

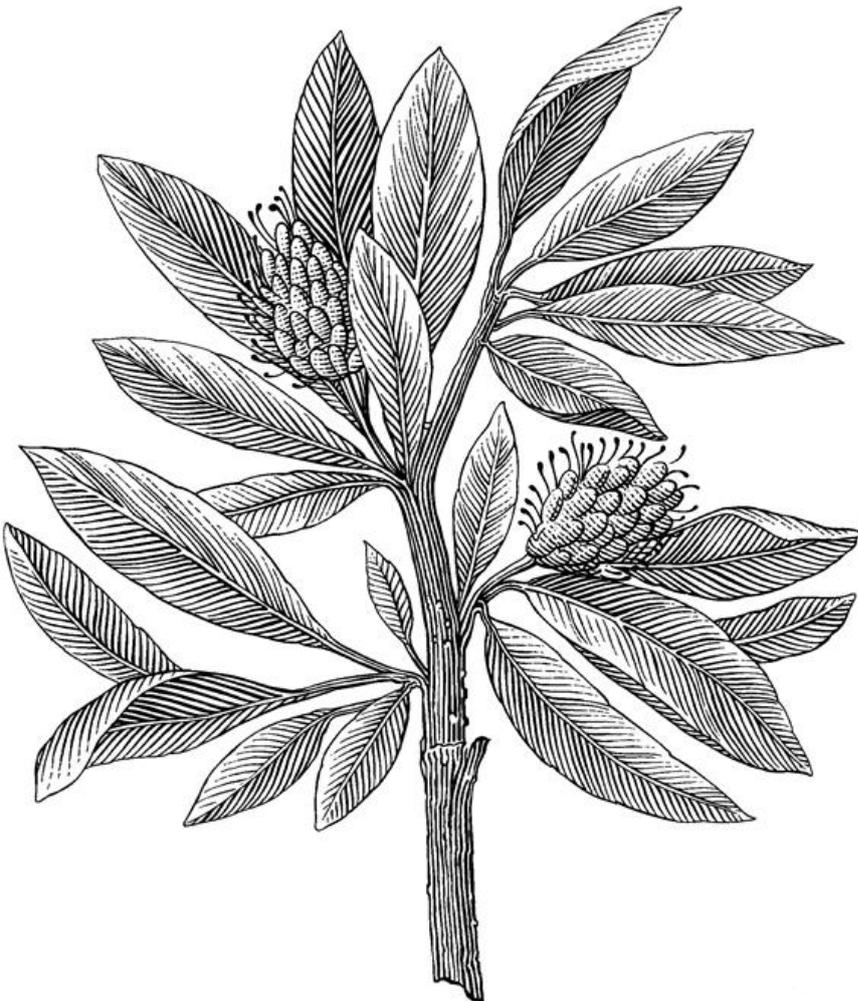


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Bachelor Thesis

Gender Equality as ‘Political Indoctrination’

A case study on Brazil’s turn towards conservative university policies



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Abstract

‘Gender ideology’ is a term used by radical conservative congregations to condemn issues around gender, such as reproductive rights and gender studies, for it is seen as a conspiracy against traditional family values. Congregations that use the term also embrace other forms of anti-gender rhetoric as they aspire to influence decision-makers to adopt policies against gender matters, for instance same-sex marriages and transgender rights. As the discussion of ‘gender ideology’ is spread, campaigns against gender matters evolves. The campaigns are often focusing on whether gender should be discussed within, and be a part of, the education. It is a threat for the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030, which indeed focus on gender equality and quality education. The campaigns are seen all over the world but have become especially successful within South America. In Brazil, the campaign *Escola sem Partido*, has created a movement against gender and political indoctrination, where the term *gender* has become a central dispute for what is considered legitimate knowledge.

This thesis aims to investigate, through a critical discourse analysis of ‘testimonies’ from *Escola sem Partido*’s website and through collecting interviews with professors and students at a university in Brazil, the conflict about gender equality. Since the term *gender* has become a central term of dispute within the discussion of ‘political indoctrination’ at a high level of education.

The result of this thesis shows that the perception of gender reflects the perception of one’s education. The view on what is experienced legitimate knowledge determines whether professors are experienced as political or not. It is found within the ‘testimonies’ that professors personal agenda steers the education to involve gender matters when it should not, as gender matters are viewed as political. Moreover, that professors use their classes to systematically instill ideas and attitudes into their students minds. In opposition to this perception, it was found within the interviews that gender matters should be addressed in school. Universities role of promoting tolerance, and the value of engaged professors who allows critical thinking of societal issues, are two important factors for fighting prejudices against minorities, gender and varieties of sexualities and development for gender equality.

Keywords: *Brazil, gender equality, ‘gender ideology’, Escola sem Partido, political indoctrination, high level of education, radical conservative congregations*



List of Abbreviations

(CDA)	Critical Discourse Analysis
(PSL)	Social Liberal Party
(PT)	Workers Party
(LGBT)	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual
(LGBTQ)	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Queer
(UN)	The United Nations
(SDG)	Sustainable Development Goals



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1 Introduction: What is Escola sem Partido?

Activism for gender equality is often met with resistance by certain groups within the society. One term increasingly used by groups who forms resistance towards gender-activism is ‘gender ideology’, which has no clear academic nor theoretical basis. This term occurs in conservative and religious congregations, to work against and denounce the term *gender* as it implies a different view on the traditional and biological sexes. The congregation that began using the term was the Catholic church in the 1990’s, after a UN-conference on women’s rights in Beijing which emphasized the necessity of a radical change for the improvements of women’s rights. Some Catholic’s responded that ‘gender’ is a conspiracy to undermine traditional family values. In the aftermath of the conference, anti-gender activists began to form in opposition to certain ‘enemies’, such as feminists, homosexuals and trans people. To denounce activism around gender equality, sexual education, women’s rights, same-sex marriages and other subjects they consider a threat against the ‘traditional’ family. These crusades later became known as anti-gender campaigns against e.g. women’s right to abortion, LGBTQ-rights, sexual education and varieties of gender (Paternotte & Kuhar 2017).

As many other activists around the globe are striving towards equality and development nowadays (e.g. #MeToo) there are still radical conservative groups who are pushing for reactionary policies when it comes to gender matters (Ogando & Assis 2018; Paternotte & Kuhar 2017). Movements against gender are widespread, one can find campaigns against sexual education and gender equality in Argentina, Colombia and Ecuador (Con mis hijos no te metas), France (La Manif Pour Tous) and Sweden (Alternativ för Sverige). The goals are simply to comply to traditional norms of gender, and exclude everything that is a threat to it (ibid). The movements embrace, and maintains, a discourse about ‘gender indoctrination’ and encroach upon decision makers, which is a retrograde for the achievements of the agenda 2030. The agenda for Sustainable Development presents 17 goals that should be reached by the year 2030, adopted by all UN-



member states in 2015, known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Within them one can find two goals which relates to gender issues, that is goal number four: quality education, and five: gender equality (sustainabledevelopment.un.org. n.d.).

In 2004, a movement against sexual education was created in Brazil. It was funded by a lawyer, Miguel Nagib, with the motive to combat ‘indoctrination of gender identity in schools’ and the movement was called Escola sem Partido, which means schools without political parties (Portinari 2018; Escolasesempartido.org n.d.). Thus, the initial motive, the campaign includes all kinds of ‘indoctrination’ from what is considered ‘leftist’ such as gender studies, political acknowledgement, same-sex marriages, feminism and more. The campaign has gained ground in Brazilian right-wing politics. Teachers and professors are currently being supervised by parents via WhatsApp and threatened by their students inside their classrooms. The newly elected president, Jair Bolsonaro (PSL), has announced his support for the campaign and stated that a ‘good teacher has nothing to fear’ which makes the members of this campaign no longer outsiders to decision-making powers (Portinari November 2018). Shortly after his election in October 2018, a state representative of Santa Catarina, Ana Caroline Campagnolo, announced to the public a channel for denunciations of teachers with political bias or ideology, and encouraged students to record their teachers. The idea became very successful within conservative and religious congregations. Now, many people, including a Justice of Santa Catarina, fear that the freedom of expression may be violated (ibid).

Escola sem Partido, a movement which started by the goal to remove sexual education has now turned into a slander of ‘leftist’ teachers who are considered conspirators and indoctrinators. Similar campaigns are seen in other parts of the world too, aforementioned e.g. Con mis hijos no te metas. The message they convey is a retrograde for gender equality, as they target the school environment which is an important channel for the discussion of gender issues and promotion of gender equality. Escola sem Partido in Brazil is just one case out of many, but



it is a campaign that successfully has gained a powerful position within politics, and therefore, an important case to investigate.

This thesis will examine the case of Escola sem Partido through a critical discourse analysis. By analyzing ‘testimonies’ from students that they publish on their official website and interviewing the *targets* of the campaign – professors and students, this thesis investigates how the perception of gender matters in the judgement of what is considered legitimate education. The case examined is at the university level of education, since universities are a central target for the campaign, because of their role in research on gender issues. Moreover, universities are also an area where students form unions and activism around certain societal issues, such as gender inequalities.

1.1 Research Problem & Relevance

There is a consensus within the existing research that conservatism, religion and gender-ideology are interlinked and how these groups instrumentalize with the term ‘gender ideology’ against their ‘enemies’; homosexuals, transgender persons, reproductive rights and more. However, ‘gender ideology’ is a rather new phenomenon (e.g. Melo et. Al. 2016; Newman & Muzzonigro 1993; Waters 2017; Haj-Yahia 2003; Paternotte & Kuhar 2018; Graff 2014; Greenstein & Davis 2009).

In Brazil, research shows that in the aftermath of ‘the pink tide’ more people began to defend conservative organizations with a reactionary agenda, such as Escola sem Partido. ‘The pink tide’ is a term to describe the years of development for gender equality and feminism up rise in Latin America (e.g. Ghitis 2018). However, the issue of ‘gender ideology’ in Brazil has not been studied deep enough, nor why gender has become a central dispute within higher education as there is not much academic research to find. The case of Escola sem Partido is not an explored subject within the academia, not to mention through a university level of education (e.g. Miguel 2016; Frigotto 2016; Pretto 2013).



Since universities are an important environment for free and independent research, if ‘gender ideology’ would gain ground there it would be devastating for many strands of philosophical subjects, among them the critical reflections about gender issues. There is a relevance of examining how the interpretation of the term gender is at the center conflicts of values within high level of education, since the power-shift in Brazil in 2018, from a left to a right-wing regime, provided a steady ground for anti-gender crusades to affect decision-making powers. Therefore this particular case is important to investigate, as it seeks to broaden the knowledge of how anti-gender movements mobilize and affect decision makers.

1.2 Research Objective & Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to examine the discussion around *gender* at the university level of education. Through analyzing ‘testimonies’ and carrying out interviews I seek to understand how *gender* has become a central term for dispute within the discussion of ‘political indoctrination’ in education. I am using Escola sem Partido as a foundation for my research, since the campaign is challenging strands of political, philosophical and ideological perspectives that emphasizes inequalities in gender, sexualities and ethnicities. The following questions will be answered in this research;

- How is ‘gender ideology’ constructed within the ‘testimonies’ of Escola sem Partido, and how is it used to make a distinction between legitimate and political education?
- How do professors’ and students make sense of the campaign and its view on certain knowledge as ‘political indoctrination’?
- In what ways can the conflict about the interpretation of gender be understood through the findings within the ‘testimonies’ and the interviews of this thesis?



1.3 Structure of the Thesis

The method for conducting this research is through a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and coding, for the identification of themes within the interviews and ‘testimonies’. The theoretical framework used constitutes a set of feministic strands to explain power-relations and the creation of certain knowledge. This thesis is structured by a presentation of the research problem and objective, followed by the research questions. After the research questions, a literature review explains how this thesis fits in amongst previous research. Then follows the method, theoretical framework and background chapters. The findings and analysis are presented together in one chapter, and lastly the conclusion and recommendations for future research.



2 Previous Research

Through a literature review, this chapter gives an assessment of already published research that is related to this study. It seeks to present an overview of this research topic and issue: 'gender ideology' in relation to my research problem. By starting from a global perspective on the matter and moving towards my case: Brazil and Escola sem Partido, the aim is to explain how this thesis fits in to already published research.

2.1 'Gender Ideology'

The already published research about 'gender ideology' is a relatively new field and has its roots within eastern and south of Europe. The term must not be confused with studies on *gender*, as 'gender ideology' is a term used to condemn such studies (e.g. Paternotte & Kuhar 2018; Bracke & Paternotte 2016; Graff 2014; Greenstein & Davis 2009; Bolzendahl & Myers 2004; Barnett & Rivers 2004). The anti-gender campaigns are seen all over the world, as mentioned in e.g. Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, France and Sweden but previous research shows the coherence of 'gender ideology' in e.g. Spain, Italy, Croatia, Poland and Slovenia (Paternotte & Kuhar 2018).

The previous research goal has been to map out these movements and outline its 'coups' and exhibits that anti-gender campaigns and right-wing populism are 'two faces of the same coin'. The term 'gender ideology' is used by groups which oppose the term *gender* because, according to these groups, *gender* is something unquestionable i.e. the fixed biological sex of boys and girls determines the gender. Therefore, studies of gender equality, sexual liberalization, LGBTQ - rights and more are condemned and falsified (Paternotte & Kuhar 2018). The movements work by the motto of 'saving the victims of gender ideology' (Korolczuk 2015).



The term ‘gender ideology’ is not only used as an analytical frame, but also as a political strategy for these groups. Several scholars have recognized right-wing populism and anti-gender mobilization resonances, in e.g. Poland (e.g. Graff & Korolczuk 2018, in Paternotte & Kuhar 2018). The rhetoric of anti-gender formations usually highlights the diabolic of abortion by e.g. calling women ‘baby killers’. These groups are comparing feminism and gender studies with communism and Nazism (Graff 2014). The resistance of the term *gender* itself, is strong, mostly within religious congregations, as exploring one’s gender is considered a sin (Bracke & Paternotte 2016). The resistance of the term gender has come to awake since *gender* – as an analytical tool or category - has been used to highlight and account unequal social structures (Scott 1986: 1067, in Bracke & Paternotte 2016).

‘Gender ideology’ grounds in individuals’ interests i.e. personal goals. One theory that would explain why gender crusades are successful within certain groups is that the resistance of *gender* coheres from the strong belief of that recognizing gender as a term equals recognizing e.g. variations of sexual identity or inequalities between the genders, and that would not benefit their personal interest (Greenstein & Davis 2009; Bolzendahl & Myers 2004; Barnett & Rivers 2004). Therefore, ‘Gender ideology’ acts as a lens through which individuals view their social world. It is proven that family-related behaviors are strongly related to ‘gender ideology’ for instance, the reaction and level of acceptance of homosexuality (Greenstein & Davis 2009; Newman & Muzzonigro 1993).

In addition, one popular interpretation of the bible is somewhat based in ‘gender ideology’ as it gives little to no consideration of what is written on rape against women as it does to the manly desire of men. As Christian churches does not ‘picket’ on rapes as they do with same-sex relationships i.e. Christian congregations do not address violence against women by offering programs to change the lifestyle of those who sexually objectifies women as they do with those who identify themselves as lesbian, gay, transgender or queer (Waters 2017). This information is of special interest for this research due to the large



support of Escola sem Partido that are religious families (Escolasempartido.org n.d.).

2.2 'Gender ideology' in Brazil

The view on sexuality in Brazil is heavily influenced by fixed gender norms and social structures. A Survey indicates, that Brazilian youths consider male sexuality as uncontrollable and guided by instinct, and that female sexual behavior is controlled, and that the viewpoints stem from 'gender ideology' as 'biology' is evoked to reinforce the sexual behavior and social hierarchy (Laqueur 1992, in Heilborn & da Silva Cabral 2013). Prejudice against sexual and gender diversity in Brazil positively relates to level of religiosity too. It is found that Brazilian youths with a high religious attendance i.e. regularly attending of religious events, exhibit more prejudice against sexual and gender diversity. Furthermore, it is important to notice how these religious congregations are represented in the national congress, since they are targeting the LGBTQ population of Brazil through contesting Brazilian public policies. Moreover, there are no tools for addressing the questions about gender matters within the school curricula, as it has become dependent on teachers own initiatives (Costa et.al., 2016).

The campaign Escola sem Partido is a hot subject in contemporary Brazil, as it is widely discussed in Brazilian social medias. However, there is not much academic research to find about the case (e.g. Miguel 2016; Frigotto 2016; Pretto 2013). Since 2014, several bills have been made against 'ideological indoctrination' in the Brazilian congress and state legislatures (Miguel 2016). Frigotto (2016) conducted a research about the privatization of Brazilian schools and its effect on teacher's ability to teach independent as they are being 'bribed' by private funders to teach what they see fit. Lastly, a study on how societal and global change and the way of communicating affects the schools and universities learning strategies (Pretto 2013). Aforementioned, the previous research about the issue nearly 'scratch the surface' of 'gender ideology' within Brazil nor the case for this study: Escola sem Partido.



3 Research Method

This chapter presents a justification of the case and the chosen methods for conducting and analyzing the research findings. This thesis aim is to be as transparent as possible, and therefore I have dedicated a great focus on evaluating and describing my material, and why I have chosen them for my research. As some of the sources are published in Portuguese, I have explained the process of translating them into English for this thesis as well as my other limitations. In this chapter there is also an evaluation of the ethical considerations, since I am conducting interviews.

3.1 Delimitations and Justification of the case

From the beginning, this was going to be a study on how conservative and radical leaders expressed themselves about gender-based violence and how that influenced the suppression of women and LGBTQ-people. However, as I was collecting background information of my case, who initially was the Brazilian president, Jair Bolsonaro, I found that: *yes*, he is certainly an outspoken and radical leader who oppresses women, homosexuals, transgender people and ethnic minorities, *but* what is more important is that he is only one person who is a part of a much bigger context. Thus, by keeping the initial approach of gender but change the case, this research would present a more relevant contribution to this research field. Therefore, I chose to delimit the case to investigate a specific radical conservative movement. The case then became the movement and campaign Escola sem Partido, and investigate it within the university level of education. I delimited the study to focus on how the perception of gender reflects upon the opinions of what is considered political or valid knowledge.

By addressing the aspect of tradition, the method of this study will be more valid and reliable. Tradition aims at how the researcher usually performs his or her study, or the field the researcher belongs too. I am not bound to a specific tradition such as previous method or theoretical perspective practiced. However, the theme of this study is chosen by interest. Therefore, I must acknowledge that



this study is influenced by my field of study, as the choice of method, material and research question (Ahrne & Svensson 2015).

3.1.1 Limitations and Language Constrains

The most prominent limitations of this thesis are geographical and time constrains. Since this research case, the campaign, is located in Brazil and I am unable to travel there, this study has to be carried out by the computer. The limitations and delimitations of my interviews is explained in the interviews-chapter further down in the text (see page 18-19). When carrying out my research I have been translating each source published in Portuguese into English by a translator and by myself. This method is time consuming, but necessary for the reliability of this research. The quotes collected from Brazilian websites e.g. the testimonies from Escola sem Partido, are therefore translated from Portuguese to English in this research.

3.2 Research Approach and Methodological Choices

This thesis approach will be abductive, which is a mix between the empirical material and the theoretical framework, for the understanding of the social environment I am investigating. The abductive approach means to analyze the findings through a theoretical frame in order to create an understanding of the issue, and to explain and support my arguments (Bryman 2016, p. 394).

The chosen method for analyzing the materials are through a CDA, which is a critical approach engaged in a societal change. This method is chosen specifically because it emphasizes the discourse role of the reproduction of unequal power-relations. Thus, a critical research approach is engaged in societal change through uncover the role of a discourse in the maintenance of unequal power relations. A CDA should therefore investigate the message *behind* the language, through critically look into the choice of words and the broader perspective the text is a part of – as discourses is related to its surroundings. This methodological framework is applicable to this thesis research problem due to it emphasizes



language awareness. Since this thesis examines how the interpretation of gender has become a central term of dispute in the judgement of what is considered legitimate education, the critical approach is relevant (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2000, p. 70-71).

The chosen method for the exercise of the CDA is to use two of Fairclough's tools for a text analysis, the first step within three dimensional model (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2000, p. 66-92). However, I am aware of that Fairclough's view on a text analysis is that it is not sufficient enough to cover the relation between the produced text and social inequalities. *But* the text analysis involves useful methodological tools for this research; modality and transitivity. *Modality* is the level of how a person express her- or himself about a certain issue i.e. how well does this person believe what she or he says is the truth. *Transitivity* highlights the way people are concatenated with certain events (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2000, p. 87).

3.2.1 Coding

Before exercising the CDA, the material needs to be coded, to identify certain themes within them that reflect upon this research problem (Kvale & Brinkmann 2015, p. 141-149). To be able to find similarities or differences in the findings I need to break down, investigate, compare and categorize the data. Coding is a strategy for the identification of themes by putting fragments of texts within categories within the chosen theoretical frame. The identification of themes is done through the identification of 'crisis points' which is something that reflects a conflict within a discourse, and by searching for thematic words or content that can be clustered into categories (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2000, p. 121-122).

Coding is crucial for the possibility of finding a structure and concepts and make sense of them. The advantages of coding the material is obvious, since it forces the researcher to take everything the respondent wrote in concern. Although, I am aware of the risks coding has, since it could present an unfair and homogenic picture of the answers since it requires every answer to be explainable i.e. it is



easy to make conclusions or meanings out of an answer that actually would have had another meaning to it, or not a meaning at all (Kvale & Brinkmann 2015, p. 242).

3.3 Data collection of primary sources

The interviews and the ‘testimonies’ will serve as the material for this thesis empirical findings. Both the interviews and the ‘testimonies’ are considered primary sources. Primary sources are those who are originally presented to the researcher i.e. there has not been an interpretation or analysis of the data beforehand. A valid and reliable research considers the strength and sustainability for each source the empirical findings are based upon, and how the method for this research investigates what it is intended for. This research attempt is to be as transparent as possible, by evaluating the sources critically (Kvale & brinkmann 2015, p. 295; Thurén 2013).

3.3.1 Collection of ‘Testimonies’

The information posted on the website are ‘testimonies’ from students or teachers who according to them are victims of ‘gender ideology’. According to the website these persons have written letters or posted videos to Escola sem Partido which constitutes of 61 testimonies, each about one page long, from 2004 until 2018. This thesis will examine four ‘testimonies’ carefully. The purpose of analyzing these is to identify important themes within them and analyze them. For this research, important themes consider indoctrination of ‘gender ideology’.

The ‘testimonies’ were chosen by content and has been translated from Portuguese to English. The reason for why I have selected them by content is partly due to that this study investigates the campaign from a certain standpoint and partly due to the time-consumption of reading all 61 ‘testimonies’ thoroughly. I am aware of that 4 ‘testimonies’ will not represent the content of all 61, but I argue that through analyzing them carefully I will understand how the authors perception of *gender* which is what is important for this thesis. Moreover, I am aware the risk of that these ‘testimonies’ are fake as one cannot trace the persons



who wrote them. However, my intentions are to analyze the objective of the selected ‘testimonies’ by examine the language and rhetoric within them, as they are used to attract more supporters for the campaign but also as a threat towards teachers. Therefore, I consider them valuable material.

3.3.2 Collection of Interviews

This study is also based in online interviews. The benefits of interviewing respondents online are many. First of all, it is more time efficient due to that the information is already written down and ready for analysis. I can avoid transcribing and I can start my analysis directly (Kvale & Brinkmann 2015, p. 190). Second, due to this thesis limitations of geographical distance and time differences, I need my interviewees to answer these questions in their own time and without time pressure of a scheduled meeting over the phone. The third and most important benefit is that it gives them the time to reflect upon their answers and around the questions. Due to ethical considerations I have given the respondents time to develop thoughts around the questions and put their feelings into words. Since this is a delicate subject, I am aware that the professors’ or students may not share sensitive information. Thus, they know who I am and what my intentions are with their answers, and therefore they may be selective on what they will share with me.

The downside of conducting interviews online are amongst other things, that the interviews become less dynamic i.e. I am missing out on face expressions and sarcasm. It also demands that both me and respondents must be able to express ourselves accordingly in writing. For this case, me and the respondents are natively speaking Swedish and Portuguese, whilst the interviews must be held in English. Therefore, I must consider the language barrier, although the obstacle of e.g. accents is nonetheless not occurring in written text (Kvale & Brinkmann 2015, p. 190; Ahrne & Svensson 2015).

This study conducts interviews from 8 people from one university in Brazil: 2 professors and 6 students. The respondents are divided into two groups, professors’ and students. The interviewees were not selected randomly, but



through a so called ‘snowball’. In other words, I started off by asking people I know who themselves took part of this research and could give me more names of possible participants who I contacted by e-mail or via Facebook (Esaiasson et.al. 2017, p. 190).

The interview questions are standardized, by 3 main questions, which means that all interviewees are asked the same questions. The interviews includes one open question, where the respondent can write down what he or she wants me to know. May it be a specific topic related to the campaign or a description of a certain incident in their school/work environment (Esaiasson et.al. 2017, p. 239-258). It is important to mention that there has been a difference between the questions asked to the professors’ and the questions asked to the students. In addition, one interview was performed via a chat-interview on the demands of the respondent. However, the person was asked the same questions and in the same order as the others were asked but the answers from that interview turned out somewhat different: shorter and less descriptive. The respondent who answered my questionnaires had more time to write down and reflect upon their answers, and therefore the outcome from them were more informative and involved a lot of text. Moreover, I avoided the respondents urge to answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to those questions as the respondent for the chat-interview did.

The findings of the primary sources aim to reflect a fair picture of how the campaign works to push through gender as ‘political indoctrination’ and how it is met by the professors and students who are the *targets*. Both materials will be analyzed through coding, by identifying themes related to how gender is perceived in both the testimonies and within the interviews I can understand the battle of gender. The method of coding is discussed under a separate subheading further down in the text.

3.4 Information about the respondents

The interviewees for this research consist of six students and two professors who are completely anonymous in this thesis. The interviewees are students and



professors from one federal university in Brazil. The respondents' variation of age and main field of studies or discipline will make the answers less homogenic. To preserve the respondent-anonymity, information about their areas of study and expertise are left out in this thesis. However, the intention of this research is not to generalize a result that would apply to any university of Brazil since the total respondent are 8 people and I am fully aware of that there might be special circumstances regarding the school of choice or that this school is a 'single case' (Ahrne & Svensson 2015).

The interviewees were asked to share as much they wanted and encouraged to answer the questions as descriptive as possible, giving their feelings and experiences about the campaign. There was a written consent between the respondents and me that what they share may be used in this study. The respondents are aware of the purpose of the interview and furthermore, aware that this study will be published online. In addition, I want to address the few participating professors, because of the sensitive subject I could not get more to participate. Furthermore, as it interferes with their personal opinions about their workspace, they might not want to share that with me. However, I must acknowledge the importance of bringing in a teacher's perspective, and therefore I am satisfied with the two professors' who took part of the interviews. I argue, that the total number of participants is enough to analyze. Again, regarding the numbers of students and professors, this is a qualitative research and more respondents would decrease the depth of my research analysis.

3.4.1 Ethical Considerations

When conducting interviews, I have considered several ethical aspects and because of this thesis topic, the respondents will remain anonymous. The respondents have been decharacterized and their names has been replaced by the letters: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H. There is no connection between the letter and the participants real names (Kvale & Brinkmann 2015, p. 98-102). When conducting the interviews, I have approached the issue in the most respectful way. I am aware that it is not common to criticize the school nor the university in Brazil. It is a custom not to 'talk down' any university as it is seen as very



offensive, even comparable to criticize someone's home - especially if you are an outsider. Since this research focus is the school environment, where professors and students are the main characters, I need to be very sensitive of how I have chosen to ask for their participation and how I have formed my questions (ibid).

There is a consensus between the respondents and me that their anonymity is secured. All of the respondents are ensured that what they answer may be published online with open access, and therefore their confidentiality is of greatest importance. The respondents were given several days to answer the questionnaire and therefore, they have been given time to deliberate their answers and decide how much or how little personal information they would feel at ease to share with me. Moreover, I have not pushed for their answers nor put pressure on the respondents to make them answer the way I want them to. Since the interviews are performed in written form, there will not be any transcriptions nor the risk of not being loyal to what they wrote. Moreover, to avoid misrepresentation of some statements I have chosen to ask them if my interpretation is correct e.g. by asking; when you wrote X did you mean Y? .



4 Theoretical Framework

A discourse analysis needs the support of a theory to be successful, and by drawing on several theoretical lenses to a discourse analysis, one can gain a valid insight and a broader understanding of the subject. Aforementioned, this thesis conducts a CDA. A CDA is constituted by a set of theories, guidelines and methods. One of Fairclough's theories views a discourse of something that works ideologically i.e. that a discourse can create, maintain and reproduce power-relations and unequal structures between social groups (e.g. genders) aforementioned. Since my research focus is to understand how Escola sem Partido perceive gender as 'political indoctrination' a CDA towards *both* the construction of their (the movements) worldview *and* the role the discourse has in the foster of these group's interests (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2000, p. 66-70).

In addition to Fairclough's model of CDA and tools for the text analysis, I have applied theories from several strands of feminist perspectives on societal issues drawn from Lena Gemzöe's *Feminism*. For this thesis, I have looked at the particular chapters on how knowledge is produced and reproduced, since the perception of knowledge is what I am interested in. In science, masculinity is prevalent, as traditional science are produced from a manly perspective. This explains why the feminist production of knowledge, as it emphasizes genders too, always have been met with resistance by traditional research (and the traditional researchers). The chapters used for this thesis analyze that resistance in a useful way, as it can be applied to the findings and answer this thesis research questions (Gemzöe 2015, p. 121-150).

This thesis also takes a leap from the theory of 'the heterosexual matrix' in Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*. The theory emphasizes the idea of that the normative heterosexuality is a cornerstone for the construction of gender i.e. the construction of male and female characteristics is maintained by the idea of what 'natural' heterosexual behavior is. It is of use for this study to analyze the findings from the 'testimonies', since one common view on genders could be



explained through Butler's theory of a 'matrix' as it also emphasizes the melancholy of the heteronormativity i.e. that people who resist, or are afraid of, e.g. homosexuality are in fact 'unsatisfied' about their own gender (Butler 2006). The theoretical approach for this CDA is based in the assumption of that people's minds are determined by the knowledge that is created between social interactions, where people are building their common truths and fight for what they believe is true and false (Burr 1995, in Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2000, p. 12).



5 Background

This chapter presents background information about the case in order to explain how the campaign Escola sem Partido echoes 'gender ideology'. The chapter is divided in two parts: each with several subheadings. This chapter is considered important due to it emphasizes the position of the campaign and facilitates a deeper understanding of the relevance of the case, as the campaign is supported by the newly elected Brazilian president. Therefore, this chapter also outlines a brief history the president, Jair Bolsoaro, and the Social Liberal Party (PSL).

5.1 Programa Escola Sem Partido

The website of Escola sem Partido explains that; "Political and ideological indoctrination in the classroom offends the student's freedom of conscience" (Programaescolasempartido.org n.d.). The campaign states that by art. 12 of the American Convention on Human Rights: "parents have the right to have their children receive religious and moral education which is in accordance with their own convictions" (ibid). At their website one can read that teachers abuse their right of 'freedom to teach' and suggests measurements for prevention of 'indoctrination'. The campaign has drafted several bills and preliminary laws for adopting a program of schools without political parties at municipality, state and federal level. By art. 6 it is stated that the public power should not interfere in the process of sexual maturation, nor allow any 'dogmatism' and 'proselytism' in the approach to the question of gender. Moreover, the program imposes 5 decrees on schools and teachers by articles. Among them; posters that should be disposed in all classrooms and in the staff's rooms to 'remind the students of their rights'. The decrees states furthermore that the use of techniques of psychological manipulation destined to obtain adhesion of students for a certain cause is prohibited (ibid).

5.1.1 Escola Sem Partido Movement

The campaign allows parents to organize themselves against certain subjects in schools that is considered of having a political bias. The focus is mostly turned towards gender and sexual education, but a great part of the campaign is



involving teachers with political bias – as discussing gender is considered to be a leftist attribute. As mentioned before, the idea is that gender is a conspiracy against the traditional family and that sexual education will teach children how to ‘become homosexuals’ (Portinari 2018).

The movement is well established, with a structured webpage where one can find drafts of law propositions and decrees, names of those who support the project and impositions for public actions. The movement is well-organized and divided into two strands; one that works to develop the project and the other as an informatory to parents, students and counselors ‘concerned with the degree of political-ideological contamination of Brazilian schools. The campaigns main target are teachers who promotes critical thinking of societal issues and power relations and criticize some attributes of the society. The issue Escola sem Partido address is that by proposing a critical thinking of the world, teachers inflicts on student’s own perception and interpretation (Programaescolasempartido.org n.d.).

At Escola sem Partido’s website one can read an article called *who said sexual education is mandatory content?* where sexual education is denounced. The article is written by the funder, Miguel Nagib, and it highlights the idea of that gender is used as a tool do indoctrinate children. He writes:

... classrooms are being used intensively to promote certain values in order to shape students' moral judgment, feelings, and attitudes toward certain subjects [...] It may be sexual orientation, gender issues, 'reproductive rights' (e.g. abortion), family models, ethics, etc. [...] In this type of education, the goal is not to impart knowledge, but rather to instill values and feelings in the student's consciousness so that he has determined behavior. It is a type of brainwashing, because it often uses well-known mental manipulation techniques. – Miguel Nagib (Nagib, December 2013)

This quote highlights the campaigns objective i.e. that some knowledge about gender and all it brings; sexual education, reproductive rights and more is not



valuable. Thus not something teachers should speak about inside a classroom. The whole idea of gender matters is that they are seen as political, and that speaking about them is to ‘instill values’ which equals ‘brainwashing’. At the programs’ website one can find information about how to control the education came about:

...We then had the idea of disseminating the testimonies of students, victims of these false educators. Open the curtains and let the sunlight in. After all, as one well-known United States Supreme Court judge once said, ‘little sunlight is the best disinfectant’. – (Naqib n.d., in Programaescolasempartido.org n.d.).

The idea is to record and expose those teachers or professors’ who ‘indoctrinate’ students, aforementioned. The tool for controlling the education is to publicly announce ‘testimonies’ from student who have experienced such indoctrination, either by letters or videos.

5.2 Brazilian Polarization: historical and current events

As Brazil has a wounded past (e.g. two epochs of military regimes and several corruption scandals of the previous government PT) the current population is extremely ideologically and politically divided, an also extremely unequal (Williamson 1992). Brazil is known for being a corrupt country, and one of the most recent corruption scandals hit the previous leftist government (PT) hard. In the aftermath, the impeachment of president Dilma Rousseff and former president Lula da Silva (PT) awoke both the right and the leftist activism in Brazil (VEJA 2018). Moreover, the country is also ranked number 102/180 in the international 2018 World Press Freedom Index, due to high corruption, violence and the lack of transparency by authorities (rsf.org 2018). An explicit event that put more gas to the fire was when Judith Butler, a feminist philosopher, attended Rio de Janeiro for a seminar in October 2017. A movement founded by openly right-wing arrays composed by the Catholic church, conservative psychologists, the evangelical Christians, and Escola sem Partido, who put up protests for her visit, arguing that she was a threat to ‘the natural order of gender, sexuality and the family’ (sxpolitics.org 2018).



5.2.1 Bolsonaro and The Social Liberal Party (PSL)

The 28 October 2018, the Brazilian president was elected; Jair Bolsonaro, from the Social Liberty Party (PSL) and the country gained a conservative and right-winged regime. According to Brazilian poll-trackers, Bolsonaro was supported by the evangelicals with 58 %, and the Catholics by 43 % (Gonzales 2018; Kerstenetzky, Uchôa & do Valle Silva 2015). The president, who is well known for his radical statements about women, homosexuals and different ethnicities had an enormous support from the evangelicals. Bolsonaro has been accused for being racist, sexist and homophobic since several explicit statements against minorities in Brazil has been made. He has stated that his government will end quotas for women, homosexuals, northeastern and black people in universities around the country. He has stated that it is ‘coitadismo’ which translates to ‘playing the victim’ and said to Brazilian press “We are the same, it does not matter to me [...] We cannot pick up certain minorities and think they have superpowers and are different from the rest.” (VEJA 2018).

Bolsonaro began his political career in the 1990s and has since then systematically tried to undermine sexual and reproductive rights, same-sex marriages and the rights of abortion. Together with the evangelical parliamentary bloc he submitted a draft law for the recognition of the rights an unborn child has – to criminalize abortion even in the case of rape. The proposals never passed, but nonetheless it steered the debate of valuing the traditional family unit and made conservative Brazilians feel like their values were under attack (Ogando & Assis 2018). Several of Bolsonaro’s statements about women, black people and homosexuals have gone viral; “I would be incapable of loving a homosexual son [...] I would prefer my son to die in an accident than show up with a mustachioed man” (Forrest 2018) and that ‘quilombolas’, which means descendants of African slaves, are ‘not even fit for breeding’ (Henrique Leal, April 2017). Moreover, he said to a female colleague that ‘he would not rape her’ because she is ‘not worth it’ (Patrick M, 2018). The attack against the educational system in 2011, when the Ministry of Education in Brazil adopted a program for the promotion of gender equalities and sexual education, made Escola sem Partido gain ground.



Bolsonaro himself called it a ‘gay kit’ that would teach children ‘how to be homosexuals’. Anti-gender movements thought it would ‘threaten the natural sexual binary’ and even though the rumors about the books were fake, the *real* children-books, imported by the ministry of Culture, were denied in public libraries (Ogando & Assis 2018).

5.2.2 The Anti-Bolsonaro Campaign #EleNão

During the electoral campaign, students and other activist against Bolsonaro formed a resistance campaign called #EleNão which translates to ‘Not Him’. The motive behind the campaign was to create awareness around gender equalities, racism and LGBTQ-rights. Many students and people began to wear the hash tag as a statement on their clothes or as stickers on e.g. their belongings to show that they were against him and the values he stands for. One example of an incident related to the campaign was the abuse of a 19-year old girl in Porto Alegre, who was verbally and physically abused by three men who held her down and drew a swastika onto her back with a knife. The crimes motivation was because she was wearing a backpack with the LGBTQ logo and a t-shirt with the words #EleNão (Ogando & Assis 2018).

The resistance towards Bolsonaro and his crusades against minorities are important to mention in this thesis, as it relates to ‘gender ideology’ as well as the language used in Escola sem Partido’s ‘testimonies’. Moreover, as some of the students who are taking part within this study supported #EleNão.



6 Empirical Findings and Analysis

Since this thesis is carried out by a CDA, the empirical findings and the analysis of the material is presented together. In other words, there is not a separate chapter for analysis in this thesis to avoid confusion of what text I have analyzed.

The first section of my empirical findings in this research analyzes Escola sem Partido's 'testimonies' from students that have written to the campaign. The section is divided by two themes identified in four testimonies; *Professors personal agenda steers the education* and 'Indoctrination'. When analyzing the texts, I have used Fairclough's tools of transitivity and modality, and the theoretical perspective of the 'heterosexual matrix' in Butler's *Gender Trouble* is used to understand and highlight certain arguments that is formed within the 'testimonies'.

The second part of my empirical findings are the conducted interviews, divided by the students responds and the professors' this parts consists of three identified themes; *Universities role of promoting tolerance* and *The dispute of valuable knowledge* within the interviews collected from the students and; *Supervised education and research possibilities* within the interviews collected from the professors. When analyzing the interviews, I have used the CDA as a lens and applied several theoretical perspectives found in Gemzöe's *Feminism*, and Butler's *Gender Trouble* to be able to make sense of the themes.

6.1 Testimonies

This section analyzes testimonies from four persons who have written to Escola sem Partido through letters. The testimonies are collected from Escola sem Partidos websie, under the headline: 'Depoimentos' (Depositions). The identified themes are; *Professors personal agenda steers the education* and 'Indoctrination'.

6.1.1 Professors Personal Agenda Steers the Education



What was found in each of the four ‘testimonies’ collected from Escola sem Partidos website was similar characteristics of the texts. The discussion ‘gender ideology’ is prominent in the way these persons write about certain issues and the following moments of these testimonies exhibits how these people talk about these issues. In many testimonies it was found that professors’ often ‘steps away from the teaching plan’ to promote their personal agendas. In the following quote this issue is highlighted by the discussion of when a professor takes ‘advantage’ of her class to discuss gay-rights:

The subject that Professor (X) teaches, Family Law, deals with issues such as marriage, separation, divorce and custody. She is taking advantage of this and steps away from the teaching plan, the teacher starts debates to discuss gay marriage. It turns out that she starts from the assumption that homosexuality is a normal condition [...] Some students, who disagree with this opinion (based on reliable facts), are excluded from the wheel and ridiculed – Student of the Regional University of Blumenau, 17.01.2006 (Escolasempartido.org A).

The modality of this statement is way this person expresses her- or himself about homosexuality, indicates that this person think it is the truth, due to the description of homosexuality as abnormal. The student shows a great resistance of, or even fear of, homosexuals as she/he clearly takes a standpoint on the view of homosexuality i.e. ‘...the assumption that homosexuality is normal’ where the choice of the word *assumption* lets the reader know that homosexuality is not proven to be *normal* i.e. it is doubted whether homosexuality is a normal condition or not. Or ‘based on reliable facts’ indicates that the teacher’s opinion on homosexuality could be proven wrong with *facts*. The choice of words indicates that the writer is completely convinced that her or his statement is true i.e. this student really believes that homosexuality can be augmented against by fact. Moreover, the students acknowledge what he/she knows as abnormality, of speaking about homosexual relationships when speaking of relationship issues in general – something this student sees as ‘going of topic’ because the subject regarding relationships should only be discussed if the relationship is between a man and a woman. It shows the conflict about what the education should focus



on: *family* and not *homosexuality*. Where the two is placed in opposition to each other. Gay marriage is viewed as a personal interest or special interest, not something that involves family law. Even though the student acknowledge that the class is bringing up subjects regarding marriage, the professor is going ‘off-topic’ to discuss same-sex marriage.

This doubtful view on homosexuality is determined by the *heterosexual matrix*, as it decides that one should act according their biological sex i.e. if you are born as female you should be attracted to men and vice versa (see: Butler 1990 in Gemzöe 2015, p. 140-144). When applying the heterosexual matrix to this issue, *Family Law* should only deal with heterosexual relationships – and not every family related issue there is. “heterosexual refusal to acknowledge the primary homosexual attachments is culturally enforced by a prohibition on homosexuality [...]” (Butler 2006, p. 95). The refusal to acknowledge homosexuality is based in the melancholic of one’s own heterosexuality (i.e. the sadness). Moreover, the refusal of ‘the melancholic heterosexual’ man’s acknowledgement of homosexuality is based upon that a man never loves another man, he *is* a man, and more important – he can seek ‘facts’ that supports it (Butler 2006, p. 97). In this student’s ‘testimony’ it is stated that ‘It turns out that she starts from the assumption that homosexuality is a normal condition’ and ‘Some students, who disagree with this opinion (based on reliable facts), are excluded from the wheel and ridiculed’ which indicates the melancholy of the refusal to recognize homosexuality. This is related to the rhetoric of ‘gender ideology’ due to several phrasings e.g. ‘taking advantage of this and step away from the teaching plan’ in order to discuss gay rights and how this student refers to ‘reliable facts’. It is clear that her or his opinions are coherent with the societal gender norms: the assumption that genders should behave like their sex i.e. ‘gender ideology’.

A student from the state university of Goiás testifies about his university experience:

I confess that on the second day I wanted to give up. I was scared, I did not believe what I was witnessing, the college is a real ‘smoke mouth’; the smell of



marijuana is everywhere. During the week of the freshman, we were getting several lectures, all geared towards gender ideology; gay teachers talking about homosexuality. - Dorcas J. Alves da Silva, 24.05.2016 (Escolasempartido.org B).

The way this student ascribe attributes and events to certain people and places is interpreted through transitivity: that the university is a ‘smoke mouth’ and teachers there speak about ‘gender ideology’. In this ‘testimony’ the student himself states that his teachers spoke about ‘gender ideology’ and even here, the resistance of homosexuality is embedded. Since a person's view on gender facilitates the persons view on how genders should behave. Homosexuality or *gender* is unimportant and therefore a ‘forces discussion’. The dislike of when a gay teacher speak of homosexuality can be interpreted as homophobia, where homosexuality is explained as a disease. Butler (2006, p. 97) explains the view on homosexuality is based in one’s cultural enforced prohibition and it shines through this text's characteristics. By parting from Butlers theory I argue that the ‘fear’ of homosexuality in this testimony could cohere from this students cultural enforced prohibition of family values. The unequal gender norms are both maintained and reproduced through the chosen phrasing in this testimony and it seems clear that this student is aware of which people that are going to read it. He expresses that he is scared of what he has witnessed at the university e.g. smell of marijuana and ‘gender ideology’ which in his phrasing seems to be connected. It portraits the situation in a way that is to the campaigns advantage and whilst the production of ‘gender ideology’ is facilitated. The transitivity of the statements constructs the idea of gender as an issue. The student continues with describing one of his teachers:

He says he lived the dictatorship and knows very well how it is; he speaks ill of the military all the time, even cries in class [...] It always provokes me, and it shows indirect, calling me conservative, racist, homophobic and so on. - Dorcas J. Alves da Silva (24.05.2016).



The reproduction of 'gender ideology' is done through make himself a victim of it i.e. 'victim' of a gay teacher who speak of homosexuality. I emphasize this argument based upon how the student refers to being called homophobic as it is pictured as he was called that for no reason. By making oneself a victim of certain groups of the society it is easy to paint them out as harmful. Reading between the lines of this student testimony lets us know that: there should be no gay teachers who speaks about homosexuality since some students who gets offended by it are called homophobic.

What happens in these quotes and how are they related to the construction of gender as indoctrination? The portrayal of people and certain events plays a big role for the maintenance of that some subjects are unimportant. Gender is denounced or called out for being the teachers' personal agendas within these testimonies. These two testimonies exhibit the maintenance of 'gender ideology' within the campaign by 'testifying' about their experiences of how certain teachers behave around certain issues. Moreover, that they embark from personal interest 'taking advantage of' their classes to promote their own ideas. As these students can testify about 'trauma-like' experiences in their school environment, it complements the campaigns reliability. In other words, the 'testimonies' of how teachers use 'gender ideology' indicates that the necessity of the campaigns mission. Furthermore, these testimonies reproduce the construction of 'gender ideology' by putting attributes of 'weakness' to certain teachers that speaks of societal issues related to gender, for instance: gay rights. They 'testify' against professors who in some ways have taking advantage of their positions to discuss their personal opinions. Moreover, a concern for those teachers who want to promote their personal agendas due to their sexual preferences. Homosexuality becomes a threat to the professors' ability to stay objective, and more important students' rights to not be exposed to certain societal issues such as gay rights, same-sex marriages and more. The heterosexual norm is being questioned inside the school, something that these students experience as a trauma but by these 'testimonies' that invokes professors sexuality and interest for certain issues, they can argue for their bias in the matter.



6.1.2 'Indoctrination'

The second identified theme, as were found in all analyzed testimonies, is indoctrination. There seems to be a consensus, as the whole campaign is built upon that consensus, that teachers are indoctrinating students into becoming leftist. It is related to 'gender ideology' as taking a stand on gender issues is considered as a leftist attribute. A teacher writes:

The MAIN battle front in Brazil must be to combat this academic hegemony in the 1st and 2nd grade, and within the universities!!! There are no discussions! Teachers only show 'their' truth about facts for a student who has no way of knowing that he is only seeing one side! That is, they do not grow learning to analyze several faces of a fact and to debate. It creates a generation of zombies!!! That's what my colleagues are like. They do not see that they have been indoctrinated and can only see the vision of the left! It's a brainwash! They are closed to even debate and hear other opinions... - Maria Beatriz Correa De Mello Altschuller, 30.03.2017 (Escolasempartido.org C).

Indoctrination; persuasion, brainwashing or the act of compelling ideas and opinion onto someone who is not allowed to question them. The word indoctrination in this context almost implies that the student's other influential surroundings are not existing i.e. that the student's friends, parents or guardians never expose their opinions about anything. There is a high level of transitivity in the quote, and similar to the previous section, the idea that teachers have a hidden agenda with what they teach seems well established within the testimonies and that the teacher has a political or ideological bias that they want to promote. The statement: 'they are closed to even debate and hear other opinions' indicates that leftists are *captured* behind their ideology or world view, but what is more interesting is that by describing them as 'brainwashed' right-wing conservatives are thereby pictured as the opposite- open minded and 'free'.

The broader context this text is a part of is the debate around what is considered valid knowledge. 'it creates a generation of zombies' fulfills the idea of their, the movements, perception of leftists and that those people creates 'zombies' through the promotion of their personal agenda with invaluable knowledge. In the



testimony this knowledge are called ‘their truth’ which indicates both the perception on politics and ideology, but also gender. The following quote is taken from a student that discusses the demonstrations around the students university campus in 2016. The demonstrations were regarding the impeachment of former president Dilma Rousseff who was seen as a coup against the PT party and in many eyes unfair due to that the process of her impeachment was fast forward due to her being a woman. Regarding the issue this student writes:

Students are already so indoctrinated that it becomes difficult to have a relaxed conversation, without the subject coming to a controversial subject so that you are accused of being macho, homophobic, elitist, among other appeals. – VR, 10.08.2016 (Escolasempartido.org D)

It seems that by having an opinion that is not aligned with certain societal issues one immediately is indoctrinated e.g. brainwashed. What role does the testimonies have on bringing the message of ‘gender ideology indoctrination’ forward? By using Fairclough’s tool ‘modality’ and the debate of that the mass-media often produce information as if they were the truth, I argue that when a campaign like this, who is much like the media, makes statements and claims as if they were undoubtedly the truth they both reflect and gain authority (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2000, p. 88). It makes the reader of the text less likely to question it, and due to this campaign’s many testimonies – the truth about indoctrination and ‘gender ideology’ becomes much more difficult to question. The word *testify* itself indicates that what is written in these postings is the truth, since the word means; to give evidence or to make a solemn declaration; to bear witness to; or to affirm as fact or truth. Nor is it inevitable to acknowledge that regular testimonies usually are made under an oath, usually in court. The production and consumption of these testimonies plays therefore an important role for the campaign itself, due to that they gain reliability and ground within the society.

6.2 Interviews with Students



This section analyzes the findings of the collected interviews from the students and professors from a federal university in Brazil. This section is divided by themes: *Universities role of promoting tolerance* and *The dispute of valuable knowledge*. These themes seemed particularly important and was found in all 6 interviews.

6.2.1 Universities Role of Promoting Tolerance

The most prominent subjects of all five interviews with the students is the issue regarding preconceptions of e.g. gender and ethnicities and how this campaign will reproduce and maintain these preconceptions. According to the respondents, the school may be the only place young people can be taught about tolerance and face their preconceptions, since their families themselves might not address those issues. The respondents highlight the importance of promoting these subjects in schools to increase tolerance between young people. One respondent wrote:

Most parts of Brazil's society still have very strong problems with sexism and preconceptions of many natures, and it is very important to bring these subjects to the school, so we can develop tolerance and conscientization to the next generations. [...] I hope that repression don't become so strong to get the censorship in universities like in the military regime we had... – A

The respondent was asked about his opinions of Escola sem Partido and how he speaks about it with his friends, but there is a clear consideration for how Brazil once used to be; repressed and censored. The Respondent continues:

...We always had lots of problems, but at least in the last decades, we had improvements in social terms. More tolerance, more awareness and more inclusion. Not enough. We still have a very racist, sexist and intolerant society. But the saddest thing to see is that all the progress we had going down with a president elected by popular vote with disgusting speeches to his own people –
A

During the last decades, Brazil had imposed a cash transfer program called Bolsa Familia, which lifted many people out of poverty and improved the Brazilian



education (WorldBank.org 2018). Moreover, during the year of 2004 the first law to address gender-based violence was drafted. The law is known as Maria da Penha act, and within it one can find four articles related to the promotion of gender quality within the school curricula (article 8, §9 of Law 11,340). The two events happened during the last decades where Brazil had a leftist govern (PT). Conscientization and tolerance is according to the respondent important factors for social improvements, and also subjects that should be taught in schools. The highlight of the social inequalities and power-relations between groups of the society is important to acknowledge in this quote – since it is to opposite of what the campaign wants to highlight. In the relation to how Brazil was ‘before’ i.e. oppressed and censored during the military regime, the campaign is viewed as a threat to what has been achieved in social terms in the last decades. Another respondent wrote:

It is the more shameful campaign since the Brazilian dictatorship [...] In Brazil many people think Hitler’s party was Socialist, and belonged to the left wing, so for them Nazis were Communists?! That’s the level of leaders we’re dealing with right now – B

The respondent’s thoughts about the campaign reflects the fear of the campaigns relation to the military epoch 40 years ago, as the previous respondent also did. So how do we understand the relationship between political action and the constructed norms and structures that create the gender? If many Brazilians think Nazism and Communism are two faces of the same coin and that gender would be a leftist attribute (not only extreme-left), the resistance of ‘indoctrinating gender’ is less questionable. What this respondent writes about the military regime is similar to the previous respondent, and another respondent brought up the subjects as well:

I went to military school before college, and we had a few subjects like religion (catholic) and ‘formation’ (something like that). In those, we discussed themes that the military body came up with, of course. Therefore, in a certain way, I did not have the chance to be in contact with other ways to see society (and how it



works). Initiatives like Escola sem Partido make me feel like all schools will be similar to military schools. – C

All of the three brought up the subject without being asked about the military epoch, with similar views of how it would be if the campaign gained power over universities and other institutions. Not being exposed to various information or ideas seems to be one issue the respondents fear with the campaign, and aforementioned, inclusion and tolerance. By denouncing teachers ability to bring up certain issues would harm the educational environment or turn schools into military schools with ideological bias. All five of the students considered the topics of gender, sexual education, politics and ethnicity important subjects to discuss inside the classroom to fight preconceptions and alienations. One respondent wrote:

We need more emancipation for all people: black, women, LGBTs, etc. That's what's in the game here. These lives will remain to be worth a lot less if we keep going back like this. For me, we need education to change this situation. – D

Escola sem Partido is a retrograde for equality. This quote highlights the struggle of recognizing certain groups of the society, but also the battle of bringing in these subjects inside the classrooms. The schools is an important area for the promotion of equality and tolerance and the respondents answers reflects on the importance of a tolerant society. The respondents exhibit the concern of retrograding and going back to a country that is censored and restricted due the campaigns progress and the societal effect this campaign could have when targeting the school and universities.

6.2.2 The Dispute of Valuable knowledge

A theme identified from the interviews is the value of including certain knowledge within the classroom and the importance of a diverse educational system. All of the respondents expressed fear of that the (next generation's) education will become censored and homogenic, and that by having a strongly supervised and controlled education would be a retrograde in the development of



the society. This theme is focusing on the campaign's *method* for the supervision of certain subjects they do not consider valuable and how the respondent think about these subjects.

I believe that all kinds of ideas, strands philosophical and policies should be exposed to the students. This way the students will be encouraged to create a critical thinking about each doctrine exposed. Especially in Brazil [...] Most students will not be presented to all aspects of thought at home, but instead at school. [...] But the vast majority of the parents in Brazil, don't have political opinion with a strong base, they follow just what tv says – E

The respondent's answers reflect upon the necessity of being exposed to various of ideas and that this campaign is a threat to this. The well-known saying 'Knowledge is power' is interesting for the analysis of my thesis. Moreover, Gemzöe's argument of the way knowledge is presented is power (Gemzöe 2015, p. 131). Likewise, I argue that is why this campaign wants to prohibit certain knowledge inside the classrooms. However, one of the strands that directs the attention towards those who formulate what knowledge is, are feminism. Since knowledge and other forms of power is interconnected, feminism put light on the hidden reality of groups within the society: genders. The respondent brings up the importance of including these subjects in school due to that families themselves may not address certain subjects. The respondent wrote: 'the vast majority of the parents in Brazil, don't have political opinion with a strong base, they follow just what tv says' i.e. the knowledge that are presented to them defines their opinions. The way of producing knowledge is always biased, and something that often favors a bigger group, (see: Gemzöe 2015, p. 121-134). So if some Brazilians 'only follow what the tv says' they are easy targets of persuasion *or* the group that can decide what knowledge that is not presented to the population. To compare it with the important relationship between manly dominated science and the male exercise of power. In other words, the ones that dominate the science are those who can exercise power. One respondent wrote:



In Brazil, students who go to public universities have access to great professors, who stimulate their thinking and debate over complex issues and ideologies, so by this exercise we build our own idea of equality, justice and social measures. But there is a part of population who does not access certain knowledge, so they maintain the same conservative way of thinking that their parents had, they do not evolve as people and are violently against those who think differently -B

In this respond, great professors' equal professors who stimulate thinking and debate over complex issues e.g. equality. But if teachers cannot develop their pedagogy in line with societal issues the stimulation within the classroom will decrease. What I mean by this argument is, that if certain subjects are prohibited and certain subjects are not, the education will become less dynamic. To remove specific strands of ideologies from the classroom, the education will become more ideological. Like Gemzöe (2015, p. 122) claims, the science which describe itself as neutral and unpolitical is often the opposite e.g. knowledge about something is often used to reflect the whole words so that those in power becomes the norm and the most 'real' and the others as 'shadows'. In other words, Escola sem Partido's goal. As knowledge and power is interlinked, knowledge is dependent on those in power too. In Gemzöe (2015, p. 128-133) it is stated that we only believe in those who are considered authorities i.e. women and other marginalized groups could have knowledge about many things, but they are not authoritarian. For the campaign, feminism is not considered valid knowledge. The reason for why this reasoning is included in relation to this quote is due to Escola sem Partido's goal i.e. to control the education. What should *not* be discussed inside the classroom? When the teachers are constrained not to bring up certain issues that is not valued as knowledge, aforementioned, the education will become a slave to those in power.

Foucault's theory about the ruling discourse as defined by the contemporary political power relations within a society and that the majority (in this case the conservative right-wing) can succeed in the creation of how the world should be interpreted by uphold the discourse (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2000, p. 24). However, the discourse minority will most likely try to punctuate the ruling



discourse: as the respondent of this research does. The word *they* appear several times in the interviews. When asked about what the respondents' thoughts about teaching subjects that the campaign consider 'political' i.e. sexual education and gender equality. A theme identified in the detangling of what valid knowledge is, was 'stimulation in the classroom'. By that, the respondents' mean that the campaign will turn education into homogeneity where there will be no room for diversity and discussion:

“They attack all kinds of social topics and conscientization in the school, they want to make educational system more technical and less thinkable, and worst of all, they invent and propagate disgusting lies about sexual education and social movements to delegitimize and decrease social advances” – A

The word *they*, indicates a distinction between *them* and *us* e.g. 'they are not like us'. In this case, the word occurs in sentences of what *they* are. E.g. 'they invent propagate disgusting lies' or 'they maintain the same conservative way of thinking that their parents had' and 'they do not evolve as people' when describing supporters of Escola sem Partido. Whilst the discourse of the other side would probably say the respondent are 'brainwashed' and 'indoctrinated'. It reflects upon the Polarization of Brazil and the tensions between the group. How the conflict about valuable knowledge is taking place within this testimony is prominent e.g. when the respondent emphasizes that 'they attack all kinds of social topics' or 'invent propagate disgusting lies'. Another respondent wrote:

I feel bad for this be something happening in my country, where the education system was growing and developing in such a nice way during the past couple of years [...] now I'm afraid of how children will grow without the access to the same things I had, that were fundamental for my critical thinking – F

According to the respondent the access of certain knowledge is fundamental for critical thinking. This, much like what is written in the 'testimonies' about *only* being exposed to *one* or *certain* strands of ideologies, coheres from the very same argument – that teachers needs to expose students to *all* kinds of ideas. According



to Escola sem Partido, contemporary education is focusing on leftist ideologies to indoctrinate (and limits the critical thinking) students into the opposite ideology the campaign is built upon. However, this respondent argues upon the very same conclusion but from another perspective – that the campaigns motive to shut out certain subjects from the education will limit critical thinking.

To conclude the chapter on *Valuable Knowledge* I am emphasizing what one respondent wrote:

“Once the teachers be coerced to not bring the social topics to the children and teenagers anymore, it is a huge regression to our educational system” - A

As knowledge is valued by rank, so is the hierarchy between the genders. The nexus of sex (gender), knowledge and authority are viewed as natural in many societies e.g. that a male professor is considered more authoritarian than a female housekeeper (Gemzöe 2015, p. 128-131). The perception of what is considered valid knowledge goes hand in hand with the perception of who is authoritarian. The education will turn more ideological once certain subjects (considered ideological) are prohibited. What is in the game here seems to be *which* ideology that should be promoted throughout the education. By emphasizing the criticism feminists’ researchers has given towards the traditional androcentrism and male perspective on the scientific research, and in particular the landmark to address the issue; gender, I argue that is why gender studies is perceived as unvalued. Moreover, since gender is a term to highlight social and cultural differences between the sexes (ibid).

6.3 Interviews with Professors

This section analyzes the findings of the collected interviews from the professors who work at a federal university in Brazil. Through the coding of these interviews one theme was found: *Supervised education and research possibilities*. This theme was identified not because of the similar experiences the professors have had, rather due to the differences.



6.3.1 Supervised Education and Research Possibilities

The main target of Escola sem Partido are the professors since they are the ‘weapon’ of ‘political indoctrination’ and the carriers of ‘gender ideology’. To address certain subjects in a classroom can make professors outcasts or stamped as political indoctrinators. Moreover, to go off topic and discuss societal issues is something teachers and professors now do at the risk of being recorded. The responds of the interviews are however diverse, as one respondent stated:

“I’m annoyed with it. Brazil has several educational problems and we are debating this non-sense proposal [...] I have a curriculum to follow, but I deal with it on my own terms” – G

From this professor’s perspective, the campaign might be exaggerated due to that it is *not yet* implemented or that this professor’s field has not, nor is not going to be, affected by it. However, in the respondent’s point of view, the campaign is ‘nonsense’ i.e. absurd or foolish. In other words, the attitude towards the campaign is that it is absurd and can be interpreted as e.g. (he) does not have to put up with such nonsense. Whilst the other respondent was more concerned:

I received an e-mail from the (X) department of the university to avoid all kinds of opinions regarding politics and ‘keep the pace’ of my classes. I don’t think about adjusting, but students always want to discuss their politics thoughts during classes and being prohibited of doing this is a restriction that I thought I would never experience at the university - H

The behavior of professors within a classroom is becoming controlled. What they say and how they act, they do at risk of being recorded by their students or reported through ‘testimonies’ to the campaign. As certain discussions within the classrooms are at higher risk of being criticized, teachers can choose to avoid them. This professor highlights the issue of choosing between the satisfactory of some students who prefer to discuss societal issues, and those who prefer not to. In other words, those students who feel the need to discuss certain issues cannot longer have their needs met. The restrictions made by the university to avoid certain subjects in order to ‘keep the pace’ i.e. to avoid becoming headlines for



the campaign, has made teaching more difficult. The respondent highlights this by addressing how his colleagues are adopting to the campaign:

There are different kinds of teachers: the ones that express their opinions (in favor or against) and the ones that try to avoid any kind of political subject. As a personal experience, most part of my colleagues make part of the second group
-H

So even if the campaign has not been adopted inside politics or school curricula (yet) some teachers are cautious. According to the respondent, most students want to discuss events related to the electoral campaign. However, the electoral campaign and Escola sem Partido are linked to each other. How can teacher avoid being too political if their students want to discuss politics with them? As the campaign coheres from a conservative viewpoint and the subjects the campaign wants to prohibit (Aforementioned: gender studies, sexual education and more) is considered leftist, the discussion of the election and the campaign is two faces of the same coin. Attributes that is considered leftist are urged not to be discussed inside the classrooms, as well as political issues alone. When the respondent was asked about future research possibilities, he stated:

The central point of the Bolsonaro-proposals is a review of the teaching concepts adopted from Paulo Freire's pedagogical philosophy, which is seen by him as a gateway to left-wing philosophies (such as the gender ideology), allowing, in his believes, the political militancy of teachers who have links with groups and parties - H

Paulo Freire is a Christian socialist theoretician and pedagogue, who played a big role in a campaign against illiteracy in Brazil during the 1960's. One of his theory's main pillars was that the poor people should not continue to 'feed themselves on rich people's knowledge', but rather be given the possibility of learning to conquer their own world knowledge. Freire's work against poverty, starvation and illiteracy was seen as a threat to the totalitarian society Brazil was in 1964, after the military coup (Bjärvall 2015). However, the supervision on professors manner of pedagogy (whether or not it is from Paulo Freire's



philosophical strand) effects the ability to conduct independent research, since teachers are being called out for being ‘political militancy’ for having special interest in certain political issues. The speculations whether independent research will become supervised or not will remain unsolved in this thesis. However, the threat made against ‘militancy teachers’ facilitates the analysis of how gender has become a dispute in the relation between education and politics. The ways gender emphasizes various social inequalities in relation to Paulo Freire’s pedagogical philosophy ties the knot between right-wing radical conservatives and the resistance of certain knowledge to be brought up inside classrooms. It can be compared to men’s resistance towards feminism, explained in Gemzöe (2015, p. 146-151). It is based upon three main reasons which I have modified to fit the campaign’s resistance of gender matters: 1) the members (individuals) of the campaign do not recognize themselves as reactionary or close-minded 2) to recognize gender and to sympathize with various of sexualities would be to lose your own position within society 3) Gender matters do not have to do with ‘traditional families’ i.e. it is not of their interest to sympathize with various sexualities and genders

To conclude, the campaign is interpreted differently by the two respondents of my interviews. From one side, it is seen as non-sense and annoying, thus nothing that effects his role as a professor. On the other side, the campaign has caused restrictions of certain issues to be discussed within the classroom. It forces the professor to adapt his pedagogy style and choose between which side to take on in the conflict of values. The issues of conflicts regarding values will always remain present in the debate of what role the universities will have on promoting certain issues, since knowledge is valued differently depending on which strand of ideological position individuals adheres to. However, it forces professors to reflect upon (and decide) which position to take on when addressing certain values within a conflict.



7 Conclusions

By Escola sem Partido's 'testimonies' against professors and teachers with ideological bias, the campaign is fighting to define and establish certain knowledge as political. The goal is to delegitimize teachers and professors who involve gender perspectives within the education. Aforementioned, the campaign targets teachers who are suspected to have personal agendas based within 'leftist ideologies'. Personal agendas are considered to be e.g. when a gay professor discusses gay rights. The most prominent term that occurred in the 'testimonies' is *indoctrination* (i.e. brainwashing; persuasion). Other evident subjects were reflections about homosexuality: viewed as abnormal or something one should not have to be exposed to, and expositions of 'gender ideology' and brainwashing: to 'create a generation of zombies'. By using certain words or terms, they delegitimize professors, thus they are ascribed to promote only a certain strand of ideology. 'Gender ideology' is therefore seen as a tool used to instill certain values, to gradually establish an idea or an attitude into the students minds. That is how *gender* has become a central term of dispute in the campaign's role of ending 'indoctrination'. To summarize, the term has become the face of leftism.

The neglect of the term defines the conception of what is considered political knowledge, thus it delegitimizes it. By ascribing attributes to certain teachers, they portrait them as dangerous influencers of 'gender ideology' by e.g. stating that they are performing ostracism to those who disagree with their manner of pedagogy. The knowledge that is legitimate and valid, should therefore not include aspects of 'gender ideology'. It is prominent in the testimonies that to bring up the subject regarding to homosexuality, is to take advantage of the class to impose personal agenda, something seen as offensive. Not in one testimony a person mentioned indoctrination of a conservative or right-wing teacher, this could be due to that leftist ideologies are a threat to what is traditional: since traditional often means conservative. Or due to that leftist ideologies are concatenated with corruption and polarization. The campaign is targeting schools and universities due to their importance of enhancing topics about societal issues



(e.g. discussions within the classrooms or by research opportunities). But more importantly, at schools and universities one can decide what knowledge that should be produced. What should future generations know, and more importantly, what should the *not* learn about?

Aforementioned, to not recognize oneself as close-minded, or to be afraid of losing their own positions within the society, or to not sympathize with certain social inequalities may be some reasons for how the campaign is viewed as legitimate, and to proceed the activism around denunciation of professors. The battle of what is considered 'political indoctrination' is reproduced and maintained within the 'testimonies' of the campaign, as it allows students, and their parents, to organize in opposition their teachers.

In the background chapter of this research it is explained that the campaign has gained a strong relationship with policy-makers, which pave the way for good conditions and further mobilization. Since it is represented within the government and by the president himself allows it to creep upon important decision-makings too. Confirmed by my respondents' answers, the prevailing circumstances constituted that only two professors participated in this research. It is not strange, since Escola sem Partido's *targets* are the *teachers*. To make them appear diabolic and capture them opposing their ideologies. However, the conducted interviews from the students exhibits the fight of keeping their rights to a diverse education and the fear of a retrograde in gender equality and censorship. Important themes identified within the interviews are *Universities role of promoting tolerance* and *The dispute of valuable knowledge*. Whereas the respondents highlight the importance of including societal inequalities based upon gender, ethnicity and sexualities and promoting *all* kinds of ideas within the classrooms. Moreover, the importance of involved teachers who encourage critical thinking. These aspects are considered important for the development of gender equality, since many of the respondents experience the Brazilian society as unequal and sexist.



A central conclusion for this thesis is identified in both the ‘testimonies’ and the interviews: it is the fear of not being able to develop own interpretations of social issues if one is exposed only to *some* ideological, philosophical and political ideas. Aforementioned, the ‘testimonies’ highlight the issue of leftist teachers who only promote their side of the truth, whilst the interviews highlight the issue of to forbid certain strands of philosophical and ideological standpoints would be a retrograde for the Brazilian society. In other words, the conflict of interest is based upon the same concern. In addition, the diverse opinions between the ‘testimonies’ and my respondent’s thoughts about the universities’ role in the promotion of tolerance of all sexualities, ethnicities and genders. It is obvious that there are two contrary views regarding the subject in opposition against each other. As the respondents sees an opportunity to fight prejudices by addressing them inside classrooms, the campaign maintains these prejudices, or that the respondents highlight social inequalities based upon gender and sexuality: and one maintains them.

The discussion around *gender* at university level education are understood through the two opposite views the term adheres to and one conclusion can be drawn upon my empirical findings of the ‘testimonies’: *Gender* has become the face of leftism, hence the issue of ‘political indoctrination’ when discussing gender matters within the classroom.

The student-respondents of this study considered gender-matters important to address within their education. To conclude my findings from the collected interviews: social inequalities between men, women and LGBTQ-people and should be addressed by professors to fight prejudices and sexism. Through addressing the issue of gender-inequalities it allows students to develop a critical thinking of societal norms and structures. A good professor encourage critical thinking and expose all strands of political positions to his or her students. It is important to include these issues within high level of education to promote tolerance and fight prejudices.

7.1 Recommendations for future research



How can the findings from my research contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon ‘gender ideology’? I argue that through the identification of themes in this research, one can understand the conflicts about ‘gender ideology’ within a high level of education. Through the means of the language, anti-gender campaigns portrays threats against the traditional. By embracing words like *indoctrination*, they ascribe negative attributes towards strands of philosophical, ideological and political positions who tries to understand social inequalities through looking at genders and sexualities. The definition of ‘political indoctrination’ is permeating through each testimony of this thesis, and by using these findings one can search for similar themes within other anti-gender campaigns and ‘crusades’ against certain education and knowledge. This thesis provides knowledge on how anti-gender campaigns turn gender equality into ‘political indoctrination’, which can be applicable when conducting research on other campaigns or cases in relation to ‘gender ideology’.

However, the conflict of gender within all levels of education needs to be further investigated due to the phenomenon of ‘gender ideology’ which is growing both in Brazil and in other parts of the world. Moreover, only when Bolsonaro has entered power one can know if the campaign will assume effectively, although this thesis exhibits that even without political support in the government, the campaign can gain ground and power within regional spheres since some departments in the university of this study already have imposed restrictions.

The first recommendation for future research are to conduct a more comprehensive analysis Escola sem Partido’s ‘testimonies’, to develop a greater understanding of the matter. There are 61 ‘testimonies’ to collect from 2004 and it would be interesting to examine if the ‘issues’ within them has changed over the years e.g. has the issue of sexual education become vaguer contemporary in comparison to before? Or is it possible to identify other ‘issues’ within them that this thesis has not touched upon?

The second recommendation for future research would be to examine the effects of the campaign in the school environment. To investigate professors ability to



teach freely or conduct independent research would increase the understanding of how *dependent* research are of societal power-relations. By interviewing a great number of professors from several disciplines, one could map out how effectively the campaign has influenced universities in Brazil.



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Appendix 1

Escola Sem Partido

Purpose of interview: To seek knowledge of the current school situation in Brazil and the campaign 'Escola sem Partido'. By get to know students experiences. The purpose of this interview is not to criticize the university, but to understand the debate around the campaign between students and teachers.

Sex (female/male/other):

Age:

1. How do you feel about the campaign 'escola sem partido'? How do you speak about it with your friends or other students? What is your opinion on the subjects that the campaign considers 'political' (gender, sexualities, sexual education and more)?
2. How do you think the campaign will affect your education? Have you noticed any restrictions of how your teachers discuss power relations or subjects considered 'political'? Is there any tensions inside the classroom or between students and teachers?
3. Have you seen any student-union respond to the campaign? Are there any anti-movements or protests around campus? Do you think this will affect student-unions in a certain way? What are the possibilities of protesting against the campaign?
4. Do you think this campaign limits the freedom of speech? Have you noticed a difference of students wearing e.g. clothes with political statements in school? How do you think different ethnicities and genders will get affected by the power shift in general? (e.g. removing quotas in universities)
5. Additional comments; Are there anything beyond these questions that you would like to add? (example: an incident related to the campaign or other comments related to the subject)



Appendix 2

Escola Sem Partido

Purpose of interview: To seek knowledge of the current school situation in Brazil and the campaign 'Escola sem Partido'. By get to know professors experiences. The purpose of this interview is not to criticize the university, but to understand the debate around the campaign between students and teachers.

Sex (female/male/other):

Age:

1. What is your reaction to the campaign 'escola sem partido'? How do you think it will affect your profession? Do you need to adjust or change your pedagogy? Are there any guidelines to follow to avoid being 'political'?
2. How has the school environment changed since the power shift? Have you seen any tensions among students? Has the relationship between students and teachers changed? How do you think students feel about the campaign 'escola sem partido'?
3. How has the work environment changed since the power-shift? How do you discuss this with colleagues? Are there any developed strategies for how to deal with the campaign and subjects considered 'political'? what are the challenges?
4. As the campaign is conservative, how do you think it will affect research possibilities (e.g. gender studies)? How do you feel about that the government wants to remove quotas?
5. Additional comments; Are there anything beyond these questions that you would like to add? (example: an incident related to the campaign or other comments related to the subject)