,  $R^2 = .003$ ,  $F(3, 464) = .412$ ,  $p = .745$ ; Career,  $R^2 = .011$ ,  $F(3, 463) = 1.74$ ,  $p = .158$ ; Study,  $R^2 = .011$ ,  $F(3, 471) = 1.74$ ,  $p = .158$ ; and Institutional,  $R^2 = .010$ ,  $F(3, 477) = 1.61$ ,  $p = .187$ . Table 3 exhibits regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ) for each predictor, although the models were nonsignificant.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to test whether there were differences between quota and nonquota students regarding the dimensions of college adjustment. We have also referenced studies from the United States as the topic of affirmative action there has dominated many publications in this area in recent years. Although the methods of addressing

inequality may be different, the theories behind it are similar.

Contrary to our hypothesis, we found no differences between the two groups (quota and nonquota). Considering the outcome of our results, we focus on two points of discussion. First, these adaptations have significant consequences in understanding and dealing with the current prejudices that quota students face on an individual level in their personal experiences and developmental processes within the academy (Sousa et al., 2013). Secondly, these results offer new perspectives on the stereotyping and controversy that remains a part of the larger society around affirmative action and higher education in Brazil (Menin et al., 2008).

On an individual level, we acknowledge

TABLE 3.  
Regression Analysis for College Adjustment Dimensions

Variable	Personal		Interpersonal		Career		Study		Institutional	
	$\beta$	Sig.	$\beta$	Sig.	$\beta$	Sig.	$\beta$	Sig.	$\beta$	Sig.
High School Type	.01	.895	-.00	.926	.10	.035	.02	.743	-.09	.064
Skin Color	-.01	.898	-.05	.281	-.02	.672	-.07	.175	-.04	.362
Quota	.04	.474	-.00	.984	.05	.295	.10	.037	.04	.447



the importance of college adjustment for students' overall university success, particularly for those who do not enroll through traditional college entry tracks. For many, entering the federal higher education system of Brazil is the realization of a dream and considered an important process for a more successful and affluent future (Sousa et al., 2013; Stenert & Hutz, 2010). It involves establishing dedication and commitment to academic training and creating strong ties to the university life. For nonquota students in higher education, personal and social transformational aspects may not be so obvious as their transition to higher education is likely not much different from the educational culture of their past (Sousa et al., 2013). Our results show that the process of college adjustment may be a similar experience for nonquota and quota students regarding personal, interpersonal, career, study, and institutional dimensions of academic experiences. These adjustments signify important developmental processes that are occurring in quota students (as well as nonquota students) and their presence in a more equitable academic system. In fact, other studies present data demonstrating high academic performance in quota students (S. Santos, Cavalleiro, Barbosa, & Ribeiro, 2008; Velloso, 2009) and an interest to keep studying, which suggests good college adjustment (Stenert & Hutz, 2010).

American students who benefit from affirmative action express neither more nor less satisfaction with college life in general and leave school at lower rates than others (Fischer & Massey, 2007). Brazilian quota and nonquota students' intentions of dropping out from higher education also seem to be similar (P. Santos, 2013). In accordance with these findings, no differences between quota and nonquota students were observed regarding indicators of college adjustment in this study; however, in two other studies with Brazilian

samples, quota students reported lower scores on interpersonal adjustment than their nonquota peers (P. Santos, 2013; Sousa et al., 2013). This could be due to quota students' difficulties in establishing friendships and seeking help to solve academic problems, or perceptions of classmates' and even professors' prejudices against them (Moehlecke, 2002), because they are already seen as unqualified (Aberson, 2007; Menin et al., 2008), which may make them feel guilty about being applicants who filled a quota rather than earning their place (Weller & Silveira, 2008).

The absence of differences on interpersonal adjustment in this study may be explained, at least in part, by advances in technology and communication. Access to knowledge and information via social networks and search engines are spaces that are not as strongly affected by socioeconomic status as in past decades. Websites that promote social networking among students from the same university may contribute to college adjustment, as it connects peers and becomes a source of information to solve adjustment dilemmas such as living situations, event participation, and orientation planning (DeAndrea, Ellison, LaRose, Steinfeld, & Fiore, 2012). Digital social networks also help minority students to find other students who face the same kind of academic and relational challenges, promoting a sense of collective identity and belongingness to the college setting.

In the midst of positive social outcomes and good academic performance, quota students remain recipients of prejudice that can create an unfriendly academic environment, reduce learning ability, and impact social and psychological interactions and relationships. Animosity and discrimination against affirmative action and its recipients remain a reality (Sousa et al., 2013). Specific stresses that quota students face are important indicators

to acknowledge in further studies.

In the larger context of the current affirmative action system as a social policy, our results reflect a perspective that may conflict with conventional stereotypes held about quota students in academia. Long (2007) reported access to higher education brings higher graduations rates, higher likelihood of graduation, higher wages, and other positive effects on economic outcomes as well. Long's results also demonstrate that in order to maintain minority enrollment in universities, affirmative action is needed. Understanding affirmative action in Brazil is important because it reflects many of the same inequality issues found in the global south and specifically those countries with colonial roots. The gap between the rich and poor in some countries like Brazil is slowly closing with a growing middle class that demands access to higher education in a globalized world. The means of achieving this has begun with affirmative action programs; however it is clearly not enough. The higher education system as a whole, including private, for-profit universities, may offer a high-quality and affordable education as a means to promote social inclusion and the diminishing of inequalities in Brazil.

Individual universities initially implemented the quota system and later as a national policy as the government has been forced to embrace a position on the issue at a national level (McCowan, 2007). In 2012 a law was established that requires half of all vacancies for minorities (Brasil Governo Federal, 2012), resulting in fierce opposition on both sides of the political spectrum; yet clear consensus remains that an intervention (or affirmative action) is obligatory for addressing the present levels of inequality. The challenge for higher education in Brazil will be that expansion of the academy also reflects the vast diversity found in the Brazilian population (McCowan, 2007).

In addition to this challenge, it seems that

student diversity experiences are positively associated with changes in attitudes toward affirmative action, both in terms of beliefs that it does not hurt academic quality and support for the use of different admissions criteria (Aberson, 2007). This could be due to the exposure of individuals to new perspectives that provide the basis for interactions with people of different backgrounds. In turn, this may cause them to engage in deeper and more complex learning, prepare them for future interactions in an increasingly diverse society, and motivate them to seek out more integrated communities after graduation (Crosby, Iyer, Clayton, & Downing, 2003). Diverse educational experiences are related to outcomes like students' positive perception of the benefits of interacting with diverse peers, positive faculty evaluations of student learning, better monetary outcomes of education, and increased pursuit of advanced degrees (Aberson, 2007). These outcomes directly impact attitudes and realities of equality issues in Brazilian society. With over 7 million students currently enrolled in higher education institutions (Portal Brasil, 2014), the academy is a powerful space that offers potential and opportunity for transformative social change in the Brazilian context.

Diversity regarding socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity are now a visible reality in Brazilian public higher education. Despite controversies that may still persist, institutions have the responsibility to maximize the benefits of affirmative action through practices that support quota students and their adjustment. For example, spaces could be created (in or out of classrooms) to discuss topics like racial prejudice and how socioeconomic differences may be related to different worldviews, including the role of higher education in people's lives. This could help quota students to affirm their worldviews and feel empowered to face the challenges of an environment

with a different culture from theirs. This discussion could also be beneficial to nonquota students, as they could develop a critical consciousness about the social inequalities and the diversity of society.

Faculty and staff members should also pursue training and resources aimed at improving their skills to deal with minority students. As they may not be used to interact with these students and likely do not know their reality and needs, educators may fail to recognize students in need of assistance and what to do in order to help them. Faculty and staff training should include information about characteristics and the needs of quota students that differ from those of nonquota students, as well as about the different types of support the institution offers to students with the objective of improving their integration to the university and increasing their academic success and retention.

For Brazil, with a selection process that uses standardized test scores for admittance in favor of additional information like personal essays, life experience, and volunteer work, which are also considered in the United States, alternatives to a quota system are limited and require transformations in the overall selection process as well. As long as the *vestibular* determines admittance, alternatives to affirmative action must target students at younger ages in order to provide more equal footing in training and preparing minority groups for these tests (Francis & Tannuri-Pianto, 2012). The fact that the best universities are funded and controlled by the federal government is a double-edged sword. The status quo can be unintentionally maintained by the current administration; however this also means the possibility exists to drastically reform higher education through policy making. How Brazil chooses to move forward to reform the academic system will depend on the current administration and the

pressures that come from minority groups. We hope that future research and results continue not only to offer positive steps in the right direction for an equitable academic system, but also to demonstrate the importance of holistic assimilation processes for those students who are admitted through affirmative action programs.

## LIMITATIONS

There are two limitations to be acknowledged in this study. The first, briefly mentioned above, refers to unidentified variables that may influence college adjustment that were not investigated in this study, such as access to knowledge and information before arriving at the university and socioeconomic status. The second limitation of this study is that our findings may be biased by the sample characteristics. Our sample was composed of individuals 84.3% of whom studied in public high schools. This may have hindered tests to identify differences between quota and nonquota students. Besides, this sample only represents two universities in South Brazil. So possibly the greater disparity between rich and poor in other regions such as the Northeast would show different results. Also the sample size did not allow us to identify possible differences between students who were admitted to university by different types of quotas (race, disability, public school students, and low-income students).

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals that there is no difference between quota and nonquota students from South Brazil regarding college adjustment. Our results suggest that although affirmative action remains one of the most controversial social policies in Brazil, it has simultaneously provided positive outcomes for those recipients

of the system on both individual and societal levels. In addition to other studies that seek to develop alternative forms of integration in the academy, this research may be considered in the future design, transformation, and implementation of alternative affirmative action policies and practices within the country. Using positive spaces such as these may contribute to a system that allows for

not only more diversity, but for equality for those who desire to pursue higher education.

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