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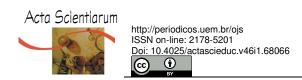Versão do Editor / Published Version

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The "fight against 'gender ideology'" and its Impact on the teaching of human and social sciences

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ABSTRACT. This study focuses on the contemporary debate surrounding the so-called 'gender ideology', analyzing, through a literature review, the process of incorporation of this debate by the so-called 'new right' in the Brazilian context starting from 2013. In the midst of the political transformations that occurred during this period, the impeachment against Dilma Rousseff in 2016 and the subsequent election of Jair Bolsonaro in 2018 stand out. The so-called 'fight against gender ideology' gained even more visibility in the field of education, with a notable role played by the '*Escola sem Partido*' (School without Party) movement, founded in 2004. Projects inspired by this movement, aimed at limiting teachers' autonomy, gained popularity in Brazil, leading to a continuous process of surveillance of these professionals, particularly regarding discussions about gender and sexuality. In this context, we find that teachers in the humanities and social sciences are especially affected by these actions, as gender studies are integral to their disciplinary fields. Furthermore, we observe that the main mechanism employed by these movements is to deny the scientific character of gender studies, suggesting that they encompass topics that should remain within the private sphere and, therefore, taught by families and not by schools. However, we argue that this debate should be brought to the center of pedagogical practice, considering its social and scientific relevance.

Keywords: gender ideology; teaching, teaching of humanities and social sciences; right-wing radicalism.

O "combate à 'ideologia de gênero'" e o impacto sobre o ensino de ciências humanas sociais

RESUMO. O presente trabalho volta-se para o debate contemporâneo sobre a chamada 'ideologia de gênero', analisando, por meio de uma revisão bibliográfica, o processo de incorporação desse debate pelas chamadas 'novas direitas' no contexto brasileiro a partir de 2013. No bojo das transformações políticas ocorridas nesse período, destacam-se o *impeachment* contra Dilma Rousseff, em 2016, e a posterior eleição de Jair Bolsonaro, em 2018. O chamado 'combate à ideologia de gênero' ganha ainda mais visibilidade no campo educacional, com destaque para a atuação do movimento Escola sem Partido, fundado em 2004. Popularizam-se no Brasil projetos de leis inspirados nesse movimento que objetivam limitar a autonomia docente, estimulando também o contínuo processo de vigilância desses profissionais, especialmente no que diz respeito às discussões sobre gênero e sexualidade. Constatamos que, nesse contexto, os professores de ciências humanas e sociais são especialmente impactados por essas ações, na medida em que os estudos de gênero são constitutivos de seus campos disciplinares. Observamos, ainda, que o principal mecanismo desses movimentos é negar o caráter científico dos estudos de gênero, indicando que eles abarcam algo que deve ser do âmbito privado, e, portanto, ensinado pela família e não pela escola. Argumentamos, no entanto, que esse debate deve ser trazido para o centro da prática pedagógica, considerando sua relevância social e científica.

Palavras-chave: ideologia de gênero; ensino de ciências humanas e sociais; radicalismo de direita.

La "lucha contra la 'ideología de género'" y su impacto en la enseñanza de las ciencias humanas y sociales

RESUMEN. Este estudio se centra en el debate contemporáneo sobre la llamada 'ideología de género', analizando, a través de una revisión bibliográfica, el proceso de incorporación de este debate por parte de las llamadas 'nuevas derechas' en el contexto brasileño a partir de 2013. En medio de las transformaciones políticas que ocurrieron durante este período, destacan el juicio político contra Dilma Rousseff en 2016 y

la posterior elección de Jair Bolsonaro en 2018. El denominado 'combate a la ideología de género' adquiere aún más visibilidad en el ámbito educativo, con un papel destacado desempeñado por el movimiento '*Escola sem Partido*' (Escuela sin Partido), fundado en 2004. En Brasil, se popularizan proyectos de ley inspirados en este movimiento que tienen como objetivo limitar la autonomía de los docentes, fomentando así un continuo proceso de vigilancia sobre estos profesionales, especialmente en lo que respecta a las discusiones sobre género y sexualidad. En este contexto, observamos que los profesores de ciencias humanas y sociales son especialmente afectados por estas acciones, ya que los estudios de género son parte integral de sus campos disciplinarios. Además, notamos que el principal mecanismo empleado por estos movimientos es negar el carácter científico de los estudios de género, sugiriendo que abarcan temas que deben permanecer en el ámbito privado y, por lo tanto, ser enseñados por las familias y no por las escuelas. Sin embargo, sostenemos que este debate debe ser llevado al centro de la práctica pedagógica, considerando su relevancia social y científica.

Palabras-clave: ideología de género; enseñanza de ciencias humanas y sociales; radicalismo de derecha.

Introduction

By observing aspects of the new right-wing radicalism in Germany in the 1960s, Adorno (2020) sought to emphasize that this phenomenon could be explained by the fact that assumptions from fascist movements persist socially. More recently, as analyzed by the Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research (Tricontinental, 2021), just as in the Global North, in Latin America the 'new' right has emerged as a reaction to the increase in the number of progressive national governments and the consequent expansion of rights that the subcontinent has experienced in the last twenty years

It's no coincidence that we see non-traditional radical right-wing actors everywhere gaining ground, visibility, and mass influence, transforming and broadening their political-discursive spectrum (Tricontinental, 2021). Álvarez, Martín, and Puello-Socarrás (2020) draw attention to this fact by stating that, although various electoral episodes and the political profile of leaders, organizations, programs, and public policies retain a certain historical continuity concerning the origins of ultra-rightist ideology, the strategies of the emerging right in Latin America also express new modes of political articulation and new ways of (re)constructing hegemony. It is therefore a reaction that relaunches conservative projects, which can be understood as 'new clothes' being woven with 'old threads' such as racism, classism, homophobia, misogyny, authoritarianism, militarism, and repression (Tricontinental, 2021).

It is particularly relevant that these offensives unfold strongly on the terrain of the dispute of meaning and through the expansion of the discursive frontier towards the extreme right. Starting from this observation, the Tricontinental Institute (2021) identified three aspects that characterize the communication strategies and discursive construction procedures of the conservative reaction in Latin America: (1) the renewal of a conspiratorial matrix and a story focused on the dangers of the advance of the political left, combined with the creation of an external and powerful enemy, and the betting on salvationist and/or protective figures; (2) the appeal to so-called 'sad passions' and indignation through defamatory campaigns, fake news, etc.; and (3) the emphasis placed on public safety problems and the encouragement of punitivism and repression.

Despite mentioning that the offensives of the emerging political right in Latin America have been unfolding in the name of traditional institutions and values such as the family and the 'natural' role of men and women, the analysis developed by the Tricontinental Institute (2021) did not focus on a phenomenon that is extremely relevant to the recent growth of the right in Latin America: anti-gender policies.

Corrêa and Parker (2021) contribute to the debate by pointing out that this recent turn to the extreme right in the Latin American region contains, at its core, this type of politics that is articulated through strategies to preserve or restore sexual and gender orders. Miskolci and Campana (2017), in retracing the historical trajectory of anti-gender policies in Latin America, characterize them as a specific reaction to the expansion of sexual and reproductive rights, won by the struggle of social movements during the term of progressive governments. This reaction gives rise to various strategies to attack the fight for and the expansion of these rights, which are grouped together under the concept of 'gender ideology' in the subcontinent.

In this sense, anti-gender policies, that is, the various conservative or reactionary actions strategically produced with the purpose of preserving or restoring sexual and gender orders (Corrêa & Parker, 2021) constitute a fundamental part of the political-discursive spectrum of the 'new' radical right in Latin

America. It would therefore seem sensible to say that understanding the communication strategies of agents who (re)produce the anti-gender language is an indispensable task for contemporary political sociology.

In this paper, we propose a discussion of aspects of the new right-wing radicalism in Brazil, in order to reflect on the place of the fight against 'gender ideology' in the broad conservative-reactionary project that has been advancing in the country at least since the so-called 'June Journeys' of 2013 and more intensely since the pro-impeachment demonstrations of 2015, and, more specifically, on how these events have impacted the teaching of the humanities and social sciences, to the extent that numerous teachers in this area have become the targets of information filed by movements such as the 'School without a Party', accused of 'ideological indoctrination'.

To this end, the first section is dedicated to a discussion of the emerging extreme right in Brazil, based on the research of Messenberg (2017) and Cesarino (2019; 2020), in dialogue with the theoretical elaborations of Adorno (2020) and Laclau (2009), respectively on the new right-wing radicalism and populism. In the following section, we revisit the historical trajectory of anti-gender policies in Brazil. We then move on to a reflection on the fight against 'gender ideology' in Brazil and its connection to the conservative-reactionary agenda that has been brewing since at least 2013 and reached its apogee with the election of Jair Bolsonaro in the 2018 presidential elections (Cesarino, 2019). Finally, we seek to highlight how these processes impact the teaching of humanities and social sciences.

We have observed that the main mechanism of movements such as 'School without Party' is to deny the scientific nature of gender studies, indicating that they encompass something that should be private, and therefore taught by the family and not by the school. We argue, however, that this debate should be brought to the center of pedagogical practice, considering its social and scientific relevance.

The new right-wing radicalism in Brazil

In the first decade of the 2000s, Brazil experienced a political moment in which "[...] the political left increasingly adhered to the market economy, on the one hand, and the political right, on the other, with the phenomenon that has come to be called the ashamed right, did not assume its ideological identity" (Fuks & Marques, 2020, p. 2). However, an interruption in this tendency for important parties to drift towards the center of the ideological scale has been observed at least since 2013, with the rise of Lava Jato (Operation Car Wash) and the anti-corruption and pro-impeachment movements (Cesarino, 2019), and even more intensely since 2015, the year in which several protests brought hundreds of thousands of people to the streets in Brazil's main cities and revealed the existence of conservative groups with segregationist and authoritarian convictions in the country (Messenberg, 2017).[1] To this scenario must be added the fact that the popularization of social media has accelerated since the 2010s in Brazil, and right-wing movements have been able to better grasp this phenomenon (Miskolci, 2021).

According to Fuks and Marques (2020), this discontinuity in the national political scenario is related to the emergence of a new right wing on the streets, in parliament, in the media, and on the internet, and has unfolded into a political polarization in Brazil. As Cesarino (2019, p. 531) observes, "[...] this rearrangement, which had already been gradually and discreetly gestated through social media and other internet forums, suddenly gained strength and projection in the public sphere with the meteoric victory of Jair Bolsonaro in the presidential elections of 2018".

Interestingly, Fuks and Marques' (2020) analysis shows that this recent 'polarization' in Brazilian politics does not correspond to an ideological extremism of right and left, proportionally and simultaneously: More specifically, this is about the radicalization of this new right, which is explicitly shifting towards its respective extremity of the ideological scale, while the left retains the tendency of the first decade of the 2000s towards a neoliberalization of its agenda, moving closer to the political 'center'. In this sense, we understand that political 'polarization' in Brazil should be understood as one of the consequences of a radical conservative right that has 'come out of the closet' (Messenberg, 2017) and has been establishing a bellicose atmosphere in the Brazilian social life, identifying political-ideological enemies to be eliminated.

As Adorno (2020, p. 44) aptly argues, the primary means of upholding the social assumptions of radical right-wing movements is propaganda. In the author's words, the propaganda technique, which in his understanding is the substance of the politics of fascist movements, consists of "[...] a relatively small

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[1] Although in the early 2000s some right-wing movements were already organizing themselves in 'response' to what was happening in the country, such as the School Without Party, for example, which emerged in 2004.

number of standardized and completely objectified tricks, which always come back, which are rather poor and weak, but which, on the other hand, gain a certain propaganda value for these movements through their permanent repetition".

Messenberg (2017), when investigating the worldview of the opinion leaders of the right-wing demonstrators in 2015, discusses the construction of frameworks that serve as 'interpretative keys' for understanding the national political situation, but also as organizers and guides for political actions[2]. The results of the author's research are quite interesting for understanding the contents of the fascist propaganda (Adorno, 2020) of the new Brazilian right-wing radicalism.

After identifying the main social movements that provided logistical and ideological support to the protests of 2015, as well as their leadership and other opinion leaders, Messenberg (2017) was able to systematize three semantic fields that appeared regularly and repeatedly in the discourse of these social agents. As the author points out, semantic fields are frameworks conveyed by the press and social media and are constituted through the articulation and repetition of force-ideas.

The three semantic fields systematized by Messenberg (2017) are: (1) anti-Petism, formed by the force-ideas: impeachment (out with PT, out with Dilma, out with Lula), corruption, economic crisis and Bolivarianism; (2) moral conservatism, shaped by the following ideas: traditional family, revival of the Christian faith, patriotism, anti-communism, fighting crime/increasing violence and opposition to racial quotas; and (3) neoliberal principles, formed by the following ideas: minimal state, market efficiency (privatization), free enterprise (entrepreneurship), meritocracy and curtailing social policies.

Cesarino (2020), when analyzing the content that circulated in large pro-Bolsonaro groups on the WhatsApp application during and after the 2018 election campaign, in order to understand the recurrence of certain discursive and aesthetic patterns, arrived at what he describes as 'digital populism', having the theory of Laclau and Mouffe as the background.

Laclau (2009) argues that a definition of populism should be drafted on the terrain of political 'practices', and not on movements or ideologies. In this sense, in the author's words, "[...] a movement is not populist because it presents, in its politics or ideology, real 'contents' that can be identified as populist, but rather because it shows a certain 'logic of articulation' of these contents - whatever the latter may be" (Laclau, 2009, p. 52, emphasis added, our translation)[3]. The author promotes then a shift in the focus of the debate on populism, arguing that it matters less 'what' a movement defends (its ideological content) but rather 'how' it articulates its ideological content (political practices). His concept of populism is formal rather than content-based. In short, in the author's words,

> [...] there is only populism if there is a set of political-discursive practices that construct a popular subject, and the precondition for the emergence of such a subject is, as we have seen, the construction of an internal border that divides the social space into two fields. But the logic of this division is established, as we know, by the creation of a chain of equivalences between a series of social demands in which the moment of equivalence prevails over the differential nature of the demands. Finally, the chain of equivalences cannot be the result of a purely fortuitous coincidence but must be consolidated through the emergence of an element that grants coherence to the chain by signifying it as a totality. This element is what we call the 'empty signifier' (Laclau, 2009, p. 64, emphasis added, our translation)[4].

In this logic, as Cesarino (2020, p. 95) states, structuring the campaign in favor of Bolsonaro on social networks in 2018, "[...] digital populism [...] refers to both a (digital) media apparatus and a discursive mechanism (of mobilization) and a (political) tactic for building hegemony". However, as the author emphasizes, it is not a question of simply adding the digital to the classic populist mechanism described by Laclau in a context prior to the advent of the internet. There are new elements, specific to digital mediations, which make this new type of populism different from the classic one. Among these elements, Cesarino (2019) highlights the 'fractalization of the populist mechanism' (its capillarization among users of social networks and digital media) and the 'digital body of the king' (the removal of Bolsonaro's physical

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[2] With regard to these opinion leaders, Rodrigues (2018) offers us interesting elements to reflect on the new ways of (re)constructing hegemony by agents of the new Brazilian right. The author calls the phenomenon a 'market of reactions' which, based on a discursive agreement concerning a 'left-wing cultural hegemony', turns conservative journalists-teachers and teachers-journalists into providers of frameworks, 'interpretation keys', demanded by their contractors and clientele. Rodrigues (2018) focuses his analysis especially on agents such as Olavo de Carvalho, Demétrio Magnoli, Marco Antonio Villa, Reinaldo Azevedo, Luiz Felipe Pondé, Rodrigo Constantino and Leandro Karnal.

[3] In the original: "[...] un movimiento no es populista porque en su política o ideología presenta 'contenidos' reales identificables como populistas, sino porque muestra una determinada 'lógica de articulación' de esos contenidos -cualesquiera sean estos últimos-."

[4] In the original: "[...] sólo hay populismo si existe un conjunto de prácticas político-discursivas que construyen un sujeto popular, y la precondición para el surgimiento de tal sujeto es, como hemos visto, la construcción de una frontera interna que divide el espacio social en dos campos. Pero la lógica de esa división es establecida, como sabemos, por la creación de una cadena equivalencial entre una serie de demandas sociales en las cuales el momento equivalencial prevalece sobre la naturaleza diferencial de las demandas. Finalmente, la cadena equivalencial no puede ser el resultado de una coincidencia puramente fortuita, sino que debe ser consolidada mediante la emergencia de un elemento que otorga coherencia a la cadena por significarla como totalidad. Este elemento es lo que hemos denominado 'significante vacío'".

body from the public space after the 'stabbing' and its replacement by a digital body formed by his supporters who called themselves 'Jair's marketers/auditors/shield/army/robots').

This brief discussion allows us to consider two things. The first is that it seems analytically powerful for aspects of the new right-wing radicalism in Brazil to be understood in terms of a 'constant mobilization' (Cesarino, 2019), a fascist propaganda (Adorno, 2020) aimed at the regular and repetitive dissemination, in digital media and social networks, of semantic fields that serve as 'interpretation keys' for the understanding of the national political conjuncture, and that organize and guide political actions (Messenberg, 2017). The second is that it seems quite interesting that the logic of articulation (Laclau, 2009) of the contents of these semantic fields, that is, of their 'force- ideas' (Messenberg, 2017), be conceived as an expression of a 'digital populism' (Cesarino, 2020) that cultivates differentiations from the classic populist mechanism described by Laclau (2009).

Taking these two analytical considerations as a backdrop, we then propose a reflection on the place of the fight against 'gender ideology' in the broad conservative-reactionary project that has been advancing in the country since at least 2013. But first, we must review the history of anti-gender policies and the fight against 'gender ideology' in Brazil.

Historical trajectory of anti-gender policies in Brazil

At least since 2011, the fight against so-called 'gender ideology' has been particularly relevant in Brazil's political scene. At first related to the controversy over the 'gay kit' (teaching material from the 'School without homophobia' program)[5], the notion perhaps reached its peak popularity in 2014, when the inclusion of gender and sexuality issues in the National Education Plan (PNE - Plano Nacional de Educação in Portuguese), which will be in force until 2024, was under discussion (Miskolci & Campana, 2017; Borges & Borges, 2018; Balieiro, 2018). It is important to consider, as Hamlin (2020) explains, that a common characteristic of these movements is the appropriation of academic categories, subverting their meaning, which would also have occurred with 'gender ideology' since it would be relatively consensual in the human and social sciences that there is a gender ideology (without quotation marks), which refers to the processes and domination of the production of inequalities based on gender relations.

According to Miskolci and Campana (2017), the fight against 'gender ideology' had already been discussed in Latin America in 2007, during the Fifth Episcopal Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean (Celam). At this event, through the Aparecida document, a common agenda against the so-called 'gender ideology' was established, given, among other things, the concern of Catholic religious groups regarding the political demands of homosexual groups and the need for the Catholic Church to defend the traditional concept of the family. According to the authors, these moral entrepreneurs associate and articulate themselves in this crusade within a 'discursive field of action' and through a common 'political grammar' against what they call 'gender ideology'. For the authors, this political grammar "[...] operates in the logic of phenomena that sociology refers to as recognizable moral panics when the rhetoric of society under threat emerges" (Miskolci & Campana, 2017, p. 739-740).

Focusing on the context of the discussion on the inclusion of gender and sexuality issues in the National Education Plan (PNE - Plano Nacional de Educação) in 2014 - and, consequently, in state and municipal plans - Borges and Borges (2018, p. 13, emphasis added) offer us more details on the conceptualization of the fight against 'gender ideology' in Brazil as a moral crusade, in analogy to the Christian military movements that started in Western Europe between the 11th and 13th centuries.: "Intending to safeguard the traditional Brazilian family, they find the evil in the insertion of gender and sexuality issues in educational plans; and, with the effectiveness of the dissemination of 'gender ideology', they intend to exclude, like true 'moral crusaders', the imminent danger".

The authors argue, also based on Howard Becker's sociology of deviance, that it is appropriate to speak of 'moral crusaders' because they believe that their mission is sacred and they also point out that a moral crusade has two interdependent objectives: (1) to create rules and impose new laws, and (2) to establish a new marginalized group, considered to be 'deviant' from these rules and laws.

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[5] The School Without Homophobia Project originated from Brazil Without Homophobia, the name given to the Program to Combat Violence and Discrimination against LGBT people and to Promote Homosexual Citizenship drawn up by the Ministry of Health's National Council to Combat Discrimination in 2004. Part of the Brazil Without Homophobia Program emphasized the need for teacher training on gender and sexuality issues, so a kit consisting of a book, newsletters and videos would be distributed to educational institutions across the country. In 2011, even before the material was printed, conservative sectors of the National Congress began a campaign against the project, led by Bolsonaro (then a member of parliament for the Progressive Party - PP). In the campaign, the Escola sem Homofobia material was dubbed the 'gay kit' on the grounds that it would encourage 'homosexuality' and promiscuity - in Bolsonaro's words (Bolsonaro criticizes 'gay kit'..., 2011; Soares, 2015).

In the case of the crusade against 'gender ideology' in Brazil, who are the moral entrepreneurs creating and imposing new laws? Miskolci and Campana (2017) identify among them: sectors of the Catholic Church, 'pro-life' organizations, evangelical organizations, and other groups that engage in the battle for reasons that are not only religious but also ethical, moral and/or political, which may not necessarily be from civil society and can operate within institutions, including the government. Borges and Borges (2018) conclude that these are conservative sectors led by Christian religious groups and politicians from the religious groups in the Legislative Branch.

And as an effect of the political grammar disseminated by these moral entrepreneurs - a grammar that is sustained by statements such as: "[...] gender ideology wants to end biology [...]"; "[...] gender ideology wants to exclude the concepts of man and woman [...]"; "[...] gender ideology wants to end families [...]"; "[...] gender ideology will hypersexualize children [...]". ...]"; "[...] gender ideology wants to break up families [...]"; "[...] gender ideology will hypersexualize children and encourage homosexuality [...]" (Borges & Borges, 2018, p. 13) - moral panic about 'gender ideology' has spread. According to Borges and Borges (2018), in general, moral panics are situations in which a group of events is seen as a threat to the values and interests of society and, as a result, strategies are created to counter them until the threat disappears. In the case of the 'gender ideology' moral panic in Brazil:

> Although other concerns have been raised, such as the threat to the family and the suspension of the right to expression, it was with the construction of the threat to children that the discussion had widespread media repercussions, with effective consequences when initiatives aimed at human rights regarding gender and sexuality were blocked (Balieiro, 2018, p. 8).

As Balieiro (2018) illustrates, it was in this context that the political movement School Without Party (Escola sem Partido), created in 2004 with a focus on combating 'communist ideological indoctrination' in Brazilian schools, became one of the main moral entrepreneurs in the fight against so-called 'gender ideology', forging at the heart of this moral crusade the figure of the child (or adolescent) who is vulnerable and susceptible to manipulation by teachers with bad intentions. One of the main actions of School Without Party (Escola sem Partido) was to make available, on its official website, federal, state, and municipal bills for parliamentarians to propose changes to the educational normative bases in order to prohibit discussions on gender and sexuality in schools (Balieiro, 2018).

It is clear, therefore, that "[...] the moral entrepreneurs against what they call 'gender ideology' seem to share with their enemies, human rights defenders, a belief in education as a means of political formation" (Miskolci & Campana, 2017, p. 738-739, emphasis added).

However, it is worth noting that these groups frequently resort to complex strategies, in which instead of fighting human rights, they start to dispute their meaning in the semantic field (Oliveira, 2021). Corrêa and Parker (2021) even point out that the inclusion of gender and sexuality issues in education (especially public education) is the target of anti-gender policies in all nine Latin American countries they researched. It's worth noting, then, that the 'ghost' of 'gender ideology' has spread throughout Brazil, especially through the discussion of education plans across the country (Miskolci, 2018; 2021) and that the School Without Party Program is one of the main moral entrepreneurs of this crusade.

Frigotto (2017) seeks to understand the success of the School Without Party Program in the historicity of previous facts and events, as he argues that there are very deep and barely visible determinations already sedimented in the social relations that support the theses of such a program. For the author, the School Without Party Program is directly linked to Brazil's colonial and slave structure, to the legacies of the military coup and dictatorship, to the hegemony of large economic groups and financial capital, to education governed by commercial criteria and laws, to North American imperialism, to the police state and the anti-terrorist law, to media manipulation and the culture of plea bargaining (spread during the Lava Jato (Car Wash) 'anti-corruption' operation). Furthermore, Frigotto (2017) understands that, together with the 'All for Education' movement, the School Without a Party Program operated, in the broad context of the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff, between 2015 and 2016, as 'the coup's corporate core' in the field of education. In this sense, the School Without Party is understood as a program of "[...] liquidation of the public school as a space for human development, based on the values of freedom, democratic coexistence and the right and respect for diversity" (Frigotto 2017, p. 17).

The main effects of the School Without a Party's actions on Brazilian education include changing the role of teachers (threatening their autonomy in teaching) and attacking public universities and disciplines such as Sociology, Philosophy, and other human sciences (accusing them of being ideological and unscientific).

In sum, in the author's words: "[...] under the ideology of the neutrality of knowledge and the reduction of the role of public schools to merely instructing, lies hidden the privatization of thought and the thesis that only the interpretation given by the science of the capital-owning class is valid" (Frigotto, 2017, p. 29).

It is a fact that, since 2014, a narrative battle has raged in Brazil regarding the prohibition or insertion of gender and sexuality topics in Brazilian school education (César & Duarte, 2017), leading to the removal of any mention of the word gender in the final version of the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC - Base Nacional Comum Curricular) in 2018, in addition to other deletions related to regionality, race, etc. (Oliveira, 2021), and that, because of this, "[. ...] feminists, scholars of gender theorization, sexuality and sexual diversity have been dealing with the analysis of this phenomenon, both from a global and local point of view" (César & Duarte, 2017, p. 143). However, since 2020, new elements have been introduced to the political grammar of the fight against 'gender ideology' and a new strategy has been put in place by some of the moral entrepreneurs of this crusade.

According to Covas and Bergamini (2021), in 2020, the Federal Supreme Court (STF) ruled on a series of lawsuits in which it deemed unconstitutional several municipal and state laws that prohibited the application of the terms 'gender' and/or 'sexual orientation' in their respective education systems. The central argument of these rulings was that these laws contradicted the protection of the pluralism of ideas and pedagogical conceptions, as well as the promotion of tolerance, as provided for in the Federal Constitution and the Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDB - Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação).

This series of unfavorable rulings seems to have shifted the focus of the actions of anti-gender parliamentarians to banning the use of neutral (or non-binary) language in schools, in the name of the 'student's right to learn the Portuguese language according to the standard norm' (Alfano, 2021). In other words, the evil to be eliminated in the moral crusade to combat 'gender ideology', first located in the so-called 'gay kit' and then in the presence of gender and sexuality topics in educational plans and in the BNCC, has now been identified in the use of neutral or non-binary language in school spaces[6].

Seidel (2021) states that in 2020 four federal bills were introduced in the House of Representatives with the aim of banning neutral language in educational institutions. Rodrigues, Brevilheri, and Nalli (2022), observed that at least 18 Brazilian states and the Federal District have bills, in progress or approved, with the same objective in their respective State Legislatures. We were unable to find objective data regarding Brazilian municipalities, however, in a brief exploratory search, we identified the existence of bills (in process or approved) in the Municipal Councils of at least 23 municipalities in 11 Brazilian states.

Before proceeding to reflect on the place of the fight against 'gender ideology' in the broad conservative-reactionary project that has been advancing in the country since at least 2013, we consider it important to point out some more theoretical issues regarding the phenomenon of anti-gender policies or the fight against 'gender ideology'.

First of all, we should stress that, as we mentioned earlier, this phenomenon can be observed in several Latin American countries (as well as in European countries and the United States). In other words, it's not exclusive to Brazil. Furthermore, we should reiterate the following argument by Bento (2017, p. 172): "Now, it is not new that some parliamentarians are trying to bind and condition the Brazilian State to a violent interpretation of Christianity. What's new? One word, just one word: identity". As the author rightly states, the inclusion and relevance of discussions on identities in the feminist and diversity movements seems to be one of the main events that has led conservative and reactionary sectors to mobilize themselves more intensely. For, rather than conquering or expanding social rights, the debate based on identities is a debate that questions and denaturalizes biology, the biological, the 'creative power of God' (Butler, 2019). In this sense, with this 'new' word and all the discussions based on it, "[...] the supposed stability of gender based on the body (vagina-woman-femininity-maternity-family & penis-man-masculinity-paternity-family) began to fall apart" (Bento, 2017, p. 172).

With this diagnosis, a third issue needs to be highlighted: the broad 'anti-gender' movement, which accuses progressive sectors of spreading a 'gender ideology', is extremely pro-gender and is completely committed to spreading a 'biologizing gender theory'. (Bento, 2017). In contemporary times, those who call themselves anti-gender and fighters against 'gender ideology' are actually deeply concerned with defending and maintaining the genders that they believe were 'naturally' created by God, an "[...] exclusive work of hormones, chromosomes,

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[6] It is worth mentioning that, during the 2022 election campaign season, another phenomenon became the target of the moral crusade against 'gender ideology' because it was also conceived as a danger to be eliminated: the implementation of unisex toilets. More specifically, the phenomenon became the subject of Jair Bolsonaro's campaign, as he was running for re-election as the PL candidate at the time, by spreading fake news on social media, claiming that his opponent Lula (PT) would set up unisex toilets in nursery schools (Pinho, 2022).

genital shapes, and other biological structures" (Bento, 2017, p. 171). In short: inclusive or transphobic, there is always a gender ideology and theory underpinning social practices and discourses.[7]

The fight against 'gender ideology' and the new right-wing radicalism in Brazil

Messenberg (2017) observed that among the ideas that compose the semantic field 'moral conservatism', discursively articulated by the opinion leaders of Brazilian right-wing protesters in 2015, there is the 'traditional family'. According to the author, the discursive elements often related to this idea-force are: "[...] opposition to same-sex marriage, opposition to abortion, gender ideology in schools, the expansion of feminism and agreement with the 'gay conversion therapy'" (Messenberg, 2017, p. 637, emphasis added).

Therefore, although antipetism has been the semantic field that has brought together the largest number of discursive emissions from the opinion formers analyzed by Messenberg (2017), it is central to the fascist propaganda (Adorno, 2009) of the new Brazilian radical right what Álvarez et al. (2020) call 'discriminatory social narratives': ideological vectors aimed at the stigmatization and even criminalization of human rights, the rights of women, the LGBTQIAP+ population, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants. Cesarino (2019) endorses this argument by showing that the attack on identity or recognition policies plays a central role in Bolsonaro's populist grammar.

As demonstrated by Corrêa and Parker (2021, p. 13-14, emphasis added), the very concept of 'gender ideology' can even be understood, in terms of the populist mechanism described by Laclau (2020), as an empty signifier:

> Just as in Eastern Europe, 'gender ideology' has been propagated in Latin America as an empty basket, or as a signifier that involves multiple contents and targets. The anti-gender language is popular, versatile, and part of the common sense. It has left religious semantics behind and appropriated arguments from biology, biomedicine, and demography, as well as democracy, citizenship, and the law. In Latin America, a strong feature of the anti-gender scarecrow is that, in most countries, it circulates in association [sic] with Marxism, communism, or totalitarianism.

In this sense, we propose to observe the phenomenon of combating the so-called 'gender ideology' based on the five metalinguistic functions, or discursive patterns, that Cesarino (2020) identified as recurring in all the content circulating in pro-Bolsonaro groups during and after the 2018 election campaign. Let us start with the third of these functions: permanent mobilization through threat and crisis.

This metalinguistic function is very well evidenced by Miskolci and Campana (2017), Borges and Borges (2018), and Balieiro (2018) when they create the consensus that the common political grammar of combating 'gender ideology' operates in the logic of moral panics. There is a constant construction of the threat to society, the family, values, and, above all, children (Balieiro, 2018).

The construction of a scenario of moral panic concerning the expansion of sexual and reproductive rights, and the intensification of debates on gender and sexuality issues in various spheres of social life, leads us to consider the first metalinguistic function identified by Cesarino (2020): antagonistic friend-enemy border. After all, if there is something or someone being threatened, logically there is something or someone threatening them.

As Cesarino (2019) shows, the great antagonistic border drawn by Bolsonaro's memetics is between feminists, LGBTQIAP+, and black movement activists against' the 'good citizens'. In other words, the identification of the enemy responsible for the social threat posed by gender ideology does not simply involve the categories 'women', 'gays', 'blacks', etc., but rather the politicization of these identities by 'leftist' activists.

This brings us to the fourth metalinguistic function characteristic of Bolsonaro's memetics: mirroring the enemy and reversing accusations. Since, in order to sustain the production of 'activism' as the enemy, "[...] oppressed minorities have come to be seen as a source of oppression and the curtailment of freedoms, or as unduly privileged segments" (Cesarino, 2020, p. 109). This great game of discursive mirroring and inversion explains the regular and repetitive presentation of terms such as 'gay dictatorship', 'feminazis', etc. in speeches by the Brazilian radical right (ibidem).

Cesarino (2020) also identified another inversion characteristic of Bolsonaro's memetics, which is the bridge between mirroring the enemy and reversing accusations, on the one hand, and the second

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[7] Here we highlight the work of Butler (2015) and Vergueiro (2015) on the discursive production of 'biological sex' as a 'pre-discursive' for the (re)production and maintenance of cisheteronormative gender norms..

metalinguistic function, the leader-people equivalence, on the other. We are referring to 'anti-politically correct', which contradicts and mirrors feminist activism, LGBTQIAP+, and other identity agendas, but also produces a common identity between Bolsonaro, the populist leader, and 'the Brazilian people', discursively produced by Bolsonaro's memetics as tired of being oppressed and restricted by the 'mi-mi-mi' (whining) of leftist activism.

From this perspective, the 'politically correct' is identified as a compulsory order that infringes upon freedoms of expression and thought, and the leader and the people mutually identify themselves as victims of such oppression and subjects of the change they desire. On this subject, it is interesting to recall what Fassin (2019, p. 60) says in his analysis of Trump's election in the USA: "[...] the new president was not elected in spite of his xenophobic and racist attitude, but because of it".

By shifting and adapting this statement to the Brazilian reality, we could say that Bolsonaro was elected not in spite of his sexist, LGBT-phobic, 'anti-gender' and politically incorrect attitude, but because of it. After all, "[...] there is no misunderstanding - at least not on the political right" (Fassin, 2019, p. 62). This attitude was actually fuel for a specific type of affection that was already burning in the hearts of part of the Brazilian population: resentment.

As Fassin defines (2019, p. 70), "[...] resentment is the idea that there are others who enjoy pleasure instead of me, and if I don't, it's their fault. And this impotent anger becomes, in turn, pleasure". The common identity of 'anti-politically correct' can be conceived, then, as a form of articulation of a politics of cultural resentment that has as its starting point the desire to recover positions of domination and privilege that have supposedly been 'confiscated' by the activism of certain social minorities (Fassin, 2019).

Finally, the last metalinguistic function identified by Cesarino (2020) and which we would need to mobilize in this study in order to reflect on the phenomenon of combating gender ideology in Brazil is the fifth: the production of an exclusive media channel. At the core of this metalinguistic function is the delegitimization of instances of knowledge production, such as academia and the professional media. In this sense, we see this discursive pattern manifested in the very disregard for theoretical productions resulting from the scientific accumulation of decades of research in the field of feminist studies, relegating them to an arbitrary and unfounded 'ideology'.

Such practice is developed on the basis of post-truth regimes which, as Harsin (2015) defines, are the result of historical changes in the dynamics of truth-producing apparatuses and discourses; of distinguishing what is true from what is false - what Foucault called 'regimes of truth. It follows from this that, in this new context, the production of truth "[...] "[...] it always involves a statement whose veracity is in question [...]" (Harsin, 2015, p. 2,), which makes it opportune for political agents who are especially rich in resources to

> [...] to exploit and encourage the recognition of skepticism toward cultural authorities in journalism, politics, and the academic disciplines, each with their experts. They multiply truth claims (often entertainingly tabloids) whose meaning, if not veracity, is not easily or quickly confirmed (Harsin, 2015, p. 5,).

In the case of school contexts, post-truth has a direct impact on the questioning of teacher autonomy, as well as their ability to arbitrate on truth in scientific terms (Peters, 2017). Cesarino (2020) offers an example of how post-truth operates in the fight against 'gender ideology' by the Brazilian radical right. The author recalls Bolsonaro's propaganda against the so-called 'gay kit' and points out that:

> [...] anyone could cut, paste, assemble (record a video, audio), and share their own homemade version of this symbol of the enemy. On Bolsonaro's networks, the gay kit circulated as a pure signifier (in Saussure's sense), to the point of losing any connection with a concrete referent. No one has ever seen the original gay kit, and nonetheless, as a floating signifier, it produced real effects on the electorate (Cesarino, 2019, p. 102).

This is a great example of how effective this production of an exclusive media channel is for maintaining the ideological propaganda of the new right-wing radicalism in Brazil. At the same time, the innovation of the populist mechanism that digital causes is also evident, guaranteeing its fractalization, capillarizing it among users of social media and digital media.

The impact of this scenario on the teaching of the humanities and social sciences

The understanding that gender identity is a social construction that does not necessarily reflect biological sex is something that is relatively consensual in the field of human and social sciences so this debate is also recurrent in the classes of teachers in this area of knowledge. Eventually, Philosophy, Geography, History, or Sociology

teachers will address this issue, considering the impact of gender studies on these disciplines, as well as the relevance of analyzing society from this perspective. However, in a scenario like the one we've just described, how does this impact the teaching of the humanities and social sciences?

As indicated above, the final version of the BNCC makes no mention of the gender category, which reflects the various disputes that exist in this field, and how conservative groups have managed to place their demands on educational policies. It should be noted that the approval of the final version of the BNCC took place at a time of democratic inflection, in the context of the post-impeachment government of Michel Temer, marked by a shift to the right in State policies, and the absence of popular support (Estellés, Oliveira, & Castellví, 2023). The removal of the gender category from the final version of the BNCC is objectively aimed at questioning the legitimacy of teachers who may eventually teach such content, seeking to produce in them a kind of 'self-censorship' for fear of being reported.

Evans, Avery, and Pederson (1999) already debated this issue in the late 1990s, based on the US case, indicating that social studies teachers often choose to remain silent on topics that are considered too controversial and, in some cases, become taboo. It seems that the strategy of conservative groups in Brazil is precisely to produce a scenario in which teachers are silenced as they avoid certain content, even if it is socially relevant and widely supported by the scientific community.

The agents linked to the School Without Party, whether through articles or statements in the press, insist on a certain type of distinction that would delimit the work of teachers: it is up to the family to educate and the school to instruct. At the bottom of this division lies the idea of education as a moral act, centered on family values, while school provides a foundation of technical-scientific knowledge, often understood narrowly[8]. The attacks on the human and social sciences take place precisely in the gaps opened up by this division and the arbitrary nature it possesses since a significant part of the knowledge of these sciences is classified by these movements as something that would fall within the scope of family education and not scientific knowledge.

It is also evident that in the context of post-truth, scientific evidence is relegated to the sidelines in favor of personal convictions. This scenario strengthens scientific denialism, something that has been even more evident in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (Caponi, 2020), demonstrating that the denial of science and scientific misinformation affects not only the human and social sciences but also the natural sciences.

One should therefore be mindful of the fact that in this classification game, gender studies are classified as 'ideology' insofar as they are not science, and therefore something that belongs in the private, family sphere, and not in the public, school arena. This is a discursive strategy that most directly affects teachers of the humanities and social sciences, as we can see from the complaints found on the School Without Party website itself (Oliveira, 2022).

One of the issues that also gained momentum among supporters of the School Without Party concerns the right of students to film their teachers, which would function as a surveillance mechanism. This process became institutionalized during Jair Bolsonaro's administration (2019-2022), more specifically as an action by the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights (MDH - Ministério da Mulher, da Família e dos Direitos Humanas), which was under the command of Damares Alves, since in 2021 'Gender ideology' was included in the Human Rights Taxonomy Manual of the National Human Rights Ombudsman's Office as an attack on human rights, and therefore subject to reporting by 'dial 100'.

An example of this process of institutionalizing the persecution of basic education teachers occurred in December 2021, when the Civil Police summoned the Getúlio Vargas Municipal School located in the city of Resende (RJ). According to the summons, there had been an anonymous complaint forwarded by the MDH:

> The victim suffers the following violation: The complainant reports that the Getúlio Vargas Municipal School is exposing adolescents to communist concepts, inducing their political ideology. The school also preaches gender ideology. The complainant claims that the responsibility for directing the conduct of young people belongs solely to the parents and not to the school. (Leal, 2021).

In addition to the institutionalized mechanisms and bills that are being processed at various levels of the legislature, there are also recurring accusations against teachers that go viral on social media and gain even greater repercussions when they are spread by conservative politicians. In March 2022, a video of a sociology teacher in the municipality of Jaguariúna went viral (SP), in which he discusses concepts related to

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[8] It would be beyond the focus and scope of this article, but it is important to emphasize that this concept is also reflected in another agenda of these movements: homeschooling, which is understood as fundamental to guaranteeing the 'right' of parents to educate their children in a way that is separate from moral values with which they disagree.

gender identity, content provided for in the curriculum of the state of São Paulo, and the video was shared by federal deputies Flávio Bolsonaro (PL-SP) and Carla Zambelli (PSL-SP). As a result, the teacher and his family received threats and had to file a police report about the case (Las Casas, 2022).

What is of interest to us in highlighting these cases is to reveal the *modus operandi* of these actions in the school environment, and how teachers working in the humanities and social sciences become the preferred targets of these actions, given that the debate on gender and sexuality is constitutive of this field.

It is also worth noting that controversial topics in the classroom can be considered important pedagogical resources, as they have an important capacity to engage students in the classroom (Fernandéz, 2019). It is therefore understood that such topics should not lead to self-censorship on the part of teachers, but rather open up spaces for debate in the classroom.

If we understand that the pedagogical and epistemological principles of social science teaching are based on the estrangement and denaturalization of social reality (Mores & Guimarães, 2010), it means that the debate on the concept of gender finds itself at the very center of this discussion, insofar as this category enables us to detach identity from biological sex, understanding the process of sociocultural construction elaborated in society. This knowledge is fundamental for students in basic education, as it helps them to understand the changes taking place, as well as expand their unique understanding of the world.

Concluding remarks

Based on the research conducted by Messenberg (2017) and Cesarino (2019; 2020), in dialog with the theoretical elaborations of Adorno (2020) and Laclau (2009), respectively on the new right-wing radicalism and populism, we seek to discuss aspects of the new Brazilian radical right, and how this impacts the teaching of the humanities and social sciences.

A reflection was proposed on the place of the phenomenon of combating 'gender ideology' in the broad radical conservative-reactionary project that has been advancing in the country since at least 2013. Understanding the moral crusade against 'gender ideology' as the articulation of a discursive field of action in which a common political grammar is (re)produced (Miskolci & Campana, 2017), it became evident how this phenomenon is directly related to the semantic field 'moral conservatism' and, in particular, to the force-idea 'traditional family', composed of discursive elements such as opposition to same-sex marriage, opposition to abortion, gender ideology in schools, the expansion of feminism and agreement with the 'gay conversion therapy'(Messenberg, 2017).

In this sense, it is notable that discriminatory social narratives (Álvarez et al., 2020) play a central role in Bolsonaro's recurring and repetitive populist-digital grammar (Cesarino, 2020). In a way that it is possible to observe the phenomenon of combating 'gender ideology' based on the five metalinguistic functions, or discursive patterns, that Cesarino (2020) identified as recurring in Bolsonaro's memetics.

In the context of schools, we have observed the creation of institutional and non-institutional reporting mechanisms against teachers accused of indoctrinating students in the classroom, to the extent that 'anti-gender' movements deny the scientific nature of the humanities and social sciences. Gender is an 'ideology' for these movements because it wouldn't be science and therefore wouldn't have a place in the school structure, an understanding that has no academic foundation.

Despite the accusations against teachers in the human and social sciences, we understand that the gender debate is constitutive of this field and that controversial topics should be at the center of the debate in these spheres of knowledge. The consolidation of a democratic project for society precisely involves the public debate of certain topics, which is also in line with the socio-political conception of school knowledge, if we understand it in the terms laid out by Young (2007), as powerful knowledge that the student would not be able to access in any space other than school. Situating the problem in this manner, teachers of the humanities and social sciences would be key players in combating scientific misinformation within their respective disciplinary fields, and consequently in redirecting the debate on so-called 'gender ideology' in Brazil.

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