Un/knowing & un/doing sexuality & gender diversity:

The global anti-gender movement against SOGIE rights and academic freedom

A report written for SAIH
Dr. Haley McEwen

Glossary of Terms[1]

Bisexual

Bisexual: An umbrella term used to describe a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards more than one gender. Bisexual people may describe themselves using one or more of a variety of terms, including (but not limited to) pansexual and queer.

Cis/Cisgender

A term used to describe someone whose gender identity matches the sex and gender they were assigned at birth.

Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE)

A rights-based approach to sexuality education that seeks to equip young people with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values they need to determine and enjoy their sexuality – physically and emotionally, individually and in relationships. It views sexuality as a natural part of young people's emotional and social development. Central to CSE is the recognition that young people need to be given the opportunity to acquire essential life skills and develop positive attitudes and values.[2]

Epistemicide

This concept comes from decolonial theorisation of the epistemic dimensions of colonial occupation. According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos,[3] epistemicide accompanied genocide, and refers to the destruction of the knowledge and cultures of indigenous populations, including their memories, ancestral links, their ways of relating to others and to nature, legal and political forms.

Epistemology

The theory of knowledge and how things come to be known.

Gay

A term used to refer to a man, trans person or non-binary person who tends to have a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards men.

Gender Binary

The system of dividing gender into two distinct categories – man and woman.

Gender non-conforming/non-conformity

A person or practice that does not conform to the binary gender categories that society prescribes (man and woman) through their gender identity/ expression.

Heteronormativity

A sociopolitical system that, predicated on the gender binary, upholds heterosexuality as the norm or default sexual orientation. Heteronormativity encompasses a belief that people fall into distinct and 'complimentary' genders [men and women] with natural roles in life. It assumes that sexual, romantic and marital relations are most fitting between a cisgender man and a cisgender woman, positioning all other sexual orientations as 'deviations'.

Heteropatriarchy

A sociopolitical system that privileges and prioritises cisgender men and heterosexuals, and where those groups dominate cisgender females and those with other sexual orientations and gender identities. The term highlights how discrimination exerted both upon women and the LGBTIQ+ community is rooted in the same systems and social principles of sexism, heteronormativity, and gender discrimination.

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1 The definitions of gender and sexuality related terms for this glossary were sourced from an existing glossary developed by the GALA Queer Archives.
2 Guttmacher Institute (n.d), p.1
3 Santos, B. (2016), p. 18

Heterosexism

Discrimination or prejudice against LGBTIQ+ people on the assumption that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation and all others are 'deviant'.

Intersex

A term used to describe a person who may have biological attributes that do not fit with societal assumptions about what constitutes 'male' or 'female'. These biological variations may manifest in different ways and at different stages throughout an individual's life. Being intersex relates to biological sex characteristics and is distinct from a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Lesbian

A term used to refer to a woman, trans person or non-binary person who tends to have a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards women.

LGBTIQ+

An acronym standing for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer. This is not an exhaustive list, as denoted by the inclusive of the "+" symbol, which nods to the varying sexual orientations and gender identities that exist around the world.

Patriarchy

A social hierarchy that privileges and prioritizes men over women and other gender identities.

Pro-natalism

The policy or practice of encouraging biological reproduction, especially in terms of government efforts to increase national birthrates.

Queer

An umbrella term used by those who reject heteronormativity. Although some people view the word as a slur, it was reclaimed by the queer community who have embraced it as an empowering and subversive identity.

SOGIE

An acronym that stands for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Expression. Increasingly, the letters "S" and "C" have been added to the end of this acronym to include sexual characteristics and therefore be inclusive of intersex persons.

Transgender

An umbrella term used to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Some transgender people are binary-identified and others are non-binary.

Transphobia

The fear or dislike of someone based on the fact that they are transgender, including the denial/ refusal to accept their gender identity.

About the author

Dr. Haley McEwen

Dr. Haley McEwen is a nationallyrated researcher in South Africa (National Research Foundation). She holds a PhD in Sociology (University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg), an MPhil in Diversity Studies (University of Cape Town), and a BA in Social Relations (Michigan State University). Haley is currently a researcher at the Wits Centre for Diversity Studies and an Associate Researcher at the GALA Queer Archives in Johannesburg, South Africa. She is also Associate Editor of the International Journal for Critical Diversity Studies. She has published articles in numerous scholarly journals, including Agenda, Ethnic and Racial Studies, Critical Philosophy of Race, and Critical African Studies.

Dr. McEwen's research takes critical historical and geopolitical approaches to analysis of epistemologies of difference, particularly in relation to constructions of gender, sexuality, race and disability. Following her relocation to South Africa, and her growing awareness of U.S. Christian Right anti-gay rhetoric within African debates about homosexuality, Haley's doctoral research investigated ways in which the U.S. Christian Right is working to influence sexual politics and policies in African countries.

As a donor-conceived child born

to same-sex parents in the United States in the 1980s, and now as a queer identifying adult, Haley has experienced the effects of 'pro-family' and 'anti-gender' discourses and their 'othering' effects. Beyond shifting her physical location, Haley's relocation to South Africa in 2005 shifted her epistemic location, especially in relation to her understanding that the U.S. Christian Right 'family values' agenda is not only a product of heteropatriarchy, but also of white supremacy and coloniality. For these reasons, Haley has made it her intellectual pursuit to name and challenge the discourses and agendas of the U.S. Christian Right. She has published a number of scholarly and popular articles aimed at raising awareness of these dynamics. She has also worked with artists and activists to coordinate interventions aimed at shifting imaginaries of gender and sexuality in South Africa.

These aspects of Dr. McEwen's biography locate her as someone who should not exist within the logic of 'pro-family' and 'anti-gender' ideology; a spectre of heterosexist imaginaries that condemn queer sexualities and reproduction. While conservative anti-gay and anti-feminist advocacy has been a persisting existential threat in Dr. McEwen's life, she has worked to challenge the direction of this haunting through her scholarly work, establishing herself as an ever-worsening nightmare of the U.S. Christian Right.

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Preface

by Sunniva Folgen Høiskar,
President of SAIH

There is a grave backlash against women's rights and LGBTIQ+ rights, in international fora and at grassroots level. It has been ten years since SAIH last had a campaign concerning LGBTIQ+ rights, and since then many important rights have been won, and our partner organisations have achieved a lot. Therefore, it is especially worrying that when SAIH again campaigns against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, it is not with the backdrop of this progress, but rather with a fright of what might be lost. This report explores the origin of the anti-gender movement, its rhetoric and concrete examples of its consequences in Poland, Brazil, Hungary and South Africa. This movement is not small, and it affects many layers of society, from civil society to parliaments to academia. The ambition of this report is to create an awareness of the linkages between the backlash against LGBTIQ+ rights and the threat to academic freedom.

Higher education and research are important tools in the struggle against discrimination and for equal rights. SAIH is inspired by Paulo Freire and his pedagogy of the oppressed. One central idea of this pedagogy is that students through critical education understand the unjust structures around them, and in turn can work to change them. Higher education and research contribute to critical thinking, and to challenge established norms and attitudes. It is no wonder that higher education and research have become targets of the anti-gender movement. There is power in knowledge, and the critical perspectives on gender and sexuality explored by gender scholars, among others, pave the way for a more inclusive society where patriarchal norms no longer constrain people. Research on gender and sexuality is an important contribution to changing narratives, norms and practices that limit people today and that foster discrimination. It is therefore vital that scholars and students have the academic freedom to study, research and teach about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression without fear of sanctions from the state, university sector or colleagues and co-students.

The current backlash against women's and LGBTIQ+ rights violates the academic freedom of many researchers and students. Gender research is a critical field of study that among other things explore power relations in society. Those power relations become clear when politicians and state powers meddle in knowledge production, making decisions as to what research a country "needs" or does not need. Rather than just withdrawing funding, they actively shut down a field of study, like you can read about in the case from Hungary in this report. It is not a fair fight, and it is a worrying sign of the degree to which governments feel

South Africa was the first country in the world to safeguard sexual orientation as a human right in its Constitution. Here from the Durban Pride in 2017. Credit: AFP, photo by Rajesh Jantilal

entitled to regulate higher education and research. Therefore, SAIH hopes that this report will create awareness in academia and among Norwegian politicians and decision-makers about the key role that education and research plays in the work for LGBTIQ+ rights, and the current threats against this work.

The attacks on the academic freedom of gender researchers is an attack on the academic freedom of all. It is exactly to protect those who research important but unpopular questions that we need academic freedom. This report is not a manifesto to make all agree with gender researchers. A scholarly debate in academia and society is needed and encouraged across all disciplines. However, when a field of study is targeted specifically and restricted on a political basis by government actors, religious actors and international bodies, all those who champion academic freedom should be concerned. This report aims to inspire its readers to take action for academic freedom.

When illiberal powers organize, unite and advocate against the academic freedom of gender researchers, we must respond. This report is one effort to do that.

Content

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Introduction

Over the course of the past thirty years, the visibility and rights of LGBTIQ+ people have increased substantially. In many countries, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer people and other non-heterosexual and/or cisgender identities are legally protected from discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or family structure. In addition to the decriminalization of homosexuality, the legalisation of same-sex marriage and the right of these couples to adopt children, the creation of equal rights in education and employment, and the right to join the military, there is growing institutional awareness and recognition of transgender and non-binary gender identities in several countries. International LGBTIQ+ advocacy has also been on the rise in an effort to affirm gender, sexuality and family diversity within international policy, the private sector, and education. This advocacy has been shaped in significant ways by critical gender and sexuality studies scholarship.

These developments have not been easily gained, nor have they come without resistance – local and global movements working to counter SOGIE rights have been on the rise. These movements, which are often referred to as "anti-gender", have argued that advocacy for LGBTIQ+ rights is dangerous and damaging for individuals, the society, the nation, and the economy. Anti-gender movements have proliferated internationally, fueling moral panic about growing LGBTIQ+ rights and visibility, comprehensive sex education in schools, and declining marriage and fertility rates, especially in countries with declining population rates. There are a number of organizations working to advance anti-gender ideology internationally, most of which are based in the United States. Some of these organizations are highlighted in this report, such as the World Congress of Families/ International Organization for the Family, Family Watch International, and the Family Research Council. However, numerous other organizations exist that are advancing anti-gender agendas locally, regionally, and internationally.

While the anti-gender movement has emerged to counter the advances of SOGIE rights, it is important to recognize that their activities do not merely constitute a 'backlash' against SOGIE rights, but a global imperative to entrench sex- and gender-based oppression as 'natural' and 'biological'. Anti-gender movements have consequences not only for SOGIE rights, but for liberal democracy and the paradigm of equal rights and social justice that have emerged over the past half century.

Fields of knowledge that are intertwined with LGBTIQ+ advocacy work such as Gender Studies, feminist and Queer Theory, and Sexuality Studies, have also become targets of anti-gender activism for having developed what the movement refers to as "gender theory". Gender research institutions are coming under increasing pressure in countries where democracy and freedom of speech are under attack by broader neoconservative populist movements. In Hungary, for instance, the government has effectively banned Gender Studies through the removal of its national accreditation and funding. The same tendencies are curbing academic freedom in other countries such as Russia, Peru, Tanzania, Armenia, Poland, Brazil, Sweden, Spain, and Italy.

This report was commissioned in order to provide an insight into the ideological backdrop of "anti-gender" movements, and their efforts to discredit gender researchers, students and academics raising and/or researching SOGIE-related issues, thus presenting a threat to academic freedom. Here, academic freedom is understood as the right of students, academics and institutions to

pursue knowledge without fear of discrimination, harassment, or sanctions. For students, this means the "right to discuss, be critical, research, and oppose religious, political or historical presentations in academia and in society without fear of own or others' safety by doing so" (SAIH 2016, p. 1). For scholars, academic freedom is understood as the responsibility and right "to freedom to teach and discuss, carry out research, disseminating and publishing research results, to express their opinion in institutional matters, and to participate in academic bodies (ibid). Academic freedom is therefore closely related to, and in many ways depends upon, the freedom of speech, right of peaceful assembly and the right to freely associate (3). SAIH and its stakeholders felt that it was important to gain insight into the global scope of the situation and underline these movements' particular profile in the wider landscape of opposition to feminism and LGBTIQ+ rights. The ways in which students, academics and civil society groups are fighting for their rights to freedom of speech and assembly, and what tactics they are using in the era of shrinking space, were also set out as an important area of focus within the report.

While primary and secondary education are beyond the scope of academic freedom policies per se, attacks on Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE) are also considered in this report. Here, anti-gender efforts to thwart the introduction of CSE in schools is read in relation to their similar attacks on Gender Studies as an academic field - both working to close down the production and dissemination of knowledge about gender and sexuality diversity.

Although anti-gender movements are active in many parts of Eastern and Central Europe, Africa, North and South America, and Southeast Asia, this report takes a case study approach in order to provide insight into anti-gender efforts to curb SOGIE rights and Gender Studies scholarship, specifically, in four countries: Poland, Hungary, Brazil and South Africa. Lastly, the report provides concrete recommendations for policy makers, higher education institutions and international actors in relation to the protection of LGBTIQ+ academics, scholarship, and rights amidst shifting political agendas and discourses around gender and sexuality diversity. The findings presented in this report indicate an overwhelming need for interventions that can achieve three epistemic and political objectives: Preventing the reinstatement of the gender binary and hierarchy as a biological and social norm; expanding social imaginaries of gender and sexuality diversity beyond the gender binary, and; decentring morality politics within conversations and understandings of sexuality and gender.

Method

Scholars have taken a range of approaches in defining and describing the anti-gender movement's agendas, and academic discussions of the movement have been notably shaped by politics of location, providing helpful insights into the local and regional shape of anti-gender activism. This report, too, is written by a scholar working in Gender and Sexuality Studies who has also been a target of anti-gender politics as a donor child conceived to same-sex parents and as a queer identifying adult. In my research, I have examined the ways in which, and the reasons why, the U.S. 'pro-family' movement has been working to influence sexual politics and polices in African countries. Having been born and raised in the 1980s American Midwest, I became aware of the family values politics and discourses being promoted by the U.S. Christian Right and their othering effects from a relatively young age. When I began to detect echoes of U.S. Christian Right discourses in South Africa a few years after moving here in 2005, I was immediately concerned and very curious about how anti-gay and anti-feminist rhetoric was travelling internationally. In these ways, my own location in relation to the anti-gender movement has provided

me with privileged insights into both the logic and effects of their advocacy. Intellectual and embodied engagement with the discourses of the anti-gender movement is therefore an uncomfortable and often terrifying, yet necessary, way in which I work to identify, name, and challenge their violent ideologies in my academic work.

This report aims to contribute to understandings of the anti-gender movement through a focus on the implications of anti-gender activism for academic freedom, specifically. The data that informs this report was collected from various sources: scholarly publications such as peer-reviewed journal articles and books, YouTube videos, articles (many of them written by Gender and Sexuality Studies scholars) written for popular media, published interviews, organizational blogs, reports, websites, and photographs. These different materials provide contextual insights into the anti-gender movement and its implications for SOGIE rights and academic freedom. The sourcing and selection of these materials was guided by an effort to understand both the anti-gender movement and the experiences and perspectives of academics who are enduring its effects. Many of the references used throughout this report are openly accessible and available online - a deliberate effort to invite and encourage further reading. These scholars provide an understanding of how the anti-gender movement is eroding academic freedom and SOGIE rights and the available strategies for resisting and countering these conservative forces. The lived experiences of these scholars collectively paint a worrying picture of SOGIE rights and academic freedom in their specific contexts and globally. While there have been some who have claimed that the fight for LGBTIQ+ rights is over (see Kirchick, 2019), the lived experiences of Gender Studies scholars and LGBTIQ+ people in many other countries around the world tell a different story.

The process of investigating the anti-gender movement for this project and its specific strategy of attacking Gender Studies revealed that a multifocal analytical approach can expose the local and global dimensions of contemporary anti-gay and anti-feminist activism. One must engage in an ongoing process of 'zooming in' to local issues and debates that provide specific insights into anti-gender activism, and 'zooming out' to the ways in which these debates connect with those taking place elsewhere in order to gain a wider perspective on the discourses, agendas and ideologies that are at work. Through this method of 'reading' the anti-gender movement, the historical and geo-political dimensions of the movement and its underlying interests can be pulled into focus.

The process of investigating anti-gender activities around the world proved to be an overwhelming task. Having deepened my own understandings of how the anti-gender movement has undertaken a political and epistemic campaign against LGBTIQ+ people and Gender Studies, it became clear that this report needed to adequately reflect the urgency of understanding and organizing against assaults on SOGIE rights, especially in relation to academic freedom. The report therefore takes an unwavering stance against the anti-gender movement.

Section 1:
Understanding anti-gender ideology, language and history

What is the anti-gender movement?

The anti-gender movement is a transnational coalition of conservative activists and organizations working to counter political and social gains made by local and international feminist and SOGIE rights advocacy. Anti-gender activists and organizations work to prevent and/or undo equal rights for LGBTIQ+ people, women's reproductive rights, Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE) in schools and Gender Studies programmes at a tertiary level. Their campaigns claim that feminist and queer efforts to deconstruct the gender binary and redefine marriage and family are social, economic, and national threats. The movement has found great currency in presenting itself as a victim of western progressives, but also as a defender of the nation against these international powers embodied by SOGIE rights. For these reasons, anti-gender advocacy can be most accurately understood as a 'countermovement' (Corredor, 2019) in that its central objective is to defeat feminist and queer social movements that have advanced the equal rights, recognition, and representation of women and LGBTIQ+ people, particularly in national and international policy. Ultimately, anti-gender opposition to feminist and SOGIE rights has taken the shape of a "battle over moral epistemics, especially over who can define the meanings of gender, sexuality, human development, and the family" (Geva 2019, p. 398). The concepts of 'gender', 'family', and 'marriage', and who gets to define them have become critical faultlines within SOGIE advocacy.

While here the movement is referred to as 'anti-gender', activists and organizations who oppose SOGIE rights and Gender Studies typically refer to themselves in positive terms – as 'pro-family' or 'pro-life', or as protectors of 'family values'. Their so-called 'defence' of the family involves resistance to efforts to re-define notions of 'gender', 'marriage' and 'family' in more inclusive terms that acknowledge gender and sexuality diversity. Pro-family activists interpret the redefinition of these concepts as dangerous to the so-called "natural family", which they argue is the universal basis of all "civilizations". As this report will later discuss, the movement's reference to "civilization" and its appeal to a universal notion of what constitutes "family" are breadcrumb trails to the colonial ideology embedded within the anti-gender discourse and advocacy work, despite the movement's overt appeals to being an anti-colonial force working against the "ideological colonization" of 'gender theory'.

Anti-gender activists and campaigns employ a variety of strategies to gain support and political power in order to prove that Gender Studies is "bogus science" and discredit SOGIE rights. Their protests have been described as "colorful, youthful and festive", departing from stereotypical

People are seen taking part in the March for Life and Family in Warsaw, Poland on June 9, 2019. Several thousand people took part in the march that was meant to counter the gay pride march of the previous day.
Photo credit: Zuma Press

images of conservative groups and action being led by older generations who use religious-based forms of condemnation as a central rhetorical device (Paternotte & Kuhar, 2018, p. 10). Rather, contemporary anti-gender political messages are presented as secular, rational, commonsense, and moderate responses to SOGIE rights that have "gone too far" (ibid). As Kuhar and Zobec (2017, p. 36) write: "The anti-gender movement presents itself as modern, young and hip. In most cases, the movement tries to hide its religious connections and create a secularising selfimage that cannot be reduced to previous forms of conservative resistance against gender equality and sexual rights." Anti-gender campaigns are active online and offline. Their internet advocacy often takes the form of online petitions, websites and newsletters that aim to raise awareness of the threat to the 'family' and children posed by SOGIE rights and activism. Offline, the anti-gender movement organizes demonstrations, lectures, press conferences, statements, and lobbying of national and international governments. Importantly, the movement has made a great effort to grow the next generation of activists who will not only modernize, but advance, anti-gender activism.

While anti-gender campaigns may often appear as local and "grassroots", they are integrated into a transnational network of organizations promoting what they call 'traditional' notions of gender,

marriage, and family. As David Paternotte and Roman Kuhar (2018, p. 8) write, "although the triggers vary across borders, a common pattern may be identified: these mobilisations are a critique of gender, labeled as "gender ideology", "gender theory" or "(anti)genderism". They all claim to combat "gender", which is seen as the root of their worries and the matrix of the reforms they want to oppose".

There are also important transnational coalitions that give shape and coherence to the anti-gender movement. The World Congress of Families (now known as the International Organization for the Family), has become a key organization that has facilitated anti-gender international cooperation and alliance building. Co-founded by Dr. Allan Carlson (founder of the Howard Center for Family Religion and Society), and Anatoly Antonov (a professor of demography in the Department of Sociology at Lomonosov Moscow State University), the World Congress of Families was created to foster International pro-family movement building. In his retirement ceremony at the ninth World Congress, which took place in Salt Lake City Utah in 2015, Carlson recounted:

> *The idea for a World Congress of Families actually emerged…in early 1995 in a modest apartment in Moscow, Russia…Professors Antonov and Medkov who had secured a copy of and read my early book, Family Questions: Reflections on the American Social Crisis… invited me over to discuss the implications of my arguments for Russia…we agreed on the value of…convening an international meeting that would examine the family crises to be found alike among the western peoples of western Europe and North America and a similar crisis found among the people of former communist lands in East Europe and Russia. In both spheres the same developments were emerging…falling marriage rates, declining marital fertility, growing levels of cohabitation, and children born outside of marriage, mounting signs of…failure of youth to thrive and grow… The result two years later…was the inaugural Congress of Families, held in Prague.*[4]

Since the first World Congress of Families in 1997, a number of other Congresses have taken place in cities across the world. Only one Congress has taken place in the United States. The World Congress of Families, which features 'pro-family' activists, researchers, and organizations, has played an important role in creating a shared anti-gender ideology and vocabulary that is shared by anti-gay and anti-feminist activists around the world.

As several scholars have discussed, the anti-gender movement has many points of intersection with rising right-wing populism and new right-wing activism, having serious implications for SOGIE rights, national politics and elections, and international policy. As existing research has shown, right wing political positions in Europe and the United States have been deeply heteronormative, and often heterosexist, in their defence of the traditional nuclear family as the location from which national identity is (re) produced (Rohde-Abuba, Vennmann & Zimenkova 2019, p. 720). While it is important to locate anti-gender activism in relation to other 'Global Right' agendas, opposition to LGBTIQ+ and women's rights form a "specific type of conservative opposition to gender and sexual equality, which needs to be distinguished" from other new right actors (Paternotte & Kuhar, 2018, p. 7). For anti-gender campaigners, in particular, the issues of 'gender' and 'gender ideology' are at the heart of various economic, social, and population crises afflicting the globe, with the 'natural family' and the restoration of the gender binary and hierarchy providing their remedies. Through their emphasis on SOGIE rights as an "ideology", anti-gender activists seek to accomplish two goals: First, to

4 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CtV6Vf6v7U&list=PLei2Xk4DlLIzt-2524mJWQpcrl9tuUZ3h&index=3

frame Gender Studies as subjective and therefore unscientific as a means of discrediting SOGIE rights and, second, to construct their perspectives, which are deeply violent at physical and epistemic levels, as well-intentioned 'commonsense' that is value-free and unideological.

Anti-gender advocacy and knowledge production has targeted queer and feminist epistemologies or ways of knowing, that have provided the intellectual and empirical foundations of queer and feminist advocacy work. The movement has established a number of think tanks, which generate research to support their claims regarding the dangers of 'genderism' to individuals, societies and economies. The knowledge generated in these research entities provide 'evidence' that can be referred to by pro-family activists in their efforts to prove that non-normative family formations, gender identities and sexual orientations have social and economic consequences.

Making sense of the anti-gender movement

In order to understand anti-gender activism and its opposition to Gender Studies as a legitimate field of research and education, it is necessary to understand the historical and geopolitical contexts from which this countermovement emerged. It is also important to understand the anti-gender vocabulary that has been so vital to its ability to bring together multiple stakeholders, political, economic and social issues into a transnational movement in opposition to equality politics, which the movement has dubbed "cultural Marxism". Before proceeding to discuss the movement's activities in relation to academic freedom in specific contexts, it is therefore necessary to locate the anti-gender movement historically and geopolitically, and to introduce the key phrases that give coherence to its very complex structure and diverse transnational membership: 'gender', 'gender ideology' or 'genderism', 'gender theory', and the 'natural family'. These terms, which are often used interchangeably in anti-gender activism, have come to be used as "'empty signifiers', flexible synonyms for demoralization, abortion, non-normative sexuality, and sex confusion" (Mayer & Sauer, 2017 in Korolczuk & Graff, 2018a, p. 799).

These terms, as scholars have pointed out, function as "symbolic glue" that can tap into different fears and anxieties in specific contexts and facilitate cooperation between actors despite their political, economic, and religious differences (Corrêa, Paternotte & Kuhar 2018, para 18). The cohesive power of this terminology exists in its ability to create unity about the meaning of heterosexual marriage, the nuclear family and heterosexuality for a functioning society, particularly amongst groups who have been opponents in relation to other social, economic, religious, and political matters.

Historically locating the anti-gender movement

Many researchers and commentators have said that the anti-gender movement was born in the mid-1990s during two international UN Conferences: The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing. It was during these two conferences that feminist activists put issues of reproductive rights, gender mainstreaming, and sexual orientation on the policy agenda for international debate for the first time. Cairo marked the first time the United Nations recognized sexual and reproductive rights, and it was in Beijing that the critical use of the term "gender" was first introduced at the United Nations. Both of these world conferences signified major gains for the women's rights movement and raised alarm in the Vatican about increased access to abortion and the mainstreaming of LGBTIQ+ rights (Kane, 2018). As Corredor writes, the emergence of anti-genderism and its gender ideology rhetoric are unmistakable as countermovements to "the epistemological turn within feminist and queer discourse and to attempts among feminists to reconceptualize and operationalize gender into international policy" (Corredor, 2019, p. 619).

Transnational feminist and queer advocacy networks expanded internationally in the 1990s, and these groups were successful in making gains for women's rights and incorporating progressive ideas about sexuality and reproductive justice in proposed policy documents (623). As LGBTIQ+ activists increased their mobilisation within UN conferences, their efforts were met with growing coordination and resistance amongst their opponents. As Doris Buss (1998) discusses, prior to the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, various members of what has become the 'anti-gender' movement were present, but they were not yet working together as a collective, and they were not directly targeting feminist and LGBTIQ+ activists. However, as many scholars have argued, it was in Cairo that the anti-gender movement "began to show its muscle" in defeating attempts to include specific gender protections including women's reproductive rights and to recognise that various forms of family exist across different cultural, political and social systems (Corredor, 2019, pp. 622-623). This movement, as many have argued, "emerged in direct response to feminist and queer attempts to insert new understandings of gender, sex, and sexuality into international policy" (619).

As Corredor (2019) writes, "Although the term 'gender' had appeared in earlier UN world conference documents, it was generally understood to refer to dichotomous biological sex or to women" (624). In contrast, proposed changes to the way in which gender was used and understood aimed to reorient discussions and policy around gender power structures shaping social life, political institutions, and economic development policies which conflate "gender with women or 'natural' sex differences" (624). The Vatican led the opposition against proposed changes in policy language, joined by Catholic and Muslim countries who issued a Statement of Interpretation of the Term 'Gender', which articulated an uncompromising position that the term 'gender' must be understood to be "grounded in biological-sexual identity, male or female" and rejects the notion that "sexual identity can adapt indefinitely" (625). The Vatican-led coalition made its power felt, ultimately blocking any of the proposed changes to the definition or use of the

term 'gender' in the contested Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

While the UN provided an international stage for anti-gender activism, anti-feminist and anti-gay advocacy had already been gaining political influence in North America since the 1970s. Over the course of three decades, the 'family values' movement had been fomenting and growing opposition to women's rights, gender and sexuality diversity. In the United States, the increase in women's demands for reproductive freedom and intensifying pressures of the gay rights movement subsequent to the Stonewall rebellion caused conservative Christians to "wake up and put sexuality issues on their political agenda" (Herman, 1997, p. 28), a narrative which Christian Right activists themselves tell as the origin of the Family Values movement (ibid). Thus, by the 1990s UN Conferences, the rhetoric of 'family values' had already become a persisting feature within American political discourse, largely as a reaction to the perceived values of the 'permissive sixties' and the sexual revolution (ibid). Much of the anti-gender discourse that we are seeing globally today is textured by the logic and rhetoric that emerged in North America in opposition to changing norms about sexuality, gender and family.

The colonial history of anti-gender ideology

While the recent history of the anti-gender movement in the United States and the United Nations is important to understand in efforts to make sense of its ideology, it is equally important to recognize that the movement's ideological underpinnings are more deeply anchored in colonial ideologies of gender, sexuality, race and nation. While the 'pro-family' movement claims that the ideas of 'gender', 'marriage' and 'family' are universal and timeless, these ideas have a location and history within colonial knowledge production that served the purposes of conquest, domination, and slavery. As this section briefly discusses, the anti-gender notion that the 'natural family' is timeless and universal is a form of epistemicide that denies and erases diverse kinship structures, gender and sexuality identities that existed in precolonial indigenous societies, and which continue to exist around the world. These heteronormative forms of denial and erasure also obscure the role of the notion of the nuclear family within colonial conquest and domination. Ultimately, anti-gender claims that the nuclear family is 'natural' constructs the heterosexual nuclear family as something to which all should subscribe and aspire to, rendering all other alternatives unthinkable.

While the nuclear family has become an important site of analysis within western feminist analyses of patriarchy and women's subornation in North America and Europe, anti-imperialist and decolonial scholars have also located the nuclear family as a mechanism of colonial domination. As anti-imperialist feminist scholars have shown, the notion of the nuclear family became used as a pillar, and measure, of civilization during the colonial period. Colonial science claimed that heterosexual nuclear family, and the gender binary and hierarchy constituting it, was superior to the kinships systems practiced by indigenous people. This idea was used to establish scientific basis for notions of racial difference and hierarchy. Sally Kitch (2009) provides archival research showing the ways in which the gender binary and hierarchy became constitutive of racist colonial ideologies

of white, European superiority and supremacy. She shows that white, Christian, European men, who were already fully invested in their spiritual, physical, and intellectual superiority over European women, sought to construct white men as superior to all men in order to legitimize the geopolitical dominance and authority of Europe in relation to the rest of the world. She writes: "In these ways and others, sexual difference and the gender binary became basic tenets of the ideology of racial hierarchy and white supremacy during processes of nation formation in the West" (169). Gender, she writes, became "a colonial concept and mode of organization of relations of production, property relations, of cosmologies and ways of knowing" (ibid).

The imposition of the nuclear family model upon indigenous societies involved the creation of penal codes that criminalized 'sodomy' and 'indecency' in the colonies (Human Rights Watch, 2013). Contemporary anti-gay laws in many countries originated with nineteenth century anti-sodomy laws introduced by the British, Portuguese and French. After independence, anti-sodomy laws remained the rule of law, and have even been expanded to include harsher penalties and additional restrictions. Through these laws, colonial governments imposed European notions of sexual morality onto colonized societies in an attempt to 're-educate' indigenous people into heterosexuality and the nuclear family structure. As numerous scholars have shown, forms and expressions of gender and sexuality diversity were common in pre-colonial societies around the world, and it was only through colonial occupation that taboos, stigmas, and restrictions on homosexuality came to be entrenched in these societies. For instance, Marc Epprecht (2013) has written extensively about homosexuality in pre-colonial Zimbabwe, showing evidence of same-sex practices represented in indigenous artefacts; the existence of a 'third gender' has been documented amongst first nations people in North America (Smith, 2010; Mirandé, 2017), and Vanita (2013) has conducted research on same-sex intimacy and partnership in precolonial India. In documenting the forms of gender and sexuality diversity that existed in indigenous societies, this work reveals the mythology of compulsory heterosexuality and the nuclear family as 'natural' or 'universal'. Importantly, these works have also shown that the ideology informing colonialism was not only racist, but heterosexist and patriarchal.

The significance of the nuclear family model in the project of modernity/colonialism has also been elaborated upon by decolonial theorists Aníbal Quijano and Walter Mignolo in their respective theorization of the colonial 'logic' (Quijano, 2007) and 'matrix' (Mignolo, 2010) of power. Drawing on Quijano's work, Mignolo argues that a global gender/sex hierarchy "privileged males over females and European patriarchy over other forms of gender configuration and sexual relations" through the invention and institutionalization of sex (heterosexual/homosexual) and gender (male/female) binaries and hierarchy (Mignolo, 2011, p. 18). This hierarchy, he writes, was established upon "two pillars of enunciation: the racial and patriarchal foundations of knowledge without which the colonial matrix of power would not have been possible to be established" (Mignolo, 2010, p. 120, emphasis added). The nuclear family structure was also an important site of analysis within the efforts of Frankfurt School scholars to understand the roots of authoritarianism and the relationship between class and gender in capitalist societies. According to Max Horkheimer, the heterosexual and monogamous nuclear family was essential to the re(production) of capitalism in that it established a 'natural' social hierarchy in which women and children became the property of men. In his 1987, Studien über Autorität und Familie (Studies on Authority and Family), Horkheimer argued that the heteronormative concept of the family was a main symbol of authoritarian behavior within society (Horkheimer, 1987, p. 57 in Rohde-Abuba, Vennmann & Zimenkova, 2019, p. 723).

The colonial roots of anti-gender ideology show the contradictions of accusations that "gender theory" is a new form of colonisation. According to Buss and Herman (2003), the language of colonialism, inequality, and racism enables conservatives to lay "claim to a progressive stance that says it is more authentic, more compassionate, and more sensitive" than that of feminists and LGBTIQ+ activists (77). This argument disfigures SOGIE advocacy and rights in a way that also distorts the history of colonialism and obscures the complicity of heteropatriarchy within colonial violence and domination. The accusation that SOGIE rights activists and Gender Studies scholars are "colonizers" also draws upon and contributes to anti-migrant xenophobia, demonizing "gender" as a 'foreign' concept that is contaminating local cultures, endangering children, and destroying traditions. The 'foreignness' of gender and its conceptual contents is further marked by its English origins and lack of translation and translatability in other non-English speaking contexts where it has been used in gender research and in relation to SOGIE activism (Geva, 2019, p. 412).

As Korolczuk and Graff (2018a) write, "'Genderism' – a term that sounds ominous and alien in most cultural contexts – has replaced 'feminism' in global right-wing rhetoric, strengthening the critique of gender equality movements as powerful and foreign 'colonizers'" (799) who are said to be forcing gender ideology upon other countries through international structures such as the European Union and the United Nations. The construction of LGBTIQ+ people as neocolonizers creates suspicion and doubt about the legitimacy of LGBTIQ+ people and rights within international political discourse, claiming that it is opposition to SOGIE rights that speaks most authentically for the formerly colonized world (Buss and Herman 2003: 77). Notably, anti-gender activists are not the only conservative forces repurposing the history and concept of "colonization". According to Korolczuk and Graff, "the notion of colonisation is infinitely pliable in right-wing discourse and… can be effectively used in countries with no obvious colonial history as a powerful signifier for humiliation that needs to be resisted" (810).

Anti-gender ideology and concepts

Within claims that gender ideology is a form of ideological colonization, gender becomes the ideological 'glue' (Corrêa, Paternotte & Kuhar 2018) holding together conservative interests around the world. Activists working to advance 'traditional' notions of gender roles and family argue that gender is not a social construction, but a "common sense" division of humanity, ordained by God and nature. The contestation over the meaning of "gender" (and other related concepts such as sexuality, marriage, family, and what is considered 'normal' human development) points to the deeper epistemic contestations at work within anti-gender politics, and efforts to delegitimize feminist and queer knowledges. Gender Studies and queer theory have been characterized by anti-gender activists as "a theory on the loose" (Geva, 2019, p. 414): A form of "bogus science" or "indoctrination" that circulates "like a virus infecting one discipline to another, from one country to another, and rapidly moving from the psychiatric clinic, across university disciplines, and then to law and public education" (Apperly, 2019; Geva, 2019, p. 414). Anti-gender campaigns, and their strategic use of the phrases 'gender ideology'

and 'gender theory', must therefore be understood as "an epistemological response to emancipatory claims about sex, gender, and sexuality" as well as "a political mechanism used to contain policy developments associated with feminist and queer agendas" (Corredor, 2019, p. 614).

Within anti-gender counter campaigns against SOGIE rights and comprehensive sex education (CSE), "gender theory" is commonly denounced as the main ideological base of all of these progressive policies. "Gender theory" is constructed as a project of social engineering where men are no longer masculine and women are no longer feminine and one is free to choose one's own gender and sexual orientation, even "several times a day" (Kuhar & Zobec, 2017, p. 34). Emphasis on "gender theory" within anti-gender activism shows that queer and feminist knowledge production is one of the important targets of the anti-gender movement. This involves a struggle over the legitimacy of academic work and what constitutes "knowledge", particularly of gender and related studies. The anti-gender movement therefore has ambitions to reassert positivist patriarchal forms of rationality as the authority on what constitutes legitimate forms of knowledge and knowledge production (Pető, 2016).

The effort to reclaim the gender binary as 'natural' and scientific was mobilized, in the literal sense, through a bus campaign project called the #FreeSpeechBus, which was implemented by the National Organization for Marriage, CitizenGo and the International Organization for the Family in cities around the world in 2017. The orange bus transported the message: "Boys are boys… and always will be. Girls are girls…and always will be. You can't change sex. Respect all". The #FreeSpeechBus made its way around the United States, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Chile, Mexico, Colombia and Kenya. In its depiction of 'male' and 'female' as defined by XX or XY chromosomes, the bus promoted the message that gender is assigned at birth and strictly biological. This campaign ultimately sought to undermine the legitimacy of LGBTIQ+ existence and "gender theory" in its international tour. However, it was not received without resistance on the part of activists and governments. In Madrid, a judge banned the bus from traveling through the city on the grounds that it was discriminatory and could provoke hate crimes. In the U.S., counter protestors greeted the bus's arrival on every stop of its attempted tour. In Bogota, the LGBTIQ+ activists splashed paint on the vehicle (Parke, 2018). The bus also inspired a Los Angeles based game developer to create Ignorance Fighter II, which lets players kick, punch, and demolish the bus in virtual space (Marusic, 2017).

The rights of transgender and non-binary individuals to be officially recognized as the gender they identify as, not which they were assigned at birth, has been a key issue that anti-genderists have targeted in their accusations about the dangers of gender, gender ideology, and Gender Studies. Transgender rights in the workplace, education, and public facilities more broadly have also been used as anti-gender rallying points for the assertion of gender as biologically determined. In doing so, they tap into and grow an affective economy and politics of fear (Ahmed, 2004; Wodak, 2015) by fueling anxiety and suspicion of changing social norms.

Anti-gender movements in Europe have also targeted public schools, which are said to be including "gender theory" in their curricula through content on family diversity and CSE. Different types of actions have been organized to resist teaching on gender equality in schools. Civil initiatives of so-called "concerned parents" have tried to put pressure on school authorities and teachers to not address certain topics, such as same-sex families, the social construction of gender roles, sex education and homosexuality. In France, for example, conservative civil society organizations created an online petition against an animated film for primary schools entitled

Baiser de la lune (The Kiss of the Moon), which depicted a romantic relationship between two male fish (Stambolis-Ruhstorfer and Tricou, 2017). In Italy, conservatives were successful in withdrawing books that address family diversity from some public primary schools (Garbagnoli, 2017). In Peru, a campaign called ConMisHijosNoTeMetas (Don't Mess with my Kids) has mobilized in relation to sex education in schools. According to the founder, child protectionism has been a strategic device used to gain popular support: "We started with sex education because it was what mobilised people the most, because it refers to their children, but what we really want is to eliminate gender, the word 'gender', altogether, in Peru and all over the world (Cariboni, 2019, para 6).

Supported by conservative Christian organizations, 'concerned parent groups' have had the appearance of being "grassroots" movements, but have numerous ties to "well-resourced Evangelical and Catholic conservative campaigns that are promoting the myth of 'gender ideology' internationally" and which are connected with the U.S. Christian Right (Greenesmith & Fernandez-Anderson, 2019). Open Democracy provides a helpful overview of these movements and their transnational connections in an article From the US to Peru, these 'parent groups' targeting sex education are all backed by the Christian right (ibid). The child protectionist discourse informing these movements challenges notions of children's rights, having implications for children's self-determination and ability to access vital information about sexual health and development.

Promotion and protection of the so-called "natural family" is a cornerstone of anti-gender discourse and advocacy. According to conservative activists, changing notions of gender and SOGIE rights undermine and threaten the so-called 'traditional' or 'natural' family, which is itself understood as foundational to universal notions of "society" and "civilization" (McEwen, 2017).

Within 'pro-family' rhetoric, a universal notion of 'family' is used, which erases all other kinds of kinship structures that have existed, and which continue to exist, in societies around the world. This construction of the natural family as universal and natural was set out in a document called The Cape Town Declaration, which was launched in Cape Town, South Africa in 2017 by the International Organization for the Family:

> *A thriving culture will therefore serve marriage—and all society—by promoting purity outside it and fidelity within; by discouraging pornography, adultery and divorce; and by firmly resisting every push to redefine marriage: to include same-sex or group bonds, or sexually open or temporary ones (World Congress of Families, 2017).*

Similar to the colonial deployment of the notion of the nuclear family as the most "civilised" kinship structure, contemporary notions that the nuclear family is universal creates a figure through which social hierarchies can be portrayed as natural and familial through the naturalization of male control over women and children (Stoler, 1995, p. 45; Hill-Collins, 1998). Through the 'natural family', patriarchy was constructed as natural, providing a model through which other differences could be classified, ranked and rationalized according to 'categories of nature' (Kitch, 2009).

Section 2:

Anti-gender knowledgeand attacks on Gender Studies

In June 2019, a writer for The Atlantic wrote:

> *As far-right politicians become entrenched in Europe, both at the European Parliament and within national parliaments across the Continent, they are taking aim at experts and intellectuals they present as members of an out-of-touch, corrosive elite. Several academic disciplines are subject to scrutiny and attack, but Gender Studies has become a particularly vilified target (Apperly, 2019, para 4).*

The accusation that experts and intellectuals who critique the gender binary and hierarchy and normative notions of the family, gender and sexuality are "out of touch" and "corrosive" is a familiar narrative within anti-gender activism. However, there are variations in how Gender Studies and its eminent scholars are constructed that relate to geo-political and historical factors. In former Stalinist countries, for instance, reference to "ideology" recalls memories of pedagogic brainwashing (Apperley, 2019). "In Germany, the new word genderismus…wilfully echoes the sozialismus, or socialism, of East German memory. In Estonia, …the far-right website Objektiiv has published a number of articles comparing "gender ideology" to Marxism and Leninism" (ibid).

Gender Studies developed as an interdisciplinary critical field of knowledge in the late 20th century along with other fields informed by critical theory and civil rights movements such as Disability Studies, Subaltern Studies, and Ethnic and Racial Studies. Gender Studies is historically and ideologically related to Women's Studies, Feminist Studies, Sexuality Studies, Men and Masculinity Studies, and Queer Theory; all advancing critique of 'gender', gender roles, and heteropatriarchal social formations. Building upon feminist standpoint theory and Foucauldian understandings of power, discourse, and sexuality, many critical Gender Studies scholars have exposed and challenged the sexed and gendered power relations embedded in knowledge production.

The interdisciplinary field of Gender Studies examines a range of contexts in which sex and gender power relations are at work, often through intersectional lenses that engage with identities, racial inequality, popular culture, politics of citizenship, the environment, and militarization. Largely guided by an ethos of social justice, Gender Studies scholars have developed new concepts and theoretical frameworks that have gained traction not only across academic disciplines, but also in civil society activism. There has been important relationship between theory and practice in

Hijras are officially recognized as third gender in countries in the Indian subcontinent, being considered neither completely male nor female. This picture is from the sixth pink rally in Mumbai, India, 13 January 2020. The rally is organized to demand shelter home, social visibility, equality, empowerment, end of discrimination and to raise awareness about different issues of transgender and Hijra community. Credit:EPA, photo by Divyakant Solanki

Gender Studies, with scholarly work in the field making important contributions to feminist and SOGIE advocacy.

For these reasons, the field of Gender Studies itself has become a strategic target within anti-gender efforts to protect heteropatriarchal power and privilege. As anti-gender campaigns have gained momentum worldwide, one of their key strategies has been to portray Gender Studies as "bogus science" and as knowledge with political, rather than scientific, motivations. This emphasis within anti-gender activism reveals the significance of knowledge, power and authority within contemporary debates over SOGIE and women's rights. While campaigns against 'Gender Studies' and its approaches to education about gender and sexuality take various forms in different social and cultural contexts, they are all underpinned by the effort to restore the authoritative status of knowledge that has historically maintained a heteropatriarchal social order.

Anti-gender knowledge production

The generation and mobilization of the anti-gender concepts discussed above – 'gender' and 'gender ideology', the 'natural family' and 'gender theory' – have been the product of conservative efforts to develop knowledge that can counter the gains by feminist and queer activists in advancing women's and SOGIE rights and shifting social imaginaries about gender, sexuality and family. As Kuhar and Zobec (2017) argue "in many ways…the anti-gender movement is a struggle over the legitimacy of academic work and – in the populist world of 'alternative facts' – an attempt to create 'alternative science'" (44). While often overlooked in the academic literature on the anti-gender movement, conservative 'pro-family' think tanks are largely responsible for manufacturing the ideological glue of the anti-gender movement: developing and deploying discursive devices and knowledge that seeks to undermine and delegitimize feminist and queer theory and advocacy.

One of the first and now most prominent conservative 'think tanks' promoting 'pro-family' policy and knowledge is the Family Research Council (FRC). Established in 1983 by James Dobson in Washington D.C., the FRC has become the leading organization within the U.S. context and within international pro-family activism opposing SOGIE and women's reproductive rights. The FRC explicitly understands itself as a site of pro-family knowledge production, describing the organization as:

> *a nonprofit research and educational organization dedicated to articulating and advancing a family-centered philosophy… providing policy research and analysis for the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government…[and] inform[ing] the news media, the academic community, business leaders, and the general public about family issues that affect the nation from a biblical worldview (www.FRC.org).*

Since the establishment of the FRC over thirty years ago, a number of pro-family research centers and think tanks have been created, such as Family Watch International, the Marriage and Religion Research Institute, the National Organization for Marriage, the Ruth Institute, and the Institute for Family Studies. And, while the Heritage Foundation (the most powerful conservative think tank and lobby group in the U.S.) addresses a range of issues from conservative perspectives, a significant proportion of its work is dedicated to research that can underwrite the argument that "Marriage and family are the building blocks of all human civilization and the primary institutions of civil society", as stated on their website (www.heritage.org).

Following the UN World Conferences in Cairo and Beijing, an organization called the Centre for Family and Human Rights (C-Fam) was established in New York City in order to influence social policy debate at the UN and other international institutions. In 2014, C-Fam obtained Special Consultative Status at the UN, and has been known to work closely with the Vatican-led UN delegation. In May 2019, Reuters reported that emails and memos they had obtained from U.S. officials at the UN clearly "show the influence of…C-Fam, a private U.S. research institute formed to affect policy at the U.N." particularly in relation to issues of family, gender and sexuality diversity (Abutaleb and Tanfani, 2019). C-Fam Director Austin Ruse has attacked academic programs that

support gender and sexuality diversity, claiming it is "nonsense that they teach in women's studies… The toxic stew of the modern university is Gender Studies…teaching people how to be sex-positive and overcome the patriarchy". He continued, arguing that "the hard left, human-hating people that run modern universities…should all be taken out and shot" (Tashman, 2014).

In universities in the United States, conservative approaches to marriage and family are becoming regarded as legitimate areas for academic research. One example is the National Marriage Project (NMP) at the University of Virginia (previously at Rutgers where it was established in 1997). The mission of the project, according to its website:

> *is to provide research and analysis on the health of marriage in America, to analyze the social and cultural forces shaping contemporary marriage, and to identify strategies to increase marital quality and stability…The NMP conducts research, sponsors conferences, and public lectures… publishes reports, books and articles by family scholars, and makes its findings available to the broader public through its web site, media outreach, and publications" (nationalmarriageproject.org, 2020).*

The Director of the National Marriage Project is Brad Wilcox, who is also a professor of Sociology at the University of Virginia. He has also held fellowships at pro-family think tanks such as the Institute for Family Studies and the American Enterprise Institute. Some of the most prestigious institutions in the United States house pro-family scholars. Sociologist Mark Regnerus, at the University of Texas, Austin (which is widely recognised as a liberal institution despite its location in a conservative state) has been widely discredited for his research's anti-gay bias, and World Congress of Families founder Allan Carlson, was a professor of History at Hillsdale College. While these academics and research entities have largely worked to discredit Gender Studies and related disciplines, their emergence provides an opportunity to interrogate anti-gender ideology on the basis of its scholarly merits in the spirit of exercising one's academic freedom. The methodological, theoretical, and analytical approaches and assumptions within conservative 'marriage and family studies' scholarship require further engagement and scrutiny, and their intersections with more established disciplines such as Population studies, Demography, Sociology, and Political studies beg further analysis.

To be certain, Gender Studies is not the only field of knowledge under attack by conservative campaigns. Scholars working in climate change science have also been targeted by new right movements, and their research called "bogus" or "junk" science by new right-wing organizations. Similar to their attacks on Gender Studies, right-wing movements have been making efforts to suppress the dissemination of climate science. For instance, the late and eminent climatologist from Stanford University, Stephen Schneider, had his name listed on a neo-Nazi death list alongside other climate scientists with apparent Jewish ancestry. In response to the threat, Schneider drew important parallels between attacks on climate science and those on feminist activists. He asked: "What do I do? Learn to shoot a magnum? Wear a bullet-proof jacket?…They shoot abortion doctors here" (Hamilton, 2011).

Attacks on climate science provide a helpful point of comparison within this report on SOGIE rights and academic freedom. While Gender Studies scholars have critiqued these foundational concepts that have held heteropatriarchal power and Euro-American hegemony in place, climate scientists also critique industrial capitalism, which has also been a critical mechanism used by colonial powers to exploit and dominate indigenous people. Similar to how Gender Studies has been accused as a covert strategy of Western liberals to reduce populations, climate science is increasingly coming under attack as a conspiracy to manipulate

and reduce fertility rates – something that the 'pro-family' movement vehemently opposes.

In making this comparison, however, it is important to recognize that Women's and Gender Studies have faced longer standing ridicule more generally within the society and academic corridors. Prior to and beyond the proliferation of anti-gender discourses, the field has struggled to gain legitimacy within institutions. As reported by Maria Do Mar Pereira, a lecturer in Gender Studies and Sociology at the University of Leeds, her research revealed: "claims that Women's and Gender Studies is not proper knowledge are frequently made informally and in humorous tone, creating what one of my interviewees called a 'culture of teasing' around women's and Gender Studies" (Pereira, 2013). She quoted one senior scholar who commented, "Feminism is seen as something which is ridiculous, something that is laughable, that does not have academic quality' (ibid). Contemporary anti-gender rhetoric about Gender Studies connects with this longer struggle of Gender Studies to establish itself as an academic field within institutions due to deeply entrenched positivist, male dominated, elite, white and heteronormative knowledge traditions and disciplines.

Case studies of anti-gender movements

Anti-gender movements have taken shape in many different parts of the world over the course of the past decade. Unfortunately, it is not within the scope of this report to comprehensively cover all contexts where anti-gender activism is underway. Here, four case studies are presented for closer analysis: Poland, Hungary, Brazil, and South Africa. Through an in-depth focus on anti-gender activities in these contexts, the intention is to provide the reader with a textured understanding of the movement in different contexts, while also showing their shared discursive threads.

Poland

Eastern Europe has witnessed the rapid growth of anti-gender campaigns over the course of the past decade, and gender studies departments and research centres have been a strategic point of their activism. Poland, Russia and Hungary have been key sites where anti-gender mobilisation has taken shape and where it has been notably effective in capturing the imagination and hearts of large portions of the population more effectively than progressive movements have managed to do, write Korolczuk and Graff (2018a, p. 815). Partnerships between conservative politicians and organisations in Eastern European countries and the United States have given rise to distinct East-West networks connecting nations that are opposed on other political and economic matters.

Within the Polish anti-gender movement, Poland has come to signify not only a 'victim' of western "gender ideology", but as its potential savior. "Gender" has been characterized as "Ebola from Brussels" by right-wing populist groups as a way of creating fear about the EU as "a coloniser and source of contagion, as it spreads the virus of genderism, aiming to destroy the healthy body of the Polish nation (Korolczuk & Graff, 2018, p. 811). As stated by the leader of the country's Law and Justice party, gender and the LGBTIQ+ movement are a "direct attack on the family and children" (Apperley, 2019). A prominent anti-gender author in Poland, Marzena Nykiel, writes of Poland's "special mission in the global gender war" exclaiming, "The world looks to Poland with hope that Poland shall save the West once again" (Nykiel, 2014, p. 305 in Korolczuk & Graff, 2018a, p. 812).

Korolczuk and Graff (2018a) understand this rhetoric as a strategic inversion of the idea amongst many western observers that post-socialist countries like Poland have lagged behind in relation to gender equality and sexual democracy. Within New Right political ideology, these countries are seen as "the world's avant garde and possibly a savior" (813). In 2012, the Polish minister of justice publicly opposed the Istanbul convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence on the basis that it was a "carrier of gender ideology" (Kane, 2018). There have also been targeted oppositions to abortion, SOGIE rights, and divorce, with the movement gradually coalescing against emerging issues such as sexuality education and reproductive technologies (ibid).

Conservative think tanks in Poland such as the Ordo Iuris Institute for Legal Culture has supported these campaigns, benefiting from the partnership of European and global platforms such as CitizenGo and have worked with the World Congress of

Families/International Organization for the Family, Family Watch International, and C-Fam. Anti-genderism became an official part of the right-wing Law and Justice Party's platform (which won a majority of seats in Parliament in 2015) and policy of "Change for the Better". According to Kane (2018), "The ministries of science and education committed to strip away the influence of gender, including pledges to remove 'gay and lesbian studies journals from the official rankings of academic journals', and promised to ensure that school 'be free from various ideologies' and that 'children will study normal, class subjects'" (ibid). As Kane continues, while this surge in anti-gender politics was first perceived by those on the left as an effort to cover up pedophilia scandals in the Polish Catholic Church, it was actually a "nationally driven alliance building project between foreign, illiberal influences and a gendered form of nationalism" (Ibid). On the campaign website (http://www.stopgender.pl) the word "gender" is left notably un-translated amongst exclusively Polish text, signifying and marking it as an alien import (Snitow and Detwiler, 2016).

Agnieszka Graff, a well-known Polish feminist scholar based at the University of Warsaw, is also a prominent feminist voice in Polish media. In her opinion, feminist and Gender Studies researchers in Poland have been protected by their lack of institutionalisation in formal "Gender Studies" departments. In a 2018 article appearing on the Norwegian Kilden Gender Research website, Graff was quoted as saying:

> *We have never had a designated centre or department for gender research at a Polish university or the opportunity to get a master's degree in Gender Studies…so the argument that this is the taxpayers' money doesn't hold water. It's a shame, because it means that Gender Studies remain marginalized, but it's also good for avoiding attack (Lilleslåtten, 2018).*

However, Graff also tells that conservative movements have made deep roads into education in a separate interview, explaining and predicting the extent of their impact:

> *What I find most disturbing is the effect these conservative movements have on education. They are successfully preventing progressive NGOs (sex educators, anti-homophobia groups) from entering schools. They intimidate teachers who try to talk to kids about gender equality. They have managed to create an aura of danger and suspicion around gender equality, feminism, LGBT rights. This might have a lasting effect. We have a generation of Poles growing up who think gender is a scary thing to be avoided (Korolczuk & Graff, 2018b).*

According to Graff, in some places queer and feminist resistance to the anti-gender movement has taken debates that had previously only

happened in academia "into the streets". However, in Poland where she is based, there is a much narrower scope for possible repertoires of political action that queer and feminist activists can take. She explains:

> *You see the violence of this movement, you see that it is really a movement against liberal democracy, and you know what happens when people who support them and whom they support are now in power. And they're not debating anyone; they are closing down institutions, censoring intellectual and artistic work. Our freedom to think, speak and organize is contingent on liberal democracy, which is disappearing. So, no, I am not optimistic. I don't think we have reason to be hopeful in Poland. We should see this as a real political struggle and not an intellectual debate about essentialism and constructivism. We may be winning intellectual debates, but they are taking over the country (ibid).*

Several dozen people are seen rallying in front of city hall in Warsaw, Poland on January 21, 2018 against gender education in schools. Credit:Zuma, photo by Jaap Arriens

Hungary

In 2018, the Hungarian government officially removed Gender Studies from the list of accredited Masters programmes in Hungary – a first in the European Union. Two universities were affected: Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) and Central European University (CEU). The official position of the government with regards to its removal drew explicitly on anti-gender political rhetoric about 'gender' and 'gender ideology'. As stated by a spokesman for the prime minister, "The government's standpoint is that people are born either male or female, and we do not consider it acceptable for us to talk about socially constructed genders rather than biological sexes" (Redden, 2018). It was further stated by the Presidential Chief of Staff, Gergely Gulyas, "the Hungarian state does not wish to spend public funds on education in this area" (ibid). The Deputy Prime Minister, Zsolt Semjen, made the political logic behind the decision explicit, denouncing Gender Studies as a legitimate site of scholarship. He was quoted as saying that Gender Studies "has no business in universities" because it is "an ideology, not a science" (Oppenheim, 2018).

In an interview with The Independent, a student who was planning on enrolling in the Gender Studies MA programme at Central European University named the gender power relations at work in the government's decision to take funding and accreditation away from the field. She commented:

> *We live in a world that privileges the research of white men – as historically it is them who have done the research – and we need other voices to understand the power structures of our current society. I think that studying gender fosters an understanding of others rather than a fear (Oppenheim, 2018).*

The Hungarian government's position on Gender Studies not only articulates an intolerance for Gender Studies, but also for LGBTIQ+ people. The implications for the banning of Gender Studies could therefore have further reaching effects through the censorship of LGBTIQ+ scholars working in other disciplines, and their abilities to pursue scholarly projects that pertain to LGBTIQ+ communities, identities and rights.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban is no stranger within global anti-gender activism. Prior to the announcement to remove Gender Studies from the list of accredited MA programmes, Orban welcomed the World Congress of Families to Hungary, and delivered a speech at its opening ceremony. After telling of the successes of his government to reduce the numbers of immigrants entering Hungary, he ironically turned to the perceived threat of population decline in the country. In doing so, he shows the ways in which

Students from The Central European University rally for academic freedom on 24th November 2018. Credit: Reuters, photo by Bernadett Szabo

'family' and 'reproduction' figure into his anti-gender social policy. He stated:

> *The family is at the centre of the Hungarian government's vision of the future…strong families will create a strong, competitive society and economy, a strong and competitive Hungary and Europe… Our goal…is to have as many children in Hungary as possible; because if there are children, there is a future (Profam.org, 2017).*

Population decline has been a talking point in much anti-gender activism, with declining fertility rates attributed to SOGIE and women rights and the fields of knowledge that advance social justice for LGBTIQ+ people and women. Through the argument that reproduction will spur economic growth and development, control over women's reproduction becomes a crucial site for bio-political control and intervention. Gender Studies scholarship subverts these claims, presenting a direct threat to pro-natalist political agendas that encourage women to see themselves as birthers of the nation.

Moreover, the closing down of Gender Studies is indicative of a greater systemic threat to academic freedom. As the secretary general of the European University Association

commented, "The move confirms an unsettling and thinly-veiled trend towards increased state control over civil society in Hungary – and higher education and research are no exception" (Wilson, 2018). The threat to academic freedom in Hungary resounded globally amongst academics from all disciplines. The American Association of University Professors responded with this statement in which they warned academics across disciplines:

> *Restrictions like those imposed in Hungary directly interfere with the academic freedom of researchers and teachers. Biologists, anthropologists, historians, and psychologists have repeatedly shown that definitions of sex and sexuality have varied over time and across cultures and political regimes (American Association of University Professors, 2018).*

Pointing to the multidisciplinary implications of assaults on Gender Studies in Hungary and other parts of the world, the statement addresses the deeper interests and power relations at stake within efforts to impinge on the academic freedom of LGBTIQ+ scholars:

> *Authoritarian efforts such as these can justify racial, class, and sexual policing that disciplines forms of kinship and homemaking—including same-sex, multi-generational, or other nonnormative households—that deviate from established nuclear family norms (ibid).*

Queer organising in Hungary has continued despite the growing anti-gender sentiments and the banning of Gender Studies. As told by one scholar who had been registered for the Gender Studies MA programme at Central European University before it was banned:

> *activists on the ground are setting up underground education lectures and organizing queer theory readings and poetry nights in people's living rooms and basement bars. We hold drag shows in anarchist spaces and screen Paris Is Burning and films about gay Hungarian stonemasons. Regardless of what the government throws our way, and how exhausted we are—we still resist. We find ways to thrive in our own particular queer, nerdy way (Schwartzburg, 2019).*

Across many countries in Eastern and Central Europe, anti-gender movements have created multiple professional and personal challenges and risks for those who were and are still working in the fields of gender equality, women's rights, SOGIE, Gender Studies, and/or anyone who does not conform to the expectations of 'traditional' sex and gender norms.

Brazil

Over the past 10 years, Brazil's LGBTIQ+ population secured several civil rights victories in the courts, including same-sex marriage in 2013 and legal transgender name and gender changes in 2018. But as the LGBTIQ+ community gained new rights, Brazilian politics have been growing more conservative. Gender and sexuality have become a primary target for evangelical groups over the past decade. A question about trans culture on a high school standardized test, for example, drew widespread criticism from Brazil's growing religious right, which argued that gender education had gone too far. In 2017, the government decided to withdraw mention of gender identity from national curricula. Some conservative politicians in state and city governments are now pushing for a ban on any discussion of gender diversity and sexual orientation in the classroom (Faiola & Lopes, 2019). According to Cleber Cabral Siedschlag, coordinator of Front for the Defense of the Christian Family, a conservative group against the teaching of liberal ideology in schools, "Gender ideology is a field of study with no scientific backing that causes confusion for children in development because it negates the biological identity of the child and destroys distinctions between masculine and feminine. It is an extremely grave social experiment" (ibid).

The late Brazilian educationalist, Paulo Freire, who has become internationally renowned for the transformative paradigm for teaching and learning he articulated in his 1970 text, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, became figured as an embodiment of "cultural Marxism" within Bolsonaro's efforts to eliminate leftist views from the classroom. Pedagogy of the Oppressed argues against a model of education structured by hierarchy between teacher and learner in which learners are passive and empty vessels and teachers are depositors of knowledge. Through the dismantling of this hierarchy, Freire famously figured the classroom as a space in which broader social hierarchies can be addressed. He argued:

> *Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators (Freire, 1970, p. 44).*

For Freire, disrupting normative orders of power in the classroom translates and transfers into the disruption of other naturalized systems of dominance and oppression. The text drew upon an explicitly Marxist analysis of the reproduction of systems of dominance

People protest against the visit of US philosopher Judith Butler to Brazil, in Sao Paulo, on November 7, 2017. Credit: AFP, photo by Nelson Almeida

between the oppressor and the oppressed and the ways in which traditional pedagogy cultivated a culture of silence among the dispossessed. These ideas and their global influence clearly provoked an authoritarian response from Bolsonaro, who has supported a move to strip Freire of his ceremonial title as the "patron of Brazilian education" (Uribe, 2019). During his presidential campaign in 2018, Bolsonaro argued that it would be necessary to "purge [schools] from Paulo Freire's ideology" in order to improve Brazilian education. In the weeks following his inauguration, Bolsonaro promised to "enter the education ministry with a flamethrower" and to "tackle the Marxist garbage in our schools head on…We shall succeed in forming citizens and not political militants" (Watson, 2019).

As a number of commentators have discussed, the rise of conservative evangelical Protestantism and Pentecostalism, and their increasing cooperation with the Catholic Church in the past half-decade, has turned the political tide against the humanities in Brazil. Economic crisis and a period of "political irresolution" following the 2016 impeachment of Dilma Roussef became factors that enabled the consolidation and rise of conservative political powers in Brazil. There have been calls for ideologically motivated funding cuts to fields like sociology, Gender Studies, and philosophy, which are portrayed as financially wasteful at best and as leftist political propaganda at worst. Bolsonaro wasted no time in making his position on gender clear after taking office as President. In his inaugural speech, he stated: "We will unite people, value the family, respect religions and our Judeo-Christian tradition, combat gender ideology and rescue our values" (Faiola & Lopes, 2019).

Teachers and professors came under direct threat immediately following the election of Bolsonaro when incoming state deputy of Santa Catarina, Ana Caroline Campagnolo, asked students to film their classes to catch "political-partisan or ideological" behavior from teachers (Pells, 2018). Justin Axel-Berg, associate researcher in higher education policy at the University of São Paulo, described Campognolo's announcement as a "direct…attempt to create a climate of fear and persecution" (ibid). Reports of educators experiencing intimidation soon followed. For instance, Adriana Marotti de Mello, a professor of business, reported that students in Para State University had already "denounced teachers…because they were discussing 'fake news' in class… It was enough for police invasion and prison. I cannot imagine what is going to happen [in the future]" (ibid). Well known Brazilian writer and professor, Marcia Tiburi, has spoken about her experience of intimidation, having been told by her contacts in the police that paramilitary gangs were "watching her". Right-wing activists began disrupting her book events, and she received online threats that said she would be shot during a book signing (Phillips, 2019). Since Bolsonaro's election, left-wing academics have gone into exile and hiding, fearing the forms of violent intimidation that they have been experiencing. For example, Debora Diniz, a professor of anthropology at the University of Brasília, received death threats against herself, her students and colleagues via WhatsApp message and email for her pro-choice position on abortion (ibid). Diniz eventually left Brazil for a visiting researcher position at Brown University in the U.S. These academics and others have confirmed that the death threats they receive have come from users of an extreme racist and misogynist site that called itself "the biggest alt-right forum in Brazil" (ibid).

According to a report by The Guardian:

> *The site's anonymous users discuss paedophilia, raping and killing women, "corrective rape" of lesbians, suicide tips and even plans*

> *to shoot up schools and universities to target Marxists and leftists. Over the years, the forum changed its name and moved to the dark web where it cannot be accessed using a normal browser (ibid).*

In addition to creating a climate of fear, these forms of intimidation have caused a widespread sense of despair amongst academics and educators, especially those who have had to flee the country to escape persecution.

The Escola sem partidos (School Without [Political] Party) movement has been at the forefront of this campaign, inspiring over one hundred and fifty bills that were proposed to Brazil's National Congress and state legislative houses (Crevelari and Hobson, 2018). Targeting public and private schools from preschool through the university level, the legislation has "two main goals": First, it aims to enforce the American Convention on Human Rights' Article 12, IV, which states that "parents or guardians, as the case may be, have the right to provide for the religious and moral education of their children or wards that is in accord with their own convictions." Second, it states that "gender ideology" and "sexual orientation" should not be included in the school curriculum (ibid). As Green (2019) writes, Bolsonaro supporters have recently introduced a bill in Congress that would establish a new curriculum under the banner of "school without [political] party". The proposed changes include making social science and philosophy courses optional, banning sex education, and reintroducing the dictatorship-era courses, "moral and civic education" and "social and political organisation".

In April 2019, Bolsonaro and the Brazilian Minister of Education, Abraham Weintraub, declared the government's plans to "decentralize investments in philosophy and sociology" in public universities and to shift financial support to "areas that give immediate returns to taxpayers, such as veterinary science, engineering, and medicine" (Green, 2019). This perspective on Sociology and Philosophy stands in contrast to that taken by Bolsonaro's predecessors, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Dilma Roussef, who were both from the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Worker's Party). Experts interpret the proposed cuts as a move to roll back the "signature achievement" of his left-wing predecessors expanding access to higher education and advancing the humanities in the public schooling system and the society more broadly.

In response to President Bolsonaro's decision to cut funding from sociology and philosophy, academics in these and related disciplines from around the world signed an open letter written by academics at Harvard University, "In solidarity with Brazilian Sociologists", which stated:

> *President Bolsonaro's intent to defund sociology programs is an affront to the discipline, to the academy, and, most broadly, to the human pursuit of knowledge. This proposal is ill-conceived, and violates principles of academic freedom that ought to be integral*

> *to systems of higher education in Brazil, in the United States, and across the globe (In Solidarity with Brazilian Sociologists, 2019).*

This initiative raised international awareness of the threat to academic freedom in Brazil and globally, collecting over ten thousand signatures.

While Bolsonaro's threatening words towards Gender Studies and the humanities came as headline news to scholars globally, his position reflected growing hostility towards disciplines associated with the political Left amongst conservatives in Brazil. As Green (2019) tells, the Far Right did not begin their battle against higher education with the election of Jair Bolsonaro. Rather, over the past five years, conservative groups have been working to introduce legislation to stem the alleged "left-wing ideological influences" in public education and seek to discredit educators "who offer critical instruction that examines the country's recent authoritarian history, employs gender as a category of analysis, and supports affirmative action programs" (Green, 2019).

Approximately one year prior to Bolsonaro's election, eminent American philosopher and gender theorist, Judith Butler's visit to the country was opposed by protesters. A petition was circulated via the conservative Spanish platform Citizen Go by a collective including the Catholic hierarchy, evangelical protestants and pentecostalists, conservative psychologists and the Escola Sem Partido (School Without [Political] Party) calling for the cancellation of her trip. Butler, who has become figured as the creator of gender theory and ideology within anti-gender campaigns was accused of threatening "the natural order of gender, sexuality and the family" (Sexuality Policy Watch, 2018).

Butler was aware of the opposition to her visit, but was not dissuaded by the petition. Inside Higher Education reported that Butler commented via email that the petition "called for the cancellation of my lecture, and assumed that I would be speaking on gender since the allegation is that I am the founder of 'the ideology of gender.' That ideology, which is called 'diabolical' by these opponents, is considered to be a threat to the family" (Jaschik, 2017). A demonstration took place outside of the venue of the International Colloquium on the Ends of Democracy, an event which she had helped organize. During the event's opening, protestors burned an effigy of Butler, whose figure wore a black witch's hat and pink bra, while others carried Bibles and crosses, or placards of her face with drawn on red devil horns. Butler acknowledged the far-reaching intentions and effects of the anti-gender demonstration as part of a larger campaign against SOGIE rights and ultimately, democracy:

> *My sense is that the group who engaged this frenzy of effigy burning, stalking and harassment want to defend 'Brazil' as a place where LGBTQ people are not welcome, where the family*

A demonstrator attends a protest against Judith Butler in Sao Paulo, Brazil November 7, 2017. Credit:Reuters, photo by Nacho Doce

remains heterosexual (so no gay marriage), where abortion is illegal and reproductive freedom does not exist. They want boys to be boys, and girls to be girls, and for there to be no complexity in questions such as these. The effort is antifeminist, antitrans, homophobic and nationalist, using social media to stage and disseminate their events. In this way, they resemble the forms of neo-fascism that we see emerging in different parts of the world. Indeed, they reminded us at the conference why we were right to worry about the state of democracy (Jaschik, 2017).

In addition to mobilizing against the academic disciplines of philosophy, sociology, and related fields, anti-gender campaigning in Brazil has also worked to remove and block the inclusion of gender and sexuality diversity in schools. The President's attacks on SOGIE rights and Gender Studies in the classroom have been paralleled by an increase in violent attacks on LGBTIQ+ people with reports indicating that the death toll for the LGBTIQ+ population in the country has more than tripled in recent years (Telesur, 2019).

South Africa

The role that U.S. conservative evangelical organizations and activists have played in promoting legislation criminalizing homosexuality in many African countries has been increasingly documented. Most notorious, perhaps, is the direct involvement of ultraconservative right-wing American pastor, Scott Lively, in designing the Ugandan 'Kill the Gays' bill. Rev. Dr. Kapya Kaoma, a Zambian researcher based at Political Research Associates in Massachusetts has written prolifically on the ways in which U.S. Christian Right activists are working to promote anti-gay and anti-feminist agendas in Africa. Through his research, Kaoma has shown the ways in which pro-family organizations have "formed relationships and partnerships with mainstream U.S. evangelical groups working in Africa and initiated relationships with African religious leaders, with offices in various African countries" (Kaoma, 2012, p. 13). The impact of these relationships is further elaborated upon in his 2012 report, Colonizing African Values: How the U.S. CR is Transforming Sexual Politics in Africa, in which he discusses the forms of direct intervention and 'mentorship' of African religious and political leaders by U.S. conservatives who have facilitated the transplanting of current U.S. culture war debates to many African countries.

In contrast with other countries in the region, South Africa has largely been recognised for its progressive constitutional protections for LGBTIQ+ people. Notably, the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2006 made South Africa the first country in Africa and the fifth country in the world to adopt such laws. Despite this legislation, and in many ways because of it, anti-gender campaigning has been gaining momentum in the country over the past decade. Following the adoption of same-sex marriage legislation, Cape Town based Pastor Errol Naidoo traveled to the United States where he was mentored by the conservative pro-family think tank Family Research Council, and later established a South African based organization called the Family Policy Institute. In an interview with the Christian magazine Joy! in 2011, Naidoo openly discussed his relationship with U.S. 'pro-family' organizations which have become leading voices in the global anti-gender movement. He explains, "the vision for FPI was crystallized during my internship with Family Research Council in Washington DC" (Naidoo, 2011). After this "six month training in the U.S., I returned home in October 2007 and established Family Policy Institute". Akin to his American counterparts, Naidoo (2012) claims, "Birth rates are plummeting throughout the world as a result of a sustained global offensive against the natural family by radical feminist groups, homosexual activists and other anti-family lobbyists". Further describing the characteristics of what he calls a "global offensive" led by gay and feminist activists, Naidoo

Same-sex marriage in South Africa has been legal since 2006. This is Tshepo Modisane and Thobajo be Sithole kissing at a traditional gay wedding in South Africa in 2013. Credit:Shutterstock editorial, photo by Gallo Images/rex

points to the challenges to gender roles undertaken by these groups as the cause of declining fertility rates worldwide. He argues that "Plummeting birth rates are a direct consequence of the war on fatherhood, motherhood and children. Radical feminists regard motherhood and childbearing an imposition to the progress of the emancipation of women" (ibid). Naidoo has since become a regular participant in World Congress of Family gatherings and networked into the U.S. pro-family movement. A decade later, in 2017, the World Congress of Families chose Cape Town as the destination for its relaunching under the new name International Organization for the Family, under the new directorship of Brian Brown. At the event, the organization launched the previously discussed Cape Town Declaration, which states a commitment to resisting "the ideological colonization of the family" (World Congress of Families, 2017). A number of policy makers from African countries and elsewhere endorsed the statement with their signatures.

In 2019, the Stop Comprehensive Sex Education project, initiative by the Arizona-based organization Family Watch International, led a campaign against the incorporation of gender and sexuality diversity and sex positivity into the South African Life Orientation curriculum (McEwen 2019). According to an online letter that was circulated in opposition of the new content, "Highly controversial CSE programs…

indoctrinated youth to embrace radical sexual and gender ideologies, promote sexual rights and abortion, and encourage promiscuity, high-risk sexual behaviours, and sexual pleasure, even to the very youngest of children" (Stop CSE n.d.). Identical letters were also circulated in Nigeria, Kenya and Ghana to engender opposition to the inclusion of sex positivity, gender and sexuality diversity in the national curricula of these countries (ibid). Therefore, while the local campaign had the appearance of being a grassroots movement led by local organizations, teachers and parents, it had clear connections with U.S. based organizations that are promoting anti-gender ideologies worldwide.

In the context of South African higher education, LGBTIQ+ and feminist academics have not been under the same kinds of attack by anti-gender campaigns as they have in many other parts of the world. However, the movement has worked to support the rights of conservative students and teachers to express homophobic opinions, claiming that such utterances are protected by the democratic freedoms of speech and religion. In 2015, Family Policy Institute along with Freedom of Religion South Africa, a local conservative organization with clear ideological ties to U.S. conservatives, came to the defence of Zizipho Pae, a member of the Student Representative Council (SRC) at the University of Cape Town (UCT) who was widely criticised for her comments about the legalisation of same-sex marriage in the United States. Following the legalisation of same-sex marriage in the U.S., Pae posted a status message on Facebook, which said, "We are institutionalizing and normalizing sin! Sin. May God have mercy on us". Pae's comments raised alarm amongst LGBTIQ+ students that her statement contributed to the normalization of homophobia on campus and in the society more broadly. The UCT student group Queer Revolution issued a statement saying, "We fear that [Pae's] status may cause further violence towards the queer community", demanding that UCT and the SRC "take immediate action to remove Ms Pae from her position of influence as a student leader" (DeBarros, 2015). Students from LGBTIQ+ groups on campus also took action by removing Bible scriptures that she had on her SRC office door (RDM News wire, 2015). After Pae refused to retract her statement, an organization called Freedom of Religion South Africa circulated an online petition to gain support for the student's right to express her religious beliefs and also sponsored her with an attorney to threaten to press charges. Family Policy Institute president Errol Naidoo also featured Pae on his television show, Watchmen on the Wall to defend her anti-gay views. While Pae was not removed from the SRC, the controversy became currency for conservative groups in the country to portray themselves as under attack by progressives promoting SOGIE rights. According to Matthew Clayton, from the Cape Town based LGBTIQ+ group Triangle Project, "conservative religious and political groups are using the situation to drive a narrative of persecution of South African people of faith" (DeBarros, 2015).

Unlike the situation in neighbouring countries in the region, such as Zimbabwe where LGBTIQ+ teachers and learners face intimidation and exclusion for being open about their sexualities,[5] educators and students in South Africa have Constitutional protections. Yet, as Anthony Manion (former director of the GALA Queer Archives) commented, these protections do not translate into substantive forms of inclusion for LGBTIQ+ people. Manion said:

> *In South Africa, we've led the world in reforms around sexual orientation, and when you look at education, you see that the basic rights are there in the policies. But despite these protections, schools continue to be unsafe spaces for LGBT learners, who are victimised, harassed and bullied. We know from anecdotal reports that these students are dropping out in high numbers, and that there are high levels of homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse (Davis, 2015).*

In her book, Under Pressure: The Regulation of Sexualities in South African Secondary Schools, South African professor Deevia Bhana (2014) reports that learners who are not heterosexual experience high levels of bullying and harassment. While overt discrimination against gay learners might be officially discouraged, her research demonstrates that a culture of "compulsory heterosexuality" prevails in schools, institutionalized through traditions and contemporary cultures that continue to privilege heterosexuality and normative notions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'.

While there have been few quantitative studies on the experiences of LGBTIQ+ students in schools and universities, a 2016 national report by OUT LGBT Well-Being documented a disturbing scale of the abuse in the South African basic and tertiary education system (OUT LGBT Well-Being, 2016). More than half (56%) of people between the ages of 16 to 24 years of age said they had experienced discrimination based on their gender identity or sexual orientation at school (ibid). For roughly one third of students who participated in the study, verbal threats escalated into violence and/or damage of property. Gay and transgender students reported the highest levels of physical abuse and sexual violence (ibid). Experiences of harassment and violence on the basis of sexuality have caused a number of LGBTIQ+ learners to drop out of school and attempt self-harm and suicide. Research by Transgender and Intersex Africa showed that 32% of LGBTI pupils do not have a matric certificate because they face "deeply entrenched homophobia and transphobia" (Kings, 2014), and a study by the GALA Queer Archives found that 20% of LGBTIQ+ teenagers had attempted suicide and a third had thought about taking their lives (Bloch & Martin, 2016).

5 In 2018, for instance, a teacher at a private school in Zimbabwe was forced to resign after he received death threats and pressure from parents after he came out as gay.

Concluding Remarks

Anti-gender efforts to overturn the current equal rights framework through their countermovement against SOGIE and women's rights must be taken seriously by academics and civil society. In reworking the concept of 'gender' to create the appearance that "gender ideology" is a new form of colonization, anti-gender activists also erase real forms of abuse that occurred as a result of colonialism. This ideological strategy is one indication that the scope of anti-gender activism is not limited to SOGIE and women's rights, but rather that they are interconnected with issues of the economy, immigration, the environment, indigenous rights, land rights, and militarization that also shape national and geo-political power relations. As right-wing interests come together through anti-gender campaigning, they are consolidating a political base that is eager to thwart the equal rights of other historically oppressed minority groups on the basis of their race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, class, disability, and age.

As this report has revealed, anti-gender efforts to erode SOGIE rights has strategically targeted queer and feminist knowledge production while simultaneously working to produce conservative knowledge that attempts to repair and restore male and heterosexual privilege and superiority. Feminist and LGBTIQ+ scholars have faced censorship, harassment, and exclusion from their institutions as a result of these developments.
In Gender Studies and other fields shaped by critical social theory, scholars are not only attacked for the knowledge they produce, but for the questions they ask (Quinn, 2019). In attempting to stop scholars from asking questions about sex and gender power relations, anti-gender activists are working to regain patriarchal authority to define what constitutes "legitimate" questions and questioning about society, ultimately shrinking the space of academic knowledge production and reversing the advancements made by critical social theory.

Scholars currently writing on academic freedom have emphasized that asking critical questions is a key purpose of academic work, particularly in its role of pushing knowledge forward. As Patrick Blessinger (Chief research scientist for the International Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association) and Hans de Wit (director of the Center for International Higher Education at Boston College, USA) write, "since higher education is, by definition, an environment where new knowledge is produced and consumed, it follows that the freedom to engage in intellectual inquiry is essential to the purpose of higher education, to the mission of higher education institutions and to the professional duties of those individuals involved in teaching, learning and research processes" (Blessinger & de Wit, 2018). Without academic freedom, therefore, critical thinking cannot be cultivated, and higher learning cannot be nurtured. Thus, academic freedom has been an integral part of higher education since its inception (ibid).

Challenges waged by populist movements against "gender theory" and Gender Studies scholars have been personal, political and professional, challenging the academic freedom of scholars who advance SOGIE rights through their research and teaching. These attacks therefore call into question not only the role of individual scholars, but the role of the university itself within the broader society. Globalization, social movements and democratization, economic liberalization in the form of competition and choice, the growth of national and international regulatory systems and government interest in higher education as a

means of advancing economic development have all deconstructed notions of the isolated ivory tower model of higher education (Brennan, King & Lebeau, 2004). Critical Theory has also played an integral role in revealing the porous boundaries not only between disciplines, but between the university and the society, widening the scope for socially engaged research and teaching. Moreover, as historically excluded groups (women, people of color and indigenous groups, LGBTIQ+ people, people with disabilities) have entered universities, they have levelled important critiques of the racism, hetero/sexism, ableism, and classism of higher education institutions and the oppressive forms of knowledge produced in these elite 'ivory towers'. Conservative challenges to policy-oriented and socially-engaged scholarship emerging from Gender Studies and related fields illustrates their wider objections to the changing role of universities as they become more socially engaged and relevant as well as "cosmopolitan", contributing not only sufficient numbers of professionals for the economy, but also having broader social relevance and impact (de la Rey, 2015).These broader transformations within higher education bring about the need for academic freedom policies to be revisited and revamped so that they are on par with expanding notions of academic research and its relationship to the broader society.

Currently, many academic freedom policies around the world focus largely on the physical space where ideas were articulated, their content, and/or audience, while relatively little attention is paid to the extent to which the work or statement adheres to the ethical and professional standards of the discipline (Quinn, 2019). In light of this shortcoming, Robert Quinn (Executive Director of the Scholars at Risk programme) proposes that a shift in focus towards the methods of inquiry and the discourses that certain knowledge advance, as well as their regard for professional and social responsibility, would enable Academic Freedom policies to address emerging challenges faced by academics. Such policies, he argues, would not place as much emphasis on where or how ideas were communicated, but their social impact. This view would therefore be more in tune with the role of modern universities, as well as related rights such as freedom of expression, and the right to education that arose out of the human rights movement as articulated in the 1994 UNESCO Statement on the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel, and others such as the Magna Carta Universitatum (1986), the Lima Declaration on Academic Freedom and Autonomy of Institutions of Higher Education (1988), and the Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility (1990) (ibid).

In addition to having implications for academic freedom, anti-gender campaigns to discredit Gender Studies and related fields have implications for the ability of LGBTIQ+ people to access education and to pursue intellectual projects that are relevant to our lives. These campaigns create unsafe and toxic environments for LGBTIQ+ teachers and learners where being "out" could be threatening to one's life and one's career. Advocacy around infrastructure and systems that are inclusive for non-binary and transgender individuals is also threatened by campaigns that are working to discredit so-called "gender theory".

Much remains to be said about the anti-gender movement and the global and local dimensions of its efforts to undermine Gender Studies and SOGIE and women's rights. Scholarship on the topic is burgeoning with rich and insightful analyses of anti-gender ideology, discourse, policy imperatives, and implications for LGBTIQ+ people, a great deal of which, regrettably, could not be included in this report but which readers are encouraged to seek out. Moreover, anti-gender activism is underway in many countries, not all of which could be discussed in depth here. Developments in these places and others are occurring daily, making the study of the anti-gender movement akin to taking a photograph of a moving object. Stories of LGBTIQ+ activists

being arrested and killed and anti-gay crackdowns happening around the world can regularly be found in media. At the time of finishing this report, a city in Indonesia announced a "crackdown" on LGBTIQ+ people, threatening police raids of places like shopping malls, boarding houses and private residences in search of LGBTIQ+ people who would be offered "religious counselling" in order to curb homosexual "contagion" (Souisa & Walsh, 2020).

Recommendations

The specific issue of academic freedom requires further attention in research into anti-gender movements around the world. As this report has attempted to show, the struggle over knowledge and authority of 'gender', 'sexuality', and 'family' is foundational to the heteropatriarchal relations of power that anti-gender discourse, ideology and strategy are working to promote: male privilege, power and control over women's bodies. Furthermore, it is important to investigate anti-gender knowledge production and the kinds of social imaginaries that the movement is working to foster. As this report has demonstrated, anti-gender attacks on SOGIE rights and academic freedom are becoming more prevalent globally, with far reaching effects and implications.

Through a focus on the case examples of anti-gender movements in Poland, Hungary, Brazil, and South Africa, it becomes clear that while there are notable differences between anti-gender campaigns in different parts of the world, the similarities between them are of great significance in understanding the ideology and underlying interests of the movement. Especially with regards to their attacks on academic freedom, the similarities between anti-gender movements taking shape globally are perhaps more remarkable than their variations. Beyond their shared language and concepts, there are key discursive threads and strategies that connect anti-gender opposition to Gender Studies and Comprehensive Sex Education.

For academics and activists, it is important to take note of anti-gender strategy, discourse, and ideology in order to make sense of, and counter, anti-gender efforts to erode SOGIE rights and academic freedom. In conclusion, I provide some recommendations to connect the findings from the research informing this report to SOGIE advocacy work within and beyond the academy:

1. Academic freedom policies need to be updated to reflect the contemporary role of the university within civil society, and should consider including protection for academics who pursue intellectual projects that address oppressive social dynamics.

2. Further research and investigation into the anti-gender movement is needed, as well research into the argument that the gender binary and nuclear family relates to colonial ideology. This requires networks for scholars to meet and share insights that can promote the advancement of theory and policy addressing anti-gender ideology and campaigns. Such research can provide information helpful to progressive policy makers who are encountering anti-gender advocacy in their contexts.

3. SOGIE activists, organizations and other civil society groups need to be made aware of anti-gender political discourse and strategy.

Greater awareness of the anti-gender movement will push forward the development of new strategies amongst LGBTIQ+ communities about the most effective ways of responding to attacks on SOGIE rights.

4. Scholars and civil society organizations should collaborate on campaigns to raise public awareness of the implications of anti-gender activism, not only for LGBTIQ+ communities, but for equal rights of women, racial and ethnic minorities, civil society, indigenous groups, and migrants.

5. Conversations about the ways in which academic freedom cannot be taken for granted need to be reinvigorated, and the higher education sector needs to take action against breaches to academic freedom. This could be achieved through dialogues, campaigns and through measures to protect scholars and students who face threats and restrictions to their work.

6. In order for higher education institutions to fulfill their potential of contributing to societal change, they should work actively against discrimination on the basis of SOGIE at their own institution. This should also be reflected in their expectations to higher education institutions they cooperate with.

The findings presented in this report indicate an overwhelming need for interventions that are both epistemic and political to address the need to foster already expanding social imaginaries of gender and sexuality diversity in order to achieve substantive SOGIE rights.

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