

Vultures Among the Sunflowers: The Racial Question in the Brazilian Graduate Education System

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Introduction

The Brazilian *stricto sensu* graduate education system constitutes a complex and stratified ecosystem for the training of high-level human capital (Master's and Doctoral degrees), serving as a pillar of the nation's science, technology, and innovation production system (CAPES, 2023). Its organizational architecture is highly centralized in the figure of the Brazilian Federal Agency for Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education (CAPES), a foundation linked to the Ministry of Education that exercises regulatory, evaluative, and funding functions indispensable to the cohesion and quality of the National Graduate Education System (SNPG) (CAPES, 2023). As a power structure (Foucault, 2022), CAPES functions in the regulation and maintenance of the SNPG's excellence, both of which are operationalized through a process of approval, evaluation, and control that transcends mere accreditation. It functions as an instrument for shaping academic policies and resource allocation, setting standards of international excellence (CAPES, 2023).

For this reason, the institutional discourses and practices of CAPES mold the functioning of the SNPG, which, in turn, reflects the historical contradictions and inequalities of Brazilian society. This creates a paradox we conceptualize as racialized counter-bureaucracy. This duality inspired the title of this paper, in an allusion to the song 'Tropicália' by Brazilian artist Caetano Veloso. The lyrics lay bare the contradictions of a country immersed in violence and poverty, particularly after the onset of the military dictatorship in the 1960s. The vultures, seen one afternoon among the sunflowers, symbolize the naturalization of decay and death during the dictatorial period, amidst what should evoke life, beauty, and hope. Just as in 'Tropicália', where an apparent harmony conceals underlying violence, the institutional discourses and practices of CAPES mask racial exclusion under a guise of technical neutrality and meritocracy.

This is because, throughout its entire history, CAPES has never even collected data on the racial composition of faculty in Brazilian graduate education (Santos-Souza, 2024), even though 56% of the Brazilian population is Black (IBGE, 2022). This omission prevents a structured dialogue with civil society, which is vital for developing public educational policies to address these racial inequalities.

The impact on education and research in the field of administration is axiomatic. On one side, the training of professors is delegated to graduate programs; on the other, these programs are responsible for forming a critical mass of researchers (CAPES, 2023). Without reliable figures on Black professors, both teacher training and research would ignore the racial question (Santos-Souza, 2024). The lack of Black professors in business schools, especially at the graduate level, is not necessarily a new phenomenon (Grier & Pole, 2020; Santos-Souza, 2024; Nkomo & Naya, 2025). This is reflected in research, as evidenced by the absence of the racial question in organizational studies (Abdallah, Dar, Kalemba, & Mir, 2025; Cooke, 2003; Jaime, Barreto & Oliveira, 2018; Nkomo, 1992; Rosa, 2014). As a result, we still have a disparate racial profile among graduates and an extremely low percentage of Black professors in higher education, given their population share (IBGE, 2022; INEP, 2024). Furthermore, business schools seem to ignore the importance of the Black Brazilian population for companies, as they constitute a trillion-dollar market and the largest contingent of entrepreneurs (Instituto Locomotiva, 2022).

Against this backdrop, and drawing on the ideas of Foucault (2014, 2022), this study views Brazilian graduate education as a system of power that links political, economic, and institutional aspects to produce knowledge. The objective is to analyze how racial questions, historically central to the constitution of Brazilian society (Paixão, 2025), shape the inequalities evidenced in the organizational structure of CAPES and manifest in its institutional discourses and practices related to the graduate education system. For this, the

study adopts a mixed-methods approach, supported by the subsequent theoretical framework section. This articulation underpins the analysis and discussion section, which in turn provides the foundation for the final considerations.

Theoretical Framework

Race and Racialization

Although scientific consensus demonstrates the invalidity of race as a biological category for classifying the human species, its efficacy as a social construct remains enduring (Jaime & Santos-Souza, 2025; Munanga, 2004). It is precisely because races are biologically fictitious that it becomes imperative to investigate, as Fassin (2010) suggests, why societies organize themselves and individuals act as if they truly existed.

The persistence of race as a social category derives from its historical origin, not as a neutral instrument of classification, but as a technology of hierarchization (Foucault, 1976, 2010). This operation, which decreed the superiority of one race over another, paved the way for the pseudoscientific doctrine of raciology, whose purpose was to justify and legitimize systems of domination (Munanga, 2004). This entire process of rendering Black humanity sub-humanized and akin to a state of degeneration, as Foucault (2022, p. 106) describes, "is closely related to racism." Thus, the concept of race is born and perpetuated as an ideologically charged category, whose primary function is to conceal and naturalize relations of power and domination—that is, who must live and who must die (Foucault, 2010; Mbembe 2016, 2022).

In this context, the concept of racialization refers to any process in which the idea of race is introduced to define, qualify, and hierarchize a population, its characteristics, and its actions. Racialization, in its origin, is the imposition of a category upon individuals and groups with the objective of dominating, exploiting, or excluding. It is the expression of a collective and institutional racism that operates through the dehumanization and negation of the other (Jaime & Santos-Souza, 2025). This logic manifests in academia, which reproduces racial hierarchies and maintains access to knowledge under the control of a hegemonically white elite (Borges & Bernardino-Costa, 2022; Santos-Souza, 2024; Souza, 2021).

However, in a dialectical movement, the very instrumentalization of the category of race by racially subjugated groups emerges as the condition of possibility for a non-racist racialization. This constitutes a counter-hegemonic political praxis that aims to assert their legitimacy as an interlocutor in the public sphere and to demand parity of conditions (Jaime & Santos-Souza, 2025). Nevertheless, if racialization operates as a persistent mechanism of exclusion (Jaime & Santos-Souza, 2025) that intensifies in the highest strata of hegemonic power (Foucault, 1976, 2022), one would expect this logic to manifest in the managerial structure of a central organization like CAPES. Thus, it is postulated that:

H1: There is a significant difference in the proportion of Black individuals between the upper and middle management of CAPES.

The Racial Cleavage in Higher Education

Far from being an anachronism, the fallacy of racial democracy persists as an ideological apparatus that, by naturalizing inequality, sustains a structural cleavage in Brazilian society (Rosa, 2014). This cleavage materializes as critical asymmetries in the Black population's access to elementary conditions of existence, including basic sanitation, dignified housing, and health services (Paixão, 2014). This material deprivation translates into acute economic asymmetries, where the poverty rate for the Black population disparity is reflected in the low Human Development Index (HDI) compared to the non-Black population (Paixão, 2014). In the sphere of Brazilian public security, this structuring

characteristic is evident in the overrepresentation of Black people in the penitentiary system and among the victims of violent deaths, including those perpetrated by state agents (Cerqueira & Coelho, 2017; Paixão, 2014; Souza, 2021).

It is from this structural juncture of overlapping vulnerabilities that the narrowing of Black representation in education can be understood. According to the Higher Education Census (INEP, 2023), undergraduate faculty is composed of 72.5% white individuals and 26.2% Black and Indigenous individuals. The field of administration reproduces this systemic cleavage; at the undergraduate level, 73% of faculty members are white, while 25.8% are Black and Indigenous (INEP, 2025). As CAPES has never collected this data, it is estimated that the proportion of Black faculty drops to just 6% in graduate programs in administration (Santos-Souza, 2024).

A central paradox emerges here in undergraduate administration programs: the high qualification of their faculty, composed of 41% PhDs and 43% Master's degree holders (INEP, 2023), is a product of the significantly whitened graduate education system under analysis. In other words, CAPES accredits most of the professors who will teach at the undergraduate level, perpetuating an endogenous cycle of exclusion.

However, as staggering as the current numbers may be, they indicate progress when compared to the historical series beginning in 2016 (INEP, 2023). This progress can be attributed to a political agenda of affirmative action that, starting from pioneering initiatives at some universities, consolidated into a progressive legal framework (Borges & Bernardino-Costa, 2022). A seminal milestone was the enactment of the Racial Equality Statute (Law No. 12,288/2010), which established the doctrinal basis for policies promoting equality. This agenda of intense debates and articulations culminated, for higher education, in the sanctioning of the Quota Law (Law No. 12,711/2012), which institutionalized the reservation of places in federal educational institutions. The logic of reparation was later extended to the federal public administration through specific legislation for civil service examinations (Law No. 12,990/2014). These last two policies have recently been reformulated to expand and ensure continuity.

Despite this legislative progress, the effectiveness of such policies in reversing the predominantly white composition of power strata in the federal public employers remains an open empirical question (Santos, Oliveira, Marchisotti, & Celano, 2023; Lima & Santos, 2024; Santos & Diana, 2018). Against this backdrop, which juxtaposes a progressive legal framework with the persistence of exclusionary structures, empirically investigating the impact of the quota legislation (Law No. 12,990/2014) on the racial composition of CAPES's management becomes relevant. This is because the aforementioned foundation is a central pillar of policies for higher education as a whole—both undergraduate and graduate levels (CAPES, 2023). Therefore, the study tests the following hypotheses regarding the policy regime shift after the implementation of Law No. 12,990:

H2a: The proportion of Black individuals in the upper management of CAPES changed after the implementation of the Quota Law in the public service.

H2b: The proportion of Black individuals in the middle management of CAPES changed after the implementation of the Quota Law in the public service.

The SNPG and the Perpetuation of Power Structures

Organizations are not racially neutral (Nkomo, 1992). Within governmental organizations, a sophisticated discursive power apparatus exists that functions not merely to repress but to produce exclusion under the guise of neutrality and merit actively (Foucault, 2022). This discursive formation is a regulated practice (Foucault, 2008) that constitutes the very objects of which it speaks. The relationship is inextricable: discourse is the vehicle par excellence of power. To have power is to control the order of discourse

(Foucault, 2014), which involves the procedures that determine what can be said, by whom, under what authority, and in what circumstances.

This discursive power manifests in institutions like schools and companies through disciplinary technologies and technologies of governmentality (Foucault, 2022). Such discourses are structured to create a regime of truth: a set of statements and procedures that a society accepts and makes function as true (Foucault, 2014, 2022; Orlandi, 2015). This regime is sustained by an institutional apparatus—such as universities and funding agencies—that disseminates and validates it. Thus, discourse becomes power because it produces the truth within which individuals are measured, classified, and governed, thereby naturalizing hierarchies (Foucault, 2014, 2022) and rendering certain realities (like racial exclusion) invisible or non-problematic (Santos-Souza, 2024).

In this case, power operates through normalization, statistical control, the creation of classifications, surveillance, and examination (Foucault, 2010, 2022). In organizations of regulation and control (or surveillance, as Foucault would call it!), such as CAPES, power is expressed through the discourses of efficiency, competence, and, in the academic case, merit and quality, like those set forth in the National Graduate Education Plan - PNPG (CAPES, 2023), which serves as the official instrument for managing and planning the Brazilian's graduate education policies.

This structural racial cleavage, when absorbed and reproduced in the daily functioning of organizations, gives rise to what is conceptualized as institutional racism. This form of racism manifests as a bureaucratic system of norms, practices, and biases that, often unintentionally, produce and perpetuate racial inequality, and it is frequently associated with organizational and social inertia (Souza, 2011; Werneck, 2021).

This dynamic is directly linked to the maintenance of class and racial privileges (Souza, 2021). Academia, and especially graduate education, functions as a space of distinction for a predominantly white class. As Souza (2021, p. 262) trenchantly observes, this class "is zealously protective of the educational privileges that guarantee them good salaries, prestige, and the power to exploit and humiliate Black people and the poor." The academic credential becomes a form of symbolic and material capital guarded by those already in positions of power. The result is a markedly whitened system that operates by grinding down the aspirations of racialized subjects in the name of maintaining an exclusionary order (Woodson, 2021; Santos-Souza, 2024).

Therefore, the analysis of Black underrepresentation in the management of CAPES cannot be detached from a critical reflection on the very field the agency regulates: administration. Historically, this field has been characterized by a silencing of the racial question (Abdallah et al., 2025; Jaime et al., 2018; Rosa, 2014). As Nkomo (1992) points out, organizational theory was built on an epistemological foundation that universalizes the white, male experience, treating race as an irrelevant variable or a peripheral topic. This theoretical avoidance is not neutral; it produces and legitimizes an academic space in which racialized power structures are not named and, therefore, are not questioned.

It is within this context of an academic field structured by the avoidance of the racial question and the maintenance of privilege that the hypotheses regarding the trajectory of representation in CAPES's management are situated. Given the strength of this structural inertia, even in the face of external pressures from affirmative action policies, the expectation is that any change will be slow and incremental. The hypotheses, therefore, test the resilience of this hegemonic structure:

H3a: The proportion of Black individuals in the upper management of CAPES exhibits a positive trend over time.

H3b: The proportion of Black individuals in the middle management of CAPES exhibits a positive trend over time.

Method

From a critical epistemological perspective, this research employs a mixed-methods approach. The quantitative analysis assessed the evolution of the proportion of Black individuals in the upper and middle management of CAPES. This classification was based on an analysis of personnel in appointed positions, considering the remuneration from these roles, which ranges from BRL 609.39 to BRL 18,469.94, with a mean of BRL 6,361.11. In 2024, there were 77 employees in middle management whose remuneration from these positions of trust was below this mean, holding titles such as assistant, technical assistant, coordinator, and section head. Above this mean remuneration, there were 47 employees in upper management distributed across positions such as director, president, advisor, general coordinator, ombudsman, prosecutor, and auditor. In the other years of the sample, the classification followed the same job structure.

Based on this classification, the occupants of these positions were separated to consider the participation of Black individuals (Black and Brown). Therefore, the study's sample consists of a total of 30 observations, comprising two 15-year time series (2010-2024), one for upper and one for middle management (this was the historical series that the company made available). The first stage of the quantitative research, using RStudio® software, performed a permutation test to compare the proportions of Black individuals between the upper and middle management. Considered a computationally intensive method, the test uses non-parametric data with an unknown distribution, randomly permuting them between both groups (i.e., pooled) 10,000 times. For each permutation, the test statistic is recalculated, generating an empirical reference distribution (Wilcox, 2010).

The second stage unfolds in three sub-stages: (A) an analysis to directly test the change in trend, (B) a robustness analysis, and (C) an analysis to quantify the uncertainty of the effects. In sub-stage A, the trends in the pre- and post-law periods (Law No. 12,990/2014) were estimated via Theil-Sen regression, a non-parametric method chosen for its robustness to non-normality and heteroscedasticity of residuals (Wilcox, 2010). In sub-stage B, the significance of the difference between the estimated slopes was then evaluated by a permutation test (10,000 iterations). In sub-stage C, to quantify the uncertainty and validate the findings under a distinct inferential paradigm, a stratified non-parametric bootstrapping was conducted (10,000 resamples). This procedure was used to construct a 95% confidence interval (95% CI) for the time-interaction coefficient, estimated from a linear regression model (Wilcox, 2010).

To evaluate the implications of the observed trend, a third stage involved a non-parametric linear extrapolation analysis (Wilcox, 2010). The procedure used the coefficients from the Theil-Sen regression line, fitted exclusively to the data from the post-intervention period (2015-2024), to estimate the time to convergence toward the racial parity target (56%).

The empirical corpus for the qualitative analysis was constructed from two documentary sources. The first, longitudinal data, is composed of all National Graduate Education Plans (PNPGs) published by CAPES since its inception (I PNPG 1975-79, II PNPG 1982-85, III PNPG 1986-89, IV PNPG 2005-2010, V PNPG 2011-2020, and VI PNPG 2024-2028). They were chosen because they present the formalization of the central guidelines that direct the management of CAPES (2023). The analysis of this historical series allows for the mapping of the evolution of the discourse on diversity and racial inclusion. The second source, which is interactional in nature, consists of a series of formal communications with CAPES. These were conducted between July and August 2024 and initiated by a request through the Brazilian Access to Information System (a social control platform) concerning racial data. The choice to analyze this complete sequence is justified because it represents a unique enunciative scene (Orlandi, 2015), where the institutional discourse, when challenged, is produced, contested, and rearticulated at different

hierarchical levels, providing fertile ground for analyzing the technologies of power in action.

The Foucauldian-inspired discourse analysis was chosen for its potential to understand how discourse operates as a practice that constitutes subjects and power relations, mainly because power rarely announces its deepest operations. Considering the very materiality of the interaction (such as the different hierarchical tones and procedural delays) as an integral part of the discursive apparatus, the analysis was structured into three inductive analytical categories. The first, 'counter discourse,' was examined based on procedures of interdiction (Foucault, 2014). The second, 'mediator discourse,' was interpreted through the lens of disciplinary power (Foucault, 2022) in the normalization of conflict. Finally, the category 'cabinet discourse' was analyzed in light of the notion of governmentality (Foucault, 2022).

As discourse analysis transcends categories (Orlandi, 2015), the research sought to unveil the underlying logic of power and the contradictions between the agency's public discourse (expressed in the PNPGs) and the discourse revealed in direct communications. At the same time, the analysis paid special attention to silence as a discursive practice (Foucault, 2014). As the final part of the analysis, the qualitative and quantitative findings were integrated in a critical confrontation.

Analysis and Discussion

Quantitative Analysis: Permutation Test and Theil-Sen Analysis

The classification of the personnel composing the middle and upper management of CAPES is presented in Table 1. In the first stage, after performing the permutation test, the data indicate that the difference in the proportion of positions held by Black individuals between middle and upper management is 13.91%. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of the randomly generated differences, highlighting in red the observed difference, which is located at the extreme tail of the distribution. The statistically significant result of the permutation test ($p < 0.0001$) corroborates Hypothesis 1 (H1), providing evidence that racial inequality in CAPES's management is more pronounced in positions of greater strategic power and is not due to random chance. Exclusion intensifies in the higher strata of power, a finding consistent with the broader reality of Brazilian organizations (Jaime & Santos-Souza, 2025).

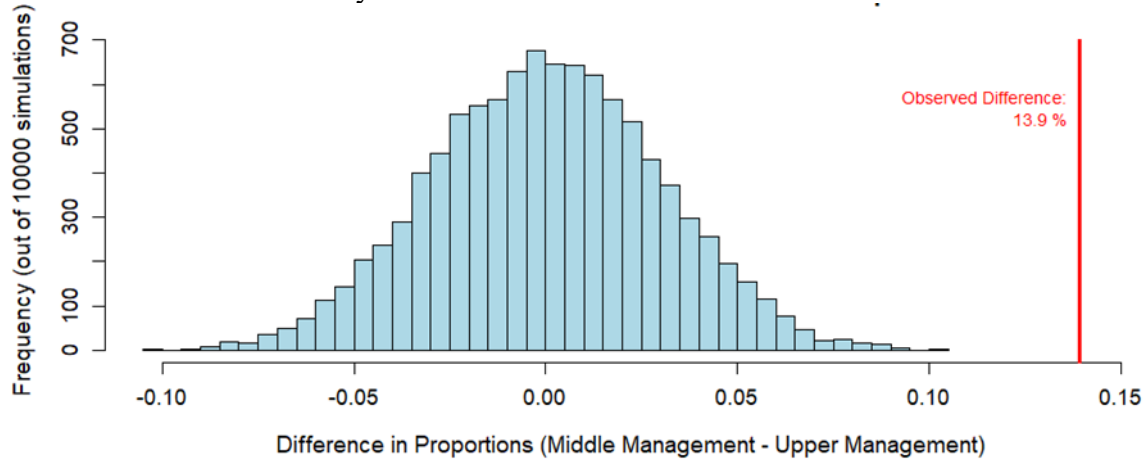
Table 1

Hierarchical and Racial Composition of Personnel in CAPES Management

Year	Total (Upper Management)	Black (Upper Management)	Proportion(Upper Management)	Total (Middle Management)	Black (Middle Management)	Proportion (Middle Management)
2024	47	12	0,25531915	77	24	0,3116883
2023	47	11	0,23404255	75	24	0,32
2022	34	7	0,20588235	56	22	0,3928571
2021	41	11	0,26829268	60	21	0,35
2020	38	11	0,28947368	62	23	0,3709677
2019	40	11	0,275	62	18	0,2903226
2018	40	8	0,2	61	19	0,3114754
2017	41	7	0,17073171	62	19	0,3064516
2016	40	7	0,175	60	22	0,3666667
2015	43	8	0,18604651	59	24	0,4067797
2014	42	9	0,21428571	64	24	0,375
2013	41	8	0,19512195	60	22	0,3666667
2012	38	8	0,21052632	60	21	0,35
2011	36	7	0,19444444	51	20	0,3921569

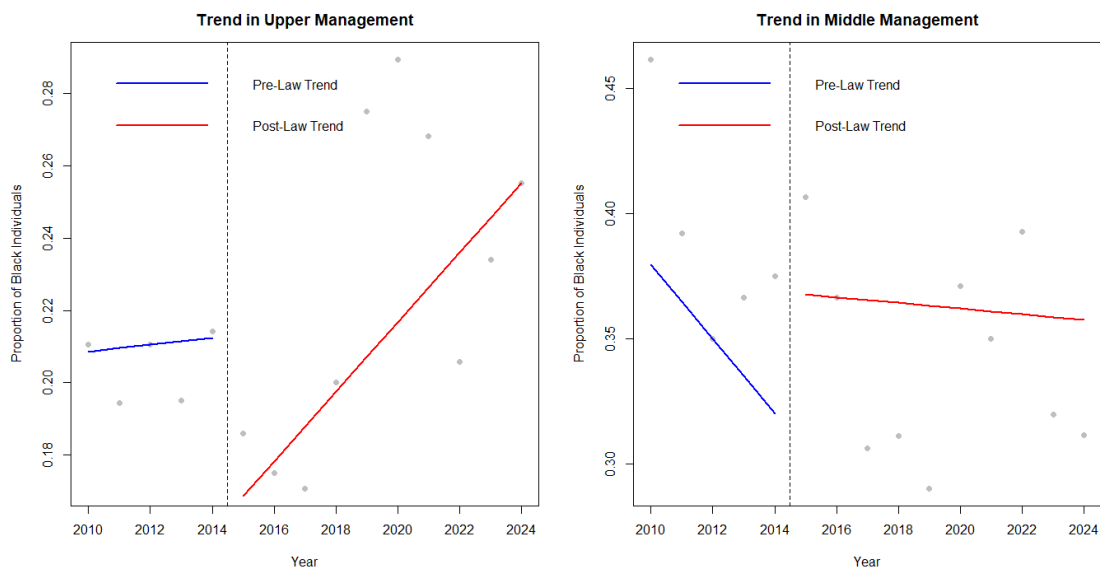
In sub-stage A of the second stage of the quantitative analysis, the trends in the pre- and post-law periods (Law No. 12,990/2014) were revealed. As shown in Table 2a, the trend in upper management was positive (pre-law: +0.09%; post-law: +0.96%), while in middle management, the downward trend was attenuated (pre-law: -1.48%; post-law: -0.11%). The corresponding trend plots are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 1
Distribution of the Randomly Generated Differences



Sub-stage B involved a new permutation test on the difference between the estimated slopes, revealing no significant difference in the law's effects, with a p-value of 0.226 for upper management and 0.118 for middle management (Table 2a). The non-parametric trend analysis, which is free from the assumptions of regression models, indicates that the observed change in trends after 2015 was not large enough to be distinguished from random variation, thereby confirming the absence of a statistically significant impact from the Quota Law.

Figure 2
Trend Plots for Middle and Upper Management, Pre- and Post-Law



To ensure the robustness of these findings and to assess the stability of the results under a different inferential paradigm, sub-stage C conducted an analysis via non-

parametric bootstrapping. As shown in Figure 3, the results of this analysis corroborate the conclusions from the two previous stages. For upper management, the 95% CI for the change in trend was [-0.005, +0.022]. For middle management, the 95% CI was [-0.018, +0.056]. Since both confidence intervals contain the value zero, this robustness check confirms that the observed change in trend is not significant. Given this evidence, hypotheses H2a and H2b were rejected. This denotes that the resilience of the structure in the face of public policies for racial diversity remains problematic (Santos et al., 2023; Lima & Santos, 2024; Santos & Diana, 2018).

Table 2a
Pre- and Post-Law Trends and Permutation Test Results

Management Level	Pre-Law Trend (2010-2014) (Annual β in p.p.)*	Post-Law Trend (2015-2024) (Annual β in p.p.)*	Change in Trend (Post - Pre) (in p.p.)*	p-value (Permutation)
Upper	0.09%	0.96%	0.87%	0.226
Middle	-1.48%	-0.11%	1.37%	0.118

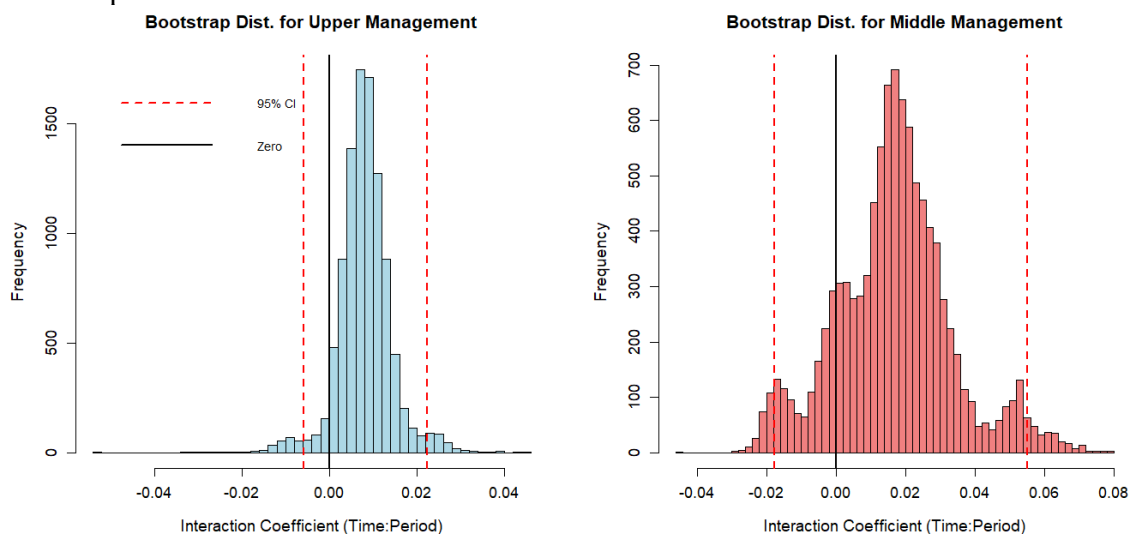
Table 2b
Change Trajectory and Projection

Management Level	Annual Trend (Post-Law)	Projected Year to Reach 56%	Years Remaining (from 2025)
Upper	+0.84%	~2058	~33 years
Middle	-0.67%	Unattainable	Negative trend

Note. *The trend (β) represents the median annual change in percentage points (p.p.) in the proportion of Black managers. The p-value from the permutation test assesses whether the "Change in Trend" is statistically significant, using a threshold of $\alpha = .05$.

In the third stage, a non-parametric linear extrapolation analysis was performed using the change trajectory derived from the Theil-Sen Estimator. The objective was to estimate the time horizon required for the representation of Black managers to reach the 56% target, which corresponds to the proportion of Black individuals in Brazilian society.

Figure 3
Bootstrap Distribution of the Interaction Coefficient



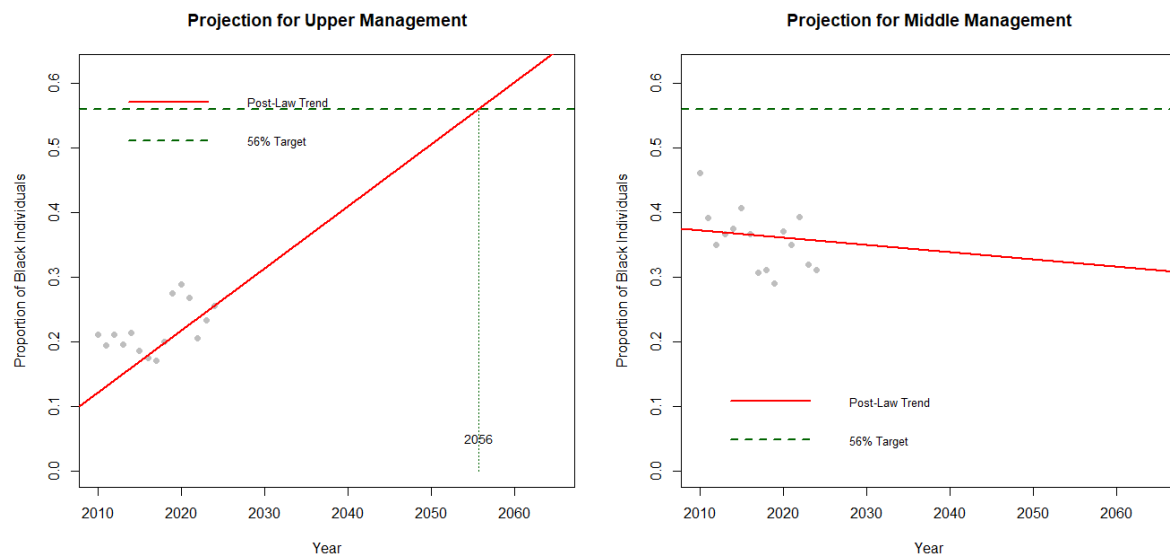
It is important to note that this is not a prognostic model, but rather an extrapolation exercise whose analytical value lies in contextualizing the magnitude of the current trend

(i.e., assessing the adequacy of the pace of change). As shown in Table 2b, for upper management, the analysis was based on a growth trend of +0.84% per year. As Figure 4 shows, if this pace is maintained, the projection indicates that the 56% parity target would only be reached in approximately 2058—that is, in over three decades. Since the growth trend, although slow, is positive, hypothesis H3a is not rejected.

However, for middle management, the trend observed in the same period is negative (-0.67%). A projection based on this trajectory indicates that, under current conditions, the 56% target would never be reached; therefore, H3b was rejected. The data paint a picture of a racially hierarchical organization that is resistant to structural change, corroborating the idea that organizations are not racially neutral (Nkomo, 1992).

Figure 4

Projecting the Racial Composition of Middle and Upper Management at CAPES



Qualitative Analysis: Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

The analysis of the results, divided into two fronts, exposes the historical and contemporary discursive strategies employed by CAPES. On the first front, we conducted a diachronic analysis of the published National Graduate Education Plans (I PNPG 1975-79 to V PNPG 2011-2020). Although the documents acknowledged the diversity of the Brazilian people, the discourse of the PNPGs operated a systematic silencing, as the lexicon of ‘race’ is absent from their diagnoses and directives. This was still the case at the beginning of the 21st century, a period when Brazilian society was fostering intense debates that led to the curricularization of the history of African peoples, the enactment of the Racial Equality Statute, and the implementation of affirmative action policies (Borges & Bernardino-Costa, 2022; Law No. 12,288/2010). As a recent discursive inflection point, this theme only emerges in the PNPG 2024-2028, which establishes as its premise the construction of a “diverse, equitable, inclusive” system and defines “expanding diversity and inclusivity” as an explicit challenge (CAPES, 2023, pp. 60, 89).

This historical silence by CAPES constitutes an active policy of silencing (Orlandi, 2007). Through the lens of Foucault (2014), it operates as an interdiction procedure: by refusing to name race in its constitutive documents for decades, the agency actively defines the racial question as a topic impertinent to the discussion of academic excellence. The agency's silence effectively interdicts the specific lexicon of race, which is laden with historicity, conflict, and demands for reparation (Borges & Bernardino-Costa, 2022). It is a form of power that establishes the boundaries of what can be legitimately thought and debated within the system.

This practice is rooted in the very political juncture in which the SNPG was consolidated. The fact that the first two PNPBs were forged during the military regime (1964-1985) is not a minor detail. The administrative culture of an authoritarian state, characterized by the control of information and the suppression of debates considered subversive, offers fertile ground for the emergence of a regulatory agency that naturalizes silence regarding the country's social fractures. Furthermore, the silence of CAPES is homologous to the silence of the very field it regulates; after all, administration as a science was historically built upon an epistemological foundation that universalizes the white experience (Nkomo, 1992; Rosa, 2014).

On the second front, the discourse analysis of a series of formal communications with CAPES, generated three categories—'counter discourse,' 'mediator discourse,' and 'cabinet discourse.' In the first instance, the 'counter discourse' operates through containment tactics. The agency resorts to legalism by evoking the General Data Protection Law (LGPD) as a supposed impediment to releasing data on the racial composition of graduate faculty. This is a discursive strategy, as the request for aggregated data for research purposes is a current and legally sound practice (Bioni, 2020). The use of the LGPD, in this context, functions less as a concern for privacy and more as an interdiction procedure (Foucault, 2014), an attempt to shut down dialogue by framing the request as legally problematic.

After reply, the initial obstruction fails and the institution is legally forced to justify itself, the strategies become more sophisticated—the 'mediator discourse.' It is at this moment that the CAPES Directorate of Evaluation admits: "this Foundation does not collect information regarding the race/color of faculty [...]." In response to a reply that accused the Directorate of state racism, the directorate asserts: "we stress that there is no intention by this Foundation to hide such information, foster privileges, or incur in state racism. So much so that the Census of Brazilian *stricto sensu* Graduate Education was instituted (CAPES Ordinance No. 99/2024)." By justifying that it does not "incur" in such a practice because it has now instituted the Census, the agency employs a temporality that, in attempting to protect the present, ends up confessing the past. The defense of the "now" constructs, by contrast, the admission of the previous condition: that of an institution that, for decades, operated under a logic that permitted the systematic erasure of the Black population from the scientific field. In this case, the discourse lies in what is not said (Foucault, 2014; Orlandi, 2015).

Intimately linked to this movement is the strategy of tokenism. When confronted with criticism about the systemic failure in collecting faculty racial data, the institution responds by highlighting an unrelated affirmative action initiative: "[...] we inform that Capes and the Ministry of Education have developed other actions in this regard, for example, the Abdias Nascimento Program, whose objective is to provide training and qualification for self-declared black, brown [...] students." A displacement of the object of debate occurs here: the interpellation about the power structure (the faculty) is answered with information about access (the student body). This tokenist argument is used as a discursive alibi that allows the institution to appear to be making progress and publicly align with the values of equity, while maintaining the logic of silencing data that would reveal the true extent of inequality at the top of the academic pyramid. The visibility of the 'one' is the tool to manage the invisibility of the 'many,' where governmentality (Foucault, 2022) operates by constructing a facade of progress that diverts the gaze from structural immobility.

Another technology of power manifests in the will to truth (Foucault, 2014), when the institution argues that diversity is a matter of the university's discretion and autonomy. This implies that racial data is not necessary information for the exercise of evaluation and statistical registration—as in the first communication: "We alert, however, that information

on race/color is voluntary to fill out [...]; therefore, the database is composed only of that which is provided by the graduate programs”; and in the second communication: “We also alert to the guidance that the issue be handled internally by higher education institutions within the scope of university autonomy.” The “alerts” are read as a discursive strategy (Foucault, 2014) for the exemption of responsibility. At the same time, by treating racial diversity as an optional and discretionary theme applicable only to student policies, CAPES also defines race as irrelevant to its regime of power-knowledge (Foucault, 2014, 2022) concerning faculty.

Nevertheless, it is in the apparent neutrality of this criterion that its most sophisticated operation of power resides (Foucault, 2022). By stating that race is not a target of evaluation and official statistics, the institution proposes a supposedly universal and disembodied subject of knowledge, affirming, in practice, which body is the tacit and legitimate bearer of scientificity. However, in a social formation like Brazil's, where access to education has historically been a white privilege (Paixão, 2014; Souza, 2021), this refusal to see race is not an act of impartiality. It is an act of power (Foucault, 2010, 2022) that, by ignoring the material starting conditions, sanctions the outcome of the historical process of exclusion and reproduces the hegemonic norm.

In the third instance, the 'cabinet discourse,' the tone shifts to become polished, cordial, comprehensive, and strategic. The discourse now welcomes the relevance of the topic and praises the depth of the inquiry. This cordiality, however, is not a sign of openness, but rather the most effective technology of governmentality (Foucault, 2022).

The function of this tone is to co-opt and neutralize. By agreeing with the importance of the agenda, the institution disarms the critic. By expressing understanding and empathy, it positions itself as an ally rather than an antagonist. It is at this point that the refusal becomes more potent, as it no longer comes as a technical barrier (as at the 'counter'), but as a "well-intentioned" conjunctural limitation. Cordiality operates to depoliticize the urgency of the present, transforming a demand for immediate reparation into an item to be considered in a vague and noncommittal future plan, thereby preserving the institution's image as sensitive and progressive.

Another notable element is that the variation in the tone of the responses—from the technical and defensive 'counter,' to the procedural and diluting 'mediator,' to the polished and strategic 'cabinet'—is not accidental. It reveals an institutional economy of discourse (Foucault, 2014, 2022) in which different tactics are activated at each hierarchical level, all operating in synergy to depoliticize the urgency of the problem, neutralize criticism, and, ultimately, ensure the perpetuation of the existing order. From a structural perspective, it is highly improbable that the issuer of the 'counter discourse,' located in the same directorate responsible for the 'mediator discourse,' was unaware that racial data on faculty had never been collected.

Finally, just as in the analysis of the PNPBs, silence appears again. In all three instances, CAPES fails to respond to the request for an explanation of the reasons why the foundation has never collected racial data on faculty in one of the most racially unequal nations in the world. This silence about the "why" is a historically and materially situated discursive act (Foucault, 2014, 2022) that de-historicizes exclusion, treating it as a technical problem to be corrected in the future, rather than as the result of a power structure that benefited from this invisibility in the past.

Silence also fulfills a material function. The production and dissemination of data on racial composition would represent a direct threat to the hegemonic system of domination that underpins the country's development (Paixão, 2025). This is because the data transform a diffuse and naturalized inequality into a concrete, measurable, and therefore contestable political problem, one that is subject to demands for reparative policies. Statistical silence is the key technology that allows the discourse of universal merit to operate without being

confronted by the reality of exclusion. The refusal to see race is the condition of possibility for the privileges of a white racial group to be maintained and reproduced under the guise of neutrality and academic excellence.

Integration of the Two Methods

The convergence between these two analytical axes—the internal hierarchy and the external erasure—suggests a relationship not of linear causality, but of structural homology. The immobility of the numbers and the discursive evasion are isomorphic and mutually constitutive manifestations of the same logic of power, mediated by the racism that structures the academic field (Abdallah et al., 2025; Souza, 2021). The structure is the material counterpart to the organizational discourse that creates the conditions of possibility (Foucault, 2014, 2022). This is because the hegemonic structure of CAPES is legitimized through a discourse of neutrality, and this discourse, by rendering race irrelevant to a regime of ‘truth’ (Foucault, 2014), guarantees the conditions for the reproduction of the very structure that enunciates it. This completes an endogenous cycle of exclusion in which the agency's own managerial elite is, axiomatically, a product of the graduate education system it now regulates.

It does so through sophisticated devices. While, through the latest PNPG (2024-2028), the agency positions itself as the architect of a system that must be “diverse, equitable, inclusive,” establishing inclusivity as a central value for the future of Brazilian science (CAPES 2023, p. 89), it operates a split governance: one for the exterior, based on the performance of progressive values and the discursive regulation of the system; and another for the interior, based on the silent reproduction of hegemonic power structures and the management of invisibility. Thus, both inside and outside the graduate education system, Black individuals find themselves once again excluded from the educational policies that have historically been denied to them, even when public policies and management strategies enunciate their rights (Cerqueira & Coelho, 2017; Paixão, 2014; Santos-Souza, 2024; Souza, 2021; Woodson, 2021).

Although we can classify the strategies of CAPES as an expression of institutional racism, it surpasses the classic understanding based on exclusion or forced assimilation (Souza, 2011; Werneck, 2021). It does so because it manifests a strategic management of invisibility as a technology of power, which operates through the visibility of the token to legitimize the invisibility of the whole. Furthermore, the dynamic reveals an institutional performance in two acts: the ‘counter discourse’ operates as an intentional containment tactic, while the subsequent admission via the ‘mediator discourse’ functions as a forced strategic retreat. What unmask this staging as a deliberate maneuver—and not a mere miscommunication—is the fact that both voices belong to the same directorate, exposing the process's lack of transparency. Traditional institutional racism does not adequately theorize this strategic ambivalence expressed in the agency's external discourse, reactive discourse, and structure.

Moreover, distinct from the classic model of governmentality, which operates through the production of statistical knowledge to control and discipline bodies (Foucault, 2022), CAPES exercises its power precisely through the management of invisibility via the production of non-knowledge, statistical silencing, and the creation of zones of non-right. This shift from a power that knows to one that deliberately ignores is connected to a metamorphosis of the very technology of state racism. However, to understand this technology of administrative power, it is imperative to situate it in relation to the modern state's management of life and death, according to Foucault's biopolitics (Foucault, 2010). Racial statistics become irrelevant because their recording and dissemination would make the racialized existence of the other an undeniable administrative fact, demanding reparative policies that the hegemonic structure aims to avoid.

If, for Foucault, state racism is the mechanism that allows a power focused on making live and letting die (Foucault, 2010), the contribution of Achille Mbembe deepens this logic. For Mbembe (2016), racism is not a mere side effect of biopower but a structuring force, the very foundation of modernity that enables the domination of racialized bodies. According to Mbembe (2022, p.21), “the Negro is, in the order of modernity, the only one of all humans whose flesh was transformed into a thing, and spirit into a commodity—the living crypt of capital.” Thus, domination is not a historical accident but the foundation upon which the capitalist system and modern power were built.

It is precisely in the transition from a power that operates on the materiality of flesh to one that acts on the immateriality of records that this expression of governmentality reveals its adaptation. The explicit violence of state racism, upon becoming politically questionable in democratic regimes, does not disappear; it metamorphoses into a management of invisibility. The violence no longer resides in the direct attack on the body, but in its suppression as a political and statistical entity within graduate education.

Thus, considering this a unique phenomenon (a racially cleaved organization that manages a state's graduate education policy), the analysis of the manifestations of power at CAPES seems to delineate the contours of a specific form of power-discourse. It is like a bureaucracy that functions contrary to its teleology: its objective is non-registration, non-information, and the management of a localized chaos that impedes measurement and, consequently, oversight. This allows the discourse to run asymmetrically to the organizational structure and public policies, masked by a supposed progress. It is at this point that a kind of counter-bureaucracy emerges as a manifestation of power whose governmentality has its own *modus operandi*. In this racialized counter-bureaucracy, the production of gaps through non-statistics and non-registration aims to reduce the Black body to a state of political non-existence, even as the discourse insists on valuing its existence.

In the case of CAPES, even if there is legislation and a discourse oriented toward diversity, it creates paralegal and para-institutional strategies to dictate which kind of body matters in the making and regulating of science—be it in the organizational structure or in institutional policies. This is a racialized operation of negating the other (Jaime & Santos-Souza, 2025).

As the great beneficiaries of this racialized counter-bureaucracy are white people, in the case of CAPES, the State becomes the guardian of the integrity of a social patrimony that ends up being racially protected. Therefore, we classify the actions of CAPES as a sophisticated form of State racism, not because it directly segregates and kills, but because it ensures that a racial hierarchy is perpetuated (letting live), albeit indirectly. This racialized counter-bureaucracy determines which body is seen by the State, rendering racialized subjects administratively invisible. It is worth noting that, at the time of this writing, one year after the issuance of Ordinance 99/2024, the Graduate Education Census still has no forecast for implementation.

Final Remarks

The objective of this study was to analyze how racial questions shape the inequalities evidenced in the organizational structure of CAPES and manifest in its institutional discourses and practices related to the graduate system. The mixed-methods analysis unveiled a complex and resilient structure of racial exclusion, demonstrating that racial inequality at CAPES manifests in two interconnected dimensions. First, there is an internal racial hierarchy marked by the underrepresentation of Black individuals at the highest levels of management (Hypothesis H1 not rejected) and by the inertia of this racial composition in the face of affirmative action policies (H2a, H2b, and H3b rejected; H3a not rejected). Second, there is an external regulatory practice that operates through a sophisticated discursive apparatus of silencing, erasure, and neutralization of the racial question within

the SNPG. The study contributes to theory by demonstrating the structural homology between these two dimensions, arguing that the internally whitened power structure and the external discourse of meritocratic neutrality are isomorphic and mutually constitutive manifestations of a single logic of power, which manifests as a racialized counter-bureaucracy.

Beyond diagnosing a case of institutional and state racism at CAPES, this study makes another theoretical contribution by delineating the contours of what can be conceptualized as a manifestation of governmentality, whose *modus operandi* occurs through a racialized counter-bureaucracy. It employs a set of power-discourse tactics and rationalities in which the state apparatus, under a veil of technical neutrality, uses the management of invisibility as its primary technology for managing racialized populations. This ensures their erasure from official statistics and the perpetuation of racial hierarchies without the need for explicitly racist policies and strategies. Paradoxically, this racialized counter-bureaucracy simultaneously deploys a discursive apparatus articulated with a progressive rhetoric of inclusion, thus constituting a sophisticated racist management technology that performs equity while ensuring the perpetuation of hierarchy.

This management technology can serve as an analytical lens for future studies because other organizations may manifest a similar phenomenon. One example is ANPAD (Brazilian Academy of Management) itself, which launched a program called Anpad-Inclusiva that aims to include historically marginalized social groups. However, in ANPAD's data repository, named AnpaData, race and color data have never been presented. Thus, we are faced with the same paradox: how can a central institution in the scientific field of administration in Brazil (and a significant actor globally) manage what it does not measure if it purports to be inclusive? Beyond ANPAD, other corporations may be adopting a public discourse of diversity, equity, and inclusion while their managerial structures remain racially homogeneous and data on the subject are nonexistent, scarce, or not used for decision-making.

Beyond this paradox, the implementation of the new Graduate Education Census by CAPES—a result of interpellations and social control initiatives like the one that originated this study—will demand longitudinal analyses to monitor its effectiveness, which also presents an avenue for new studies. Furthermore, comparative studies with other funding agencies and investigations into the reception of CAPES's discourses by graduate programs themselves are promising paths for research. Another line of inquiry could focus on how the racial composition of organizations influences their actions toward their stakeholders.

Finally, the analysis allows us to return to the metaphor that titles this work with a new understanding. It has been demonstrated that the management of invisibility practiced by CAPES does not create a desert, but a garden that shelters a cemetery. The sunflowers of public discourse on diversity, equity, and inclusion flourish on the surface, nourished by institutional silence and a neutralizing cordiality. Beneath this soil, however, lies the necropolis of exclusion, where vultures roam free over the bodies and knowledges whose existence has been administratively slaughtered so that the hegemonic order may be perpetuated. The task of building a truly anti-racist academy, therefore, is not merely to water the sunflowers, but to unveil the conditions of this cemetery so that a new ecology, one that is truly just and diverse, can finally emerge.

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