

Education and Health in dispute: anti-egalitarian movements and public policies

Richard Miskolci^(a)

<richard.miskolci@unifesp.br> 

Pedro Paulo Gomes Pereira^(b)

<pedropaulopereira@gmail.com> 

^(a, b) Programa de Pós-Graduação em Saúde Coletiva, Universidade Federal de São Paulo. Rua Botucatu, 740, sala 404, 4º andar, Vila Clementino. São Paulo, SP, Brasil. 04023-062.

In Brazil, during the last decade, sexual and reproductive rights became one of the subjects of struggle about educational and health public policies. In this paper, we show how, in the education field, proposals of inclusion of an egalitarian perspective about men and women and anti-discrimination initiatives in the basic and high school level started to suffer opposition as “gender ideology” while higher education was attacked, among other reasons, for adopting affirmative actions. In the health field, we reconstitute how the values of equality and integrality of our Brazilian National Health System (SUS) has been attacked when its services deal with gender, sexuality and ethnic-racial differences. In both fields, political groups that fight the advance of sexual and reproductive rights set into action an anti-equality agenda that also deepens class and ethnic-racial inequalities.

Keywords: Health and education. Sexual and reproductive rights. Gender ideology. SUS. Differences.

During Brazil's 2010 presidential election – in which, for the first time in the country's history, a female candidate showed strong chances of being elected – her main (male) opponent exploited the theme of abortion strategically^{1,2}. In May 2011, one week after Brazil's Supreme Court (STF) recognized unions between partners of the same sex, an alliance of congressional representatives formed in opposition to the distribution of anti-sexual discrimination materials in schools. Ultimately, Dilma Rousseff, the newly elected president, rubber-stamped this opposition by vetoing distribution of the material. The possibility of decriminalizing abortion and of extending full citizenship rights to homosexuals brought sexual and reproductive rights to the forefront of national political debates.

When, in 2013, the STF considered civil unions between people of the same sex to be equivalent to marriage, these conservative political sectors once again rebounded. Not by chance, this was also the year in which a Neo-Pentecostal pastor opposed to sexual rights, reproductive rights, and affirmative action became the chair of the Human Rights Committee in Brazil's Congress. From there, anti-egalitarian groups began lumping various human rights agendas together under the term “gender ideology,” a label first created at the end of the 1990s by activists and intellectuals – both Catholic and secular – to oppose the advance of sexual and reproductive rights in international forums. These activists were especially focused on demands involving equality between men and women; same-sex marriage; access to new reproductive technologies; contraception and the interruption of pregnancy; sexual education; and the criminalization of homophobia^(c).

Beginning with the so-called “June Journeys” of 2013, right-wing groups with neoliberal economic agendas and anti-egalitarian political agendas began to rise. Here, we understand “anti-egalitarian” as including groups and alliances organized in opposition to social inclusion policies and the expansion of rights for historically subalternized groups, as well as against researchers, educators, and artists who deal explicitly with differences, especially gender and sexual differences. In the context of Brazil, the pioneers of this movement included *Escola Sem Partido* (*Schools Without [Political] Parties* – 2004) and Instituto Millennium (the Millennium Institute – 2005), followed in 2013 by Movimento Brasil Livre (Free Brazil Movement – MBL). Bit by bit, as we will demonstrate, these movements aligned themselves with other political actors so as to achieve their objectives through a shared moral platform.

In 2014, protestors wrote “Down with gender ideology” on signs and in social media posts, positioning themselves against the inclusion of themes of gender relations and sexuality in the National Education Plan (PNE) and, later, in equivalent state and city-level plans. At the same time, sectors of the Catholic Church and of Neo-Pentecostal evangelical churches aligned in disputes that extended from Brazil's national Congress to statehouses and city halls, disseminating moral panic that these themes – and the educators who raised them – represented a supposed threat to childhood^(d). These groups railed against sexual education in schools, which they defined as “Marxist indoctrination.” Their opposition spurred persecution against elementary and high schoolteachers, which soon reached university professors.

^(c) The origins of the campaign against sexual and reproductive rights labeled as “gender ideology” has already been well documented for a number of researchers, such as Corrêa³; Miskolci⁴; Miskolci & Campana⁵; Patternote & Kuhar⁶; Vigoya & Rondón⁷.

^(d) Regarding the strategic construction of the image of children under attack and related attacks on educators, artists, and intellectuals, see Balieiro⁸.

During 2015 protests supporting the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff, groups like *Vem pra Rua* (Come to the Street – formed by former supporters of Aécio Neves, the presidential candidate Rousseff defeated in the previous year’s election), *Revoltados Online* (Online Rebels – created in 2004 to track pedophiles on the internet), and *Movimento Endireita Brasil* (the “Turn Rightward, Brazil” Movement – created in 2006 in defense of minimal government) all aligned themselves with the MBL. Adopting an anti-corruption discourse that personified corrupt practices as being inseparable from the Workers’ Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores – PT), these protests also enjoyed vast support from the mainstream media. Their political and economic agendas, based on the defense of the free market and critiques of the PT’s social policies – became truly hegemonic. After the 2016 parliamentary coup that removed Rousseff from office, this agenda materialized in the “reforms” of the newly-installed Temer administration, which included a hard limit on public spending, the overturning of workers’ rights, attempts to loosen the definitions of slave labor, and a reform of social welfare and retirement laws.

Since then, educators, intellectuals, and artists have been targets of defamatory campaigns in a context that, since December 2016, has also been marked by Federal Police operations aimed at supposed financial fraud at public universities. The use of bench warrants and “preventive” or temporary imprisonment in these operations shocked Brazil’s academic community. In the case of the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) in southern Brazil, it ended in tragedy when the university provost, Luiz Carlos Cancellier de Olivo, committed suicide in early October 2017.

In terms of public health policies, anti-egalitarian groups’ actions have focused on attempts to dismantle Brazilian National Health System (SUS), through proposals to revise the principle of universal access to healthcare, charge user fees, divide public healthcare among private plans, reduce federal financing, and restrict investments in infrastructure and worker management. These groups have also focused on an agenda of combating sexual and reproductive rights, proposing a moral grammar in order to interfere with SUS guidelines. Anti-egalitarian groups use fear of change to mobilize political action, always in opposition to the guiding principles of universality, equity, and completeness.

In this article, we will articulate two ongoing research projects relating to anti-egalitarian movements. The first relates to the history and actions of these groups outside the context of institutional politics, and the second analyzes their insertion into political party structures, as well as their actions in both the legislative and executive spheres. We base this work on the study of documents, public databases, and on the rigorous revision of social science studies on this theme, as well as on texts posted on web pages and social media sites^(e). From the perspective of gender and sexuality studies, we aim to reconstitute how these groups have focused on public education and healthcare policies in a such way that has attracted less visibility in the media and even among currently available academic analyses. We will also examine their opposition to other social policies, such as affirmative action, indigenous rights, religious freedom, and – in certain cases – income redistribution programs like *Bolsa Família* (Roughly, “Family Grants” – stipends for food and other basic necessities given to millions of low-income families throughout Brazil. (T.N.).

^(e) In relation to documents, public databases, and webpage/social media posts, we have researched official sites and documents involving healthcare policies for women, Black people, and LGBT people. Throughout the text, we will reference documents like the National Curricular Standards; the National Education Plan; National Curricular Guidelines; the Brazil Without Homophobia Program (PBSH); the First National Conference of LGBT Public Policies; Curricular Guidelines for *Quilombola* and Indigenous Elementary Education; the National Common Curricular Basis; individual laws (such as Law 12.711); Constitutional Amendments; Legal Projects (PL); Direct Actions of Unconstitutional Conduct; proposals (such as universal Access to healthcare) and related action plans; Documents and pamphlets on policies combating the HIV/AIDS epidemics; and SUS’ Users’ Rights Statement, among others. In addition, we have accompanied official sites and posts belonging to the groups referenced here as “anti-egalitarian” on social networks like Facebook and Twitter.

These facts call us to reflect on the emergence, in the 2010s, of a new political agenda, an agenda not limited to Brazil. In different contexts throughout Latin America and Europe, we have seen the rise of movements and politicians with an agenda that goes beyond the struggle that some define as anti-gender⁶, and that we think can be more accurately defined as anti-egalitarian. Without losing sight of the fact that these groups have sexual and reproduction rights as their most visible targets, we consider it worth noting other dimensions of their actions involving political and economic agendas.

By labeling these groups as anti-egalitarian, we mean to amplify debates regarding sexuality and gender, thereby embarking on ethnic, racial, and class relations, and emphasizing these anti-egalitarian movements' creation of tension in relation to democratic principles of equality and universality. Recent emphases on analyses of the moral grammar of these groups' political actions have not explored conflicts that must be articulated in terms of the redistribution of political recognition.

Below, we seek to explore the actions of groups that we define as anti-egalitarian in disputes regarding public education policies, followed by an analysis of their actions regarding healthcare. Finally, we will aim to sketch how their actions take hold in public policy disputes, and what consequences this might hold for our democracy.

Anti-Egalitarian Movements and Education

Based on Vianna and Unbehaum's studies⁹, we can affirm that, since the ratification of Brazil's 1988 Constitution, the incorporation of the dimension of gender into public norms and policies only took place indirectly, within a general vision of "promoting the well-being of all, without prejudice as to origin, race, and sex"¹⁰ (Article 3.0, IV). Although the 1996 Law for National Guidelines and Bases in Education (LDB) made reference to human rights, it was in fact quite timid; it merely mentioned an "appeal to tolerance"¹¹ (p. 35). The 1997 National Curricular Standards made gender and sexuality official topics of study in schools, but these were followed by the PNE in 2001, which did not mention gender and sexuality in its objectives and priorities. Instead, it left these themes to the responsibility of teacher training.

Beginning in 2003, when the PT came to power, themes of human rights have been incorporated into public policy through the Secretariat of Human Rights (SDH), the creation of the National Secretariat for Women's Policies (SNPM), and the Special Secretariat for Policies Promoting Racial Equality (SEPPIR). One defining characteristic of 2003 was the passage of Law 10.639/03, which made Afro-Brazilian history and culture mandatory subject matters in schools, and which led to the 2004 publication of National Curricular Guidelines (DCN) for both Ethnic and Racial Relations Education and for Teaching Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture (although it was only in 2009 that a national plan was launched to implement these guidelines)¹².

The actions articulated by these aforementioned secretariats, together with the Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy, and Diversity (SECAD - 2004), promoted, in the years that followed, inclusion initiatives for themes of difference in educational policy. They also led to teacher training courses on the themes of human rights, gender relations, and sexual and ethno-racial diversity.

During this same time period, conflicts and tensions arose in other Latin American contexts between the Catholic Church and certain national governments that threatened its hegemony in religious education, or through the inclusion of sexual education in school curricula⁵. In a singular way, the first account of tension in Brazil's educational sphere came about through a member of civil society. In 2004, State Attorney Miguel Nagib reacted to a class in which a teacher compared Saint Francis of Assisi to Che Guevara. Soon afterward, Nagib created "Escola sem Partido" ("Schools Without [Political] Parties" – ESP) which, at the time, campaigned against what Nagib defined as "ideological indoctrination." ESP is a sort of empty shell organization: in other words, it presents itself as a group or movement, but it does not have an expressive social base. Since 2010, ESP has become incorporated into Instituto Millennium's neoliberal economic proposals, but it remained relatively unknown until 2014.

Also in 2004, the University of Brasilia (UnB) created an affirmative action program for people of African descent, thereby igniting a polemical debate that extended for eight years until Brazil's Supreme Court (STF) ruled that it was constitutional. The following year, Brazil's federal government created the Brazil Without Homophobia Program (PBSH) with the objective of promoting citizenship among gays, lesbians, *travestis* (A form of self-designation used by people assigned male at birth and who engage in different levels of corporal transformations so as to construct a more feminine form of corporal presentation), trans* people, and bisexuals (p. 11)¹³. Soon afterward, in 2006, Congresswoman Iara Bernardi proposed criminalizing homophobia. At this time, the Catholic Church, through the so-called Aparecida Document¹⁴, positioned itself against the advance of sexual rights; likewise, evangelical leaders from churches that aimed to "cure" homosexuality eventually positioned themselves against what they interpreted as a threat to freedom of religion.

The First National Conference for LGBT Public Policies, which took place in June 2008, proposed amplifying the objectives of PBSH and transforming the program into state policy. According to Irineu¹⁵ (p. 201), the LGBT Plan – launched in May 2009 to articulate the Conference's proposals – aimed for a systematic implementation of actions promoting and defending LGBT citizenship throughout a number of different federal ministries. In October 2009, the General Coordination for Promoting LGBT Rights formed within SDH and, in December 2010, the National Council for Combating Discrimination and Promoting LGBT Rights was formed. Although at first sight it may seem otherwise, this succession of events did not lead to expressive concrete results due to, among other factors, the low budget allocated for these policies^(f).

Demands for equality and for anti-discrimination policies began to grab the attention of political adversaries¹⁷. The Schools Without Homophobia Program created didactic materials to combat discrimination against gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, trans* people, and *travestis* in schools under the coordination of SECAD, the British Council's Global Alliance for LGBT Education, and the Brazilian Association of Lesbians, Bisexuals, Gays, *Travestis*, and Transsexuals (ABLGT). As stated at the beginning of this article, the STF's legal recognition of same-sex unions in May 2011 set off a campaign in Brazil's Congress against the distribution of these didactic tools. Recently, Balieiro⁸ analyzed the campaign's strategy of presenting itself as defending

^(f) For a critical analysis of Brazilian sexual policies and the actions of the National Council for Combating Discrimination and Promoting LGBT Rights, see Colling¹⁶.

children; we would add, consequently, that this strategy also presented itself as defending families and, indirectly, heterosexual marriage. Thus, anti-discrimination tools became known as the “Gay Kit” among certain members of the evangelical caucus; ultimately, with the support of Catholic groups and other organizations opposed to sexual rights, President Dilma Rousseff vetoed these tools.

In April 2012, the STF approved the adoption of race-based affirmative action in higher education, thereby closing years of polemical debate and opening the path for the approval of Law 12.711 – passed on August 29 of that same year – which implemented affirmative action policies throughout the federal higher education system. Also in 2012, the National Guidelines for *Quilombola* (*Quilombolas* are people who live in *quilombos*, areas that were inhabited by enslaved Black people who rebelled against slavery. In the present day, *quilombos* are communities of people of Afro-Brazilian descent who live collectively, sharing territory, culture, and values, and laying claim to legal recognition of their rights to these lands) and Indigenous Elementary Education were created. In 2013, the year in which the National System for Confronting Violence Against LGBT People was created, and in which the STF declared same-sex civil unions to be equal to marriage, an evangelical congressman became president of the congressional Human and Minority Rights Commission. Protests against him and his explicitly anti-gay and anti-Black political positions guaranteed him relative popularity in the media, thereby reinforcing his base of support.

It was only in 2014, as Congress debated the PNE, that Escola sem Partido joined an alliance of Catholic, Neo-Pentecostal, and conservative secular members of Congress against what they began to refer to as “gender ideology¹⁸.” According to available empirical evidence, it was during the debate on the PNE – and, shortly thereafter, during debate on equivalent state and municipal legislation – that these new moral entrepreneurs found the opportunity to disseminate social panic against the advance of sexual and reproductive rights, inciting their followers’ political participation at the state and local levels⁴. Like the PNE, 2017’s Common National Base Curriculum (BNCC), did not incorporate the concept of gender.

In the sphere of recognizing differences, the Temer administration incorporated Special Secretariats in the Ministry of Human Rights and erased the role of the Secretariat of Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity, and Inclusion (SECADI) in public policies. Since 2016, the actions of Escola sem Partido and the MBL have materialized in the persecution of elementary and high school teachers as “leftists indoctrinators,” or in raising questions of gender in schools. Public higher education became a target of Federal Police operations in December 2016, under the so-called Operation PhD, which began as an attempt to investigate supposed funding fraud at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). In 2017, similar operations took place at universities throughout the country, including the federal universities of Paraná (UFPR), Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS), Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN), Santa Catarina (UFSC), the Mineiro Triangle (UFTM), Juiz de Fora (UFJF), Minas Gerais (UFMG) and, in 2018, the Federal Technological University of Paraná (UFTEPR) and the State University of Piauí (UESPI).

According to Pablo Ortellado, professor of Public Policy at the University of São Paulo (USP), this seeming crusade against public higher education consists of

three different agents: anticorruption investigations that follow the nationwide Lava Jato (“Car Wash”) investigations; the World Bank’s campaign against tuition-free education, supported by certain media outlets and political parties like the Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB); and the intimidation tactics of conservative groups¹⁹. It is worth underlining that proposals to charge tuition for public higher education comes from political parties, media outlets, and interest groups that historically have refused or resisted race-based affirmative action, and that have links to private higher education.

To resume: themes of difference began to take on increased importance in public educational policies beginning in 2003, generating curricular guidelines that encouraged the development of studies in higher education, but that arrived more timidly at the elementary and high school levels, primarily through teacher training courses on gender, diversity, and ethnic-racial relations. Anti-egalitarian forces prevented issues of difference from becoming socially widespread; these forces began to focus on education in 2011, but they became more articulated and more powerful in 2014, when the PNE began to be debated in Brazil’s congress. The policy with the greatest impact in the sphere of differences was undoubtedly the rise of race-based affirmative action in public higher education. Recently, this, too, has become a target of attacks across multiple fronts that seek to halt its expansion and question the openness of its administration. This, in turn, may serve to promote the private sector and strengthen the proposal to end tuition-free education in Brazil’s public universities.

Anti-Egalitarian Movements and the Healthcare Field

The political actions of anti-egalitarian groups also target one of Brazil’s most significant public policies. In 1988, when the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Brazil was ratified, the country inaugurated SUS, which offered complete, universal, and free access to healthcare services for all of the country’s citizens.

These groups’ actions constitute direct attacks on SUS: they suggest that it is inefficient and disorganized, and they propose privatization models as alternatives. Not by chance, the MBL – in addition to creating constant social media posts against SUS – released, as part of its 2015 party conference, a statement that supported substituting SUS with a mandate requiring individuals to buy health care. This is obviously similar to the call for Universal Healthcare Coverage by the World Health Organization (WHO), Pan-American Health Association (PAHO/WHO) and the World Bank, which transforms the right to universal access into market-based access. In truth, this other healthcare system is already structured in our day-to-day lives²⁰. However, it is exclusionary, self-regulating, and profit-based, despite being labeled cunningly as “Universal Healthcare.” This proposal is notably opposed to guidelines for equity, completeness, and human rights. According to Paim²¹, the numerous successes of SUS (e.g., institutional innovations, decentralization, social participation, consciousness of the right to healthcare) coexist with “the growth of the private sector, the segmentation of the market, and the commitment to equity in health services and conditions”²¹ (p. 1933).

Among the obstacles that SUS faces, reductions in federal financing stand out, as do restrictions on infrastructural investments and worker management²¹. Additionally, anti-egalitarian groups' actions in Brazil's Congress present a significant obstacle to the system, through proposed constitutional amendments (e.g., Amendment Number 31/2016 or Number 85/2015) that aim to dismantle SUS. This proposed dismantling is even more serious when we recall, as Campos²² (p. 302) warns, that the legitimacy of SUS depends largely "on its concrete performance, and its effective capacity to improve." Campos has the impression of a certain widespread "disenchantment," or perhaps a lack of belief, in SUS' capacity to transform the reality of its political purpose.

Anti-egalitarian groups act on such disenchantment, mostly by building a moral grammar that acts against egalitarian and inclusive public policy proposals; in other words, against the very guidelines of SUS. Perceiving this type of action, sensible researchers such as Batista and Barros²³, who analyze racism in healthcare services, signal conservative forces' advances in attacking civil rights, especially the rights of Black and indigenous people, women, gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, , and trans* people. The authors synthesize the offensive strategies of these anti-egalitarian groups and their modes of acting by exploiting moral tensions in order to attack SUS.

These tensions are multiple and interconnected; they include debates on the legalization of abortion, health policies for LGBT populations, sexual reassignment surgery through SUS, and anti-HIV/AIDS epidemic policies, among others. The debates are ample, and we do not aim to approach all of their different trajectories and possibilities here. However, we intend to illustrate some of the more tense moments and disputes involving bodies, epidemics, infirmities, and choices.

As we have said, one of these tensions involves the legalization of abortion. In 2004, the first case regarding legal authorization for induced labor in the case of pregnancies with anencephalic fetuses reached the STF. On that occasion, Minister Marco Aurélio Mello issued an injunction that allowed therapeutically induced labor for cases in which a qualified doctor swore to the presence of anencephaly. This injunction was revoked three months later in a plenary session of the court^{24,25}. In 2008, a campaign of the Brotherhood of the National Conference of Bishops in Brazil (CNBB), called Brotherhood in Defense of Life, arose to confront the effort on the part of the Ministry of Health (MS) and the Special Secretary for Women's Policies (SPM) to classify abortion as a public health issue^{25,26}. The bishops' campaign was coordinated with the Evangelical Parliamentary Front, created in 2003 with 58 members, but which grew to 72 members by 2015²⁷.

The theme of abortion was central to Brazil's 2010 presidential elections^{1,28,29}. In that year, the PSDB candidate, José Serra, sought to draw closer to more conservative evangelical and Catholic sectors of the population. As previously mentioned, the abortion debate also played a significant role in the 2014 presidential campaign. In 2013, Legal Project (PL) 5069 was created. This Legal Project went directly against one of the feminist movement's victories in creating legal avenues to facilitate legal abortion in cases of rape. PL 5069 reinstated the demand of a physical forensic exam to prove violation by rape. In other words, SUS would only be allowed to attend to rape victims who produced a police report. This step backwards in relation to feminist agendas was enormous, but it did not stop there.

In or around March 2015, the Zika epidemic began, although the Ministry of Health only began to monitor it that November. Soon, a new question arose. Once Zika contamination became linked to a congenital fetal syndrome, the abortion debate intensified. Women now had to deal with the possibility of carrying seriously malformed fetuses at risk of microcephaly³⁰. Faced with this fact, the National Association of Public Defenders (ANDP) submitted a Direct Action of Unconstitutional Status (ADI 5581) in an attempt to guarantee pregnant women infected by Zika the right to terminate their pregnancies. Altercations surrounding this legal maneuver were intense, and the values of life and family were frequently invoked. For example, the Rio de Janeiro Union of Catholic Jurists³¹, argued that abortion is not a “solution,” but rather “the direct killing of innocent children”.

One year later, in 2016, Michel Temer appointed Fátima Pelaes as Secretary of Women’s Affairs. Pelaes is a member of parliamentary caucuses that oppose the agenda of feminist movements, and she is opposed to abortion even in cases of rape. During this same year, when the STF’s first circuit decided that abortion in the first 3 months of gestation is not a crime, Kim Kataguiri – one of the MBL’s leaders – criticized the judges’ decision in a video in which he showed an image of a three-month-old fetus. “Is this just a bunch of cells to you?” he shouted³². At the same time, members of the evangelical caucus in congress worked through a special commission to approve a proposal reversing the legalization of abortion.

Debates regarding the legalization of abortion mobilize society, centralize contentious elections, interpellate the STF, and question the dynamics of epidemics and of bodies. However, it was not the only tension called upon in the construction of a moral grammar capable of producing disenchantment with egalitarian politics. By working with moral tensions and bringing old ghosts back to life, discourses create bases for conservative actions to spread, such that talking about the restriction of rights can become an acceptable everyday phenomenon. It is for this reason that trans* peoples’ political agendas are paralyzed in Congress, and that – at the same time that public health policies for LGBTI people advance – old ghosts, like proposals for a “gay cure,” come back to life as counter-pedagogies disputing public spaces, as we will see shortly.

As mentioned in the previous section, Brazil’s federal government launched the “Brazil Without Homophobia Program – Program for Combating Violence and Discrimination Against GLTB People and for Promoting Homosexual Citizenship” in 2004. At the time, the Ministry of Health created the Technical Committee for the Health of Gay, Lesbian, Transgender, and Bisexual Populations, with the aim of structuring a National Health Policy (PNS). Two years later, in 2006, the Letter on Healthcare System Users’ Rights made explicit the right to care and treatment within SUS, free from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity³³. The materialization of these initiatives occurred in 2008, when the preliminary version of the document National Policy on Complete Health for the LGBT Population was launched. The final version was only made public in 2010.

In August, 2008, the Ministry of Health, implemented, through Ordinance 1.707, reassignment surgery in SUS, to be carried out by qualified doctors. The Ministry of Health regulated policies relating to surgery, assistance, and care for transsexual patients³⁴. Although this represents a significant advance, and although these actions may be considered more consolidated³², a great deal remains to be developed, and some

researchers insist on the need “to rethink the training of healthcare professionals”³⁵ (p. 776). In any case, policies for LGBT people call on healthcare professionals to “think and act on the trajectory of an amplified conception of health”³³ (p. 1518).

Popadiuk et al.³⁴ (p. 1509) recognize advances in relation to LGBT healthcare, but they indicate the “possibility of regression imposed by conservative sectors of the executive and legislative branches.” It seems to be quite common to affirm that the field of healthcare presents more systematic initiatives for LGBT populations, such as the Plan for Confronting the HIV/AIDS Epidemic and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) Among Gay Men, Men Who Have Sex With Men (MSM) and *Travestis*, created in 2007³⁶. Yet in a 2016 research project, Ligia Kerr et al.³⁷ showed that the prevalence of positive HIV test results increased in relation to results from 2009: the 2016 research found an 18.4% rate of positive test results, surpassing the 12.1% rate found in 2009 using the same methodology. According to Keer et al.³⁷, in a work by Colucci³⁸, the increase in the prevalence among MSM is due to the reduction of public campaigns against the spread of HIV/AIDS.

As we can see, researchers are certainly sensitive to the movements of anti-egalitarian groups, which run parallel to advances and consolidations in terms of LGBT health, as can be seen in discussions relating to the “gay cure.” In 2017, a federal judge in the 14th Circuit of Brazil’s Federal District granted an injunction that made it legally possible for psychologists to offer sexual conversion therapy, altering Resolution 01/99 of the Federal Psychology Counsel (CFP). This decision joins others, such as PL 4931, from 2016, which prohibits the use of therapies for the purpose of aiding in converting sexual orientation. With the same intensity, evangelical churches promote retreats with programs dedicated to the “gay cure.” The terms used, like “cure” and “therapeutic actions,” seem to propose a counter-pedagogy that disputes space with advances in LGBT healthcare rights^{39,40}.

Conclusions

The actions of anti-egalitarian groups have found success in the field of education by impeding the inclusion of perspectives on gender in educational plans, and by blocking anti-homophobia initiatives in teaching materials. Yet these groups also attack affirmative action and tuition-free public higher education. In the field of healthcare, they have availed themselves of moral tensions relating to the legalization of abortion and the demands of LGBT populations, which they see as contributing to “disenchantment” with SUS, thereby creating space for proposals that range from dismantling public healthcare to dividing it into smaller sections for the purposes of market-based exploitation.

Although all of these anti-egalitarian policies in the fields of education and healthcare share certain common aspects, it is also worth problematizing certain differences. In education, their moral grammar acts through accusations and rumors that are directed primarily against the supposed “politicization” of education – as though it were possible to educate without discussing social inequality in gender, race and ethnicity, and among generations. In the field of healthcare, attempts to dismantle SUS are focused on the program’s supposed inefficiency, poor management,

corruption, and depletion of public financing sources so as to undo the universal coverage guaranteed by law.

Sexual and reproductive rights have been the most visible targets of these initiatives in relation to public healthcare and educational policies, but the consequences of these attacks involve maintaining and perhaps even deepening inequalities based on class, as well as on race and ethnicity. In the case of public higher education, attacks on affirmative action have been repurposed as accusations of administrative inefficiency and poor management, approximating themselves to neoliberal ideals that advocate for meritocracy and that evaluate results on the basis of productivity. The common denominator among these anti-egalitarian groups is their defense of agendas that question ideals such as universality, equity, and completeness in public policies.

The moral grammar that unites sectors of the Catholic Church, Neo-Pentecostal evangelicals, and diverse interest groups is the glue for a truly anti-egalitarian political alliance. The religious refusal to accept equality among men and women – favoring instead a supposed “complimentary” relation among them – adds to the reaffirmation of sexuality as circumscribed to reproduction, negating full citizenship to non-heterosexual subjects, or to those outside hegemonic patterns of gender. Although historically, the Catholic Church has positioned itself against neoliberal economic measures – bringing it close to the left – its current emphasis on sexual morality draws it closer to right-wing groups⁵, making a pro-market agenda viable.

The struggle against these groups and alliances will only be effective if it is a struggle for sexual and reproductive rights, as opposition to these rights forms the basis of the moral grammar that this anti-egalitarian alliance is constructing. This alliance has helped to produce consequences like the rise of the far right in Brazil’s 2018 presidential elections. Faced with the global post-2008 crisis, politics has traded the future away, instead turning toward the past as a utopian reference. The future has become the space in which anxieties and fears are projected, leading to the growing appeal of a supposedly more stable, secure, and – first and foremost – unchanging past. In an environment of economic and political crises, certain social segments begin to consider their own relative status as being threatened by greater equity in relations among men and women, as well as by the recognition of the full citizenship of homosexual, trans*, and intersex people, and by affirmative actions and income redistribution programs.

Authors’ contributions

All of the authors participated actively in all stages of the elaboration of this manuscript.

Copyright

This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, BY type <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.en>).



References

1. Mantovani D. Quem agenda a mídia? Um estudo sobre agenda setting a partir da tematização do aborto nas eleições de 2010 [tese]. Brasília, DF: Universidade de Brasília; 2014.
2. Mota FF, Biroli F. O gênero na política: a construção do “feminino” nas eleições presidenciais de 2010. *Cad Pagu*. 2014; 43:197-231.
3. Corrêa S. A política do gênero: um comentário genealógico. *Cad Pagu*. 2018; 53:e185301.
4. Miskolci R. Exorcizando um fantasma: os interesses por trás do combate à “ideologia de gênero”. *Cad Pagu*. 2018; 53:e185302.
5. Miskolci R, Campana M. “Ideologia de gênero”: notas para a genealogia de um pânico moral contemporâneo. *Soc Estado*. 2017; 32(3):725-48.
6. Patternote D, Kuhar R. *Anti-gender campaigns in Europe: mobilizing against equality*. London/New York: Rowman & Littlefield; 2017.
7. Vigoya MV, Rondón MAR. Dossier Hacer y Deshacer la ideologia de género. *Sex Salud Soc*. 2017; (27):118-27.
8. Balieiro FF. “Não se meta com meus filhos”: a construção do pânico moral da criança sob ameaça. *Cad Pagu*. 2018; 53:e185306.
9. Vianna CP, Unbehaum S. O gênero nas políticas públicas de educação no Brasil: 1988-2002. *Cad Pesqui*. 2004; 34(121):77-104.
10. Brasil. Presidência da República. Constituição (1988). Constituição da República Federal do Brasil. Brasília, DF: Senado Federal; 1988.
11. Brasil. Presidência da República. Lei nº 9.394, de 20 de Dezembro de 1996. Estabelece as diretrizes e bases da educação nacional. *Diário Oficial da União*. 23 Dez 1996.
12. Vieira PAS, Medeiros PM. Pela desracialização da experiência: discurso nacional e educação para as relações étnico-raciais In: Miskolci R, Leite Jr J, organizadores. *Diferenças na educação: outros aprendizados*. São Carlos: Edufscar; 2014. p.199-250.
13. Brasil. Ministério da Saúde. Conselho Nacional de Combate à Discriminação. *Brasil sem homofobia: programa de combate à violência e à discriminação contra GLTB e promoção da cidadania*. Brasília: Ministério da Saúde; 2004.
14. Carta de S.S. Bento XVI aos irmãos no Episcopado da América Latina e Caribe. In: *V Conferência Geral do Episcopado Latino-americano e do Caribe*; 2007; 13-31 maio Aparecida, Brasil. Aparecida; 2007.
15. Irineu BA. 10 anos do programa Brasil sem homofobia: notas críticas. *Temporais*. 2014; 28:193-220.
16. Colling L. A igualdade não faz o meu gênero – em defesa das políticas das diferenças para o respeito à diversidade sexual e de gênero no Brasil. *Contemporânea*. 2013; 3(2):405-27.
17. Deslandes K. *Formação de professores e direitos humanos: construindo escolas promotoras da igualdade*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica; 2015.
18. Miguel LF. Da “doutrinação marxista” à “ideologia de gênero” – Escola sem Partido e as leis da mordada no parlamento brasileiro. *Direito Prax*. 2016; 7(15):590-621.
19. Betim F. Operações policiais em universidades aumentam temor de cruzada contra o ensino superior. *El País* [Internet]. 2018 [citado 18 Maio 2018]. Disponível em: https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2017/12/13/politica/1513178766_195360.html



20. Santos NR. SUS: compreendendo a história para antever ameaças e oportunidades. Rio de Janeiro: Abrasco; 2017 [citado 21 Maio 2018]. Disponível em: <https://www.abrasco.org.br/site/outras-noticias/opiniao/sus-compreendendo-historia-para-antever-ameacas-e-oportunidades-por-nelson-rodrigues-dos-santos/29984/>
21. Paim JS. A Constituição Cidadã e os 25 anos do Sistema Único de Saúde (SUS). *Cad Saude Publica*. 2013; 29(10):1927-36.
22. Campos GWS. Reforma política e sanitária: a sustentabilidade do sus em questão? *Cienc Saude Colet*. 2007; 12(2):301-6.
23. Batista LE, Barros S. Enfrentando o racismo nos serviços de saúde. *Cad Saude Publica*. 2017; 33 Suppl 1:e00090516.
24. Diniz D, Velez ACG. Aborto na suprema corte: o caso da anencefalia no Brasil. *Estud Fem*. 2008; 16(2):647-52.
25. Luna N. Aborto e células-tronco embrionárias na campanha da fraternidade: ciência e ética no ensino da Igreja. *Rev Bras Cienc Soc*. 2010; 25(74):91-105.
26. Luna N. O direito à vida no contexto do aborto e da pesquisa com células-tronco embrionárias: disputas de agentes e valores religiosos em um estado laico. *Relig Soc*. 2013; 33:71-97.
27. Almeida R. A onda quebrada - evangélicos e conservadorismo. *Cad Pagu*. 2017; 50:e175001.
28. Luna N. A controvérsia do aborto e a imprensa na campanha eleitoral de 2010. *Cad CRH*. 2014; 27:367-91.
29. Machado MDC. Aborto e ativismo religioso nas eleições de 2010. *Rev Bras Cienc Políticas*. 2012; 7:25-54.
30. Diniz D. The protection to women? Fundamental rights violated by the Zika virus epidemic. *Am J Public Health*. 2016; 106(8):e9.
31. União dos Juristas Católicos do Rio de Janeiro. “Aspectos da ADI sobre zika vírus, microcefalia, políticas públicas e aborto”. *Jornal do Brasil* [Internet]. 2016 [citado 9 Jun 2018]. Disponível em: <http://m.jb.com.br/sociedade-aberta/noticias/2016/09/21/aspectos-da-adi-sobre-zika-virus-microcefalia-politicas-publicas-e-aborto/>
32. Carta Capital. Seis vezes em que o MBL esqueceu a política para falar de costumes. *Carta Capital* [Internet]. 2017 [citado 9 Jun 2018]. Disponível em: <https://www.cartacapital.com.br/sociedade/seis-vezes-em-que-o-mbl-esqueceu-a-politica-para-falar-de-costumes>
33. Mello L, Perilo M, Braz CA, Pedrosa C. Políticas de saúde para lésbicas, gays, bissexuais, travestis e transexuais no Brasil: em busca de universalidade, integralidade e equidade. *Sex Salud Soc*. 2011; 9:7-28.
34. Popadiuk GS, Oliveira DC, Signorelli MC. A política nacional de saúde integral de lésbicas, gays, bissexuais e transgêneros (LGBT) e o acesso ao processo transexualizador no Sistema Único de Saúde (SUS): avanços e desafios. *Cienc Saude Colet*. 2017; 22(5):1509-20.
35. Souza MHT, Malvasi P, Signorelli MC, Pereira PPG. Violência e sofrimento social no itinerário de travestis de Santa Maria, Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil. *Cad Saude Publica*. 2015; 31(4):767-76.



36. Villarinho MV, Padilha MI, Berardinelli LMM, Borestein MS, Meirelles BHS, Andrade SR. Políticas públicas de saúde face à epidemia da AIDS e a assistência às pessoas com a doença. *Rev Bras Enferm.* 2013; 66(2):271-7.
37. Kerr L, Kendall C, Guimarães MDC, Salani MR, Veras MA, Dourado I, et al. HIV prevalence among men who have sex with men in Brazil: results of the 2nd national survey using respondent-driven sampling. *Medicine.* 2018; 97 Suppl 1:9-15.
38. Colluci C. “EM SP, 1 a cada 4 homens que transam com homens tem HIV”. Folha de São Paulo [Internet]. 6 Jun 2018 [citado 10 Jun 2018]. Disponível em: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/equilibriosaude/2018/06/em-sp-1-a-cada-4-homens-que-transam-com-homens-tem-hiv-revela-estudo.shtml>
39. Natividade MT. Diversidade sexual e religião: a controvérsia sobre a cura da homossexualidade no Brasil. In: Lima RK, organizador. *Antropologia e direitos humanos*. Brasília, Rio de Janeiro: ABA, BookLink; 2008. p. 226-76.
40. Natividade MT, Oliveira L. “Nós acolhemos os homossexuais”: homofobia pastoral e regulação da sexualidade. *Tomo.* 2009; 14:203-27.

Translator: Raphael Soifer

Submitted on 06/21/18.

Approved on 11/26/18.