"I DON'T LOOK LIKE A MEDICAL STUDENT": TRAJECTORY OF A STUDENT AND THE DISCRIMINATING GUICHES AT THE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

"EU NÃO TENHO CARA DE ESTUDANTE DE MEDICINA": TRAJETÓRIA DE UM ESTUDANTE E OS GUICHÊS DISCRIMINANTES NA UNIVERSIDADE PÚBLICA

"NO PARECERÉ UN ESTUDIANTE DE MEDICINA": TRAYECTORIA DE UN ESTUDIANTE Y LOS GUICHES DISCRIMINANTES EN LA UNIVERSIDAD PÚBLICA

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ABSTRACT: The article analyzes the trajectory of a low-income student, the interactions with discriminating counters in a public university in Minas Gerais and his perceptions about his daily life as a target student of social policies. Based on a qualitative approach, a narrative interview was carried out, covering four dimensions: (1) her family and school trajectory before entering the university; (2) strategies and perceptions about social inclusion policies that contributed to their admission to university; (3) your experience as a medical student and interactions with peers; (4) its interaction with the sectors at the university, at its counters. The results indicate a change in the socioeconomic profile in public universities since the Lula government and the entry of "unlikely students", through the Quota Law and other policies aimed at families. They also reveal discriminating windows and stigmas that are processed from the reproduction of inequalities in the policy implementation process.

KEYWORDS: Implementation of public policies. School trajectories. Inequality and educational opportunities. Public university.

RESUMO: O artigo analisa a trajetória de um estudante de camada popular, as interações com guichês discriminantes em uma universidade pública mineira e suas percepções sobre seu cotidiano como estudante-alvo de políticas sociais. A partir de uma abordagem qualitativa, realizou-se uma entrevista-narrativa, contemplando quatro dimensões: (1) sua trajetória familiar e escolar antes do ingresso na universidade; (2) estratégias e percepções sobre políticas de inclusão social que contribuíram para seu ingresso na universidade; (3) sua experiência como estudante de Medicina e as interações com os pares; (4) sua interação com os setores na universidade, nos seus guichês. Os resultados indicam mudança no perfil socioeconômico nas universidades públicas a partir do governo Lula e o ingresso dos "estudantes improváveis", por meio da Lei de Cotas e outras políticas destinadas às famílias.

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Revelam, também, guichês discriminantes e estigmas que se processam, a partir da reprodução de desigualdades no processo de implementação de políticas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Implementação de políticas públicas. Trajetórias escolares. Desigualdade e oportunidades educacionais. Universidade pública.*

RESUMEN: *El artículo analiza la trayectoria de un estudiante de baja renta, las interacciones con contadores discriminatorios en una universidad pública de Minas Gerais y sus percepciones sobre su cotidiano como estudiante objetivo de las políticas sociales. A partir de un enfoque cualitativo, se realizó una entrevista narrativa, abarcando cuatro dimensiones: (1) su trayectoria familiar y escolar antes de ingresar a la universidad; (2) estrategias y percepciones sobre las políticas de inclusión social que contribuyeron a su ingreso a la universidad; (3) su experiencia como estudiante de medicina e interacciones con sus compañeros; (4) su interacción con los sectores de la universidad, en sus mostradores. Los resultados indican un cambio en el perfil socioeconómico de las universidades públicas desde el gobierno de Lula y la entrada de "estudiantes improbables", a través de la Ley de Cuotas y otras políticas dirigidas a las familias. También revelan ventanas discriminatorias y estigmas que se procesan a partir de la reproducción de desigualdades en el proceso de implementación de políticas.*

PALABRAS-CLAVE: *Implementación de políticas públicas. Trayectorias escolares. Desigualdad y oportunidades educativas. Universidad pública.*

Introduction

This article, initially, weaves together some problematizations and tensions regarding the access of students from different social, cultural and economic backgrounds to university: how do students with unlikely trajectories, enrolled in federal universities, interact with the State and social policies throughout their trajectory, as recipients of these policies? What difficulties do they face with the state bureaucracy to have their rights guaranteed? What perceptions do they have about their schooling and social inclusion?

The article analyzes the trajectory of José[3], a popular student enrolled in a medical course, his experiences and interactions with the discriminating windows in a university in Minas Gerais and how (and why) he moves to another university in the same state to deviate from the stigmas and inequalities he faces. From this perspective, we analyze his perception of the dynamics associated with the implementation processes of social inclusion programs throughout his school career in basic education and, already at university, we discuss how the discriminating windows within the state affect these dynamics.

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[3]Fictitious name in order to preserve identity and ensure anonymity, according to research ethics protocols.

According to Jaccoud (2005), since the election of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010), we have witnessed the strengthening of the Brazilian Social Protection System, whose goal was to equalize access to opportunities and confront social risks, poverty and the destruction of rights. This social protection network contributed to what Kerstenetzky (2008) calls the correction of socioeconomic inequalities, based on the idea that reducing inequality would contribute to the insertion of a significant portion of the population into the social fabric.

In the educational field, the Lula and Dilma Rousseff governments (2011-2016) effectively treated education as a right, through policies established for all levels, stages, and modalities of education, with emphasis on basic and higher education, in dialogue with representatives of civil society, and in increasing the percentage destined to direct public investment. Senkevics (2021) states that the unprecedented expansion of places and enrollments in higher education, in addition to the implementation of inclusive policies in both public and private universities, contributed to a considerable increase in the number of young people from low-income backgrounds.

From the early 1990s on, Sociology of Education has focused on these questions, interested in understanding who these students are, their trajectories, and their strategies for school longevity until they reach university. The works of Portes (1993), Viana (1998), Silva (1999), and Zago (2006) stand out, based on the literature that deals with the school success of "improbable" students"[4] of popular classes through trajectories that are often conflictive and unequal.

From the perspective of the implementation of public policies, the presence of these young people in universities may be submerged in the dyad (1) expansion of access and (2) effects revealed from bureaucratic limits associated with the reproduction of inequalities. The interaction between users/recipients of public policies aimed at low-income citizens and the institutions that offer/implement them may reveal stigmas and discriminations, at the same time that it collaborates to the practical regulation of the behaviors that constitute it. Thus, one can speak of inequality implemented in the policies at the *guichês[5]*, concept used by Dubois (2019) to recall windows or tables through which the interactions of subjects with the State are performed and, also, to report to a symbolic place of domination and revelation of stigmas

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[4]BernanrdLahire (1997), sociologist and professor at the University of Lyon, has contributed to the construction of the understanding of the concept of school trajectories, in his work "School Success in Popular Backgrounds: The Reasons of the Improbable", where he deepens the concept of improbable success of popular class students.
[5] Dubois (2019) asserts that at the *guichês*, institutions assume the ability to shape citizens from the moment institutional practices are shared in unequal and silent ways that reproduce social inequalities.

that are processed in these relations. By dialoguing with the literature in these fields, this article articulates, therefore, the references and evidence from the Sociology of Education with the discussions about policy implementation and the reproduction of social inequalities.

According to Hirata (2014), Oliveira (2017), and Laisner *et al.*, (2021), these issues are directly articulated with intersectionally intertwined social markers - gender, race, and patriarchal structures, and the way specific actions and policies generate oppressions, constituting dynamic aspects of disempowerment and stigmatizing practices - we understand that the research subject, the narrator, could not be randomly selected. Due to the objectives of the research, it was necessary, then, to "find", in this group of students enrolled in a highly selective course, one who had this profile. Based on surveys with students and professors linked to the medical course, we found José, a typical representative of this universe.

We analyze, then, his trajectory as a student coming from a family in poverty and his passage through two federal universities (the first, a medium-sized university where he enrolled in 2016 and left in 2020, the focus of the reports; and the second, a large university, where he has been enrolled since 2021), both located in the state of Minas Gerais. José is a 28-year-old black male. His father is a receptionist in a pousada and his mother is a housewife. José comes from a poor family in the north of Minas Gerais, which has benefited from the *Bolsa Família* Program for more than ten years. He entered the university through the quota policy and is a user of the university student assistance programs.

The research developed by Senkevics (2021) analyzes the transformations that have marked the recent expansion of the Brazilian higher education system, based on quantitative data concentrated in the period from 1991 to 2020, in dialogue with a literature review. The author lists five main trends: democratization of access, institution of affirmative action, public-private imbalance, expansion of distance learning, and horizontal stratification. The author states that the unprecedented expansion of vacancies and enrollments in higher education, together with the institutional diversification of supply and inclusive policies, has led to the heterogenization of the student body and a growing horizontal stratification. It is in this context that José is inserted, one of the thousands of students from working class backgrounds, black and brown, who became part of higher education institutions in Brazil as a result of the policies of social protection and expansion and democratization of this education modality. According to Pires (2019), the processes of implementation of social policies, while mitigating inequalities, can reproduce them.

The research, qualitative in nature, has its methodological proposal supported by the experiential model, from new epistemological and methodological perspectives for the analysis of public policies, proposed by Lejano (2012). Likewise, the perspective of Dubois (2019), from his fieldwork on the bureaucratic encounters between subjects of popular strata and the State through the counters, and the contributions of Gofmann (1982), on the stigmatizing interactions between citizens and the State, favored the construction of the methodological path of this article. The use of narratives proposed by Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003), as a methodological proposal for understanding the interactions existing in the process of policy implementation, also subsidized the methodological proposal of this article.

As a methodological instrument, an in-depth narrative interview was carried out which, according to Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2002), can be classified as a qualitative research method, materialized as a form of non-structured, in-depth interview with specific characteristics, such as, for example, a semi-autonomous process, based on telling and listening to the story with minimal influence from the researcher. The interview-narrative contemplated four dimensions: (1) his family and school trajectory before entering the university; (2) strategies and policies of social inclusion that contributed to his entry; (3) his daily experience as a medical student and interactions with colleagues, professors, employees; (4) his interaction with sectors and agencies in the university, in its counters and (5) his motivations and strategies to change institution.

The article is organized in four sections, besides the introduction and final considerations. In the first section, we present a brief discussion on social protection policies and their contribution to the arrival of students from popular strata in public universities. The second section brings a review about bureaucratic encounters in the process of policy implementation from the perspective of discriminating and stigmatizing counters. Finally, the fourth section presents the results of the research based on the narrative interview conducted with the student, in which the trajectory of José's family and his "improbable" entry into the public university are exposed, as well as his experiences with the discriminating counters at the university.

From social protection policies to public universities: the arrival of poor students to higher education

As Oliveira, A. L. M. (2019) points out, the presidential election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010) inaugurates a period that conjures an institutional framework that guarantees, for the first time, social policies for the poor population, education as a right, the adoption of a profusion of public policies for higher education, especially from 2003 onwards.

Kerstenetzky (2008) states that the inclusion of social policies in the governmental agenda contributed to the correction of socioeconomic inequalities. The author argues that the promotion of equal opportunities in Brazil is one of the keys to promote social mobility. In this direction, Lavinas and Gentil (2018) state that, between 2003 and 2014, there were several signs of economic growth and efforts to eradicate poverty and expand opportunities and social inclusion: the increase in the creation of formal jobs; the increase in public investment in education and health; the growth in adherence to health plans; the increase in the purchasing power of the minimum wage by more than 70%; and the success of the Bolsa Família program and other inclusion programs, such as *Minha Casa Minha Vida*, *Programa de Prestação Continuada*, *Luz para Todos*, among others.

Regarding the advances in the field of education, Costa, Silveira, Costa, and Waltenberg (2021) show that, in 2015, the schooling rate for students aged 7 to 14 years in Brazil reached 98.8%; for adolescents aged 15 to 17 years, it reached 85%. From this perspective, such expansion, coupled with social inclusion policies aimed at families living in poverty, has contributed to young people considered unlikely to have a glimpse of the opportunity to access higher education.

The period was marked by the creation of numerous federal universities, funded by the Support Program for Restructuring and Expansion Plans of Federal Universities (REUNI). In 2018, a decade after the creation of the Federal Institutes through Law No. 11.892/2008 (BRASIL, 2008), which created the Federal Network of Professional, Scientific and Technological Education, it was possible to observe the expansion of Brazilian technical schools, which, by 2020, had more than 600 campuses. The expansion of private higher education was made possible from the granting of scholarships, tax waivers and loans to students, through the University for All Program (PROUNI, in the Portuguese acronym) and the Higher Education Student Financing Fund (FIES, in the Portuguese acronym).

The V Pesquisa de Perfil Socioeconômico e Cultural dos Graduandos(a) das Graduandos(a) das Instituições Federais de Ensino Superior, organized by FONAPRACE [6] (2019), provides information regarding the socioeconomic and cultural profile of its undergraduates. The data reveals that there has been an important change in the socioeconomic profile of its students, reducing its historical inequality and elitism: between 2003 and 2017, Brazilian higher education witnessed an expansion that resulted in an increase of more than 260% in vacancies offered. The Quotas Policy has contributed to minimize inequality of access and social inclusion and the presence of greater diversity among students in Brazilian higher education.

Through Law No. 12,711, of August 29, 2012 (BRASIL, 2012), vacancies began to be reserved in a percentage for students from public schools and ethnic minorities, those said to be "unlikely" in universities until a few years ago. Data from the National Association of Directors of Federal Institutions of Higher Education (ANDIFES) on the black population in universities show that the combination REUNI and affirmative action have caused the number of black students, which in 2003 was 27,693, to advance to 143,599 in 2018 (FONAPRACE, 2019).

Regarding the socioeconomic profile of students from families in poverty and/or vulnerable, the denomination used by FONAPRACE (2019) uses the variable "Gross monthly income of the family group and per capita monthly income" and considers that students in social vulnerability are in the per capita monthly family income category of "up to one and a half minimum wages". In 2019, the survey revealed that 53.5% of undergraduates in the IFES are in the per capita monthly family income range of up to one minimum wage, and 70.2%, are in the per capita monthly family income range of up to one and a half minimum wages. Historically, one can observe through the data that the percentage of students belonging to families with monthly per capita income up to 1 and a half minimum wage jumped from 44.3% in 1996 to 66.2% in 2014, reaching 70.2% in 2018, the highest level in the historical series. Part of this movement stems from the strong expansion of public higher education and investment in social policies for the poorest layers of the population, since the early 2000s.

It is important to highlight, however, that research also reveals the inequalities associated with this inclusion process. Costa, Silveira, Costa, and Waltenberg (2021) call attention to the need for a horizontal democratization of universities, through the maintenance of conditions of access and permanence of students from popular strata in elite university

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[6] Observatory of the National Forum of Pro-Rectors of Student Affairs.

courses, historically attended by white sectors of society and children of families from more favored social classes.

The bureaucratic encounters in the process of policy implementation: the discriminating and stigmatizing counters

The discussion on public policies starts from the assumption that they travel a path until they are made available to their addressees, through a chain that mobilizes a set of government actors, involving, also, characteristics of the bureaucracy itself. When analyzing implementation from the perspective of the agents who work at the tip - the street bureaucrats or street-level bureaucrats, according to Lipsky (1980 apud OLIVEIRA, B. R., 2019) states that the process of policy implementation in the context of practice involves distinct actors who have distinct agendas and interests, coupled with their beliefs, values, and perceptions. The author further asserts that the meanings attributed to policies throughout this implementation trajectory go through particular "lenses." This perspective brings to light the understanding that this dynamic is complex, since there are a range of particularities that involve the decision-making process of the actors, as well as how they interpret the policy and their own role, as implementers or beneficiaries of the policies.

According to Pires (2019), until the policy is made available, its objectives are conditioned to a set of factors that may not have been foreseen in its formulation. Thus, they may produce effects that were not foreseen in the formulation and implementation processes, reproducing or exacerbating inequalities. Research on unrevealed effects informs us that implementation produces desirable social effects, and also undesirable ones, which arise from negative externalities. Even though they are born from the norm and the rule, their everyday life concerns the way bureaucrats translate politics and how these issues affect the interaction with citizens - the recipients of these policies. In this direction, Oliveira and Lacerda (2019) state that there are invisible aspects inherent to the implementation process and that this invisibility can be understood as the production of positive and negative externalities, the side effects generated by the operationalization of actions within the scope of state action, at the local level.

In addressing these issues, Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003), state that the implementing agents have their decisions directly linked to their values, beliefs, and their value systems. For the authors, the implementation processes trigger their moral values,

which affects the way they act and decide. When analyzing the performance of agents who act at the tip and their "educational" attribution before citizens, Auyero (2012) characterized users as "learners" or "patients" of the state, from the perspective that sanctions, demands, value judgments, and power inequality are personified in bureaucrats.

From this perspective, implementation can be understood as a political process. The politics that takes place in implementation is described by Vincent Dubois (2019) as capable of perpetuating positions of subordination in structural relations of domination, in the context of serving the working classes. The relationships that exist at the counters and the judgments that come into existence from these relationships are capable of producing what the author calls "policies at the *guichê*." More than that, they reveal a "*guichê* policy" that aims to reproduce the inequality already existing between the two sides of the counter, through what the author calls a mode of operation of a public intervention that aims to regulate these populations.

The author states that, in the dynamics of implementation, "tricks" can occur that allow governments to sustain a "double game", which, despite the discourse of inclusion of the working class population, is sabotaged by what he calls "*guichê* policies" exercised by front-line workers in the process of public policy implementation. The expression "*guichê* discriminant*" refers to the perspective of the French sociology of the guichet (sociologie du guichet) and can bring new analytical lenses to the Brazilian debate on issues such as public policy implementation, especially when it comes to the relationship between street-level bureaucrats and the working-class population. In his studies on these dynamics, Dubois (2019) clarifies the concept of *guichê* and analyzes how such interactions can contribute to the reproduction of inequalities in the context of public policy implementation. Goffman (1982), when analyzing the "interactional order" and its relations with social structures, states that interactions should be seen as a relevant unit of analysis for sociological research in general. For the author, there is a close relationship between these interactions and social structures, as if characteristics of these social structures could be reproduced. It is in this perspective that, supporting Dubois' ideas, Goffman (1982) reinforces that these interactions can produce unequal, silent and stigmatizing relations, aggravating social inequalities.

The trajectory of a family and an "unlikely" student who "broke the bubble" of access to public university

José is twenty-eight years old. In 2019, he started his first medical course at a medium-sized university in Minas Gerais, and in 2021, he decided, because of financial difficulties and issues associated with the stigmas suffered at this institution, to attend medical school at a large university in Minas Gerais. The student reports that, alongside his brother, who is two years older, he had a very poor childhood. His father, who did not finish the first years of elementary school, was always the one who worked and supported the family as a receptionist in a hostel. His mother, who finished high school and was a teacher, worked for a short time in a daycare center when her children were small and became a "housewife", since she understood that it was necessary to have someone to take care of her children's studies.

José relates that his family lived in a "classic adobe brick house from documentaries in the Valley" and that the family received help from the local church to maintain the precarious housing conditions. She says that material privations made daily life difficult, and access to primary care policies was limited for the family, which found, for example, many difficulties in access to health professionals, medicines, and procedures such as exams and hospitalizations.

The social and political context of the early years of the first decade of 2000, the period corresponding to José's childhood and adolescence, was shrouded by a new paradigm focused on the construction of social protection policies for the population living in poverty in Brazil. With an agenda focused on the conformation of a social protection network aimed at addressing inequalities associated with specific publics, the Lula government inaugurated a political moment of social change in which the State reaffirmed itself as a strategic, if not central, actor to address problems related to citizenship, inequality, opportunities, and well-being (JACCOUD; BICHIR; MESQUITA, 2017, p. 39).

José, who was born in 1993, reports that, starting when he was a pre-teen, his family became eligible for the Bolsa Família Program. He says that the amount, which was used to buy food and pay the household bills, was conditional on the two brothers' school attendance. José recognizes that the *Bolsa Família* Program made a great contribution to their ability to support themselves, supplementing the income from their father's salary, as well as helping his brother and him not to drop out of school. Néri (2012) states that the *Bolsa Família* Program offered great potential for the fall of inequality in Brazil, characterizing the program as one of the most successful public policies in the fight against social inequality. The author

further states that the program induced families to keep up with the schooling of their children, contributing decisively to the reduction of the intergenerational circle of poverty and to the expansion of the years of schooling of children and youth.

In Brazil, the last two decades have been marked by the expansion of access to Brazilian public universities, which have been receiving, in a significant way, students from popular classes through affirmative action policies and expansion of openings. In his account, the interviewed student explains how the inclusion policies that have been part of a social protection network in Brazil since the first decade of the 2000s have contributed to his trajectory, stating that "I would never have been able to get into university if there was no ENEM (National High School Exam)," and that the Quota Policy was his "gateway" to the public university. For him, such policies "allowed a handful of students to overcome this trajectory of poverty and exclusion from the diploma.

However, José makes it clear that the school spaces he attended are marked in his memory by the stigma of inequality. In his accounts, he demonstrates an idea of a school capable of reproducing social inequalities, based on his understanding of the precariousness of the structure, the training of his teachers, and the teaching materials to which he had access in the school he attended.

About his access to public higher education, José pointed out two important factors that, in his words, allowed him to "break through the bubble of the federal university". His mother's schooling trajectory and the family's support so that he could study without worrying about having to work to help the family financially were decisive. About his mother's trajectory and her attempts to enter university, the student reports that she had a successful trajectory in basic education, but was not able to get into a university. José says that growing up hearing his mother's memories of a successful school career made him, from a very young age, see the possibility of being a good student. In his reports, he makes it clear that his mother's figure, the vast collection of books she had at home, and the fact that she created reading moments with her children through her old school books, contributed to expand his view about his school career.

By stating that the parents' investment in their children's school life is a driving element for success in schooling, Nogueira (2021) reflects on the use of the concept of cultural capital in explaining school inequalities as a synonym of cultural dispositions and relationship with cultural goods. Lahire (1997) emphasizes that the presence of members with school cultural capital in the family, by itself, is not able to produce effects in the following

generations. For this, effective and affective interactions are necessary, which, in the case of the student interviewed, seems to be related to the access to his mother's collection of books, the encouragement to read and study these books, and the memory of his mother's accounts of his school success and his attempt to enter a university. In the same way that the mother's strategies are remembered by the student, the efforts of the father, a salaried worker, so that his son could study and "break through the university bubble," are also highlighted in his account.

> *I think I was able to break through that bubble by stubbornness and effort and by having the slightest possibility of being able to sit down and study. There are many people who did not have this privilege that I had, you know? My father let me, I was able to study, quietly inside the house the whole year, studying until I was 28, without having to work, you know.?* (José).

Through the studies of Lahire (1997), Nogueira (2005), Viana (2005), Thin (2006), and Portes and Souza, (2012), it is known that the family constitutes an indispensable social ground to be considered in the constitution of a trajectory of school longevity, which is corroborated with the reports of José. Such studies on family strategies for schooling have opened up the debate, making room for the importance of considering the complexity of these trajectories, of the subjects as the result of multiple processes of socialization, and that their individual performance is also strategic in these processes.

According to FONAPRACE (2019), the inclusion of a large number of Brazilian students in higher education, through policies to strengthen basic education and social protection policies since 2003, has caused the number of "exceptions" to increase, as stated by Piotto (2012, p. 3). In his account of being at university, in a medical course, José states, "I am an exception of the exception." According to data from Fonaprace (2019), José is part of the 70.2% of Brazilian working-class students who entered the public university with per capita income of up to one and a half minimum wages. With this movement, such composition imposes on these institutions other demands, revealed by the inequalities associated with the permanence of these students in these spaces. For Terrail (1990), who discussed the strategies of poor university students, the academic success of students from popular classes involves contact with hostility in relationships and the inequality present in these relationships. For this reason, Dubet (2001) discusses the segregative democratization of education, from the perspective that poor students are not part of the most socially valued educational sectors.

In analyzing these issues based on José's account, the student states that it was not enough to "break through the bubble," since he makes it clear that entering the university did not make the social problems he had known since childhood disappear. The inequalities of opportunities with regard to school are now revealed in the difficulties faced by the student to access the assistance policies at the public university, in the interaction through its *guichês*. Besides this, the daily coexistence with the other actors who pass through this universe also emerges as a reproducer of inequalities and stigmas, objects of the next section.

"*I don't look like a medical student*": the experiences of a student from a popular layer with the discriminating counters at university

José idealized, since adolescence, to be a medical oncologist, or, "a doctor from the Valley", to work in his region and give people in his community what he and his family did not have: access to public health policies. His trajectory, between dropouts and approvals, was extensive and tortuous: he graduated from high school in 2010 and tried, between 2011 and 2014, to be approved in Medicine. José says he is aware of "his conditions in front of those he thought were much more prepared". Unable to pay for preparatory courses, he adopted a calculated strategy: to enter university through a "springboard course" to get into the medical course. In 2015, he was approved in the Mechanical Engineering course in a medium-sized university in the interior of Minas Gerais - the "springboard" to achieve his desire to study medicine.

In the two following years, 2016 and 2017, José reports that he took several subjects in Portuguese, mathematics, physics, and chemistry, with the strategy of, within the Mechanical Engineering course, having his preparatory course for a future ENEM and being approved in Medicine. José was not approved in 2016 and in 2017, which made him request the "lock" of the Mechanical Engineering course and return to his parents' home. Studying at home and with support from Youtube channels, in late 2018, Jose was approved in Medicine at the same university. In 2019, he went on to study Medicine.

The student reports that he continued to receive the housing allowance and the meal allowance through the university restaurant, just as he did when he was enrolled in Mechanical Engineering. In his accounts, he explains the difficulties he had regarding the housing, since he had to "go into the bathroom and close the door to study", and that he shared the room with four other colleagues who were studying different courses.

When asked about the student assistance policies at this university, José reports that he had financial difficulties to stay in the course because of the absence of a maintenance grant, which made it impossible for him to buy the handouts left by the professors in the stationery stores that sold them, and also to pay for the bus fares for the practical activities of the course that were held in neighborhoods far from the university. The student reports that he decided to apply to the university for a housing allowance, because the housing hindered his studies. Thus, he reports that in order to get this aid it was necessary to write a letter explaining why he didn't want to live in the lodging, proving with a medical or psychological evidence the need to live alone and/or in the city, which made him feel humiliated.

> *You have to write a letter, asking why you wanted to leave, you know? You feel humiliated to be able to earn 230 reals and you can't find a place in the city to live for 230 reals. You can't afford it. Then they ask you to write down the reason why you want to leave the dorm. Then you have to tell them why you want to leave, and then they will approve or not your leaving. Then they ask that, if you have some psychological issue, some medical report, that associates that the lodging is harming you, that you make an attachment and send it. So, to me, it seems to be a lot of bureaucracy* (José).

Dubois (2019) states that the interactions that occur at the counter, that is, relationships in the treatment of misery, bureaucratic roles, which at first seem impersonal, reveal themselves to be highly permeable to the dispositions of those who perform them. The counter revealed by the author, with its recurrent potential of symbolic violence, imposes on individuals the conviction of their condition of subordination in relation to agents and to the State itself, reinforcing his idea of a stigmatizing interaction, which Goffman (1982) calls unequal and silent interactions that reproduce social inequalities. In his narrative, the student makes it clear that the path he had to go through to request that the housing grant be converted into housing aid was particularly humiliating. In front of the student assistance counter, he makes it clear that he received instructions that embarrassed him on how the request should be made.

José's experience is a clear example of the effects of the process of implementation and reproduction of social inequalities in the provision of public services, as analyzed by Pires (2019). The student makes it clear that writing a letter with proof that he really could not afford to live in the accommodation in order to get a housing allowance put him through a process of anxiety and sadness. The repetitions of patterns of exclusion also occurred, according to the student, by the type of treatment through which he was received at the student assistance counters. His personal perception was that he was treated with disregard,

coldness, and haste in some situations. Thus, it becomes necessary to discuss the performance of the implementing agents at the top, street-level bureaucrats who, with discretionary power, can reproduce inequalities from their position in the policy-making process, or who, according to Maynard Mood and Musheno (2003), can act from positions of power with citizens. This is one of the reasons why "the actions of street-level bureaucrats can impact processes of social inclusion and exclusion" (PIRES; LOTTA; TORRES JUNIOR, 2019, p. 258).

In his narrative, José states that his sense of belonging as a medical student at this university was fragile and painful. The student reports that he went through several situations in which he felt distanced from other colleagues because of his color or social class.

> *When I started the course there was that speech of the veterans, of the united room. And then you enter with the feeling that you are part of it. But, as the course goes on, you realize that there is a natural segmentation of the class by social context, by socioeconomic context, there is a segmentation. You realize that there are people who don't look at you properly. You realize that there are people who are bothered by your presence, you know, who look at you tolerating you being there, as if you were not worthy of being there. This is very noticeable, you know? Among the students yes* (José).

About his classmates, he says that he felt excluded from some collective decisions, stating that it is "like a person who is hitchhiking in a car that is not yours, you know? You don't have any rights there. The same happened in relation to the employees of the Department of Medicine or with other organs of the university. As an example of unequal and discriminating distance between the popular classes and institutions, according to Dubois (2019), José states that he experienced embarrassment with Department attendants, as reported below:

> *It has happened that I am sitting there in the department, a person arrives, with several students there, and an employee comes up to me and asks if I was there waiting to take the contest for technicians. Why did he ask only me if I was in the middle of all my colleagues? It is a question of visualization, that I don't have the face of a medical student* (José).

Dubois (2020) emphasizes that "face-to-face" bureaucratic encounters between citizens who are on both sides of the counter can reveal that all the social and moral norms that are part of this interaction are capable of producing dynamics of classification among citizens and, furthermore, perpetuate inequalities among them. At the counter, concrete service and/or symbolic devices that reveal the bureaucracy and discretion of the implementing agents, power relations, discrimination, perpetuation of inequality, and

stigmatization occur. Pires, Lotta, and Torres Júnior (2019) also reinforce on the need to understand the processes of (re)production of social inequalities engendered in state action.

In addressing these issues, José reports that "even the position of sitting in the room is segmented. People don't mix. You have the poor crowd and the other crowd. The student tells about a situation in which a colleague, in the midst of several students, asked him aloud in which course he was enrolled at the university.

> *Everyone said: "It's History! Geography". So you already have a character, who is a medical student and doesn't have my characteristics, right? Nobody talks, nobody even thinks that the guy is a medical student. So, I see that this is something that is very complicated to try to solve. It is something that is already structural. I think that with time, but with a lot of time, as these students manage to get in and more students manage to have access to these positions that today belong to other people, I think that there is a tendency to improve in this respect.* (José).

José reports that all the stigmas related to the lack of privacy and space to study, in addition to the "low-income situation and lack of support from the university" materialized in the absence of a maintenance grant and difficulties encountered in relation to student housing, made him try again to take the ENEM at the end of 2019. But this time, his goal was to study medicine, starting in 2020, at a large university in the state of Minas Gerais. The student was then approved in the Medicine course of this university, located in the capital of Minas Gerais.

Even with the approval in 2020, José reports that he gave up going to the capital because he was informed that it would be more difficult to get provisional housing allowance until he applied for housing. The fear of not having financial resources to support himself made him give up. So he kept his enrollment at the first university, in the interior of the state. In March 2020, when social distancing and lockdown were proposed because of the Covid-19 pandemic, Jose returned to his parents' home. The situation was aggravated because just at that time his father became unemployed and he could not count on any help to stay at the university and not even at his parents' home. His perception is that the first university "let go of poor students", which made him take a new decision: to try again the ENEM to enter medicine in the university of the capital of Minas Gerais, starting in 2021. José, stating that he would start the course "from scratch again", becomes a regular student of the medical course at this large university. Even though he has migrated to another university, he recognizes that the student assistance policies he received at the first university were fundamental for him and

his classmates to remain there. He highlights the importance of the Food Grant for the period he stayed there.

> *I think that assistance policies for poor students are necessary, however minimal they may be. There is a university in my town. Wouldn't it have been easier for me to get in there? There was Mechanical Engineering in my town. Why didn't I get into Mechanical Engineering there? I went to the first university because of the university restaurant* (José).

Just like many young people from lower social classes who are present in Brazilian public universities, José clearly exposes, from his trajectory, that the debate about access and permanence in public universities needs to be deepened, whether from the standpoint of student assistance policies or a more careful look at how these policies are implemented in these institutions.

Final remarks

Despite the methodological and analytical limits of this article, the student's narrative contributes to reveal the historical, collective, and social dimensions in their experiences, linked to the process of social policy implementation. Gussie Oliveira (2016, p. 95) emphasize the importance of the notion of trajectory and the social context of the subjects, defining it as a "strategic methodological referential for understanding social processes, building a dialogue between temporalities and territorialities, revealing a historical, collective, and social dimension." Thus, the student provides subsidies that allow the unveiling of the interactions between the agents that act in the *guichês* and the social groups where these subject transits, as well as the effects that such implementation processes can produce.

Anchored in Jaccoud (2005), Kerstenetzky (2008), Portes and Souza (2012), and Senkevics (2021), José's narrative reveals that the social protection network in which his family was inserted, along with the family strategies for him to have a long schooling, contributed to "break the bubble" of highly selective courses of public university. The presence of "unlikely" students in universities, especially public ones, marks the debate about the expansion of openings and democratization of access to education, which imposes the discussion about the absence of university affiliation (COULON, 2012) in Brazilian public higher education.

From this perspective, the presence of a student from a popular stratum in a highly selective course at a public university brought to light dynamics and stigmas associated,

simultaneously, with the inclusion strategies intended by this same social protection network, as explained by Goffman (1982), Dubois (2019, 2020), and Pires (2019): discrimination by gender or race, discriminating interactions in the local counters where the implementation of policies materializes daily, and difficulties, tensions, and bureaucratic mismatches in the processes associated with the provision of student assistance policies.

The unequal and discriminating distance between the popular classes and the institutions can become clear among citizens who are on both sides of the counter, which can perpetuate the loneliness present in the unlikely trajectories of success and school longevity of students from popular classes. Dubois (2019) states that the meanings attributed in the conduct exercised by the agents of implementation can exert a mechanism of moral regulation, constituting symbolic effects that can produce and reproduce, through the interactions that occur in public service, the internalization of a social value to users, with subordinated self-image and stigmatization of these citizens.

The formulators, managers, and implementers of policies aimed at the democratization of higher education and university permanence (at all levels and institutional levels) must know and mitigate the effects associated with the implementation of these policies, especially at the local level. From the same perspective, there is an urgent need to discuss the interaction associated with the actions of public agents who work at the top, their discretionary capacity and the inequalities that can be revealed in the dynamics processed at the counters, in the relationship with students from lower social classes, target citizens of inclusion programs and reduction of social asymmetries historically existing in Brazil.

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