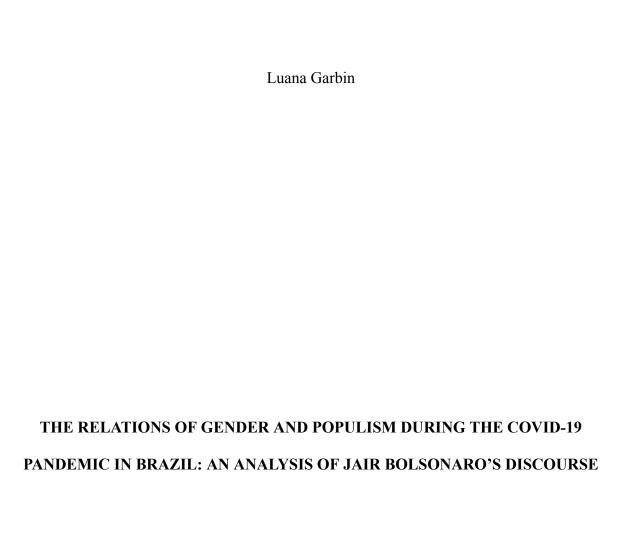UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA

CENTRO DE COMUNICAÇÃO E EXPRESSÃO

PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM INGLÊS: ESTUDOS LINGUÍSTICOS E LITERÁRIOS

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THE RELATIONS OF GENDER AND POPULISM DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN BRAZIL: AN ANALYSIS OF JAIR BOLSONARO'S DISCOURSE

Florianópolis

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Tese submetida ao Programa de Pós Graduação em Inglês da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina para a obtenção do título de Doutora em Inglês: Estudos da Linguagem.
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O presente trabalho em nível de doutorado foi avaliado e aprovado, em 09 de agosto de 2024, por banca examinadora composta pelos seguintes membros:

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Para Vera, Denise e Dirleu.

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Primeiramente gostaria de agradecer à minha querida mãe, Vera, para você dedico cada palavra escrita e história contada da sua filha de coração peludo. Para minha madrinha Denise e meu pai Dirleu, que partiram enquanto eu escrevia esta tese, não se passou um dia sem que eu não lembrasse de vocês.

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Durante o carnaval, um bom e libertador ataque de riso é capaz de enterrar a ostentação do poder, suas regras e suas pretensões.
(Os Engenheiros do Caos - Giuliano Da Empoli, p. 21)

RESUMO

A pandemia da COVID-19 evidenciou as relações de poder e formas de opressão presentes na sociedade. No Brasil, a forma de governo populista de direita do ex-presidente Jair Bolsonaro não apenas ceifou milhares de vidas, como também trouxe diversos obstáculos no que concerne as maneiras de conter os danos causados pela pandemia, em especial, à vida das mulheres brasileiras. O objetivo deste trabalho foi investigar como esse governo populista de direita impactou a vida das mulheres durante o período da pandemia. Para tanto, utilizei o modelo de Análise do Discurso Político desenvolvido por Van Dijk (1998) que consiste na análise linguística através das categorias tópico, semântica, estrutura, léxico, sintaxe e retórica, e também utilizei as perguntas propostas no modelo de Análise do Discurso Político de Fairclough e Fairclough (2012) para conduzir a discussão dos dados. Apesar de a pandemia ter sido considerada encerrada apenas em maio de 2023, os dados aqui trabalhados estão localizados durante o período de março a dezembro de 2020, e consistem em falas do ex-presidente Jair Bolsonaro, majoritariamente informais, públicas de livre acesso. Esse material está presente no estudo "Boletim Direitos na Pandemia nº10", realizado pela Cepedisa em parceria com o Conectas Direitos Humanos publicado em 2021. O documento, que buscou avaliar o impacto das medidas do governo sobre os direitos humanos, organizou em uma linha do tempo 3.049 normas federais relacionadas à COVID-19 acompanhadas por falas de Jair Bolsonaro. Os resultados deste estudo demonstram que o discurso do ex-presidente sobre a pandemia admitiu algumas características como: isenção de responsabilidade e sua atribuição a terceiros (governadores, prefeitos, os próprios cidadãos); propagação de informações falsas; ataques à esquerda, à comunidade científica e à imprensa. Os impactos desses discursos resultam no ataque à democracia, à categorização da esquerda, cientistas e jornalistas como inimigos da nação, e à valorização de uma agenda conservadora de direita. Esses impactos reforçam os papéis de gênero tradicionais, estabelecendo retrocessos e impedindo avanços nos direitos das mulheres.

Palavras-chave: Análise do Discurso Político. Populismo e Gênero. Coronavírus. Jair Messias Bolsonaro.

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the power relations and forms of oppression present in society. In Brazil, the right-wing populist government of former President Jair Bolsonaro not only claimed thousands of lives but also brought many obstacles in terms of ways to mitigate the damage caused by the pandemic, particularly to the lives of Brazilian women. The objective of this work was to investigate how this right-wing populist government impacted the lives of women during the pandemic period. In order to conduct this analysis, I relied on Van Dijk's (1998) model of Political Discourse Analysis, which consists of linguistic analysis through the categories of topic, semantics, superstructure, lexicon, syntax, and rhetoric, and also used the questions proposed in Fairclough and Fairclough's (2012) Political Discourse Analysis model to conduct the discussion of data. Although the pandemic was considered over only in May 2023, the data analyzed here is located during the period from March to December 2020 and consists of statements by former President Jair Bolsonaro, mostly informal, publicly accessible. This material is present in the study "Boletim Direitos na Pandemia nº10" (Rights in the Pandemic Bulletin No. 10), conducted by Cepedisa in partnership with Conectas Human Rights and published in 2021. The document, which sought to evaluate the impact of government measures on human rights, organized 3,049 federal norms related to COVID-19 in a timeline accompanied by statements from Jair Bolsonaro. The results of this study demonstrate that the former president's discourse on the pandemic exhibited some characteristics such as: exemption of responsibility and its attribution to others (governors, mayors, the citizens themselves); propagation of false information; and attacks on the left, the scientific community, and the press. The impacts of these discourses result in attacks on democracy, the categorization of the left, scientists, and journalists as enemies of the nation, and the promotion of a conservative right-wing agenda. These impacts reinforce traditional gender roles, establishing setbacks and hindering advances in women's rights.

Keywords: Political Discourse Analysis. Populism and Gender. Coronavirus. Jair Messias Bolsonaro.

LISTA DE QUADROS

LISTA DE ABREVIATURAS E SIGLAS

Anvisa - Agência Nacional de Vigilância Sanitária

CEPEDISA - Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas de Direito Sanitário

CDA - Critical Discourse Analysis

CGU - Controladoria Geral da União

COVID-19 - Coronavirus Disease of 2019

IDH - Índice de Desenvolvimento Humano

IPEA - Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada

MP - Ministério Público

ONU - Organização das Nações Unidas

PDA - Political Discourse Analysis

PT - Partido dos Trabalhadores

SBI - Sociedade Brasileira de Infectologia

STF - Supremo Tribunal Federal

SUS - Sistema Único de Saúde

TSE - Tribunal Superior Eleitoral

UNICEF - Fundo das Nações Unidas para a Infância

WHO - World Health Organization

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Chapter I

Introduction

Isso a que chamamos fato não será uma espécie de iceberg, quero dizer, uma coisa cuja parte visível corresponde apenas a um décimo de seu todo? Porque a parte invisível do fato está submersa nas águas dum torvo oceano de interesses políticos e econômicos, egoísmos e apetites nacionais e individuais, isso para não falar nos outros motivos e mistérios da natureza humana, mais profundos do que o mar.
Veríssimo, Érico. O Senhor Embaixador, 1965, p.4.

1. INTRODUCTION

I start this discussion by bringing up some hallmarks that were meaningful in the moment of choosing the topic of this research. The first project of this research dates back to 2019, a year when Brazilians were going through the first year of Jair Bolsonaro's mandate. At the same time, the population had no idea what would come in the future years of the mandate. At first, analyzing some discourses of the president during his mandate was the initial idea; however, 2020 came and, along with it, a pandemic.

During his mandate, the Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro has been found in several situations where institutional measures were questioned by the public, both people who were against his political campaign in 2018 and his own electors.

The government and how it came to the leading position of Brazil in 2018 has been drawn since the 2014 coup d'état against president Dilma Rousseff. This coup triggered several discussions in the areas of women's rights, gender studies and affirmative actions, for instance, the contents and agendas which were questioned during Dilma Rousseff's government and even presented as something to combat[1]. Moreover, in order to understand

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[1] In my master thesis I discuss how PSL, Bolsonaro's political party at the time, sees gender studies and affirmative actions. The content on the party's positioning is also available in their website: https://psl.org.br/

the political phenomena of Bolsonaro it is important to look at it from the perspective of a particular political theory that provides the mechanisms to comprehend the actions, intentions and measures of such a government, which is enlightened by the theories of populism, and more specifically, right wing populism.

It is known that discourse has the power of shaping and reproducing ideologies and beliefs, particularly political discourse, which has a characteristic influence on actions (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012). Interestingly, when studying political discourse, intersections with other fields emerge and enlighten the visualization of the interests and values in discourse, which is not always visible on the surface of discourse, as is the case with the object of study of this research.

I was able to experience some of the powerful influences of the ex-president's speech on a daily basis. In 2019, as an elementary teacher in a public school in a small city in Santa Catarina, the state where the ex-president Jair Bolsonaro had the biggest percentage of the votes[2] in the presidential elections of 2018, I could hear multiple statements that are reproductions of the president's speeches, either broadcasted on TV or even from his posts on X (at the time former Twitter). One example of discourse reproduction was the case of the fires in the Amazon Forest[3] in 2019, when the president made public statements blaming non-governmental organizations for the fire(s). During classroom work, my students were repeating the president's discourse, and when I questioned them about it, they could not develop an answer, but they were positive about the veracity of the assertions because the president had said so. Thus, what intrigued me was how oppressive and shallow assumptions could be accepted and easily reproduced, even by people who suffer from these assumptions but are somehow blind to them. Little did I realize that 2019 was only the beginning of a much bigger crisis that would commit Brazil and that the support claims that I heard regarding environmental issues would extend to cultural, economical, health, sanitary, and democratic issues in the following years. The problems were just beginning. What we faced after that was categorized by many authors as necropolitics (Castilho & Lemos, 2021; Safatle, 2020; Cueto, 2022).

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[2] Santa Catarina held 75,92% of Jair Bolsonaro's votes. Available in:
https://especiais.gazetadopovo.com.br/eleicoes/2018/resultados/mapa-eleitoral-de-presidente-por-estados-2turno/
[3] To know more of the fires in Amazon, see
https://sustentabilidade.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,o-que-esta-acontecendo-com-a-amazonia-em-dez-perguntas-e-respostas,70002982309

Furthermore, in August 2019, many public universities and federal institutions announced they were concerned about remaining open for the rest of that year due to a cut of 30% in federal funding for education.[4] Measures, such as canceling the vestibular of 2020, were proposed, among other possibilities. Progressive agendas and identity groups inside universities were attacked by this government since they represented the "lack of order in the country". They were even portrayed as the enemies to be stopped for having threatening positions against conservative parties/groups that were aligned with the government. Nevertheless, in 2019, Abraham Weintraub, the minister of education at the time, justified the cuts on education funding as a form of punishment for three federal universities, which, according to him, were not producing enough articles and scientific productions; instead, they were "messing around".[5]

Taking the aforementioned into consideration, we should consider that the attacks on universities, places of scientific production, are also attacks on the students that occupy these spaces. Among the groups that compose academic spaces are women, black, indigenous, and poor people, for example. These people are the ones who suffered the worst impacts of the funding' cuts since, unlike students with stable financial conditions, many of them come from a needy familiar context; thus, they depend on scholarships and socioeconomic assistance provided by universities to remain in their courses.

Another factor that is highlighted in this government is the impact its discourses have on the public. Since the beginning of the 2018 presidential campaign, it has been a struggle to have a dialogue with Jair Bolsonaro's voters. Running for the first round of the elections, there were 13 candidates, a feature that pluralized the discussions with multiple political views and different opinions. However, the repression coming from Jair Bolsonaro's voters, especially towards Fernando Haddad's (PT) voters, was harsh, and it intensified in the second round of the election. Anyone who would not vote for Jair Bolsonaro was generally called "petista" (members of Partido dos Trabalhadores), even though the number of spoilt votes in the second round was the biggest since 1989.[6]

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[4] Available in:https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/educacao/2019/05/bolsonaro-diz-que-corta-em-recursos-da-educacao-nao-e-feito-por-maldade.shtml. Access in September, 2020.

[5] Available in: https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/educacao/2019/04/mec-estende-corte-de-30-de-verbas-a-todas-universidades-federais.shtml. Access in October, 2020.

[6] The percentage of spoilt votes amounted to 7,4% with 8,6 million votes. Available in: https://g1.globo.com/politica/eleicoes/2018/eleicao-em-numeros/noticia/2018/10/28/percentual-de-voto-nulo-e-o-maior-desde-1989-soma-de-abstencoes-nulos-e-brancos-passa-de-30.ghtml. Access in September, 2020.

This generalized aversion to Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) can be explained by what the party represents. In the party's proposals, they include several policies and measures that benefit disenfranchised and marginalized groups (the working class and the poor, women, black people, LGBTs). The aversion to the party represents an aversion to these groups and progressivist agendas.

The set of actions and behaviors adopted by the government is not a coincidence. The attack on education, the environment, and specific groups within society who are fighting against the dismantling of public policies and democratic institutions is intentional and constitutes part of a plan by this far-right government. This discursive creation of a national enemy shows features of what scholars in the field of political science call populism (Laclau, 2005; Hawkings *et al.*, 2019).

Among several institutional measures and political positions from Bolsonaro's government that were criticized by the opposition since 2018, maybe the main one is the way the government dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering the examples previously given concerning the power and influence of the president as a populist politician, it is of extreme importance to investigate how his influence impacted the health, financial, and social crises occasioned by the pandemic. More importantly, it is essential to understand why and how a leader like Jair Bolsonaro is able to sustain his popularity and support even after thousands of lives were lost during the pandemic.

Furthermore, as I will discuss in the review of literature, the pandemic and its impacts affect women differently than men; thus, considering my interest on gender and political agendas, I intend to bring this topic into the analysis.

1.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

Besides being one of the most impactful events in the 21st century, the pandemic of coronavirus raised several discussions, not only from the perspective of a sanitary crisis but also on the social issues that were aggravated by it. It might seem redundant to talk about the importance of discussing the pandemic in this session due to the global damage experienced during the pandemic years, the irreparable losses, and the most challenging ways of adapting to a completely new scenario in the way of living that nobody was prepared to face, starting with isolation.

The research in the area of health and science regarding the virus were essential during the pandemic and will remain as important in the post-pandemic as well. In the same manner, studies in the areas of humanities are as vital, such as the work conducted in the areas of communication, linguistics, education, history, political science, law, psychology, and many others. The social and political movements during this period had a great impact on population interrelations, especially for those who go through financial vulnerability and social inequalities (Velloso *et al.*, 2021).

Besides the worldwide mayhem occasioned by the pandemic, such as millions of deaths, high rates of unemployment, financial crises, inflation, and others, here I call attention to the types of suffering women in particular went through during this period, and connected to this, the means by which the right wing populist Brazilian government aggravated contexts of violence against women (psychological or physical violence). According to Velloso *et al.* (2021), right wing governments omitted information, promoted distrust in the scientific community, and diminished the potential effects of the pandemic, which led to even more difficult management of the period, both in productive and reproductive life.

Four years have passed since the submission of the project for what is now this doctoral dissertation. I took into consideration the research from colleagues in other fields who also conducted research about the pandemic in their respective academic branches, such as political science, health, psychology, and reports published by activists of women's movements. All of these intersections were needed in order to comprehend what the COVID-19 pandemic was and how it has changed our lives economically, socially, culturally, and politically. As this dissertation was being written, there were many other studies in the aforementioned areas that were also being published and that contributed to the formulation of the discussion that I conduct here. Moreover, I dare to say that it would be very difficult to look at the discourses of Jair Bolsonaro without the scholars who pointed out the loopholes and taught history classes in academic articles in multidisciplinary areas. The academic collective, one of the targets of Jair Bolsonaro's government, was what made this and many other studies possible.

The significance of this research primarily addresses how necessary it is to bring to the surface the damages caused by the discourse of the ex-president Jair Bolsonaro and how his policies and actions extended a period of extreme suffering for Brazilian people, and women in particular. However, it is of equal importance that we dig for hidden objectives and hideous

government strategies that might not have a clear plan for the future but that surely have victims both in the present and in the times to come.

What many authors have discussed in common is the change in national politics: a new politics. Furthermore, even after the disaster of the administration during the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil, marked by the outrageous number of deaths, placing Brazil in the second collocation of countries with the biggest number of deaths[7], Bolsonaro remained with the support of the population, a fact that has intrigued researchers in the area of political science and contemporaneous philosophers[8]. In addition to that, in the presidential elections of 2022 in Brazil, Bolsonaro also ran in the second round of the elections against the candidate of PT Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, when he lost with a short difference in votes, 58.206.354 votes, against 60.345.999 of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Considering this high level of support and validation from the population, we can see that the pandemic was not reason enough to convince a large part of Brazilians that such conduct is unacceptable. This phenomenon was called resilience of power by Miguel Lago (2022), a strategy of modern populism, and it will be discussed in the chapter on theoretical background in this dissertation.

Thus, when we look at the context of the pandemic, the discourse strategies of the right wing representative, the rise of authoritarian power, the attacks on the constitution, and the strategic deathly administration, it is important to understand Bolsonaro and the movement that gained strength through his representation in association with a process of corrosion of laws and institutions (Bignotto, 2022). Research is needed to unveil such programs because political figures like Bolsonaro can be only the tip of the iceberg, which means that the destruction plan does not go away with the end of the mandate, even with the win of a candidate of the center-left. The purpose of this regime is long term based; Bolsonaro was not a single event in Brazil, and it is important that the scientific community investigate the mechanisms of this machinery that can and will harm democratic institutions and the parts of the population who are not aligned with it.

Finally, studying the language as a powerful tool that gives format to the administration of this destruction plan reveals two aspects of the political emergency that is approaching us: the first is to understand that there will be a moment when the violence in

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[7] This data concerns the statistics from 2021. It is available in: https://especiais.gazetadopovo.com.br/coronavirus/casos-no-mundo/

[8] According to data from Datafolha, released in May of 2021, around 24% of Brazilians still support the government of Jair Bolsonaro. Available in: https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2021/05/datafolha-aprovacao-a-bolsonaro-recua-seis-pontos-e-chega-a-24-a-pior-marca-do-mandato-rejeicao-e-de-45.shtml

speech will leave the vocabular spectrum and be transferred to political violence. The second is looking at this language as a symptom of the conditions in which Brazilian democracy is currently found (Starling *et al*., 2022). To understand this language means to understand how it threatens civilizational values such as literacy, knowledge, and culture.

1.2 OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

During the mandate of Jair Bolsonaro, a crucial event took place around the world, which was the COVID-19 pandemic. It is understandable that the pandemic caught the whole world at once, and all governments had to promptly come up with solutions and alternatives to diminish the impacts of the disease. However, as the pandemic progressed, the frightening numbers of people infected and killed, some measures were expected from the governors.

This research aims at revealing and comprehending the means through which the former Brazilian president, Jair Messias Bolsonaro, addresses the problems and solutions regarding the pandemic of COVID-19 in Brazil. I intend to investigate how the problems caused by the pandemic are addressed to society, individuals, and, more specifically, how it affects women.

Considering this, now I present the three main objectives of this research and the research questions that guide the analysis:

1- To investigate the correlation between gender and right-wing populism amidst the pandemic in Brazil, discussing the repercussions of Jair Bolsonaro's rhetoric and actions during the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil on gender dynamics, fostering a comprehensive understanding of their implications.

2- To unveil and depict through linguistic analysis what were some of the underlying objectives of Jair Bolsonaro's government during the specified timeframe. What are the values and goals of the agent?

3- To investigate the construction of right-wing populist discourse, specifically focusing on polarized argumentation concerning themes related to the pandemic.

In this sense, I bring now three research questions to guide this research:

1- What are the defining framings of women's issues and family values in the president's speech and how are they connected to the pandemic?

2- In what ways do extreme right populist discourses influence dominant positions towards gender roles during the pandemic of COVID-19 in Brazil?

3- How do differences in ideology manifest themselves in the president's speech that can impact gender issues in the pandemic?

1.3 ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation is organized in six chapters. The first chapter is where I introduce the topic of this study, the relevance of the study, and the objectives and research questions that guide the research.

In the sequence, in chapter II, I bring the contextualization of the theme of this dissertation, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Brazilian scenario. I also bring theories that ground the discussions here presented, which are: populist theories, political discourse analysis, and gender theory.

In Chapter III, I explain the methodology used to conduct the analysis. I begin with the exposition of the data, how I selected it, and where it comes from. In this chapter, I also develop the theoretical frameworks that are used in the following chapter.

Chapter IV is where I conduct the linguistic analysis of this research according to Van Dijk's (1998) model for the analysis of political discourse.

In Chapter V, I provide the discussions based on the questions proposed by Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) concerning political discourse. Apart from these questions answered, there are two other subsections in this chapter where I discuss in more detail two central points of this dissertation, which are (1) the populist right wing discourse of Bolsonaro and (2) how women were affected during this period in cause of this government.

Finally, in Chapter IV, I begin with a section where I briefly mention some important political updates that happened after 2020. I present the limitations of research and the suggestions for further research. I also revisit and answer my research questions. To conclude, my last section is to discuss the political and pedagogical implications of this study.

Chapter II
Theoretical Background

Tchau, querida.
31 de Agosto de 2016.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this chapter, I present the two main theories that guide this work, which are Political Discourse Analysis and Populism Theory. In the first section, where I present PDA, I explain features of PDA, its relation with CDA and what defines a specific discourse as political. I intend to show the dimensions of this discourse and the circumstances that surround it. The same is conducted with the section on populism. The other sections and subsections of this chapter aim at contextualizing the themes of this research: the Brazilian political scenario, Jair Bolsonaro, the COVID-19 pandemic, and gender.

Having presented the main analytical lenses that guide this dissertation, the theories of other areas of political science come together with an explanation of a series of events that happened in Brazilian politics since the beginning of the twenty first century that explain how we arrived at the current political scenario. My explanation of the narration of events comes together with scholar's analyses of the period, and many of these scholars are from the field of political science or even philosophers of contemporaneous politics. In this literature, there are connections with foreign politics that help understand how the political phenomenon of contemporaneous right wing populism is shaped and reproduced in Brazil, also because there are relationships between the great political representatives of this model of politics, such as Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro, for example. Although foreign politics is not part of this study, the comprehension of the given phenomenon on international grounds enlightens the discussion on complex ideologies that have shaped how socioeconomically vulnerable classes and disprivileged people arrived in the compactuation of a government that sees them as a target of destruction. Furthermore, as Nobre (2022) points out, the authoritarian behavior of Jair Bolsonaro was what gave Brazil entry into a global movement that he calls *internacional autoritária*. The explanations regarding class, meritocracy, and demagogic speeches will be connected with political events and with the pandemic in the course of this chapter.

2.1 POLITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Following Critical Discourse Analysis's tenets and also tapering its framework, Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) is committed to analyzing political arguments in order to understand the reasons for actions and the agent's goals and values (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012).

The integration of PDA came along with the need to incorporate an approach into CDA that is able to provide an analysis of practical argumentation. The analysis of discourse in this approach appears through materials such as government reports, the government's responses to economic crises, parliamentary debates, public debates on different social issues, internet discussion forums, and newspaper articles, among others.

Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) claim that political discourse is based on practical argumentation. The authors explain this by relating politics to choice-making. That is, each political scenario that requires decision-making, and consequently the goals and values backgrounded in it, will justify the actions that are taken. For example, the creation of a law will take into consideration the circumstances of its existence as well as who will benefit from it. That is, its creation is based on a goal and a value.

Investigating the political choices of how to take action in a certain situation is one of the interests of this kind of analysis. This includes what is done during a crisis, which answers to the problems are proposed and why they eliminate other alternatives while a "best solution" prevails. Bringing this closer to my own research, that justifies my choice of analyzing the Brazilian president's decisions during the pandemic and how they impact women in particular.

Political Discourse Analysis also analyzes patterns of choices and strategies taken by the social agents involved. According to Fairclough and Fairclough, "structures provide agents with reasons for action" (2012, p. 12), which means that the argumentative analysis of the political speech is capable of eliciting the bonds between the agent and the circumstances. Similar to CDA, PDA aims to understand power relations embedded in agents' reasoning processes, that is, the particular interests of social groups. The questions addressed to understand these hidden interests are similar: which types of ideologies, manipulation, and dominance are being held in the discourse.

Although the interests of these two areas converge, especially regarding the unveiling of power relations, Fairclough and Fairclough bring to their work Van Dijk's definition for Political Discourse Analysis, whose focus is the "reproduction and contestation of political power through political discourse" (p. 17). Inevitably, the analysis of political discourse includes political actors and political institutions in all instances, as well as the political processes and events where these actors are found. That is, the context, in its turn, is essential to making sense of political discourse.

Furthermore, political discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary area that can profit from being in dialogue with areas such as political science, even though it keeps its feature of discursive analysis. For PDA, it is of central importance that the purpose of political actions be analyzed in terms of the structure of the political argument: what is the aim of the speech? Who is it trying to reach? Why? Is the argument trying to prove its truth? These answers can be found through systematic language analysis that is applied through PDA and that lacks, in a thorough linguistic level, in social science fields, for instance. By grasping the argumentative elements of political texts, it is possible to be aware of the political strategies that compose them.

Although there are overall considerations about what is political discourse analysis, there is a deeper intrinsic concept that demands definition as well. That is the definition of political discourse. Such a definition has branches in the field of political science and still has multiple explanations. Due to the urge to establish this significant part of PDA, Van Dijk (1998) writes a paper to elucidate these questions and begins by raising the discussion of which type of discourse can be considered political. To begin with, Van Dijk reinforces that PDA is a branch of CDA, and even though the designation *critical* is replaced by *political*, the approach is still critical. Seeking to emphasize this bonding, he uses the term critical-political discourse analysis as a tool to study the "reproduction of political power, power abuse, or domination through political discourse, including the various forms of resistance or counter-power against such forms of discursive dominance." (p. 1). Thus, the purpose is also to reveal the ways in which these practices result in social and political inequalities.

Considering the aforementioned, I now move on to the discussion of what constitutes political discourse. Van Dijk (1998) draws some parallels that go beyond the connection of political discourse with a political actor. Instead, he calls attention to the contexts where political discourse takes shape, which also include political discourse produced by people who are not necessarily politicians. One example is texts/speeches made by feminists, black,

indigenous activists, for instance, who produce political discourse, and yet, are not politicians or agents with the power to formulate laws and rule a mandate in a federal position, for example (unless, of course, they pass through the election process). For this reason, Van Dijk (1998) argues that context is an ally when the matter is defining political discourse. The definition of context brought by the author includes events that result in political implications, that have goals and intentions. Some examples are: "cabinet meetings, parliamentary sessions, election campaigns, rallies, interviews with the media, bureaucratic practices, protest demonstrations, and so on" (p. 14).

Once the domains of political discourse are settled, Van Dijk lists a few categories within the domain of politics and a brief description of each category, since a more thorough definition of each category would be more accurate in the field of political science. Those are: Domain: Politics; System: Democracy; Institution: Parliament; Values and ideologies: Democracy, group and party ideologies; Organizations: Political parties, lobbyists; Political actors: Members of parliament, cabinet ministers; Political relations: Legislative power; Political process: Legislation; Political action: Political decision-making; Political cognitions: Attitudes about the relevant issue (e.g. about abortion, affirmative action or nuclear energy). (Van Dijk, 1998, p. 19)

The delimitations provided by the author help readers make sense of the categories and the applicable synonyms that fit each of them. The categories are not meant to be concrete or delimitate the field; on the contrary, they aim to guide the comprehension of each sphere in the political domain. An important aspect regarding the nature of the discourse, whether it is official or non-official, is also mentioned by the author. According to the author, non-official discourses play a role as important as the official ones because of the consequences of the act after being published by the media. The data that composes the analysis of this dissertation, for example, is extraoficial and still political. That is, it opens space for criticism from the opposition, which can possibly result in political decision-making or change. Furthermore, considering that discourses carry goals, the author stresses that discourses that carry political goals should also be interpreted as political (e.g., campaigns, speeches whose aim is getting votes, announcements in view of elections). In this sense, he points out an important aspect amidst categories of goals, which is the hierarchy of goals. One example of what he describes as a hierarchy of goals is media discourse, because they might bring political news, but the first goal is, supposedly, to broadcast rather than specifically achieving a political goal.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, political discourse analysis intersects with other areas, such as political science. In order to make sense of the political phenomenon that happens in Brazilian politics, I use in this dissertation the concept of populism, which is also explained later in this chapter. However, before I go into this discussion, I decided to present a brief exposition of facts that were of main importance for the political configuration of the country during the moment that this work was produced. I do not intend to provide the philosophical and sociological explanations of the facts in detail, although they are very deeply discussed in the research of political science. My objective with the following section is to locate this research in a timeline that builds the circumstances of collapse that we lived in 2019[9] with the arrival of Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency and in 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The section that follows can be considered an introduction to the ones coming after. Although in this dissertation I do not explore deeply emotions such as resentment, rage, and hate and their impact on demagogue and populist discourse, feelings are common topics in the main readings involving populist discourse and the art of convincement (Cassimiro and Lynch, 2022; Nobre, 2022; Starling, 2022). Thus, I do not intend to extend on this next topic, but I do find it relevant to briefly point out some relations between resentment and political action. In order to do that, I found this parallel made with the American Dream, explained by Tyson (1999), to be a good start to understanding this phenomenon.

2.2 CONSIDERATIONS ON RESENTMENT

Among the several topics discussed within political theories, Tyson (1999) discusses the role of ideology from a Marxist perspective. The first aspect of ideology is that it is not perceived as an ideology but as a natural way of looking at the world. She raises a common example of what is today a watershed in capitalist society, which is the resentment of the middle class against the poor. The reason for such bitterness relies on the middle-class tax money that is reversed into the creation of welfare programs that support the poor in many

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[9] I understand that the construction of the chaos in politics and democratic institutions in Brazil dates from before 2018, and that Bolsonaro, alone, was not the only reason for this political collapse that happened in the country, but for this research, I limited the precedent facts up to the Jornadas de Junho that happened in 2013. In order to read more about the combination of factors that placed Bolsonaro in the presidency, see Nobre (2022).

instances. In Brazil, for example, we have Auxílio Brasil[10], Auxílio Emergencial[11], among others. I brought these two examples because they were the target of criticism from (a part of) the middle-class in Brazil over the past years. Auxílio Brasil has been criticized since its creation because it is perceived by a part of society as a crutch used by the poor to not put in enough effort to not rely on the program. Auxílio Emergencial, in particular, was involved in large discussions regarding who really deserved to earn it or not. The problem embedded in this situation, which the middle class is not able to discern, is that the poor are not the ones in the position to establish tax payments; the wealthy are. They decide how much and how the taxes will be distributed. Furthermore, the poor receive only an unassuming share of the funds attributed to them; the big amount goes to the wealthy, who are the ones that manage social services, and the middle-class employees that work in this area. Pointing out these factors, Tyson (1999) questions what the bandages are that prevent the middle-class from perceiving the socioeconomic inequalities, in this case, in the United States of America. She interrogates and promptly answers with the well known concept: the American Dream.

The American Dream is, in simple words, the concept of meritocracy, which is the capitalist tool to withdraw responsibility from the state and throw it directly at people's individuality, regardless of their background. The idea draws a conceptual map that, on one side, praises success as a result of hard work, and at the bottom, there is its opposite, laziness, where the poor are. This means that every person in miserable conditions (financially, socially, or mentally) is in such conditions due to their own unique choice. What this system fails to understand, and it seems to transmit this misunderstanding to others, is that the bare conditions to leave this chain of misery are part of an endless circle (e.g., in order to get a job, it is required to have an address and a minimum level of stability, but there are some people who do not have even the bare minimum).

Tyson's critique on the American dream from the marxist point of view also dismistifies it as an ideal. According to her, "when an ideal functions to mask its own failure, it is a false ideal, or false consciousness, whose real purpose is to promote the interests of those in power" (p. 55). She makes an analogy between the American dream and the lottery,

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[10] During the mandate of Jair Bolsonaro, Auxílio Brasil was the former Bolsa Família, a program instituted in Lula's mandate. The program aims to support families in financial vulnerability with social assistance, health, education, and job offers. It assures the families a basic income with the objective of making them autonomous.To see more about the program, go to https://www.gov.br/cidadania/pt-br/auxilio-brasil.

[11] Auxílio Emergencial was a government measure created during the pandemic of COVID-19 to assure Brazilians in financial vulnerability a minimum income. To see the regulations of the program, visit the official website https://www.gov.br/cidadania/pt-br/servicos/auxilio-emergencial.

since the chances to achieve it are very few, but the catch is in the hope of being chosen out of millions of people. This gives people the illusion that they have the same chances as the wealthy, considering that "luck" does not take into consideration if people have the same financial stability, health care conditions, purchasing power, etc. People just need to work hard, and they will accomplish their objectives, as a moral reward.

There are other elements that assure the ideology of the American dream, which is the same that keeps those in power in the same position. The first is *classism,* whose principles claim that people's character is tied to their social status. That is, a person's politeness, charisma, and agreeableness are compatible with their success in life, whereas all the negative adjectives are attributed to those who failed in their socioeconomic status. It is not surprising that prestigious positions are, in their majority, held by the high social class, because, as Tyson claims, "they are naturally suited to such roles and are the only ones who can be trusted to perform them properly." (p. 56).

An equal endeavor of brainwashing is *patriotism,* which puts poor people of a country against poor people of other countries, deviating the attention of a broader class that is constantly massacring the poor. According to Tyson, patriotism is a well thought tool to deviate the attention of the poor from the exploitation they suffer in their own country because it creates an illusion to worship what is national when actually the national fails to provide fair living conditions to its people in need. Thus, patriotism ends up creating a shield against a "rebellion" of the poor to create a union and fight against the privileged classes.

Another powerful ideology, possibly the most powerful one, that carries masses is *religion.* One of the most abstract kinds of reward is assured by religion, due to the good deeds you do on Earth, you will be guaranteed a spot in heaven. This means that people (including the poor) should be grateful for what they have (even if this is sometimes less than the minimum), and actions such as donation and charity are encouraged by Christian beliefs. As Tyson claims, a part of the wealthiest population of the world takes advantage of these beliefs to profit. Furthermore, the principles disseminated through this ideology have been applied in hideous forms of oppression such as enslavement and minority subordination.

Last but not least, there are the concepts of *individualism* and *consumerism*, two tenets that incite competition by exceeding working hours or working at all costs. They are both strongly bonded to the concept of the American dream previously mentioned. The power of such ideologies is able to create a kind of race impossible to win when on one side there are

the wealthy people, who buy and squander fancy lifestyles, and on the other side there are the poor, who are convinced that if they possess what the rich do, they will be more valuable.

There are several other ideologies capable of influencing (and blinding) people concerning the multiple ways they are exploited. The point is that we are constantly encouraged to forget that we are being managed by a macro capitalist structure through many economic circumstances, and we blame the wrong majority for the slanderous living conditions caused by the few bearers of power.

Departing from this explanation proposed by Tyson, the following section approaches populism and subsequently provides an overview of populism in Brazil. With the explanation of resentment presented above, I expect to be able to highlight its connection with the populist discourse, since it is part of the features that compose this way of governing.

2.3 POPULIST THEORY

Populism can accommodate both far left and far right political ideologies; the difference that tells them apart will be defined by the ideologies, values, and objectives portrayed in the discourse. Features such as anti immigration discourse, the overvaluing of the family structure, and national sovereignty are punctual aspects of right wing populism (Turner, 2019). In this research, I am interested in the far-right perspective of populism, considering the Brazilian government and the populist figure ahead of it in the period of 2018 - 2022, Jair Messias Bolsonaro.

One of the main pillars of populism is the power of polarization. While defending one ideology and claiming that there is one common good for the people, populist leaders build a net of contempt towards their opponents, and this type of speech can easily become a hate discourse, which is also viral among the supporters of populist politicians (Laclau, 2005). Polarization also has the power to influence moral standards between antagonist groups that hardly ever reach a common sense within a discussion, which leads to a well-known facet of populism, which is the so called "us X them"[12].

Another strategy used by populist politicians is to encourage people to engage in political discussions, which can be dangerous considering the generalized feelings of mistrust

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[12] Although in this research the term us x them will only be used to talk about political connotations, the term is also discussed in the psychology field and shares the same meaning. According to psychology, humans are likely to behave hostilely towards a very contrastive point of view. This report explains more about the issue: https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/finding-new-home/201908/the-psychology-us-vs-them

people have towards politicians and politics, and thus, it is easier for some to move to an extremist type of speech, and call it an opinion (Gidron and Bonikowski, 2013).

In the context of a health crisis, when every decision should aim at the welfare of the population in general, populist discourse can be threatening since it indicates an enemy to combat, and the construction of this enemy is orchestrated by the populist leader, regardless of the coherence of the explanation that justifies the "threat". In Brazil, some of the polarized discourses during the pandemic involved the use of masks, the lockdown of schools and businesses in general, and vaccination, for example. The beginning of the pandemic was marked by many contradictions about what the virus was and what the disease could cause in the short and long term. During the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, a lot of information was propagated without scientific evidence, which led to ungrounded conclusions about how to deal with the critical moment.

Among the features of populist discourse, the spread of fake news is a political strategy due to its viral characteristic, which has a highly manipulative outcome for the interlocutor of the messages. Furthermore, as a strategy of populism, fake news works as an undemocratic strategy to get to power. These two sides of a coin between antagonist groups - the people and the enemy—are called by Laclau (2005) the *political frontier*. In the current Brazilian scenario, the political context drawn by the government of Bolsonaro indicates that "the people" is represented by his supporters and the enemy is the opposition. This antagonism is discussed more thoroughly in the next sessions of this work, but just as an example, while in 2018 during the presidential campaigns the enemies of the greater good were depicted as people who voted for PT (Partido dos Trabalhadores), in 2020 the enemies are those who are prioritizing public health over economic interests by defending the vaccine and social isolation. Again, it is possible to view antagonists' sides in a situation where a leader's discourse can have a great impact on the measures and decisions made during this critical period.

In the field of politics, antagonisms will take place in all discussions, and the need to remain critical relies as a strength, as Brown (2019) suggests: "Critical theory is essential in dark times not for the sake of sustaining utopian hopes, making flamboyant interventions, or staging irreverent protests, but rather to contest the very senses of time invoked to declare critique untimely." (p. 4). Moreover, these antagonisms are driven by the political representatives and adopted by the receptors, in this case, the electorate. The strength in this combination relies on the fact that the new electorate is not only the receptor of messages but

also the promoter of such messages, and together they produce an antagonic force capable of rejecting and boycotting the progressist field (Starling *et al.*, 2022).

In the same manner, power in a populist discourse relies on the political antagonism created around the idea of a collective, which is constructed by the political discourse that carries ideologies, transmits emotions, and provides symbols to be followed. Thus, populism is not primarily concerned with representing people according to their needs. Rather, its objective is to give shape to people's ideals and opinions (Azzarello, 2011). Right-wing populism is dedicated to nurturing the field for the "right" creation of opinion, which, according to Lago (2022), finds a prominent space through social media. At the same time that social media invites people to express themselves and their opinions and express violent speeches under the protection veil of "freedom of speech", it also creates a fertile space for antiestablishment types of speech, which is an extremely important valve in populist discourse.

Furthermore, the importance of cultural symbols within populism plays a significant role due to their relationship with the public. That is, if people recognize themselves in the symbols reproduced by populism, it is more likely that they will positively correspond and compactuate with the determined ideology proposed by the speaker, in this case, the politician. In this manner, populist symbolism is able to create a social structure and an ideal collective model. The symbols are constructions of the main elements that compose populism:

> 1. despise and even hate towards the elites; 2. a strong anti corruption rhetoric; 3. anti-system discourse based on the appeal to the people as a whole; 4. cultural (or religious) conservatism; 5. economic egalitarianism; 6. rhetorical anti-capitalism; 7. assumed nationalism; 8. xenophobic behavior and speeches; 9. contradictory public policies (when in government); 10. a foreign policy and an alliance system that is also anti-system (Taranu, 2015, p. 66)

Considering the elements of populism, and here I refer to right-wing populism, it is important to discuss the impact of political discourse, and the bonds created through this discourse, during this pandemic period. In Brazil, the relationship between Bolsonaro's supporters and the government during the pandemic was strong enough to sustain his mandate until the end, avoiding an impeachment and guaranteeing his space in the second round of the 2022 elections (Nobre, 2022). As mentioned before, now they are not only the previous

anti-PT voters from 2018, their identity is also built over negationist, moralist, and conservative values, values that are mirrored in the ex-president's speeches. Laclau and Mouffe (2001) discuss the identity of political subjects and how new identities can emerge through antagonistic relationships with new forms of subordination, which are built upon capitalist relations of production and the constant intervention of the state. Bringing this thought to the political scenario and the discourses that are being drawn upon the pandemic status, it is possible to notice a rupture in the real interests of citizens. Bolsonaros' statements at first were against the lockdown and the isolation, including from work, and then as the quarantine continued, the arguments evolved to questioning the efficacy of the vaccine.

Another concern regarding the impact of Bolsonaro's discourse in this critical time is the responsibility of the subjects themselves. For example, when Bolsonaro encourages families to take responsibility for their own[13] (e.g., children and elderly people), but they also need to go to work to keep the capitalist wheel spinning. We see ourselves in a difficult situation, because at the same time, people need to protect their own, but they are also the ones responsible for going to work to bring home food.

In dark times, critique opens the eye to veiled forms of sovereignty which are masked with optimism and promises of modernity (Brown, 2019). It is a natural process of human beings to trust and expect that governors will not do us wrong; we hold hands with the state while the maintenance of neoliberalism and forms of oppression and subordination are being consolidated. In Brown's words, "Critical theory in dark times thus affirms the times, renders them differently, reclaims them for something other than the darkness. In this sense, critical theory in dark times is a singular practice of *amor fati*."[14] (p. 16). Thus, we need to be alert in regards to the laws proposed, the news disseminated, the practices advised, and the principles preached as democratic promises.

To conclude, in this section I aimed to bring the main concepts on the issue of Populist Theory, in order to provide an initial understanding of its impact as political force and strategy. In the sequence, I bring the "applied" populism, considering the Brazilian scenario.

2.3.1 Populism in Brazil: a case study

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[13] Bolsonaro claims that people should go to work, and also take care of their elders, the only ones who should be in social isolation, according to the president.
https://valorinveste.globo.com/mercados/brasil-e-politica/noticia/2020/03/25/bolsonaro-diz-que-e-preciso-botar-esse-povo-para-trabalhar.ghtml
[14] Amor fati is a term used by Nietzsche that comes from Latin; it means to love fate regardless of what happens.

The populist approach can be interposed in such a way that it refuses the institutions and actors who interpose between the people and the political representative. The concept of populism is polissemic, and it can be approached in both positive and negative manners. For example, on the one hand, contemporaneous[15] populism can be seen as a phenomenon that allows the possibility of the creation of democratic projects because it gives the people space to be active in political action, and on the other hand, populism can be seen as the pernicious tool that harms and threatens this democracy (Cassimiro and Lynch, 2022).

Laclau (2005) argues that populism consists of two main sides: on one side, privileged people, who are the enemies to combat; and on the other side, common people, a great majority, who are oppressed by certain enemies. The latter are not always the most privileged people in a society. Instead, rich people can also be construed as oppressed by 'privileged' ones, for example. Naturally, who is the enemy and who is not is settled according to specific contexts. For instance, during the mandate of Jair Bolsonaro, 'privileged groups' were defined differently from what we normally interpret a group as privileged, such as white, male, heterosexual, and rich, for example. The privileged groups included people who would be contemplated by any type of quota or government social support. In the same way, the national enemy would be represented by the left. The features assigned to this enemy are that it is responsible for many of the miseries in the country (e.g., national debt, inflation, unemployment, and violence). Headlines such as "PT destroyed Brazil" were commonly heard in popular conversation.

For this work, I am interested in the relations between populist discourse and gender in the Brazilian context. Considering this, it is important to state that Jair Bolsonaro's government is grounded on conservative ideologies that were used during the presidential campaign and that contained characteristics of populism, such as the idea of Us X Them, where "us" is composed by the "good citizens", white, Christian, and heterosexual, while "them" is represented by the 'privileged people', for example, people who have been benefited by affirmative actions, a policy that is rejected by Jair Bolsonaro. The conservative features of this discourse can impact the progress in gender agendas since the progressist side that is responsible for carrying out advancements in the area is placed on the "them" spectrum of this polarity.

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[15] Contextualizing the concept in an objective timeline, Cassimiro and Lynch (2022) point out that contemporaneous populism comes from the beginning of the political cycle marked by globalization in 1980, which was also marked by the terrorist attacks of 2001 and the economic crises of 2008, facts that exposed the economic status of western society, characterized by low development, high levels of social and economic inequalities, and the state's debts.

One factor that demonstrated the phenomenon of "us X them" in Brazil and had a great influence on 2018's political campaigns was the significant spread of fake news. This mechanism can be interpreted as a political strategy since its viral characteristic had a manipulative outcome for the electorate. Furthermore, as a strategy of populism, fake news works as an undemocratic strategy to get to power. From a political point of view, fake news is justified since they are   part of a "bigger plan" and are accepted because they represent a means to "save the people " from a minority elite (Hawkings and Silva, 2019). Considering that what is an elite within populism depends on unique contexts of situations, in the Brazilian context, this elite would be represented by the so-called "communists" and anyone who benefits from public policies or who is involved in social activism.

The populist figure who is the focus of this research, the ex-president Jair Bolsonaro, was able to portray the populist phenomena in such a way that he became the "us" integrated into the people in a very non-traditional way. Fisher and Vaz (2020) analyzed the imagery of Bolsonaro through his Instagram page, investigating how he decided to present himself to Brazil and how the response of the public (through thousands of likes and comments) only confirmed the efficiency of this strategy (besides the confirmation that came through his election with over 51 million votes).

Firstly, the president did not demonstrate any embarrassment whatsoever by showing his life as a common Brazilian man. Fisher and Vaz claim that his pictures on his social media, filled with daily routine content, were mechanisms that made his followers believe that he was indeed a common person like themselves and, more importantly, a trustworthy man. Many of his Instagram posts went viral and became the content of news and website reports, a fact that gave him a lot of visibility in the media. By adopting the image of a "regular" person, he passed the message that he would not betray his people because he was one of them, unlike the traditional politicians who also presented themselves in a very formal way, even on social media. This was one of the steps to earn people's trust to then move on to the next level, which was convincing people that they were being fools for decades during PT's mandate. According to Fisher and Vaz, the ideology atmosphere was based upon an imaginary that gains strength with the abomination of the party (PT), whether they are grounded in corruption statements or related to social and democratic achievements during the period that PT's governors were in charge of the country.

After being presented as a trustworthy man, it was time to run for the legitimate occupation of the presidency in 2018. Two of the most important populist strategies at the

time of the 2018 elections were: (1) the spread of fake news, mostly against PT, whose content was an attack on a broader cause, which is education. One example was the spread of the fake news story "kit gay", which was a grotesque fake news story that claimed that sexuality (homosexuality) would be taught in schools through books, and (2) the co-option of those who were not contemplated by PT's measures.[16] Time passed, and during the mandate of Jair Bolsonaro, fake news and the polarization against the left remained strong elements in Bolsonaro's discourse during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was able to influence the population's acknowledgement of safety measures and the government's actions to diminish the impacts caused by the pandemic.

Fisher and Vaz (2020) assert that the existence of *bolsonarismo* was strongly affirmed because it was opposite to the "intellectualized left". The authors claim that the strengths of *bolsonarismo* flourished in the concept of transmitting a message of difference: different from traditional politics, governed by intellectual politicians whose reality was far away from the people. The erudite left became the target of this new model of politics, led by the figure of the "regular man," Bolsonaro. The depiction of the left was built on the claims of corruption and objectives to harm the traditional and conservative values of family, religion, among others.

Authors like Bignotto (2022) have discussed the phenomenon of Bolsonaro as something that gave space to a new form of populism, in particular, right-wing populism, such as the one of Trump in the United States and Bolsonaro in Brazil. The author claims that in the context of the pandemic, these governments acted on behalf of a "coverage" that aimed at limiting the negative perception of the population about the effects of the pandemic and its wrecking movement. This mask was drawn upon the inactivity of governance, the lack of implementation of sanitary measures, and even discourses that were against the combat of the disease. Instead of promoting concrete combat agendas, these governments focused on rhetoric committed to spreading nonsense messages such as "face the pandemic like a man," which brought no solution at all to the concrete problems people were facing at the time.

The distinction of "Us X Them" is also present in discourse, not because there is a coherent segregation but because this argument is attractive to radical supporters. In Brazil, the appealing reference is to the danger of communism. The national enemy (communism or communists) is the target of inflamed and violent threats, without any shame or contention of

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[16] I understand that there is a conjunction of factors that led to Jair Bolsonaro's presidency in 2018, which I intend to discuss throughout this dissertation. The other two elements presented by Nobre (2022) that, according to the author, helped him in the election were the attack he suffered in September 2018 and Lula's imprisonment in April of the same year.

aggression. The purpose is to destroy. At the same time that representatives like Bolsonaro name a national enemy, they also seek to create bonds with the population by claiming themselves as "men of the people". This direct contact with the population distances Bolsonaro from democratic institutions. He makes use of this relationship with the mass to get support when he attacks institutional mechanisms and also to gain confidence in the conspiracy theories that he spreads (Bignotto, 2022). Such theories are grounded in structural negationisms that aim at destroying the rational purchase of the truth, which reinforces even more the antagonism of "Us X Them" and makes it impossible to establish a dialogue with divergent parts.

Bolsonaro attracts followers through a speech filled with emotional appeals and conspiracy theories, since the government does not have a constructive agenda with concrete plans for the future of Brazil. Bignotto (2022) calls attention to the emergence of the new "people" in this contemporaneous populism promoted by Bolsonaro. Populism theory sees the people as a central figure in democracy. However, the conception of people is not the one of people with civil and universal rights; it is the people who are put in opposition to "the other" who is the enemy to combat. This definition of people and its principles, according to the author, is where the behaviors that give structure to the current populism in Brazil come from. The behaviors encouraged and practiced by the people include attacks on the press, traditional political parties, the judiciary, the scientific community, the intellectual left, activists, and minority groups. In Bignotto's (2022) words, "*bolsonarismo* appeals to the people who only have the right to its existence when they support him and adopt his ideas" (p. 141)[17]. The ones who do not comply with the absolute values are corruptors of a model of society that is hierarchically organized in terms of values and cultural traits that are dominated by religious authority over reason. In this manner, denying the modern world and its institutions is part of an important strategy to restore traditionalist and authoritarian civilizations.

Nobre (2022) explains that the negationism of Bolsonaro towards the system, which is composed of institutions of media, science, technology, and politics, is not merely negationism of the democratic institutions but rather an attack on their "perversions," which makes it easier for people to deny them as well, since they would not be denying the institution itself, just their wrongs.

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[17] Author's translation. The original in Portuguese, as follows: "O bolsonarismo apela para um povo que só tem direito à existência quando o apoia e adota suas ideias."

The next section aims at providing the context of a very important moment in Brazilian history, and whose importance has been stressed by political scientists as possibly being the beginning of Jair Bolsonaro's journey towards the presidency of Brazil later in 2019 - 2022.

2.3.2 June of 2013 and the rise of Jair Bolsonaro

In 2013, Brazil experienced a wave of protests, which were triggered by the increase of 20 cents in public transportation in São Paulo. The movement then was called MPL (Movimento Passe Livre). However, the manifestations would represent much more than a protest to a ticket price; it was the beginning of a series of protests against the way politics was being conducted for years (Moura and Corbellini, 2019). We would see the impact of these manifestations on the presidential elections years later.

Initially, the protests started relatively small, but in a few days, they gained a national proportion, and the motivations for their emergence gained heterogeneous reasons, such as the depredated conditions in the areas of education, health, and security. Moreover, it is necessary to mention that the manifestations did not raise party flags; instead, they had the purpose of manifesting that the discontent was collective; thus, they gathered people from multiple ideologies and distinct claims. One thought brought by Filho and Guzzo (2018) complements the description of current manifestations, which is: many of those who go to the streets to fight corruption have little to say about the structures of the state or simply do not relate the social problems to the capitalist system. Likewise, with the aid of the Brazilian extreme-right, the discourse that has been designedly spread is that those who raise left-wing flags are supposedly connected to socialism/communism.

Part of the organized left of the country claims that June 2013 represents the moment when the right-wing movement in Brazil gained strength because they saw in that fragile moment of national politics an opportunity to directly confront the political system. At the same time, the official politics lost control of the process and opened the door to the implementation of the authoritarian project of the right. This process led to the *coup d'état* of a legitimately elected president in 2016, Dilma Rousseff; the prison of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in 2018; and the election of Jair Messias Bolsonaro, someone who openly worships the military dictatorship, in 2018 (Nobre, 2022). Thus, authors in the field of political science cite

June 2013 as a hallmark that establishes a reference to debate current politics as well as how it benefited the election of Jair Bolsonaro.

Following the timeline, in 2015, during the first year of Dilma Rousseff's second mandate, the manifestations continued. This time, the positioning of the protests was more homogeneous than it was in 2013. People occupying the streets protested against the recession in the economy and the political scandals involving corruption that were brought up by the Lava Jato operation. The discourse was clearly anti-PT, nationalist, and conservative. That was the time when an important figure came out, Sérgio Moro[18], representing the symbol against corruption, or, as some may call it, the "national hero". Events like Lava Jato emphasized the aversion to everything related to politics because it became, to a large part of the electorate, the last politically trustable resource and the only channel through which the dissatisfaction with the current politics could be avenged (Nobre, 2022).

Moura and Corbellini present one fact that exemplifies this generalized aversion to politics. In the moment that PT was being bombed with attacks and hate, why did PSDB (its opponent) not gain popularity? The answer is that all political figures were in the same corrupted imaginary of the population. That, as the authors explain, is the exact moment for characters such as Bolsonaro to gain space due to their demagoguery and inflamed speech, representing, in fact, something different from everything that was in politics before. Bolsonaro also made use of key concepts capable of convincing, which are the extreme despise for bandits, traditional politics, worship of conservative values, and traditionalist speeches concerning the value of the family, religion, and order.

Moura and Corbellini (2019) point out three main reasons that led to Jair Bolsonaro's election in 2018: the demoralization of the political elite and the party system since the investigations of Lava Jato; a crisis in national security; and last but not least, the growth of social media during this period, especially WhatsApp. The latter, as the authors point out, was a hallmark of the way we conduct political campaigns in Brazil. This election, in particular, is called by Moura and Corbellini the election of the outraged. They claim that the use of the cellphone created active and "committed to justice" kind of electors. The participation of technology through its communication tools empowered the electoral process with mobilizations of emotion, such as rage and prejudice.

According to the authors, the analysis of Bolsonaro's election cannot be based only on the economic crisis that happened in Brazil in 2018 or the resentment of Brazilians for PT and

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[18]Sérgio Moro is a jurist, an important figure who was part of Operação Lava Jato and who gained national recognition after condemning Lula in 2017.

Lula (although these were important motivators). Rather, the whole process of convincing was based on (and depended on) the extra irrational thinking of the electors, who were played into feelings of madness and sensitivity to union, which then proliferated like a virus on the internet. This feeling represented a cry for help against everything that came before in Brazilian politics; it was a scream of "enough!". Thus, the irrational thoughts of the electors did not bear in mind the future of politics, as long as traditional politics could be left behind, no matter what would take its place next. The movements in the streets reflected dissatisfaction with politics and a lack of trust in politicians in general, but mostly a lack of trust in PT and the left. The feeling of disillusionment was spread over the boundaries of the generalization "all politicians are corrupt," and in the middle of the mayhem, Bolsonaro came as the alternative because he was, allegedly, the one who would denounce everything wrong with politics and restore order.

The discourse of despise for politicians and corruption is well known when talking about politics. However, the authors mention research conducted among electors in 2018 that points out that public safety appeared as one of the most discussed concerns of Brazilians in that year. Another worrisome factor of one of these studies shows that 52.8% of the participants demonstrated interest in voting for someone outside of the field of politics to be president.

In sum, the electors wanted a candidate that would not reflect traditional Brazilian politics but instead be someone willing to combat the current safety condition in the country and who had a strong speech against corruption: Jair Bolsonaro. The authors compare Bolsonaro's political moment to Lula's moment of election in 2002. Whereas Lula was elected based on a speech of hope for change, Bolsonaro's discourse was moved by rage. Urban (2004) explains that a conservative wave gains strength in the midst of a capital crisis, and it manifests through the economic, social and political field. Conservatism then appears as authoritarianism, with values that defend military intervention, the death penalty, hate speeches against the left, and prejudice against race and ethnicity. In Brazil, it was possible to identify this phenomenon discussed by Urban during the political campaign of Bolsonaro. He was well known for his inflamed discourse and for not minced words, many times masked behind humor and sarcasm, which did not diminish the seriousness of his assertions.

2.3.3 The speech of Bolsonaro

The discourse that led many people (mostly people from the left) to believe that Brazil would never elect Bolsonaro president in 2018 due to his unacceptable behavior as a politician was exactly what helped put him in the presidency. In this section, I bring some analysis of authors committed to the interpretation of Bolsonaro as a political figure and as a disruptive representative in what some authors call "new politics" or "new populism" (Starling *et al.*, 2022; Moura and Corbellini, 2019; Lynch and Cassimiro, 2022). The purpose of this section is to enlighten some aspects of the strategies involving his speech and describe the elements that were put together in order to build this political phenomenon in Brazil.

But before I move on to discourse features, I am going to briefly introduce Jair Bolsonaro and what paths guided him to the presidential position starting in 2018. Furthermore, I provide some background on the concepts of right wing populism and the conservative politics that are grounded in it.

Firstly, there are authors who believe that this government has fascist characteristics; one example is Stanley (2018), who claims that it is present in the government's way of ruling strategies such as the worship of the past (in this case, the dictatorship that culminated the country in 1964), exaltation of law and order, anti-intellectualism, praise for the nation. Although the similarities involving fascism and populism are found in a juncture of values, here I focus on populist theories that explain political conjunctures. Nevertheless, I still believe it is important to stress the similarities in the theories involving both.

The years 2000 were particularly significant for the rise of right wing populist leaders in the world, mostly due to three factors: the terrorist attacks starting in 9/11; the financial crisis of 2008; and the refugee crisis in 2015. Although the landmarks happened in North America, their impacts reached the whole world. The series of crises benefited far right parties, who were more efficient in attending to the popular dissatisfaction regarding the issues. This is due to some populist ideology reasons, which address four main umbrella themes: immigration, external politics, corruption, and public security. In Brazil, the authors Silva and Rodrigues (2021) explain that, regarding concrete motivations, a delegitimation of political elites (the left) was brought up as the main subject, with the justification that they were stealing from the people (corruption). As for the ideological motivations, the right wing movements built a degradation of the left by accusing them of propagating postmodernist and Marxist ideas, which led to a hunt for the left and intellectual-elites, mainly composed by university professors, scientists, journalists, and informative professionals committed to trustworthy content in the area of communication.

The authors explain that although themes of immigration and external politics are not historically approached in Brazil, in Bolsonaro's government, international politics are not deeply discussed, because themes such as national security assume the lead. According to Silva and Rodrigues, this discussion mirrors conservative and authoritarian values such as worship of nation, family, duty, authority, and traditionalism.

As already mentioned in the previous section, Brazilian politics was going through delicate moments when Jair Bolsonaro saw the opportunity to assume the leadership of the country. But who is, after all, Bolsonaro?

Jair Bolsonaro was born in Glicério, a small town in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. Before entering politics, Bolsonaro pursued a military career before joining the Brazilian Army. Bolsonaro transitioned into politics in 1988, when he was elected as a city councilor in Rio de Janeiro. It did not take long until he moved on to the national stage, becoming a federal deputy for the state of Rio de Janeiro in 1991. He served in the Brazilian Congress for almost three decades. During this period, he gained popularity for his right-wing and conservative positions on various issues, including military affairs, public safety, and social policies. His speeches were acclaimed for being "authentic" and for not holding his thoughts, when actually he was just being oppressive, misogynistic, and homophobic all along. After his speech on the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff in 2016, he started his journey to the presidency, and the Brazilian far-right electorate visualized in him the potential of the next federal representative, which was sealed in 2018.

To begin with, it is very important to highlight that Bolsonaro's features of speech were never concerned with the usual formality expected from political discourse. Instead, its popular characteristic was much more interest in bonding with the public. He demonstrated having a simple and colloquial discourse, composed of even some mistakes in sentence formulation. One element that stood out through this and the jocular tone in his manifestations was authenticity.

Bolsonaro uses emotional strategies to reach people. He did it in his campaign in 2018, and he used it during the pandemic. In his campaign, the focus was not on a presidential program with proposals for measures; instead, he focused on verbalizing people's feelings. As Moura and Corbellini (2019) state, in times of crisis, hatred also reaches the heart. During the pandemic, his speech had the same features, even though the focus was different. In order to make his point, in the beginning of the crisis, he did not choose the way of controlled speech (making responsible announcements respecting safety measures) until COVID-19 could be

figured out by specialists; instead, he made assertions aiming at people's fears of unemployment or starvation.

The point is that Bolsonaro appeared to Brazilians as "the last resource," the last try to trust politicians, which shows that his candidacy took advantage of a lagged country with deficiencies in many sectors of the political sphere and public policies. His leadership was a backlash on social issues that were on the schedule of the progressist movements for years. It evoked conservative speeches fueled by prejudice and hatred.

Starling *et al.* (2022) call attention to the "blindness" towards Bolsonaro. They explain that looking at him from a disbelief point of view, like his speech could never be convincing because it is contradictory and his claims are frequently appealing to emotions rather than reason, is exactly what gave him strength and allowed him to be elected with more than 57 million votes in 2018. The role of his discourse is efficient because it works against his adversaries without a lot of effort. In other words, since the discourse was composed of irrational argumentation and, for many times, sounded like a bad joke, the adversaries did not give the attention and comprehension needed. However, Bolsonaro was, in fact, being heard by a large part of the population. His discourse was very effective in terms of communicating with the mass and, most importantly, with his electorate.

The message that Bolsonaro and his government convey is that he, along with his followers, are determined to change the direction of the country. Bignotto (2022) explains that there are three main elements that guide this course of action towards the "salvation" intended.

The first concerns the establishment of a national enemy and the need to eliminate it. Once there is a clear scapegoat, ideological discourses that delate the threat that this enemy offers are widely spread, and because this enemy is highly dangerous, the violent approaches towards them are justifiable and are naturalized on a daily basis, as if the nation is in a constant state of war against the enemy. Such rhetoric, as the author suggests, recalls fascist regimes due to its similarities with tones of retaliation and destruction.

The second element is characteristically populist and places the main emphasis on the attention given to the plebiscite. During his mandate, Bolsonaro hardly ever spoke to the press or gave collective interviews. Most of his speeches were directed at the population (his followers) either through social media or in the streets at the door of Palácio da Alvorada. At the same time that this gives a tone of informality, it also gives a sense of proximity with the

people, and the casualness of the contact also allowed him to make polemic allegations with the use of aggressive language.

The third element is the constant threat of a *coup d'état*. Although the effectiveness of a *coup d'état* is not confirmed, there are elements in Bolsonaro's speech that cannot be ignored when it comes to the realization of the project. The features in Bolsonaro's discourse lead to the understanding that he will not accept political and constitutional measures if they imply his loss of power. The obstinate attempts to rupture institutions are also part of the plan to manage his permanence in power. As Bignotto (2022) highlights, the absence of any slightly clear national project characterizes this government as primarily destructive; it "demonstrates that death is the gravitational center of his power" (p. 147).

Regarding the threat of the *coup d'état*, Nobre (2022) denounces the lack of mobilization in society to prevent this urgent movement that was silently gaining shape, which can lead to catastrophic results. Furthermore, the very lack of mobilization reveals the hegemony and the control that this organization has over society "given the inertia of the merely electoral game of the parties and the relative incapacity they have of facing off against the *bolsonarista* digital party that goes beyond the virtual world, but that also occupies the streets" (p. 181).

2.4 THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN BRAZIL

The scientific community first identified the coronavirus in 1960. Since its emergence as a pandemic in 2019, global authorities have implemented various measures to control the spread of the disease. In 2021, after nearly two years of living with the virus, global statistics indicate 256 million cases and 5.13 million deaths[19]. Brazil, with 612,000 deaths, ranks as the second most affected country in terms of recorded fatalities.

A research study conducted by Rafael *et al.* (2020) analyzing Brazilian public policies during 2020 showed contradictions in the measures of containment for COVID-19. The study was undertaken from the perspective of epidemiology, and data from Brazil was compared to other countries in order to contrast the nature of the measures and their results for the population.

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[19] Data retrieved from *Our World in Data*: https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus-data

The first topic mentioned in the research, which is of extreme importance in the context of a health emergency, is the background of SUS (Sistema Único de Saúde) in the past three decades.

In 1988, through the federal constitution of Brazil, SUS was implemented with the objective of offering all Brazilian citizens full access to public health services. This service is responsible for saving thousands of lives every day, especially for those who do not have the financial means to afford private health care. Apart from the offer of medical consultations, the realization of exams, and other procedures, SUS is also responsible for food control (part of the health surveillance), the registration of medications, and the distribution of vaccines.[20] SUS was the foremost element during the pandemics, although there have been mishaps involving the health system since the beginning of the health crisis in 2020.

According to Rafael *et al.* (2020), in Brazil, the problem starts with the low number of available hospital beds. It amounts to 7.1 beds per 100,000 inhabitants, a consequence of the Brazilian political background from previous years, which did not prioritize this area in government funding. One of the problems dates from 2016, when, under the leadership of Michel Temer, Constitutional Amendment 95, or "teto dos gastos públicos", was implemented, whose objective was to set a budget for policies in the areas of education, health, and social protection for the next 20 years.

The authors also comment on risky strategies from the government, such as recruiting the help of medicine and nursing students in their last year of studies. The authors argue that this measure can be dangerous on account of the lack of professional experience of these students when they are allocated to a scenario of overwhelming working hours and emotional and physical stress. That is, it can be harmful for both patients and the professionals involved.

Another particular event took place in Brazilian politics regarding the pandemic. Starting in April 2021, under the orders of the Supremo Tribunal Federal, an inquiry could be opened that could expose the flaws committed by the federal government (and the names involved) throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This was called *CPI da Covid-19*, which means "Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito". The CPI is a temporary tool used by the legislative branch to investigate facts of major national concern, and it was composed by 11 federal senators. The CPI was the only unified act of opposition to the government, which is

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[20] SUS offers several types of services and treatments every day. On the government's website, there is more information about the system: https://www.saude.mg.gov.br/sus

pointed out by Nobre (2022) as an example of the difficulties in organizing any opposition from the Congress against the administration.

I decided to bring here some of the main themes that were investigated amid the CPI because the felonies found in the investigation are connected to the themes proposed in this work. Implicitly or explicitly, the felonies reveal the scheme of prejudice and corruption led by a right-wing populist party in a very critical moment such as the pandemic. Among the themes investigated are: herd immunity; refusal and delay in the acquisition of the vaccines; fake news; the impact of the pandemic on the lives of women, black people, and quilombo community; federal hospitals; opposition to non-pharmaceutical measures; and others. As a result, more than 20 crimes were indicted, such as: homicide, inciting crime, passive and active corruption, fake news, crime against humanity, and others.[21] Notwithstanding, among the indicted figures of the CPI are the ex-president, Jair Bolsonaro, and his three sons, who also occupy political positions. Bolsonaro's accusations relied on inciting crime, infractions of sanitary measures, prevarication, and others.

Furthermore, when looking at the range of actions taken during the period of the pandemic, one central aspect is the spread of (mis)information regarding the issue. Bolsonaro's biggest source of support came from the digital environment. Since his election in 2018, his electorate has eagerly reverberated his speech on digital channels. During the pandemic, this was not any different from any other circumstance, and even a new concept was introduced by the Organization Pan-Americna da Saúde (OPAS): infodemic. Infodemic is the great rise in the amount of information related to a specific topic; it can be multiplied in a short period of time depending on a specific event, such as the pandemic of COVID-19. During an infodemic, and with the exacerbated number of information being spread, the rumors and manipulated information follow the rhythm of circulation, reaching many users. A study conducted by Galhardi *et al*. (2020) revealed that in 2020, fake news was spread on all of the communication platforms in Brazil, with 73.7% of them only on WhatsApp.

Considering the facts aforementioned, it is important to see how the government of Bolsonaro acts upon the pandemic. Taking the pandemic as a phenomenon from nature, it would be reasonable to understand that its impact would not differentiate people by any means. However, on a second instance of the pragmatic consequences of the disease, it is already possible to visualize the layers that it commits to the population in terms of

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[21] The complete list of themes and crimes of investigation can be found at https://www.politize.com.br/relatorio-cpi-covid/. In the link, it is possible to see the definitions of the crimes and their respective laws.

socioeconomic aspects, for instance, but still, there would be no space for the populist antagonisms of Us X Them, considering that everyone suffers the impact of this force of nature. Although that would be the logic of the events, it is not what happens in Brazil. This means that Bolsonaro was able to create antagonisms around the pandemic, which were impulsions for governmental actions that led to catastrophes in public politics. Such governmental actions defeat the claim that the damages caused by the pandemic were purely "natural".

Nobre (2022) argues that Bolsonaro succeeded when using the strategy of calling the pandemic a natural disaster, because by doing this, he could not be blamed for a phenomenon that cannot be avoided: "Whoever politicizes the pandemic is a politician and is part of the "system" of the "old politics" (p. 184). The author explains that Bolsonaro also uses the pandemic as an example of how he tries to fight the system. In the same manner, he passes the message that the system tries to destroy him and that the system politicizes tragedy and the deaths of millions of people. Bolsonaro adapts his strategy in such a way that he continues to attack the system, but at the same time, he depends on this same system and even allows the system to take actions for him regarding the administration of the pandemic. At the same time that he tells people that the system is imposing unnecessary sacrifices on the population, such as the sanitary safety measures, he attacks governors, mayors, and the STF.

Bignotto (2022) constantly stresses how the ex-president's conduct during the pandemic is confusing, even to place it into one political phenomenon, as he claims "this behavior, at the same time that recalls populism, presents such a contempt for life that it cannot be interpreted within the traditional canons of classic political analysis." And yet, this type of politics is able to be implemented and lasting.

2.4.1 The matter of class

Although the focus of this research is to connect the actions of a populist government and its impact on gender during the pandemics, I understand that there are some intersections that can even increase the struggles that people, and especially women, face during this period.

The first lens through which we can view quality of life in the middle of an economic/public/health crisis is that of class. The pandemic brought to the surface many social inequalities in Brazil. Firstly, it is important to talk about the safety measures that were disseminated as crucial elements while combating the virus: sanitary measures. That is,

keeping the house and people themselves as hygienic as possible, and in case a member of the family is infected, avoiding contact with this person for 14 days. This prescription should not be difficult to follow. However, data from IBGE (2017)[22] shows that, in Brazil, there are over 11 million people living in slums where access to basic sanitation is limited and the number of families sharing a small place makes it difficult to follow the containment measures against the virus.

There were many complaints all over the country since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020 regarding the lack of water and sewage systems. Furthermore, sewage systems were shown to be a mitigating factor in the spread of coronavirus (apart from other well-known diseases the sewage system is capable of transmitting).[23] Falquete *et al*. (2020) call attention to the state's responsibility to people in more vulnerable contexts, claiming that the neoliberal strategy of dismantling social policies in a moment when they are most required shows a lack of commitment to the people.

Another central issue in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic addresses education. There are two main concerns in this area. The first one is directly connected to access to food. As Falquete *et al*. (2020) point out, the reality of children's financial vulnerability reveals that school meals are the most important, if not the only, meal of the day. Thus, with the school closures, many families had to face insecurities regarding sustenance, which were also aggravated by the inflation in the price of food products.

The second issue is related to school dropout rates. Data from *Fundo das Nações Unidas para a Infância* (UNICEF) show that school evasion in Brazil reaches 5 million students, and during the pandemic, these numbers increased by 5% among elementary-school students and 10% among high-school students. These results reflect social inequalities as well, since access to online education became a facet of the pandemic that many could not afford.

A study released by Malala Fund[24] compared the situation of coronavirus pandemics to other health emergencies and how they affect especially girls' education. The example given in the research was the Ebola outbreak. According to the study, poorer families need to

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[22] Data from IBGE: https://censos.ibge.gov.br/2012-agencia-de-noticias/noticias/20080-favelas-resistem-e-propoem-desafios-para-urbanizacao.html. Access in March, 2021.
[23] This report lists some of the problems in Brazil which were aggravated by the pandemic: https://www.gazetadopovo.com.br/republica/covid-19-problemas-estruturais-brasil/. Access in March, 2021.

[24] Malala Fund is an international organization whose main purpose is to defend access to education for girls: https://malala.org/

count on the help of their children to keep providing for the family. With school closures and more expenses at home, many children and teenagers gave up their studies to find a job and be able to help their families during the crisis. What was already a situation that required attention from public authorities did not get better with the reopening of the schools because the students did not return. The study claims that the rate of girls dropping out of school is higher in relation to boys, mainly for two reasons that are related to gender roles in society. First, because girls need to do domestic work at home and help take care of younger siblings, and second, because of early pregnancy. The research estimated the potential impact of the school closures on girls' re-enrolment. They claim that around 20 million secondary-school girls can give up on school because of the COVID-19 crisis.

It is important for governments, ministries, and public agencies to pay close attention to the aforementioned aspects when planning for and dealing with the reopening of schools. As it was discussed, it is impossible to talk about the health crisis dissociated from the economic crisis, and the state has the duty of offering support to those who are not able to go through the crisis alone.

2.4.2 Gender and the COVID-19

In 2020, ONU Mulheres released a study listing several ways in which women were harmed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though the pandemic left its mark on everyone's lives, here I shall focus on how it impacted the lives of women in particular. However, in the topics that will be addressed in this section, other groups have also presented struggles as hard as women's struggles. It is not my intention to diminish or erase the other groups' suffering, but there would be other lenses needed in order to conduct their discussion.

Here I bring two of the issues described in the report, although the complete study approaches other relevant situations explaining how the pandemic affected women, for example, immigration, women's health, and others.

1- Women are on the front lines in the fight against the virus. The work involving health care and people's care in general is mostly done by women. A study conducted by G1[25]

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[25] How the pandemics affects women:
https://g1.globo.com/bemestar/coronavirus/noticia/2020/04/19/como-a-pandemia-de-coronavirus-impacta-de-ma neira-mais-severa-a-vida-das-mulheres-em-todo-o-mundo.ghtml

analyzing world statistics shows that women represent 70% of workers in the health area, and 85% of them are nurses and midwives. In Brazil, the percentage of female nurses is 85%, and it is also the percentage of female caregivers for the elderly. Another important fact mentioned in the research conducted by ONU Mulheres is the nonpaid jobs performed by volunteers, of which there were many during the pandemic. Women were also the majority in this kind of services, which varied from free care of children and elderly people to the offer of free classes of multiple kinds, organization of food and clothes donations, etc.[26] In addition to the fact that some of these services increase the level of exposure to the virus, they are also done for free, which for capitalist societies is a very important sort of work, done with love as justification and, in this case, the spirit of solidarity.

2- The labor market suffered as a whole, and all workers who perform in-person work were under threat of losing their jobs. For women doing informal work, such as domestic workers, this threat was higher. Without the security provided by, for instance, unemployment insurance, women who lost their jobs during the pandemic had to face harsh living conditions due to the impossibility of counting on other ways to replace their income. In 2020, 64 million women lost their jobs around the world. They also compose the group of workers with the lowest salaries, few benefits, and fewer labor rights.

According to data from Ipea[27], in Brazil, among the population of 212 million inhabitants, 51,8% are women. Within this number, 21,9 million women are responsible for the maintenance of the home. From this number, 63% of the families whose main keeper is the mother are below the poverty line. In this scenario, there are more than 11 million solo-mothers who face problems related to child care, working double (or triple) shifts daily.

In order to minimize the damage caused by the high rates of unemployment, after some pressure from civil society, the Brazilian government sanctioned Law No. 13.982/2020, which composed the Plano do Auxílio Emergencial, as a means to provide for families in financial vulnerability during the beginning of the pandemic. At first, the financial support was R$600,00 per person, and for solo mothers, the support was R$1.200,00. By December 2020, this amount was cut by half, and in January 2021, it was discontinued. Brazilians survived from January until April without the government's support. At the time, the rate of

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[26] The increase in voluntary work during the pandemics, mostly developed by women: https://www.uol.com.br/vivabem/noticias/redacao/2020/12/06/em-ano-de-pandemia-voluntarios-se-reinventam-para-continuar-ajudando.htm

[27] Complete data can be found at https://www.ipea.gov.br/portal/index.php?option=com_alphacontent&ordering=3&limitstart=4460&limit=20

extreme poverty increased 4.6%[28]. After a lot of complaints, the financial support was reestablished in April 2021, but the mothers who first received R$1.200,00 now started receiving R$375.00. This amount seems unfair considering the inflation rates that the country went through during that period. Basic needs, such as supermarket purchases, became a choice of which food items to put on the table.

2.5 GENDER STUDIES AND POLITICAL IMPACT

As mentioned in the previous sections, a general claim about populism is that it is an antagonism perpetuated between the people and an elite. However, authors suggest the need to distinguish right and left wing populisms. On the one hand, right-wing populism creates a third part (other than the people and the elite) who is the one to blame for the problems of the people, which is an enemy. The curious thing is that this third part is commonly composed of feminists, black people, immigrants, and non-Christians (Hirschmann, 2021). Similarly, Hirschmann (2021) complements by bringing this example to the United States since 2015, under the government of Donald Trump. She claims that there is a group of "angry white men" who are terrified of losing their privileges over the conquest of rights by women and black people, for instance. What she describes matches the context in Brazil as well. While in the USA, Trump made strong use of anti-immigrant discourse, in Brazil, Bolsonaro's speech was anti-system anti-corruption and traditional politics, and of course, both ex-presidents shared the same conservative ideologies.

Regarding the actual use of the term populism applied to both left and right, Gould (2021) presents some scholars' perspectives when it comes to choosing a linguistic term to differentiate them. Mostov is one author who calls the right movement populist and the left a popular movement. Similarly, she brings Ackerly's perspective, which draws anti-democratic features to the right, and a more activist, concerned left, which fights against kinds of repression.

A feature that detaches right populism from left-wing populism is the conception of "the people". While the concept of the people from left-wing populism values democratic rights as well as worships what Gould (2021) calls "a culture of consent," right-wing

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[28] According to the study, the cut in Auxílio Emergencial represented the main reason for the increase in the poverty rate. The full report is available in: https://www.metropoles.com/brasil/corte-em-auxilios-agravou-pobreza-durante-a-pandemia-diz-estudo

populism does not see advantages coming from democracy, equality, or even solidarity. Furthermore, regarding class composition, Gould argues about the existence of a plurality in the public composing right-wing populism. That is, it is not a homogeneous class group that participates on this side. Instead, there are people from the middle class and the working class defending the same ideals, even though they would not benefit in the same way. In Brazil, we have a clear example of what she addresses here. In the candidacy of Jair Bolsonaro in 2018, we could see in his electorate supporters from the most variable social groups, and most importantly, not only diverging in class but also in race and gender, groups that were attacked by the president's speech repeatedly in the years that preceded his candidacy.

Regardless of the ways in which populism is addressed, authors like Hirschmann (2021) are concerned with the patriarchal mechanisms of populism that are harmful. According to her, the violence imposed by this group, mostly composed of white men, is mainly political. She argues that the political mechanisms are built so women are subordinated to men economically and legally. In the same way, she points out the clever way in which right-wing populism is structured in a way that it will sustain male and female stereotypes in order to strengthen the sources of subordination.

Considering the forms of gender subordination aforementioned, I shall now introduce a deeper and more complex form of gender exploitation that is grounded in the values of family and is seen in populist structures.

There are three dimensions that are composed in a nationalist discourse (Ôzkirimli, 2005). The first is the spatial dimension, responsible for representing the country's area and the idea of the empire. The second is the temporal dimension, the one that comprises the history of the nation; and finally, the symbolic dimension, which is the one that shelters the nation's heroes, the culture, and the traditions. This last one is the main sustainer of practices and ideologies because it is the one that is reproduced in everyday habits and costumes; it carries values and beliefs. The part of women in society, in turn, is located in the symbolic dimension through the role of motherhood.

Melinda Cooper (2017), in her book *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and New Social Conservatism,* explains the state's mechanism to perpetuate women's exploitation of time and work in order to retrieve this responsibility from the state. According to her, the main mechanism of manipulation is to bring to the table the ethic of family responsibility. In the same way, Nancy Fraser (2016) goes beyond and affirms that this system, which she calls "crisis of care" is declining to a series of contradictions within the capitalist society. In the

sequence, I intend to explain both of these author's theories and make connections to one of the themes of this work, which is the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on women.

Cooper (2017) narrates how the process of welfare took place in the 1960s in the United States, whose example could be applied to the welfare system all over the world since it is a capitalist issue as well. To begin with, a large effort to change the policies involving welfare was encouraged in order to give space for the family to take responsibility. The paternity issue was the main topic at the time, as divorces were becoming very common and the search for the state's support was growing. The objective was to reduce the use of money left in public coffins for this purpose, no matter what the cost, even if this cost meant keeping women in abusive relationships with the fathers of their children. The message passed to society was that one man is responsible for the financial security of women and children, not the state.

The repression to make this work was so hard that women were even threatened to suffer legal sanctions if they refused or showed low effort to locate the father. Other measures to "enforce the family bonding" also gained popularity in the US at the time, such as financial rewards for states where the rates of abortion and births outside the marriage were low. Furthermore, a budget was created with the objective of promoting pro-marriage campaigns.

Cooper explains that family responsibility is a heritage from the Elizabethan period, which worked out really well for the maintenance of capitalist societies. It started with the Poor Law, dated 1576, which established obligations for adult family members to care for their aging or impoverished parents. The main objective was to reduce public costs and reallocate the "burden" to the family circle. Cooper explains that this law survived the colonial period and still remains a great pillar of capitalist society today. However, some adjustments were needed due to the different family configurations throughout the years. Family size is one example; the modernization of society started being constituted by partners with two, one, or even no children at all. Another example is the growth of divorce after the nineteenth century. These factors expanded family responsibility beyond the circle of mother, father, and children; now, with the adaptations of the family, other relative members are attributed to the responsibility of care, such as siblings, grandparents, and grandchildren. In sum, everybody takes care of everybody, as long as it is blood related, people have responsibility of care.

The coercion to the existence of family support is directly connected to the need of the state to create a mechanism to deal with the poor when they cannot stand up with their

financial problems when the family institution fails. Cooper (2017) explains: "The poor laws were not only imported intact from England but were subsequently reinvented many times over as a means of disciplining new kinds of sexual and economic freedom" (p. 75).

This model has been criticized by feminist scholars for ages. The model is exactly what ties women to subordinate roles within the family circle and in society. One well-known author in feminist studies who discusses the economic and political implications of reproductive work is Nancy Fraser.

In her work, *Capitalism's Crisis of Care*, Fraser discusses the concept of what she calls the "crisis of care," where she defends that there are contradictions in the capitalist system involving social reproductive work. Fraser (2016) claims that the stands of society, such as culture, economy, and political organization, rely on the sustenance of concrete work, constituted by raising children, helping the elderly, and the sick, and abstract work, represented by emotions and affect. All of them are unpaid. According to her, the crisis of the reproductive system emerges along with problems in other fields of social life, such as economic, ecological, and political aspects, and the outcomes of the crises work in a domino effect among these areas. The author claims that usually the social reproduction struggle explains a lot of the crises in other fields, but it is put in the background in relation to the areas of economy and ecology.

The crisis and the contradiction in the social-reproductive sphere depend on its impossibility to regenerate itself in order to continue working. The author explains: "On the one hand, social reproduction is a condition of possibility for sustained capital accumulation; on the other hand, capitalism's orientation to unlimited accumulation tends to destabilize the very processes of social reproduction on which it relies." (p. 22). That is, unpaid work is necessary for the existence of paid ones. The long term results of capitalism, such as having a young workforce composed of both highly educated and low educated people, are necessary to compose all the areas of the capitalist pyramid. Raising these groups and helping maintain the existing ones is part of the reproductive work. The matter is, this work demands time and effort, which is not even expected to ask for payment because love, caring, and affection are already pre-established duties. Fraser explains how the crisis intensified when the capitalist order started reducing public provision at the same time that it started recruiting women for productive work. However, the wages of the paid work were low, which increased the hours of paid work, reducing the time of the carework at home, which then had to be transferred to others. The author explains how this became a cycle because it transferred the carework to

poorer women to do the productive work that more privileged women used to do. She claims that this work usually comes from immigrants. Fraser raises a lot of questions concerning the crisis of care in capitalist society, but she does not give concrete answers to them. However, she does point out the need to rethink the configuration of production - reproduction system by reimagining gender roles, and even though this would be the first step towards a change in social order, it still needs to be thought about considering its functioning and compactability with capitalism.

The conditions for this reproductive and unwaged work are not good. One example is the COVID-19 pandemic, a moment where this unpaid work was extremely required in a moment of economic and health mayhem. It was already difficult to develop regular paid labor during this period, with all the damage the pandemic caused to working and mental conditions. Consequently, the severe dent in this area affected the reproductive work more harshly. With poor conditions, the replenishment work at home became another almost impossible responsibility, and it lagged with the long duration of the pandemic for almost three years.

Chapter III
Methodology

> *Poet, sister: words -*
> *whether we like it or not -*
> *stand in a time of their own.*
>
> *North American Time - Adrienne*
> *Rich.*

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter is organized in three sections. Firstly, I begin with a brief contextualization of the data and an explanation of the criteria for data selection. In the sequence, I provide the theoretical framework (Van Dijk, 1998) that will compose the linguistic analysis of the data in Chapter IV. To conclude, I provide the contextualization of the questions developed by Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) that guide the discussion of data in Chapter V.

3.1 DATA CONTEXTUALIZATION

The data consists of a timeline regarding all the policies and speeches produced by Jair Bolsonaro and his government during the first year of the pandemic. The work was developed by Centro de Pesquisas e Estudos de Direito Sanitário (CEPEDISA), from Universidade de São Paulo, which, alongside with Conectas Direitos Humanos[29], developed a study regarding the measures taken by federal entities to deal with the COVID-19 crisis since the beginning of the pandemic. The research was formulated in the format of a timeline and is entitled 'O Boletim Direitos na Pandemia'. It includes over three thousand norms related to the pandemic, and its content reveals a strong denialist ideology regarding the seriousness of the problem during the first year of the pandemic. The main claim of the study is that the way the government dealt with the pandemic was part of a federal strategy for dissemination of COVID-19 in Brazil.

It is important to mention that the topic chosen to lead this research was already established before the publication of the CEPEDISA study, which is the discourse of the ex-president Jair Bolsonaro about the pandemic. However, since the study was an important

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[29] Conectas Direitos Humanos is a non governmental organization that fights for equality of rights with partnerships in Brazil and all over the world.

document and of great relevance for the area of research on discourses during the pandemic, I found the chronological organization of the study a good parameter to guide this dissertation, since the order of speeches was followed by a detailed contextualization of the moment of the speech, such as what other important events were happening while the statements were given, the number of cases and deaths caused by COVID-19, and the laws that were approved or vetoed regarding the crisis.

Since my interest in this research, apart from analyzing political discourse from a right wing populist president, also relates to the impact of this speech on gender issues, my first thought was to look for mentions of women/girls and then analyze the content of arguments around the nomination. However, my first barrier is exactly about nomination. There are almost none. (Un)Fortunately, the lack of mentions does not prevent analyzing how a specific group is impacted through discourse. In fact, the populist discourse itself naturally has features of oppression and inequalities, so the revelation of discrimination appears on the surface of Bolsonaro's speech. Even though violence and hatred are evident at first sight, a more thorough political discourse analysis is able to expose the linguistic aspects of a demagogue and manipulative discourse.

Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge that I understand that the term *gender*, which I use repeatedly in this dissertation, comprises a much larger and more complex definition beyond women. I also recognize that the groups that are part of gender studies suffered the impacts of the pandemic in particular and in intersectional ways.

3.1.1 Criteria for Data Selection

The material used for the analysis will comprise Jair Bolsonaro's speeches between March and December of 2020, only one excerpt was made in January of 2021. Although in 2021 there were still important materials which could be included in the analysis, they will only be referred to as support material for the content of the speeches of 2020. The first year of the pandemic was more crucial in terms of how policies were conducted and how the situation as a whole was dealt with. It was also very rich in terms of exposing the ex-president's positioning and ideologies.

Concerning the vehicle of the speeches selected for analysis, the report of CEPEDISA included content of varying sorts, such as publications in social media, public announcements,

official announcements, interviews, and others. For this research, I looked only at oral announcements, those being public announcements.

The speeches were separated according to the content of the messages. I identified four main topics: [the lack of] responsibility in Bolsonaro's speech (which includes the outsource of responsibility to other agents); attacks on the scientific community (safety measures, vaccination, the use of masks); the role of family; and the overdimension of the pandemic. I selected at least one and a maximum of three examples for each of the topics aforementioned to compose each excerpt of the analysis. The excerpts are organized chronologically and appear before the linguistic description, according to Van Dijk's model for political discourse analysis. I also provide a brief contextualization of each excerpt, with the objective of locating the statement in terms of the pandemic moment in which it was proffered. The contextualization includes the number of contaminations and deaths until the moment of the statement; the place where it happened; and the means of communication (interview, public statement, official statement, etc). The excerpts are provided in a table in both English and Portuguese.

3.2 VAN DIJK'S FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

Van Dijk (1998) proposes some structures and strategies used in order to analyze political discourse and raises the question whether there are specific strategies to look at political discourse that would be different from any other type of discourse analysis, and the answer is no. What would differentiate, rather, and is vital for the full understanding of the analysis, is the political context surrounding the discourse. In Van Dijk's (1998) words: "An account of the structures and strategies of, e.g., phonology, graphics, syntax, meaning, speech acts, style or rhetoric, conversational interactions, among other properties of text and talk, is therefore necessarily part of political discourse analysis only if such properties can be politically contextualized." (p. 24). Thus, there might not exist a singularity of structures used in political discourse; however, there are structures and strategies known for their efficiency when the aim is to achieve a more thorough investigation of political content. In the sequence, some of these structures and strategies are presented.

The first category is *Topic:* this category aims at investigating the themes presented in the discourse, and although it might seem redundant to assume that the topic of a political discourse would obviously be political, Van Dijk calls attention to the sub-topics inherent in the main topics. For example, politicians who are running for an election will probably talk about future projects, the background of their lives as politicians and their parties, arguments about the opposition, and others. The catch is in the hidden topics among the general topics. One example that makes a connection with this research is the topic of the COVID-19 pandemic and the policies created during the first year of the pandemic to diminish the damage. The hidden topic would be the consequences for women of financial instability throughout this period, for instance.

A common feature of political actors' topicalization is to assert a case and what measures are to be taken about it. Likewise, topics are filled with evaluations, which are then mostly polarized (e.g., the well known situation of us X them). The polarization in such evaluations has shown effectiveness in political contexts such as supporter recruitment and vote purchase.

The second is *Superstructures or textual schemata*: this refers to the ways through which text is organized, for example, premises and conclusions, the typical organization of stories (problematization and resolution). In political discourse, this schema draws global meanings for "partisan reasons" (p. 20). That is, each information is given or omitted to accomplish an established purpose, and this purpose will dictate how the summary, the headline and the conclusions will be like. What is common to happen is that important information regarding global issues can be manipulated, backgrounded, or even deleted if it does not match a political interest. In this manner, it is easier to defend a friendly political point of view and to attack the political other, located in the opposite polarity of the argument in question. Such pleas are common in nationalist and populist argumentation as ways of persuading the people to nod to the existence of an elite and convince the people to fight for their rights (the people X elite). In other words, the "ideological square of positive self-representation and negative other-presentation" (p. 30). The author points out that although discourse analysts tend to look at the semantics of the argument, this scheme in political discourses has become a common feature of the genre.

The third category is *Local Semantics*: it is the mechanism to look at presumptions, entailments, whether statements are done directly or indirectly, explicit or implicit, and representations. Participants in political discourse are usually reflexive, so for example, a self

description of the party and/or the party's ideology will be positive and, consequently, the polar opposite of an agent from the opposition. These descriptions can be configured explicitly or implicitly, but in general, the good accomplishments of the actor involved will be minutely described. Generalization and specification are also strategies to demonstrate biased arguments. For instance, a party's mistake can be represented as a single, rare event, while the opposition's mistake can serve as an example of generalization, as if the party commits the same mistake repeatedly.

The fourth category is *Lexicon:* responsible for the choice of words, lexicon determines the description of the actors and actions involved in the speech. Figures of speech can be analyzed in this category. Euphemisms, for example, are often used as a strategy to soften a harsh statement. Here we can also analyze word by word and investigate the connections between the figurative meanings and their association with the context of the message, which reveals implied meanings and values in discourse.

The fifth category is *Syntax:* this is the category that makes reference to the use of pronouns, word order, activation and passivation, nominalization, and others. One of the most popular examples of political discursive features is the use of the pronoun *we* and the possessive pronoun *our* to allude to the proximity of the politician to the people.

The sixth category is *Rhetoric:* Once seen as part of political speech, rhetoric is believed to have persuasive functions. Rhetoric develops through alliterations and rhymes, repetition, and parallelisms, which constitute mental models easy to memorize and accomplish the final target, persuasion. The use of additional information can also be used to deviate from the focus of the message or even to represent prejudice. For example, to mention the race of a person in a police report, as in "black man was arrested last night…". The opposite also happens with the omission of information for specific partisan interests. Furthermore, the use of metaphors, irony, and sarcasm equally composes rhetoric. For example, the attribution of animal figures to describe the two sides of polarization is: *we* are the brave lions, tigers, and *they* are the grime, the rats, and the cockroaches.

The seventh category is *Expression structures:* refers to the structures of sounds and graphics responsible for giving emphasis (or removing) on the meanings attributed in discourse. This is given through the volume of voice, intonation, or written discourse, through headlines, bold, capital letters, viral photos, and so on.

The eighth category is *Speech acts and interaction:* the last category describes the interrelational relationships established in political contexts and how they appear

linguistically. Some speech examples are: orders, commands, advice, questions, and apologies. Whereas some interaction examples are: how many minutes are attributed to a politician to speak, how many times a politician is interrupted during the speech, the distribution of speaking time among the groups of parliament, etc.

Considering the eight strategies mentioned above and their discursive role in political discourse, it is equally important to point out that reading the texts and talks through these lenses allows us to make a second reading of political contexts that might be taken for granted as having political tradition (or a good overall impression) but can contain traces of power relations, prejudices, and private interests (Van Dijk, 1998). The discourse and political analysis are then part of similar linguistic configurations, or, in Van Dijk's words: "Who controls public discourse, at least partly controls the public mind, so that discourse analysis of such control is at the same time inherently a form of political analysis." (p. 43). In this way, the analysis provides not only a means to understand political actor's minds but also their political actions.

3.3 FAIRCLOUGH AND FAIRCLOUGH'S POLITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

The theoretical foundations of Political Discourse Analysis developed by Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) were previously described in Chapter II of this dissertation. However, here, I am going to present the questions that will guide part of the discussion on Chapter V, which are the following:

1. What does the agent want to achieve?
2. What other goals does the agent have and how would these be affected by the action in question?
3. What are the agent's values, what are their concerns, what do they care about?
4. Which of these goals, values or concerns would the agent be willing to sacrifice by doing the action and which would they not?
5. What constraints on the agent's action are relevant to their decision?
6. What might be the positive and negative consequences of the various actions that are open the agent?

7. Are there better alternatives for fulfilling the agent's goals?

Although I do not answer all seven questions, I attempt to include in my answers elements that dialogue with the questions unanswered (4, 5, 7). The central themes of the discussion are presented on questions 1, 2, 3 and 6, and there are other two sections on chapter V where I discuss in more detail the objectives of this research, which are the features of the right wing populist government and how the measures of this government affected women during the pandemic.

In the following chapter, I present the analysis of data based on the framework presented in section 3.2 of this chapter.

CHAPTER IV
Data Analysis

Os santos são chamados para fora da Babilônia, para que não participem de seus pecados — Ela cai e seus seguidores lamentam por ela. [...] E clamou fortemente com grande voz, dizendo: Caiu, caiu a grande Babilônia, e se tornou morada de demônios, e guarida de todo espírito imundo, e guarida de toda ave imunda e detestável.
Apocalipse, capítulo 18, versículo 2.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

I start the description of data analysis with a brief contextualization of the moment in which the utterances were proffered. In this part, I also provide the date, the number of people infected/deaths by coronavirus, and further details that I consider relevant for understanding the political moment Brazil was going through while Bolsonaro was making the statements under analysis. The statements are organized in tables of two lines, where the first line is the original statement (in Portuguese) and the second line is the translation to English. When I refer to the lines in order to illustrate the analysis, I will use both Portuguese and English, with the sentences separated by a slash. I tried to be as literal as possible in the translation; however, due to the informal nature of Bolsonaro's speech, I found some problems in translating cultural expressions. In these cases, I explain the translation choices in the analysis sections that follow, more specifically, in the lexicon section.

This first analytical section consists of a microanalysis of the data. In order to do that, I use categories proposed by Van Dijk (1998) to look at discourse structures and discourse strategies present in political discourse. The categories, previously described in the methodology section, are: topic, superstructures or textual schemata, local semantics, lexicon, syntax, and rhetoric. As previously mentioned, the excerpts that contained similar content were grouped in the same categories of analysis to avoid repetition and redundancy in the discussion.

In total, 19 excerpts were used in this analysis, and their main themes were: the lack of power of Bolsonaro's government in taking action; the role of the governors and mayors; the role of the family; the neglect of safety measures and the attacks on the media. It is important to reinforce that the amount of potential materials for analysis was huge since Bolsonaro made endless suspicious allegations during the entire pandemic. However, there is a space limitation in this dissertation, and I chose the speeches that better represented the Brazilian conjuncture at that time.

4.1 EXCERPT 1

Contextualization

Excerpt 1 was retrieved from an interview with Jair Bolsonaro to rádio Tupi on March, 17th 2020. By then, Brazil had 19 confirmed Covid-19 cases and 0 deaths declared.

"O que está errado é a histeria, como se fosse o fim do mundo. Uma nação como o Brasil só estará livre quando certo número de pessoas for infectado e criar anticorpos"
"What is wrong is the hysterics , as if it is the end of the world. A nation like Brazil will only be free when a certain amount of people is infected and create antibodies."

Excerpt 1

Topic: People's overreaction about the pandemic and herd immunity.

Superstructures: problematization and resolution: the problem is people going into hysterics around the propagation of the virus, and the resolution is the infection of most of the population, which would happen naturally and solve the problem.

Local Semantics: The group mentioned in the excerpt is the nation, the Brazilian population in general, not one specific group. The representation is given through the relations people have with one other while developing immunization through exposition to contamination and the creation of antibodies.

Lexicon: choice of words: 'hysterics'; 'as if it is the end of the world', are hyperboles, and these expressions have the purpose of giving extra emphasis to the fact, implying that the COVID problem was being given unnecessary attention because it was not that serious.

Syntax: A nation like Brazil will only be free when a certain number of people are infected and create antibodies.

There is the use of passive voice, omitting the agent (coronavirus), while at the same time putting the population into the active position of creating the antibodies to combat the virus. Brazil would be the beneficiary of the action as long as there was herd immunity.

Rhetoric: this category shows the persuasion implied in discourse. The clause "A nation like Brazil will only be free when a certain number of people are infected and create antibodies" attributes to the human body the responsibility to create antibodies to combat the virus. By doing this, the discourse also creates a generalization, as if all bodies were perfectly capable of developing these antibodies. In the same manner, it decentralizes the role of an important weapon in the sanitary crisis, vaccination, which functions to create the antibodies.

4.2 EXCERPT 2 AND EXCERPT 3

Contextualization: Excerpt 2 was produced on April, 8th 2020. By then, Brazil had 20.818 registered cases of Covid-19 and 699 deaths.

"Se você impede as pessoas de trabalhar, elas não levam um prato de comida pra casa", "A chuva está aí, vamos nos molhar e alguns vão morrer afogados. Não pode é (continuar) como se tivesse vivendo num clima de guerra, onde se tivesse dado o toque de recolher. Isso não pode".
"If you prevent people from working, they do not bring food home." "The rain is here, we will get wet and some will drown to death. It is not possible to keep living as if we were in a war, where there is a curfew. It is not possible."

Excerpt 2

Contextualization: Excerpt 3 was part of a campaign released by the government's communication committee, entitled "Brazil can't stop/ Brasil não pode parar". The material was made available on March, 25th 2020, but was deleted after harsh litigation. By that time, Brazil had 19 confirmed cases and 0 deaths.

"No mundo todo, são raros os casos de vítimas fatais do coronavírus entre jovens e adultos."

"Para trabalhadores autônomos, o Brasil não pode parar. Para ambulantes, engenheiros, feirantes, arquitetos, pedreiros, advogados, professores particulares e prestadores de serviço em geral, o Brasil não pode parar."

In the whole world, it is rare to have victims of coronavirus among young people and adults.

For self-employed workers, Brazil can't stop. For street sellers, engineers, stallholders, architects, bricklayers, lawyers, private teachers and service providers in general , Brazil can't stop."

Excerpt 3

Topic: In excerpt 3, the ex-president is denouncing the impact of the loss of work caused by the quarantine and the closure of many service departments (as a recommendation from the World Health Organization). In his view, the quarantine would result in hunger. In the same statement, he mentions that it is inevitable that some people would die in the process.

In excerpt 3, Bolsonaro talks about how the closure impacts self-employed workers.

Superstructures: Regarding the problem and resolution in this speech, the president denounces problems resulting from the quarantine and even claims that people should not react "as if it was a war", implying that the containment measures were overcalculated. The resolution is not explicit in this excerpt. However, although it is omitted, it is implicit that the resolution would be to return to normal activities because the deaths at that point would be inevitable and people would need to provide for their families (through work).

Local Semantics: In excerpt 2, the group represented is people who work, and they are attributed full responsibility for their sustenance. They are given agency through the role attributed to them, which is that of providers for themselves and their families.

In excerpt 3, Bolsonaro refers to a specific working class: "For self-employed workers, Brazil can't stop. For street sellers, engineers, stallholders, architects, bricklayers, lawyers, private teachers, and service providers in general/ Para ambulantes, engenheiros, feirantes, arquitetos, pedreiros, advogados, professores particulares e prestadores de serviço em geral". By doing so, he gets closer to this particular group, as if he knew the pressures and effects of the pandemic in their private lives. He could have just talked about "self-employed workers" in general, as he did in the beginning of the sentence, yet he chose to subdivide this category of workers. The group is represented by its [lack] of resources, which is the deprivation of sustenance caused by the lockdown.

Lexicon: In excerpt 2, the choice of words in the ex-president's discourse is rich in figures of speech. The first figure of speech is a metonymy, in "they do not bring food home / elas não levam um prato de comida para casa". In this case, food is the symbol that means that going on working, even against sanitary measures, was the right thing to do in the situation. Hunger is the final product of metonymy, which is an appealing resource characteristic of political discourse because it projects emotions into the interlocutor. The example given, hunger, projects fear, insecurity, worry, and other feelings that denote the need for urgent action, but action from the workers, not the government.

In excerpt 3, Bolsonaro uses the word "rare" to emphasize that it is safe for young people and adults to continue working: "In the whole world, it is rare to have victims of coronavirus among young people and adults". Being "rare" was reason enough for people to expose themselves by going to work. By saying this, he ignored the other groups who could be contaminated through contact with the young and the adults who kept on working.

Syntax: In excerpt 2, the part "If you prevent people from working, they do not bring food home/ se você impede as pessoas de trabalhar, elas não levam comida pra casa", the subject pronoun "you", "the people", and "they" are determined. However, in the first subject, you, it is not clear who this subject is representing. It is possible to infer that 'you' were the health measures that suggested   isolation through quarantine, whereas 'the people' and 'they'

represent the Brazilian people as active agents in the process of working and in the duty of providing for themselves and their families.

In the second part, "The rain is here, we will get wet, and some will drown/ A chuva está aí, vamos nos molhar e alguns vão morrer afogados", the rain represents the danger of the coronavirus, getting wet represents catching the virus, while drowning means dying because of the virus. The subject is hidden in "vamos nos molhar/ we will get wet", where the president includes himself among the people who might be stricken by the virus. However, he does not include himself in "some will drown/ alguns vão morrer afogados", where 'some'' means someone else who will die.

In excerpt 3, Bolsonaro begins the sentence with an inversion in word order, bringing the adjective before the subject (in Portuguese, adjectives usually come after nouns) "são raros os casos de vítimas do coronavírus / it is rare to have victims of coronavirus", to highlight its connection with the theme that came before "in the whole world/ no mundo todo". In the second part, Brazil is the subject pronoun, an active agent of the modal verb "can't".

Rhetoric: This excerpt is a clear example of a demagogic discourse. By analyzing the rhetoric of this speech, the emotional appeal embedded in the discourse is evident when, for example, the president claimed that if people did not work, they would starve. Once more, he attributes the responsibility to survive during the sanitary crisis to the people, and the people alone, without any aid from the state. In the same way, he makes use of figures of speech to portray the virus as a "rain that will catch us all/ ", again demonstrating that the virus was inevitable and we should not make a "big deal" out of it and should try as much as possible to continue living as if we were not in a "climate of war", as he claimed, thus implying that although the situation was very problematic, there was no need to despair.

In the last week of March 2020, the government's communication committee launched the campaign "Brazil can't stop", reinforcing the message that workers should continue their regular duties despite the health recommendations of isolation. It is interesting to notice that the discourse in this case is more direct, almost vocative, as if the president was speaking directly with the workers from the areas he mentioned in the speech. Furthermore, there is a ruthless and irresponsible tone of the over-generalized information, claiming that in the whole world there were no records of deaths among the young. By the time this speech was made, the president had not presented enough evidence or field authorities to make such

assertions. This reckless speech encouraged behaviors that were against the measures recommended by the WHO, like aglomerations, for example.

4.3 EXCERPT 4 AND EXCERPT 5

Contextualization: On May 5, 2020, Bolsonaro declared that the pandemic was a neurosis, while he was on a jet ski ride in Paranoá Lake. In that week, Brazil had 155.939 confirmed cases and 3.877 deaths caused by COVID-19.

"É uma neurose. 70% da população vai apanhar o vírus. Não há nada que eu possa fazer. É uma loucura"
It is a neurosis. 70% of the population will catch the virus. There is nothing I can do. It is madness.

Excerpt 4

Contextualization: The statement was given while the president was on tour in Brasília on March 29, 2020, without a mask and with a crowd of people. The number of cases at the time was 19, and deaths was 0.

"O vírus está aí. Vamos ter que enfrentá-lo, mas enfrentar como homem, porra. Não como um moleque. Vamos enfrentar o vírus com a realidade. É a vida. Todos nós iremos morrer um dia."
The virus is out there. We will have to face it, but face it like a man, dammit. Not as a boy. We will face the virus with reality. That's life. We are all going to die one day.

Excerpt 5

Topic: The main theme discussed in excerpts 4 and 5 is the government's inability or incapacity to deal with the coronavirus.

Superstructure: The problems are brought up in both examples as the inevitable consequences of the virus, such as the imminent death of some people who would catch it throughout the pandemic. The resolution, however, is mentioned only in example 5. Even though it is

abstract, the proposal of resolution to the problem is assembled in a very simplistic way, which is basically "face it like a man".

Local Semantics: In cases of conflict or struggle, agents can be represented with more or less responsibility, according to their positive or negative actions (Van Dijk, 1998). In excerpt 4, Bolsonaro puts himself in a position where zero responsibility is attributed to his actions through the modal verb "can + not", immediately putting him into a passive position: "there is nothing I can do / não há nada que eu possa fazer". By doing that, he withdraws all the responsibilities of a chief of state, and even contradicts himself in comparison to other speeches where he claims that his government dealt very well with the pandemic. In terms of the representation of tasks and resources in the position he occupied (the president of Brazil), he ignored the possible actions he could have taken and reduced expectations from his work/government.

The contradiction in the aforementioned speech appears in excerpt 5. With the use of equalization through simplification of vocabulary, he claims that "we will have to face it, but face it like a man, dammit. Not as a boy./ Vamos ter que enfrentá-lo, mas enfrentar como homem, porra. Não como um moleque.". Bolsonaro disguised his manipulative relationship with the masses, pretending that he had an equal relationship with them, when the reality was that different layers of society "faced" the pandemic differently, and especially very differently from the privileged position of the white, straight, rich man that the then president occupied.

Lexicon: The choice of words in excerpt 4 is mostly connected with the non-materiality of the pandemic. This is represented through the words 'neurosis' and 'madness'. As if the global response to the virus were all wrong, as if the health authorities in charge were delusional regarding how to deal with the situation. It is important to mention that these words are strongly connected with manipulation. One type of manipulation described in psychology is gaslighting. Gaslighting is the manipulation by someone who distorts reality for a victim in particular. In this scenario, the effects of the president's speech are similar to gaslighting, but not with only one victim, but millions of Brazilians. The manipulation put millions of Brazilians in doubt about the veracity of the information about the coronavirus, and by calling it a "delusion", the negative effect of the word encourages people to act against these

"delusions". The actions derived from this include the population neglecting self-care measures and the care of others during the crisis.

Excerpt 5 brings a more violent lexicon with the adoption of the swear word "dammit"/ porra, which increases the emotional tone of the speech. It also makes the discourse more inflammatory, inciting indignation in the listeners and the urge to act against what is being criticized in the speech.

The contrast between "man and boy" also resembles the "coach style" of motivational speech; it has a similar effect as those short motivational messages like "you can do it". The chauvinist feature of hegemonic masculinity, "deal with it like a man", is also present in the president's discourse. This language adopted by the president dialogued well with his supporters, who shared with him common beliefs, values, and ideologies related to strength, honor, and other 'manly' values.

The word "reality" converses with what I mentioned in excerpt 4. The president constantly treated the situation as a collective delusion. That is, according to this excerpt, we should not have dealt with the coronavirus, but with reality. Since he did not explain what he meant by reality, it is possible to assume that reality was the opposite of what was being adopted as containment measures at the time of the pronouncement, which was mostly social distancing, the closure of businesses and schools, and other public places, measures that were considered an overreaction by the president.

Syntax: Regarding the syntax of excerpt 4 ("70% da população vai apanhar o vírus. Não há nada que eu possa fazer"), the subjects "70% of the population" and "I" are both active. The first clause ensured that the population would catch the virus, and the second withdrew any possibility of action to prevent infection.

Excerpt 5 displays two agents. One is the virus, which is activated by its existence "the virus is out there/ o vírus está aí", and the second agent is portrayed in "we have to face it/ vamos ter que enfrentá-lo", including the president himself and the population.

Rhetoric: While excerpts 4 and 5 transmitted an idea of impotence on the part of the president, it also encouraged people to deal with the pandemic individually, regardless of the dangers and mayhem it caused during the moment of crisis. It is important to bring these two contrasting speeches together because they expose the controversies surrounding the president himself. It reinforces the claim that his speeches were inaccurate and irresponsible. For the

population that was looking forward to hearing the position of the head of state, these arguments were confusing, and the type of discourse that is more emotionally appealing is the one that influences the most. As discussed in the review of literature, Bolsonaro made use of colloquial language to connect to people, which was done through emotional and inflamed statements, sometimes even sensationalistic ones (Silva and Rodrigues, 2021)

4.4 EXCERPT 6 AND EXCERPT 7

Contextualization: The speech was given during an official ceremony on November 10th, 2020. On the same date, Bolsonaro celebrated on Facebook the suspension of the tests conducted with the CoronaVac[30] vaccine. The number of COVID cases was 5.653.561, and deaths amounted to 162.269.

"Tudo agora é pandemia. Tem que acabar com esse negócio, pô. Lamento os mortos, lamento. Todos nós vamos morrer um dia. Não adianta fugir disso, fugir da realidade. Tem que deixar de ser um país de maricas, pô"
"Now everything is about the pandemic. This has to end, man. I'm sorry for the dead, I'm sorry. We are all going to die one day. It's useless running away, running away from reality. Gotta stop being a sissy country."

Excerpt 6

Contextualization: In an official ceremony on October 14th, 2020, Bolsonaro called the pandemic an overblown problem. By then, Brazil had 5.082.637 confirmed cases and 150.198 deaths caused by COVID-19. Six days after this statement, Bolsonaro cancelled the purchase of 46 million doses of Coronavac by the Health Ministry. He called the vaccine "Doria's Chinese vaccine.".

"Entramos (em) 2020, e tivemos o problema da pandemia que, no meu entendimento, foi superdimensionado"

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[30] The Agência Nacional de Vigilância Sanitária (Anvisa) suspended the clinical study trials for the CoronaVac vaccine. The suspension occurred due to serious adverse events. The studies were being conducted by the laboratory Butantan in Brazil. More information is available in: https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/saude/noticia/2020-11/anvisa-mantem-suspensao-de-testes-da-coronavac-no-pai s#:~:text=A%20Ag%C3%AAncia%20Nacional%20de%20Vigil%C3%A2ncia,%E2%80%9Cevento%20adverso %20grave%E2%80%9D%20ocorrido.

> We entered 2020, and we had the problem of the pandemic, which, in my understanding, was over-rated .

Excerpt 7

Topic: Both excerpts 6 and 7 talk about the 'over-dimensioning' of the pandemic.

Superstructure: The problem is the pandemic itself and its consequences (the thousands of deaths). The resolution to the problem relies on the argument that we should not talk about the pandemic. Although it does not provide an answer to the deaths, he suggests that the "fuzz" about the pandemic is too much and should stop. Instead, it downplays the seriousness of the situation (excerpt 7), and suggests that people should stop whining about the inevitable deaths (excerpt 6) because "we are all going to die one day".

Local Semantics: In excerpt 6, Bolsonaro used the strategy of equalization when he included himself in "we are all going to die one day / todos nós vamos morrer um dia". And then he implied that "we" were trying to run away from this inevitable event. Furthermore, by saying that we "Gotta stop being a sissy country / tem que deixar de ser um país de maricas, pô" he implied that the group addressed was behaving like cowards. Furthermore, it implied that whoever was telling people what to do, and it is possible to assume that he was referring to the health authorities, was also behaving cowardly and handling the situation in a poor way.

In excerpt 7, it is possible to recognize an omitted agent who performed the action of "over-dimensioning the pandemic". This group, unnamed, was described as responsible for a negative action. In the same way, Bolsonaro excluded himself/his government from being involved in such actions. This propositional framing has an ideological basis, and here I infer two possible agents that could be represented in this group, based on the analysis of other statements from Bolsonaro: the scientific community, responsible for organizing information concerning the virus, and the media, responsible for spreading the news about coronavirus.

Lexicon: In excerpt 6 "now everything is about the pandemic" and excerpt 7 "[the problem] was over-rated", the choice of words stresses how unnecessary the concerns about the pandemic were. It is possible to find in this part of excerpt 6 a type of irony which encompasses all the problems of the pandemic. Although it was not said, it seems that the president interpreted people's demands as overreactions, as if they were using the pandemic as an excuse for certain actions (ex: closing schools and businesses, the quarantine, etc).

Again, this reinforced his position against the security measures proposed, and consequently, it conveyed a message to encourage people to do the same.

The casual tone of excerpt 6 also demonstrates a lack of seriousness about the problem. By saying " Gotta stop being a sissy country, man", the president used an offensive intonation and inadequate choice of words for a political figure that held such an important position as the head of the state. Furthermore, it is important to look back on the historical background of Jair Bolsonaro, which includes outrageous speeches offending homosexuals and making explicit his prejudice. Thus, the choice of the word "sissy" was offensive and referred to the "cowardice" of the people who were treating the pandemic as a serious issue.

Syntax: In excerpt 6, the Brazilian Portuguese expression "gotta/ter que" omits the agent. However, it is possible to affirm that the agent who was supposed to perform the actions was generalized to all Brazilians. Since the attitude taken by those the president called "sissies" was criticized, at the same time, it is possible to infer that the same "sissies" were also the ones "running away from reality", the reality in this case being the imminent deaths, which were portrayed as a natural, unavoidable fact. The clause "Gotta stop being a sissy country / tem que deixar de ser um país de maricas, pô", points to a form of agency that was essential in order to have improvements, it suggested further actions to be taken, such as the end of the lockdown.

The positioning of subjects on except 7 was also a judgmental comment disapproving the sanitary measures related to the pandemic. The subject "we" was included in the clause "we had the problem", but in the following statement, it was immediately excluded by passivization and omission of agent. That is, "[the problem] was overrated" does not explain who exactly exaggerated the problem, but, at the same time, it excludes the president himself, meaning that he was not part of this generalized overreaction.

Rhetoric: Excerpts 6 and 7 provide examples of how populism shapes antagonistic points of view in relation to both the "other" and internal opposition within the country. This was discussed in the previous topic, syntax, where the inclusion and exclusion of "we" changed according to the content argued. In this specific theme, the populist polarization divided Brazilians (although the pandemic was a global issue, the topic of interest in the analysis

considers only Brazil) into the ones who overrated the pandemic and the ones who faced it as 'brave' people.

When discussing the rhetorical feature of Bolsonaro's discourse, it is easy to notice what Fisher and Vaz (2020) pointed out: the way he speaks and behaves as a personal feature that turned him into the "man of the people", by using colloquial language in his speeches and constantly making jokes. By doing this, the president created a divided scenario where the ones who were supposedly overreacting to the pandemic were the "others" who were harming the nation.

In these analyzed excerpts, Bolsonaro depicted Brazil as a weak country in situations where the "others" were not acting according to his beliefs. Ahmed (2004), the author of The Cultural Politics of Emotion, calls attention to this emotional feature in political discourse as a hidden appeal for the nation to be less emotional and be tough instead.

4.5 EXCERPT 8 AND EXCERPT 9

Contextualization: The statement was given on August 18th, 2020, when Brazil had 3.012.412 COVID cases and 100.477 deaths. Four days before the statement, the federal government refused the purchase proposal from Pfizer, with the possibility of this pharmaceutical company starting to deliver their vaccines on December 20th, 2020. In that same week, an analysis conducted by TCU (Tribunal de Contas da União) verified that from the R$ 286,5 billion paid until July, 31st, 2020, only R$22,06 billion (7.67%) were directly used to combat the pandemic.

"No meu entender, guardando-se as devidas proporções, não vi no mundo quem enfrentou melhor essa questão do que o nosso governo. Isso nos orgulha. Mostra que tem gente capacitada e preocupada, em especial, com os mais pobres, os mais humildes"
To my knowledge, taking into account its due proportions, I have failed to find anyone else in the world who dealt better with this situation than our government. This makes us proud. It shows there are capable people, people who are concerned, in particular about the poor and the humble.

Excerpt 8

Contextualization: The statement was given during to a crowd of people in Bahia on September 11th, 2020. By then, the cases amounted to 4.315.687, and the deaths were 131.210.

"Estamos praticamente vencendo a pandemia. O governo fez tudo para que os efeitos negativos da mesma fossem minimizados, ajudando prefeitos e governadores com necessidades na saúde. (...) [Brasil] foi um dos países que menos sofreu com a pandemia"
We are practically beating the pandemic. The government did everything to minimize its negative effects, helping mayors and governors with needs in the health sector. Brazil was one of the countries which suffered less with the pandemic.

Excerpt 9

Topic: Both excerpts 8 and 9 bring a premature diagnosis about the end of the pandemic, as if it was already finished by the time the president gave the statements. Excerpt 8 came from a speech given in August of 2020, and excerpt 9 from a speech given in September of the same year, when the number of deaths amounted to over 22.000. In these speeches The president also highlighted how well the government was dealing with COVID-19.

Superstructure: In terms of problems and resolution, the two excerpts do not introduce explicitly these structures. The content of the statements aimed to praise the work of the government regarding the pandemic.

Local Semantics: Excerpts 8 and 9 are good examples of semantic agency. Bolsonaro used the structural feature of the sentences to reinforce the involvement of his government with positive actions and responsibility when dealing with the pandemic, as in excerpt 8 "I have failed to find anyone else in the world who dealt better with this situation than our government. / não vi no mundo quem enfrentou melhor essa questão do que o nosso governo.". The same happens in excerpt 9 "The government did everything to minimize its negative effects, helping mayors and governors with needs in the health sector/ O governo fez tudo para que os efeitos negativos da mesma fossem minimizados, ajudando prefeitos e governadores com necessidades na saúde." In both examples, the government is portrayed in an active role. They are portrayed through their tasks, and the verbs used to emphasize the

effectiveness of the measures convey a sense of accomplishment and bravery: "the country that dealt better" or "we are beating the pandemic".

Lexicon: There is a similarity in the way the two excerpts start. The two of them use words that imply uncertainty at the very beginning of the statement. Excerpt 8 with "in my understanding" and excerpt 9 with "practically". These words mean that whatever the president said next, he was not completely certain of it. Indeed, the assertions he made in the sequence had a great impact on those who listened to them. At a moment when the whole country was in expectation of the vaccination and a possible cure for the virus, the president made such an important statement signaling the end of the pandemic, thus providing false hopes of its end and the end of all the suffering. Such uncertainty is incongruent with the rest of the statement, which presented words of security and positivity regarding the government's work. Excerpt 8 brings positive claims, such as "I have failed to find anyone else in the world who dealt better with this situation than our government", and how this was something to be proud of. In the same manner, in excerpt 9, the president reinforced the good work and effort from the government in dealing with the pandemic and how, as a result, Brazil was "one of the countries that suffered less with the pandemic", which is a completely mistaken diagnosis. Just to use a major piece of data to prove this mistake, we can consider the global rates of COVID-related deaths, where Brazil came in third, appearing behind the USA and India.

Syntax: The exaggeration in the president's speech is present in both excerpts. The world is used as a comparative measure in both excerpts, emphasizing that Brazil was the best at dealing with the pandemic (excerpt 8) and that it was also one of the countries that suffered less from it (excerpt 9).
The subject recognized in excerpt 8 is first and foremost the president himself, using his own point of view to comment on how his government dealt with the COVID pandemic. Further on, he claimed that the results of how well the government conducted the process show how there were capable and concerned people, supposedly professionals, but what sort of professionals is not made clear. These people, or professionals, are the other subjects identified in the excerpt, and they were concerned about a specific group of people, the poor and the humble. There are implicit actions embedded in the adjectives 'concerned' and 'capable'. It would be important to understand exactly what these concerned and capable

people were doing to help the poor and the humble, but in the statement, this is not made clear.

In excerpt 9, the president starts by claiming that "we (Brazil) are practically beating the pandemic". In the sequence, the government appears as the active agent regarding everything that could be done about the pandemic, including helping city mayors and state's governors.

Rhetoric: These two excerpts are good examples of political speakers' use of exaggeration to talk about their policies and beneficial actions. Bolsonaro compared Brazil to other countries, putting it in an false position of superiority. His optimistic speech misrepresented the real context in August/September of 2020. Furthermore, it is possible to affirm that the objective of these statements was not to soothe the millions of Brazilians struggling on account of the pandemic, but to deviate attention from the government's constant lack of responsibility, as in delaying the purchase of vaccines, for example. It is not possible that the president, with the support of his team, could believe that at that point in time, we were heading to the end of the pandemic; thus, the discourse was used unduly as an excuse to praise his government's conduct.

4.6 EXCERPT 10 AND EXCERPT 11

Contextualization: In an interview with Blog do Mano on May 15th, 2020, Bolsonaro made the following statement concerning the use of chloroquine. By time, Brazil had 155.939 confirmed cases and 3.877 deaths. In that same week, the then health minister, Nelson Teich, resigned his post, claiming that he wouldn't compromise his career because of chloroquine. His successor was Eduardo Pazuello, a military man with no experience in the health area, who even claimed that he didn't know what SUS was about before taking charge of the Ministry of Health.

| "Quem for de direita toma cloroquina, quem for de esquerda toma tubaína." |
| People from the right take chloroquine, people from the left take tubaína. |

Excerpt 10

Contextualization: In a live speech on November 26th, 2020, Bolsonaro claimed that the use of masks was a taboo. Brazil had 5.653.561 confirmed COVID cases and 162.269 deaths. In that same week, a news report produced by Estadão revealed that 6.86 million tests bought by the Health Ministry were about to expire between December 2020 and January 2021. The tests were being kept in a federal government's storage.

"A questão da máscara, ainda vai ter um estudo sério falando sobre a efetividade da máscara… é o último tabu a cair"
About the mask, one day there will be a serious study talking about the effectiveness of the mask… it is the last taboo to be broken.

Excerpt 11

Topic: Excerpts 10 and 11 discuss two safety measures, with the first one using a bad joke that offended and generalized everyone who decided not to take chloroquine as medication for the treatment of COVID-19, categorizing this group as left wing. In excerpt 11, Bolsonaro questioned the effectiveness of the use of masks.

Superstructures: The problems of excerpts 10 and 11 are placed softly, through the mechanisms of joking (excerpt 10) and doubting (excerpt 11). The problem portrayed in excerpt 10 is related to the use of chloroquine in the treatment of patients who tested positive for COVID-19. The use of this medication generated several arguments, both for and against it, and eventually its use on patients became a political discussion in Brazil as well. On the one hand, the scientific community alleged there were few studies proving its efficacy for the treatment of COVID. On the other hand, its use was defended by Bolsonaro and Donald Trump in the USA; consequently, the supporters of these two politicians began to fiercely defend the adoption of the medication for the treatment of COVID. Chloroquine, then, is presented here as the resolution for the problem.

The problem and resolution in excerpt 11 are less outward in relation to excerpt 10. The problem would be the questionable effectiveness of the mask, called by the president a "taboo". As a resolution, he suggested that future studies would show how ineffective the masks were.

Local Semantics: In excerpt 10, Bolsonaro referred to two groups in particular: the ones who would take chloroquine as the treatment for COVID, and the other group, who would not. Furthermore, the description of left-wing people being constantly connected with negative actions (in this case, not taking chloroquine) takes a propositional framing that represents this group negatively. In the long term, such propositions undermine the representation of the group addressed (the left).

In excerpt 11, there is an implicit critique of the existing studies about the mask and, consequently, of the professionals who conducted such research. The word "tabu" manifests a negative opinion about this safety measure, as if it were irrelevant. The perspective of the critique comes from an agent outside of the health area or health authority. In this scenario, Bolsonaro was in the position of a citizen who should also make use of the mask but did not. He expressed an ideological opinion that was in opposition to the health authorities, who recommended the use of the mask.

Lexicon: The outstanding polar opposites represented in excerpt 10 refer to the political spectrum of the right and left. This example illustrates what the studies about populism argue: right-wing politicians constantly try to put the left in a disadvantageous position in relation to the right, creating an exclusion strategy (Walgrave, 2007). Although the tone of the speech was humorous, a well-known feature of the ex-president, he made an allusion to intubation, a common procedure used in severe cases of respiratory failure, frequent among patients with severe cases of COVID. Bolsonaro used nominalization when he made a joke with the word "tube/tubo", and he put it on the same level as chloroquine, calling the tube a medicine. The pun produced by the word "tubaína", however, implied a negative evaluation because it meant that people who decided not to take chloroquine were choosing the wrong type of "medicine". The pun connotes an imminent breathing complication and possibly death.

In Excerpt 11, the key words are "effectiveness/efetividade", "taboo/tabu", and "serious/sério". Even with detailed studies proving the efficacy of the mask in preventing contamination by the virus (Garcia, 2020), its use remained a question mark for the president and his supporters. Bolsonaro himself oftentimes appeared in large groups of people without a mask during critical moments of the contagion in Brazil. Furthermore, he used the adjective "serious" before the noun 'study', alleging that the studies that were conducted then were not reliable. In November of 2020, Bolsonaro spoke about the need for a serious study to be conducted when thousands of studies had already been conducted, which reinforced his

denialism and his constant attempts to discredit the scientific community. The denial of the use of the mask connects to his main goal: let the mass infection continue.

Syntax: The president used the verb 'take' (to take a medicine) in the comparison he made in excerpt 10. However, the 'take' from the first clause meant to ingest a medicine, while the 'take' from the second clause meant to be intubated. The polarization can also mean that the ones from the first clause were "safe" in relation to the ones in the second clause, who were in a serious health condition.

It is important to stress the incongruency of Bolsonaro's speech, visible in excerpt 11. He pleaded for a "serious study" to prove the effectiveness of the mask, even though by the time he made the statement, there were many studies proving the same point. If the studies conducted by then were not serious enough, it is not clear who were the professionals indicated to conduct such serious research, according to his standards.

Rhetoric: The urge to find a fast answer to the pandemic encouraged practices that disregarded minimum scientific standards, leading to hasty and incomplete solutions. The question of whether the use of chloroquine was a safe and effective treatment for COVID-19 became a contentious political issue all over the world, especially in Brazil. The desperate Bolsonaro's supporters on social media precipitously shared unreliable pieces of evidence that would justify the use of the medication, even though, at the same time, scientists and critics of the president argued for the need to wait for scientific results and pointed out the lack of proven evidence for the medication (Caponi *et al*., 2021).

The health authorities warned about the risks of a medication with no scientific validation, emphasizing that it should not be prescribed either as a preventive measure or as a therapeutic treatment for COVID-19 cases. The Brazilian Society of Infectious Diseases (SBI) released some technical notes from the beginning of the pandemic, requesting caution regarding the use of chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine, as stated in a note issued in April (SBI, 2020).

The use of the medication with contraindications from health authorities meets the negationism of the government, which once again edifies the antagonisms in the country regarding the fast answer to the pandemic in order to preserve economic life instead of human life.

4.7 EXCERPT 12

Contextualization: The statement was given on April 8th, 2020, in an interview with the program Brasil Urgente. By that time, Brazil had 20.818 confirmed cases and 699 deaths. In that week, law nº 13.982 established the Auxílio Emergencial, which was a financial aid from the government in the amount of R$600,00 for Brazilians who did informal work. The implementation of the aid was slow and led people to crowd in front of bank agencies all over the country.

"Quem tem abaixo de 40 anos, tem que se preocupar pra não transmitir o vírus pros outros. Mas pra ele, pra sua vida, é quase zero esse risco. Devemos, sim, a cada família cuidar dos mais idosos. [A família] Não pode deixar na conta do estado. Cada família tem que botar o vovô e a vovó lá no canto e é isso. Evitar o contato com eles a menos de dois metros. E o resto tem que trabalhar, porque tá havendo uma destruição de empregos no Brasil"
"Whoever is under 40 years old, has to worry about not transmitting the virus to others. But for himself, for his life, the risk is almost zero. We must, in fact, each family must take care of the elderly. [The family] cannot put that on the account of the state. Each family has to put grandpa and grandma on the corner and that's it. Avoid contact with them under two meters. The rest [of the population] has to work, because there is a destruction of work happening in Brazil."

Excerpt 12

Topic: The excerpt above brings three different topics into just one statement. The first topic is the risk of contamination and the chances of complications if one catches the virus. The second issue regards the responsibility of the family in taking care of the elderly in the familiar circle, and the lack of responsibility from the state. The third topic is the labor crisis the country faced during the pandemic period.

Superstructures: Since the excerpt brought up three topics, the problems and resolutions were also presented accordingly. The first problem is the "worry" of people under 40 about disseminating the virus. A resolution concerning dissemination was not proposed. However, an alleged advantage was mentioned for this group: that their lives would not be at risk. No reasons for that claim were presented.

The second problem referred to care for the elderly and how this care should not be expected from the state. The resolution, instead, claims that this is a responsibility of the families. Here the resolution is detailed with a safety measure "Evitar o contato com eles a menos de dois metros/ avoid contact with them for less than 2 meters".

The third problem is the "destruição de trabalhos no Brasil/ destruction of jobs in Brazil", and the solution presented was that "the rest (the young workforce) has to work/ o resto tem que trabalhar" to avoid or diminish such destruction.

Local Semantics: The group of elderly people and the group of people under 40 were represented through their position towards each other. That is, the "young" must take care of the "old". The young group was generalized into the category of 'family', which implicitly and in practice means women. The subjected norm/value attributed to the actors were familiar bonds.

Lexicon: The use of the number "zero" added to the word "risk" reinforced the argument of the problem/resolution. That is, the statement began with the problem of contamination, but it immediately added the relief of 'zero risk' to the lives of those under 40 years old.

The word family was used in a general manner that includes "grandma" and "grandpa", who are the ones who must be taken care of by the family. The use of the abbreviation also appealed to the emotional involvement of the family circle.

In the last topic of the statement, the word "destruction" emphasized the crises Bolsonaro referred to regarding the work scenario in Brazil. It also claimed urgency to go back to work.

Syntax: The agents in this statement were allocated in the following manner: "the ones who are under 40"; "the others" (possibly Bolsonaro refers to the ones above 40 years old); "the family"; "grandpa and grandma/elderly people"; "the rest" (representing workers).

The first claim of the excerpt activated "people under 40", who should worry about contaminating "the others", that is, they should worry about the lives of others but not so much about their own lives, because the "risk is almost zero".

In the second topic, regarding the care of elderly people, the president used the modal verb "must", in the first person plural, including himself in "we must, in fact, each family must take care of the elderly/ devemos, sim, a cada família cuidar dos mais idosos". In the next sentence, he withdrew any responsibility from the state and put it on the family: "Não pode deixar na conta do estado" . No pronouns or agents were verbalized in this last statement, but we can infer that the family should not rely on the state because, in the following sentence, he explained what each family should do: "each family has to put grandpa and grandma in the corner, and that's it". By addressing the public and using "we must", Bolsonaro manipulated the audience through personalization and equalization. Personalizing the discourse by discussing very particular moments of private life, such as family care, and equalizing his position with the public, meaning that even members of his own family were supposed to do the same (take care of their elders). These attitudes built a relationship with the masses, and in this case, the speaker did not have one specific audience in mind since the topic he approached (family care) was a general topic and should be of interest to every audience. The sentence "Cada família tem que botar o vovô e a vovó lá no canto e é isso/each family has to put grandpa and grandma in the corner, and that's it" is strong because it expresses a universal common-sense that could hardly be contested, which was the importance of the family.

Concerning the last topic, about the "destruction of work in Brazil", "the rest" were activated as the ones who should work to fight against the destruction of work.

Rhetoric: There are elements of manipulation with emotional appeal in the excerpt. The first one attributed to people under 40 the need to worry about transmitting the virus, although there should not be much concern if he or she contracted the virus. By saying this, the real intention behind the claim relied on the fact that the president defended the end of quarantine and the return to work, and this is why people under 40 should not fear for their lives. That meant that going back to work was worth the risk of contamination, and the only concern should have been about not transmitting the virus to elderly people. It is important to stress that in this particular statement, the only public mentioned was the elderly, whereas other people who were also part of priority groups were not mentioned, such as disabled people, people with comorbidities, and health workers, for example.

The second point to be analyzed also relies on emotional aspects, which is the role of the family in the pandemic. The argument appealed to familiar bonds in order to free the state from the responsibility of caring for and supporting a specific social group (the elderly). This is a strategy of populist right wing governments to replace the state's responsibility by family care. The other problem embedded in this statement is that it is considered shameful and even monstrous for a person to deny care for their family. The family institution is strong to the point that even serious behaviors, including physical and emotional abuse, are considered acceptable just because the family is hegemonically portrayed as sacred and as a unit that should be valued and nourished at all costs. Furthermore, when we look at the words "care" and "family", the members of the family who would be the agents responsible providing care are women(mothers, sisters, daughters, aunts, grandmothers). Part of this emotional call is represented with the "childish" choice of words "grandma and grandpa", which it intended to reinforce the value of family bond and thus, why it was the family who should offer care, not the state.

The last argument also resorts to sensationalism and appeal to fear. The expression "destruction of work" aggravated what would certainly be a crisis in the labor market, a consequence of the financial crisis due to the pandemic that affected the whole world, not only Brazil. The intention was to evoke fear of a financial crisis, and thus, the solution presented was to work. This was another strategy to diminish the state's role in dealing with this problem by allocating the solution to individuals instead of the state. That is, there was a transfer of guilt for the supposed "destruction" scenario in Brazil.

To conclude, this piece of argument serves neoliberal interests, which include protecting the state by transferring charges and care to members of society while the state's own interests remain unharmed. In this scenario, the members of society mentioned are mostly women, fixed by social gender roles, and whose function is part of the non-paid job outlined through the love for the family.

4.8 EXCERPT 13

Contextualization: The excerpt is an answer Bolsonaro gave to a supporter in front of Palácio da Alvorada when she asked about the number of deaths caused by the coronavirus on June 24th, 2020. In that week, Brazil had 850.514 confirmed cases and 42.720 deaths caused by COVID-19.

> "Cobre do seu governador. Sai daqui" (...) "Mortes estão havendo no mundo todo, não é apenas a covid. Agora, querer culpar a mim… Tem muita gente morrendo de fome, depressão, suicídio, uma política feita apenas de um lado"

> "Ask your governor. Get out of here ″ (...) ″ Deaths are happening worldwide, it's not just covid. Now, wanting to blame me… There are a lot of people dying of hunger, depression, suicide, a policy made only on one side"

Excerpt 13

Topic: The main topic in the excerpt is the refusal of the then president to account for the increasing number of deaths in the country. Bolsonaro's claim is that the governors of each state should be charged (although it was not mentioned what they should be charged with in specific, it is possible to infer that he is referring to answers or measures to be taken). In his next sentence, he naturalizes deaths by putting COVID into comparison with other causes of death around the world.

Superstructures: In this excerpt, following the scheme of argumentation proposed by Van Dijk, that the political others (the governors) were attacked while the political agent (Bolsonaro) was defended. This is also done by backgrounding information through the erasure of information. In this case, answers concerning the increase in the number of deaths were not given. The problem was transferred to other political stances (state governors) instead. A solution to the problem mentioned was not proposed in this statement. However, there was a transfer of responsibility over the problem, which was no longer addressed to the president himself but to the state's governors.
Regarding the problem of the number of deaths, a solution was not mentioned either. On the contrary, the only possible action about it was to see death as a natural order of life.

Local Semantics: The actor mentioned in the excerpt was the governors of each state. When Bolsonaro talked about himself, he suggested that he was being unfairly blamed, although implicitly, through "now, wanting to blame me/ agora querer culpar a mim". Furthermore, by naturalizing the deaths from other causes around the world through generalization, he ended up defending himself and his government and creating a shield to prevent them from being

categorized as "bad". He accused the political other of doing "politics of only one side/ uma política feita de apenas um lado". Although who exactly was doing this one-sided politics was not mentioned, these others were portrayed as bad politicians, and consequently, Bolsonaro was on the opposite extreme.

Lexicon: The word "blame" was used to represent the president as the victim of the supposed unfair allegations that he should take responsibility for the number of deaths. Furthermore, COVID was put into the same category as other causes of death, such as hunger, depression and suicide. The reasons and consequences of each of these causes of death are different, and putting them on the same level as a pandemic is disrespectful to the victims and families of people who go through each of them.

It is possible to infer that the ex-president interpreted the question about the increasing numbers of deaths as an insult to the way he was conducting policies about the pandemic. Thus, it is possible to see that through rude expressions such as "get out of here" he was not open to discussing or answering anyone's questions. Bad manners were always a feature of Bolsonaro's speech, and it was accepted as such from the moment he began to become popular, even prior to the presidency, with the justification that this was just the way he was. This attitude was clearly not the behavior expected of a chief of state.

Syntax: Emphasis was given to the first part of the statement with the use of "ask your governor" followed by the imperative command "get out of here", meaning that the question should not have been addressed to the president in the first place. Afterwards, the mitigation of death was given through a sequence of other causes of death happening simultaneously with COVID around the world. Bolsonaro finished the statement with "a policy made only on one side", which also put him and his government as the ones who were at a disadvantage and being attacked.

Rhetoric: Bolsonaro tries to downplay the number of deaths caused by COVID by citing other types of deaths. That is, he backgrounded the seriousness of the thousands of deaths which were then happening every day by bringing into the discussion other causes of death (as important and serious).

Furthermore, this was not the first time that the former president mentioned suicide and depression. In other contexts, he did this by saying that people were committing suicide and

getting depressed because of isolation. However, the reference to isolation did not express any concern whatsoever for people's mental health. The real purpose for expressing concern for the psychological effects of isolation was to find arguments for the end of quarantine and the return to work.

Another important feature of this statement is the generalization of "the people " who are dying, from COVID and the other causes he mentioned. In Brazil, social inequalities became more evident as the pandemic developed along 2020 and on. Although the virus could, in fact, contaminate everyone, the poor and the working class were the ones who suffered the most due to their poor work, household and sanitation conditions, their access to food, health services, and other needs (Castilho and Lemos, 2021).

Finally, by accusing the others (not clearly who) of doing "one side politics", Bolsonaro placed himself (and his government) in the us X them populist strategic position, where his side is being undermined.

4.9 EXCERPT 14 AND EXCERPT 15

Contextualization: During a live broadcast on Labor's Day, May 1st, 2020, Bolsonaro reinforced the need to think about the role of the economy during the crisis. Brazil had 155.939 confirmed cases and 3.877 deaths caused by COVID-19.

"Eu gostaria que todos voltassem a trabalhar, mas quem decide isso não sou eu, são os governadores e prefeitos".
"I wanted everybody to go back to work, but I am not the one who decides, it's up to the governors and mayors."

Excerpt 14

Contextualization: Bolsonaro gave this speech in front of Palácio da Alvorada on June 7th, 2020. Brazil had 850.514 confirmed cases and 42.720 deaths caused by COVID-19. Two days before, Bolsonaro made a statement accusing the WHO of being a political and partisan organization.

"STF decidiu que os governadores e prefeitos é que são responsáveis por essa política, inclusive isolamento. Agora está vindo uma onda de desemprego enorme aí. Informais e o pessoal formal também. Não queiram colocar no meu colo. Compete aos governadores a solução desse problema que está acontecendo quase no Brasil todo"

"STF decided that governors and mayors are the ones responsible for this policy, including isolation. Now there is a huge wave of unemployment coming: informal and formal workers too. Don't put this on me. It is up to the governors to solve this problem that is happening almost all over Brazil."

Excerpt 15

Topic: In excerpts 14 and 15, Bolsonaro addressed unemployment and how he wanted people to go back to their occupations. He also referred to the STF, state governors and city mayors as the authorities in charge of deciding over the pandemic policies.

Superstructures: According to excerpt 15, the problem lies in increasing unemployment rates in Brazil. It is interesting to observe that the problem is on the people who get unemployed, not on the companies that dismiss these people in order to guarantee their margin of profit. Bolsonaro also referred to the isolation policy. The solution was presented in both excerpts 14 and 15, when he claimed that workers should go back to work. The only possible solution suggested by the ex-president was to go back to work, whereas the use of other strategies to diminish the problem was delegated strictly to governors and mayors.

Local Semantics: In excerpts 14 and 15, the groups who are the main agents of action are governors and mayors. In both excerpts, they are attributed the responsibility of taking action. Although they were not negatively portrayed per se, they were connected to the problems (unemployment) Brazil was facing at that moment. According to Van Dijk (1995), the propositional framing of actions in which the agents are embedded can add to the negative portrayal of that specific group. In both excerpts Bolsonaro put himself as the disclaimer, since his "positive action" was represented by having nothing to do with the problem.

Lexicon: Bolsonaro used the hyperbole "almost all over Brazil" to reinforce the seriousness of the unemployment situation in the country. The verbs used regarding taking action were "decide" in excerpts 14 and 15 and "it is up to" in excerpt 15. Regarding the actions involving Bolsonaro, the verbs used were "I would like" in excerpt 14, representing only a wish and thus empty from concrete actions, and the imperative negative "don't put this on me", abstaining from action.

Syntax: Bolsonaro is the active agent in excerpt 14 towards the modalized verb "would like", demonstrating his wish but also his lack of power. However, the power was transferred to governors and mayors in excerpt 14 "It's up to the governors and mayors", in the same way that in excerpt 15 "it is up to the governors to solve this problem". In excerpt 15, STF is the active agent who "decided that governors and mayors are the ones responsible for this policy".

Rhetoric: The tone of the speech in both excerpts seems to attribute not only responsibility to governors and mayors about the isolation policies but also the responsibility for unemployment. The fact that only states and cities know exactly the number of hospital beds available and are the only ones able to gauge their health service capacity was disregarded in the pronouncements. By doing this, Bolsonaro obscured the reason why the isolation was a safety measure in the first place, making it seem somehow useless.

Moreover, Bolsonaro took the opportunity to also criticize the positioning of the STF (Supremo Tribunal Federal) regarding the isolation policies, thus manipulating the audience not to ask or direct their concerns to him. He put himself in a position which is not only free from responsibility but also seen as the victim. By using the STF's decision as a tool to justify his conduct, he appealed to democratic tools to validate an autocratic scheming. Although the Brazilian legislation respects each state's measures of containment, a leadership position, such as the president, was expected. The pandemic was a delicate moment that devasted the whole world and that, due to its dimension and consequences in different areas of life, demanded collective strength and efforts, specially from political leaders, who occupy the highest decision making spaces in the country. The leading position (presidency) is not merely a bureaucratic one, but also an attitude capable of conveying hope and safety to the people, or not. Bolsonaro's lack of this confidence in the state governors made clear a polarization that

also raised doubts among the people about whether the governors were taking the right decisions. As Bolsonaro depicted himself in the polar opposite side as the one being politically persecuted, STF and the governors are the ones who were persecuting and going against the common good of the population.

In 2021, Bolsonaro even claimed that he would no longer obey STF's decisions. The statement was followed by many insults to the minister of STF Alexandre de Moraes. It is important to remember that attacks on the judiciary are a feature of antidemocratic behavior (Cassimiro and Lynch, 2022.; Starling *et al.*, 2022.; Nobre, 2022).

The tension between the judiciary and the executive power increased during the pandemic, in what Bolsonaro claimed to be the "robe's dictatorship", after STF took a stand in favor of science, as exemplified in excerpts 14 and 15, when the court decided in favor of isolation.

4.10 EXCERPT 16

Contextualization: The allegation was made on January 5th, 2021. Brazil had 8.455.059 confirmed cases and 209.296 deaths caused by COVID-19. On the same day of the statement, the International Relations Ministry confirmed the purchase of 2 million doses of AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccines from India. A few days later, the government organized a massive promotion of this purchase, which led to the suspension of the sale from India because Brazil had been indiscreet with the disclosure of the deal.

"O Brasil está quebrado, chefe. Eu não consigo fazer nada. Eu queria mexer na tabela do Imposto de Renda, tá, teve esse vírus, potencializado pela mídia que nós temos, essa mídia sem caráter".
"Brazil is broke, boss. I can't do anything. I wanted to change income tax, right, [but] there was this virus, potentialized by the media we have, this despicable media."

Excerpt 16

Topic: There is a mixed topic in the statement. First, Bolsonaro referred to the country being "broke" regarding financial issues. Second, he referred to the exploitation of the coronavirus by the media.

Superstructures: The problem mentioned in the statement is the bad economic status of Brazil and how the ex-president could not do anything about it. The closest solution identified in the speech is that he tried to change income tax; however, as he pointed out, it was only an intention, not an action. In the sequence, he mentioned coronavirus as something that was "potentialized by the media we have/ potencializado pela mídia que nós temos". There was not any mention of possible solutions to that matter. The explicit and implicit premises have to do with the failed organization of the media, and the implicit premise is that people should not trust the media coverage.

Local Semantics: Bolsonaro refers to himself as a disclaimer, powerless towards the media. By doing that, he distorts the goals and tasks of that actor, which is primarily to inform and broadcast news, and replaces it with a role whose purpose is to convey lies and to manipulate. Thus, the ideological purpose of this excerpt was to position the media as the manipulator and the population as the manipulated. Concerning resources, the media was represented as the bearer of the power of manipulation through its privileged access to information and capacity to formulate the means to propagate such information. On the other hand, Bolsonaro was the one who did not have the same access, and consequently, was powerless.

Lexicon: Brazil was represented through the metonymy "broke/ quebrado". Coronavirus received the attribute "potentialized/ potencializado"; and the media was portrayed as "despicable/ sem caráter".

Syntax: Brazil was represented by its economic status "broke/quebrado". Bolsonaro referred to himself as powerless, represented by the verb "can" associated with the negative form "not" "I cannot do anything/ Eu não consigo fazer nada". It is possible to identify a lack of information in the statement. That is, he claimed he could not do anything about the financial crisis, but the reason was not given, nor was it made clear who or what exactly was preventing him from doing something about it. The media also is the actor potentialized in the excerpt.

Rhetoric: When he said that he could not do anything about the economic crisis in Brazil, he also put himself as the victim, the one who wanted to, but was hindered. A very serious

accusation was made towards news producers in Brazil, as if they were super-estimating coronavirus, thus, feeding the population with distrust in relation to the media.

Journalists in the area of communication (Baptista, 2022) point out that Brazil is decreasing in the ranking of freedom of press, and that such a factor is a representation of attacks to democracy. The researcher explains that Bolsonaro's government as a whole played a role in hindering the work of journalists by harassing it through jokes or delegitimizing their information. It is also relevant to mention that Bolsonaro attacked several female journalists, being disrespectful, misogynist and aggressive towards them[31].

Finally, the visible institutional contempt for journalistic work not only made the propagation of reliable and grounded information more difficult, but it also put correct and incorrect information content on the same page, causing confusion among people when it came to distinguishing between what was true and what was fake. Another blueprint of right-wing populist governments. The misinformation is another strategy of manipulation. However, there was a complex relation between Bolsonaro and the media; for example, during the pandemic and the presidential elections of 2022, he had the support of Jovem Pan, a news vehicle that was even called the voice of Bolsonaro's supporters. Jovem Pan also helped in the propagation of defamation of STF and the discredit of other journalistic vehicles such as Rede Globo.[32]

4.11 EXCERPT 17 AND EXCERPT 18

Contextualization: On December 15th, 2020, Bolsonaro declared, in a rally in São Paulo, that he wouldn't take the vaccine. The rally gathered thousands of supporters, and many of them were not wearing a mask. By that time, Brazil had 6.880.127 confirmed cases and 181.123 deaths caused by COVID-19.

"Eu não vou tomar vacina e ponto final. Minha vida está em risco? O problema é meu"
"I'm not taking the vaccine and that's it. Is my life at risk? It 's my problem."

Excerpt 17

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[31] More details on the statements of Bolsonaro towards women journalists can be found in the link: https://www.dw.com/pt-br/os-ataques-de-bolsonaro-a-jornalistas-mulheres/a-63142932
[32] More information about the role of Jovem Pan available on the link: https://www.em.com.br/app/noticia/politica/2022/09/18/interna_politica,1394954/jovem-pan-vira-voz-do-bolson arismo-com-verbas-do-governo-e-tom-amigo.shtml

Contextualization: On December 16th, 2020, Bolsonaro questioned the side effects of the immunizer produced by Pfizer. On that same day, Eduardo Pazzuelo, the health minister from May 2020 to March 2021, talked about the excessive anxiety about the vaccination. By that time, Brazil had 6.880.127 confirmed cases and 181.123 deaths caused by COVID-19.

"Lá no meio dessa bula está escrito que a empresa não se responsabiliza por qualquer efeito colateral. Isso acende uma luz amarela. A gente começa a perguntar para o povo: você vai tomar essa vacina?"
"It is written in the drug description leaflet that the company does not take responsibility for any side effects. This is a red flag. We start asking people: are you going to take this vaccine?"

Excerpt 18

Topic: Excerpts 17 and 18 debate vaccination and the risks involved in it .

Superstructures: Bolsonaro addressed the risks of vaccination as the problem in both excerpts. In excerpt 17 he even put his own life in the statement "is my life at risk?/ minha vida está em risco?" The quick resolution he gave as the answer was "It's my problem / É problema meu". Such an answer did not have the objective of solving any problem; it only meant that he did not have an adequate answer or explanation for the question, and it also had the effect of cutting off the conversation immediately.

In excerpt 18, the ex-president refers to the Pfizer leaflet and says that the problem relies on the company not taking responsibility for the side effects. The implicit solution to the problem was not taking the vaccine, but this was not put into words, it was implied in the question "are you going to take this vaccine? / você vai tomar essa vacina?"

Local Semantics: There are two groups represented in the excerpt. The first is the company (Pfizer), which is the provider of the vaccine and whose representation is given by its task/activity. That is, the representation of the group was drawn according to what was expected of it, and in this case, according to Bolsonaro, the company failed in its primary function (to take responsibility for its product). The second group are the people, the ones to

"consume" the product. Notice that Bolsonaro equalized himself with the public. The representation of the two groups was conditioned on each other through positioning: provider of the product and consumers of the product. This relationship, however, was built in distrust of the work of the producer. The ideological purpose of the statement was to attribute errors to the first group. The first group was represented as the active agent; however, they were not engaged in positive actions, since they were portrayed in a non-responsible role. In the same way, the second group was, through Bolsonaro's discourse strategy, "invited" to also occupy an agentive role, by refusing the product offered by the provider.

Lexicon: These statements, common in the speech of Bolsonaro, also count with idiomatic expressions such as "this is a red flag/ isso acende uma luz amarela" in excerpt 18, meaning that certain happenings are warnings of danger, in this case, the danger of the vaccine.
The ex-president did not value polite speeches, in fact, he liked the exact opposite. He made lexical choices that transmitted his beliefs and values. In this sense, his speeches invited the interlocutors to take what Bakhtin (1997) calls "responsive attitude", which is to perceive the tone of the speech, be it sympathetic, aggressive, or in a tone of agreement or disagreement, as an invitation to action. In this particular statement, the invitation to action relied on the anti-vaccine movement, which was part of the government's ideology.

Syntax: In excerpt 17, Bolsonaro only referred to himself as the active agent of the verb "tomar/take" the vaccine. Then he used possessive adjectives to address "my life/ minha vida" and "my problem/ meu problema". The tone of the statement was defensive, justified by the many questions he was receiving at the time, as it was a period when a position regarding vaccination was expected from the president. His example of refusing to take the vaccine surely reflected on the thousands of people who could but did not get vaccinated at the time.
In excerpt 18, Bolsonaro starts by citing the leaflet of the vaccine, "It is written in the leaflet/ lá no meio dessa bula", to reinforce that "the company does not take responsibility for any side effects/ a empresa não se responsabiliza por qualquer efeito colateral" was registered in the sanitary documentation. The company is the agent in "not take responsibility/ não se responsabiliza" and such an act is represented through the metaphor "this is a red flag/isso acende uma luz amarela" to signal danger. In the sequence, he finished by throwing a question to the public. The sentence starts with the second person plural, "a gente/ we", where it is possible to interpret that he was referring to his government, and then there is an action

verb and the beneficiary of the question "ask the people/ perguntar para o povo". The question was "are you going to take this vaccine?/ você vai tomar essa vacina?". The question was not a mere doubt where the answer is yes or no; the background question was: are you going to risk your life and trust this vaccine? Furthermore, although there was no use of a clear imperative telling people not to get vaccinated, the use of questions directed to the audience was a manipulation strategy that engaged the public to start doubting the choice of getting vaccinated, and consequently, it invited the audience to believe the message the interlocutor aimed to convey.

Rhetoric: Bolsonaro used an inflamed speech in both excerpts. The aim was clearly to question the efficacy and safety of the vaccines, to the extent that it extrapolated rational foundations and appealed to emotional features, in this case, fear and distrust towards scientific studies. Couto *et al*. (2021) claim that speeches that discredit legit and regulated authorities, scientifically grounded information are replaced by values and beliefs originated by political and sociocultural influences, and that this switch is capable of shaping perceptions of risk (of contamination) and adherence to sanitary measures.

4.12 EXCERPT 19

Contextualization: On December 18th, 2020, Bolsonaro questioned the side effects of the vaccine produced by Pfizer. In that same week, he declared that we were living the end of the pandemic and still insisted on the use of chloroquine as a treatment for Covid-19. By that time, Brazil had 6.880.127 confirmed cases and 181.123 deaths caused by the disease.

"Lá no contrato da Pfizer, está bem claro nós (a Pfizer) não nos responsabilizamos por qualquer efeito colateral. Se você virar um jacaré, é problema seu (...) Se você virar Super-Homem, se nascer barba em alguma mulher aí, ou algum homem começar a falar fino, eles (Pfizer) não têm nada a ver isso. E, o que é pior, mexer no sistema imunológico das pessoas (...) Vocês vão ter que assinar o termo de responsabilidade, se quiserem tomar. A Pfizer é bem clara no contrato: 'Não nos responsabilizamos por efeito colateral'".

"In the Pfizer contract , it is very clear, we (Pfizer) are not responsible for any side effects.

If you become an alligator, it is your problem (...) If you become Superman, if a woman grows a beard, or if any man starts speaking in a high-pitched voice, they (Pfizer) have nothing to do with it. And what is worse, messing with people's immunity system (...) You will have to sign a liability term, if you want to take it. Pfizer is very clear in the contract: "We are not responsible for side effects".

Excerpt 19

Topic: The topic of excerpt 19 is the problem that Bolsonaro addressed in the Pfizer contract, because the company would not take any responsibility for side effects. What is now the case, and what should be done about it.

Superstructures: The existing problem is the alleged lack of responsibility for the vaccine's side effects by the producer. This was highlighted three times in the excerpt. In the beginning of the statement: (1) "In the Pfizer contract, it is very clear, we (Pfizer) are not responsible for any side effects/ Lá no contrato da Pfizer, está bem claro nós (a Pfizer) não nos responsabilizamos por qualquer efeito colateral"; (2) they (Pfizer) have nothing to do with it/ eles (Pfizer) não tem nada a ver com isso; and (3) "Pfizer is very clear in the contract: "We are not responsible for side effects"/A Pfizer é bem clara no contrato: 'Não nos responsabilizamos por efeito colateral'". What should have been done about it was not clearly mentioned, but it is implied that the resolution would be to not take the vaccine. However, for those who insisted on taking it, Bolsonaro said that people would have to sign a liability agreement, proving that they were aware of the side effects "You will have to sign a liability term if you want to take it./Vocês vão ter que assinar o termo de responsabilidade, se quiserem tomar.".

Local Semantics: There are two groups represented in this excerpt. The first is the same as in the excerpts above, Pfizer, and the second group is the people. However, Bolsonaro did not address people in a general form; he emphasizes accurately that he was talking to those who decide to take the vaccine. He even directed the public with the use of the subject pronoun "you". Unlike the excerpts analyzed above (17 and 18), Bolsonaro did not equate himself to the group represented by the mass. He excluded himself in a way that ridiculed the choice of those who decide to be vaccinated. In sum, while in excerpts 17 and 18 he promoted his manipulative interests and values against the vaccination, disguised by a false concern for the

lack of responsibility in the leaflet, in excerpt 19 he assumed that he actually did not care about what could happen if you took the vaccine. It was "your problem".

Lexicon: Bolsonaro used words that strengthened the seriousness of the risks involved in taking the vaccine, such as "we are not responsible/ nós não nos responsabilizamos", reinforcing that whatever happened after people were vaccinated, the blame was exclusively on those who decided to take it.

This excerpt in particular became popular and gained spotlights on social media and TV because of the part where Bolsonaro said "If you become an alligator, it is your problem / Se você virar um jacaré, é problema seu". The quote reverberated all over the internet, and it even became a photo filter on Instagram, which people used after being vaccinated. Bolsonaro responded to the movement of people taking selfies with the filter by justifying that he had been just joking and that the statement was a hyperbole. However, by stating that immunized people could turn into animals, he denied all the foundational science behind the vaccine and claimed that the consequences would be bad to the extent of dehumanizing/ animalizing people who decided to take it.

Syntax: The whole statement did not refer to Bolsonaro's side; it only attacked the other side, represented by Pfizer, and the people who decided to take the vaccine. The "us" group was implicit in the message as the ones who were warning the population about the risks, and the "them" group was clearly mentioned as the imminent danger. Bolsonaro used the pronoun "we/nós", but placing Pfizer as the agent of the action "are not responsible/ não nos responsabilizamos". Following this argument, Bolsonaro changed the tone by addressing the population. He claimed that "if you become an alligator, it is your problem/ se você se tornar um jacaré, é problema seu". The verbs he used to talk about the physical consequences of the vaccine were "turn/virar", "grow/nascer", "speak/falar", with the manner adverb "high-pitched/fino", and "mess/mexer", all of them signaling negative alterations to the human body.

Addressing the population, he used the verb "sign/assinar" regarding the liability term, with the purpose of making people commit to the acknowledgement of the vaccine's side effects. Although in the beginning of the sentences he used the conditional clause "if/se" to express a hypothesis, the tone of the speech was threatening and insinuated that people who took the vaccine should feel guilty by doing so, and it also instigated fear.

Rhetoric:

In addition, Bolsonaro always cherished the type of speech that conveyed the message that he was fighting for the citizens' freedom of choice, and at the same time, this feature of speech leads people to question their own decisions. During the period these speeches were made, he even advocated for a liability term for those who chose to be vaccinated to sign. At the time, this was strongly criticized by specialists because the vaccine had already been approved by the health authorities and because, if granted, the liability term would be a bureaucratic barrier for people to be vaccinated, resulting in non-vaccination. In the meantime, he would also instigate political-ideological disputes with state governors who were working for vaccine distribution, as was the case of João Dória in São Paulo. Bolsonaro referred to Coronavac as "Doria's Chinese Vaccine," reinforcing disinformation regarding the vaccine.

According to Instituto Butantan (2023), because of multiple factors, Brazil has been facing vaccine hesitancy in the past years, and fake news is one of these factors. Doctors from Butantan explained that the side effects of the vaccine were overestimated and considered worse than the effects of the disease itself. In excerpt 18, it is possible to see that Bolsonaro brought this point to his claim. Furthermore, together with the reluctance to be vaccinated came the negligence of other safety measures such as social distancing, the use of hand sanitizers, and the use of masks.

Another element in this speech is Bolsonaro's usual sexist and homophobic tone when talking about serious issues. When Bolsonaro used the examples "if any woman grows a beard, or if any man starts speaking in a high pitched voice/ se nascer barba em alguma mulher aí, ou algum homem começar a falar fino" he was using language as a mechanism for discrimination because, by doing that, he intended to ridicule the actors mentioned through their physical characteristics. Caldas-Coulthard (2022) calls this "daily banal sexism", since it is normalized in daily activities and because it is not perceived by most people. Wodak (2020) also considers this normalization of shamelessness a strategy used by right wing political governments. Bolsonaro represented the identities of both women and men in such a way that it embarrassed them, women by having a beard, a male feature, and men by speaking in a high-pitched voice, suggesting that men would sound feminine.

Chapter V

Data Discussion

> *"Nós temos é que desconstruir muita coisa,*
> *desfazer muita coisa para depois recomeçarmos*
> *a fazer [...] Que eu sirva para que, pelo menos,*
> *eu possa ser um ponto de inflexão, já estou muito*
> *feliz."*
> *Jair Messias Bolsonaro, Washington, 17 de*
> *março de 2019.*

5. DATA DISCUSSION

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section is dedicated to discussing the questions proposed by Fairclough and Fairclough (2012). Out of the seven questions proposed by the authors and which I presented in Chapter III, for this discussion I answered four because the content of the questions was better suited to the results found in Chapter IV. In the second section of this chapter, I discuss the relations between right wing populism and Bolsonaro's government. Finally, in the third section, I discuss the impact of the actions taken by the government during the pandemic on women's lives. In all of the sections of this chapter I bring examples from data discussed in Chapter IV, in order to provide evidence to the arguments that I argue in the answers to the questions raised here.

5.1 POLITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: QUESTIONS PROPOSED BY FAIRCLOUGH AND FAIRCLOUGH (2012)

The questions presented here come from the model of Political Discourse Analysis developed by Fairclough and Fairclough in their book published in 2012, as a proposal of analysis for advanced students. This model comprehends political arguments from the perspective of CDA and PDA, and analyzes arguments from a deliberative viewpoint, as they

claim "politics is about arriving cooperatively at decisions about what to do in the context of disagreement, conflict of interests and values, power inequalities, uncertainty and risk" (p. 2).

5.1.1 What does the agent want to achieve?

This question refers to one of the features of discourse analysis, which is to analyze what is not put into words. The analysis of the implicit message is the critical part that we, as discourse analysts, want to bring to the surface. What the agent wants to achieve is not always explicit, and it is not always put into reliable words.

In Bolsonaro's speech, there was a clear demonstration of manipulation through the spread of false information and the delegitimation of science. Even though he claimed that the government did everything in its power to conduct the pandemic crisis in the best way, data analysis and the sum of his actions and measures revealed that, in fact, what he wanted and expected from people was a personalistic attitude toward handling the pandemic by themselves, as we can see in:

Excerpt 3: "No mundo todo, são raros os casos de vítimas fatais do coronavírus entre jovens e adultos."/ In the whole world, it is rare to have victims of coronavirus among young people and adults."

Excerpt 8: "No meu entender, guardando-se as devidas proporções, não vi no mundo quem enfrentou melhor essa questão do que o nosso governo. Isso nos orgulha. Mostra que tem gente capacitada e preocupada, em especial, com os mais pobres, os mais humildes"/To my knowledge, taking into account its due proportions, I have failed to find anyone else in the world who dealt better with this situation than our government. This makes us proud. It shows there are capable people, people who worry, in particular, with the poor and the humble."

Excerpt 1: "O que está errado é a histeria, como se fosse o fim do mundo. Uma nação como o Brasil só estará livre quando certo número de pessoas for infectado e criar anticorpos"/"What is wrong is the hysteria, as if it is the end of the world. A nation like Brazil will only be free when a certain number of people are infected and create antibodies."

Bolsonaro's conduct and action taking went towards lengthening public suffering in order to manifest himself as the one and only representative of the state who deserved the position he occupied. He constantly did that by criticizing and ridiculing the decision making of governors and other political agents who were contrary to his values. Another feature of his conduct was discrediting the press, the scientific community, and educational sectors that brought up progressive agendas not consonant with the traditional spectrum in which his politics and ideologies lied. Starling et al. (2022) explain that Bolsonaro used language as a weapon to achieve one of his objectives: transforming his opponents into enemies and vilifying these enemies. The data from Starling et al.'s study revealed that his lexicon was truculent, his rhetoric was not articulated and was contradictory, and his repertoire of arguments was scarce and repetitive. In the present research, it was possible to see the same attacks on the same agents repeatedly throughout Bolsonaro's speeches in 2020.

Furthermore, according to Lynch and Cassimiro (2022), Bolsonaro's government was incompatible with the constitutional system of 1988; thus, his measures constantly aimed at circumventing the constitution. The government fought against the limitations imposed by law on its ability to survive and reproduce itself. This type of government and leader infringes on the law whenever they think they are being threatened. They tend to intentionally present concerns about their own safety as national issues. Bolsonaro's strategy of frequently dodging the constitutional system was only possible because of the legitimacy crisis that had taken place in Brazilian politics since the manifestations of 2013, which later on, in 2018, led to his election.

Furthermore, Boletim Direitos na Pandemia (CEPEDISA, 2021), the document that cover/represent the timeline of Bolsonaro's actions during 2020, reveals that Brazil could have faced an even worse scenario if the Supreme Federal Court (STF) had not blocked some measures that Bolsonaro's government tried to put forward. This is another reason why Bolsonaro and his supporters made so many attacks on state institutions and the Supreme Court ministers[33].

To conclude, we can imagine how many lives could have been saved if the efforts of the health institutions and other organized groups who were fighting to save lives had been backed up by a government willing to prevent the spread of the disease, especially because in Brazil we can rely on the Unified Health System (SUS), an essential organization throughout this turbulent period. In spite of Bolsonaro's anti-life attitudes, responsible entities, together

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[33] This report presents some of Bolsonaro's attacks to the ministers during his mandate: https://www.poder360.com.br/justica/bolsonaro-hostilizou-ministros-do-stf-ao-menos-23-vezes/

with workers from the front line in the fight against the coronavirus, were spending time and effort trying to diminish the harm produced by Bolsonaro's actions. All of this is because during the pandemic, measures to prevent the dissemination of the virus were discouraged, while the omission of risks and irresponsibility regarding safety measures were encouraged.

What Bolsonaro, as a political agent, wanted to achieve was the dismantling of democracy. This plan can be more easily implemented by an elected president, as was the case with Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil. This attempt at dismantling democracy flows out of authoritarianism (Starling *et al*., 2022). The strategy advances within the system through cumulative acts to degrade the political order, undermine the representation mechanisms of the opponents, attack the judiciary and the media, and wear down the institutions. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed that the extreme-right has the purpose of attacking democratic values and thus represents a wide-open threat to the population, especially because the population was affected differently according to its different social layers. Furthermore, concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, Bolsonaro aimed at mass infection and an absolute reduction of the state's intervention in taking action to conduct the crisis, thus imposing an ultraliberal and individualistic agenda.

Starling *et al*. (2022) discuss how the three superimposed crises that Brazil has faced were normalized by Bolsonaro's government, and due to this normalization, institutional stress was also normalized, which made it possible for Bolsonaro's government to develop and implement the destruction plan of democratic institutions and the public sphere. The first crisis was economic; the second was political; and the third, which is the one approached in this dissertation, was the health crisis. Combined, they explain the current Brazilian scenario, where it is possible to see the polarization of political spectrums and also the emergence of political beliefs which are authoritarian, excluding, moralist, and discriminatory. The third crisis, in particular, exposed the depths of society's inequalities since it demonstrated how a virus capable of reaching every person still reaped mostly the lives of the poor, the elderly, and marginalized people.

5.1.2 What other goals does the agent have, and how would these be affected by the action in question?

Since the onset of the pandemic, Bolsonaro's rhetoric displayed his positioning towards the problem and already signaled what his behavior as chief of state would be concerning the crisis caused by COVID-19.

By comparing the pandemic with a regular flu, Bolsonaro not only did not address the situation with the seriousness that it required from the very beginning but also minimized the threat posed by the virus. His speeches implied that a wise path to follow would be to wait for herd immunity. The discourse on the issue suggested that generalized contamination was a natural process and that it would (regardless of any efforts) eventually happen to everyone. We can visualize this in excerpt:

Excerpt 1: *"O que está errado é a histeria, como se fosse o fim do mundo. Uma nação como o Brasil só estará livre quando certo número de pessoas for infectado e criar anticorpos"/"What is wrong is the hysteria, as if it is the end of the world. A nation like Brazil will only be free when a certain amount of people are infected and create antibodies.".*

Such claims ultimately encouraged the generalized contamination of people. In that sense, Bolsonaro expected the problem to basically be solved by itself, since herd immunity is achieved when a large part of the population is contaminated, and thus the state would not have "much to do" unless to wait for this immunization to finally happen. The cost of this behavior meant one thing: the loss of thousands of lives was treated as mere collateral damage. In order to refer to this collateral damage, Bolsonaro used metaphors such as "if you are in the rain, you are going to get wet," as we can see in excerpt 2:

Excerpt 2: "Se você impede as pessoas de trabalhar, elas não levam um prato de comida pra casa. A chuva está aí, vamos nos molhar e alguns vão morrer afogados. Não pode é (continuar) como se tivesse vivendo num clima de guerra, onde se tivesse dado o toque de recolher. Isso não pode"./ "If you prevent people from working, they do not bring food home." The rain is there, we will get wet and some will drown. It is not possible to keep living as if we are in war, where there is a curfew. It is not possible.".

Hence, one of his goals was to diminish the administration's response to the crisis and, consequently, the responsibility for its consequences. This affected the population, instigating

a distrust of safety measures. It also stimulated inadequate behaviors that went against the prevention of the spread of the virus.

Furthermore, the dissemination of false statements about the pandemic (and everything related to it, such as vaccination and the use of masks) and the cumulative nature of the actions mentioned above resulted in Bolsonaro neglecting the implementation of decisive and timely measures to contain the mayhem caused by the pandemic. It is important to stress that many lives could have been saved if the right actions had been put into practice earlier.

Following right-wing populist theory (Cassimiro and Lynch, 2022; Nobre, 2022; Starling, 2022), Jair Bolsonaro is depicted as a restorative agent, entrusted with the mission of restoring popular wishes. This imaginary created around the figure of Bolsonaro posited him as the one to reinvoke the primacy of religious values and the worship of familial authority, at the same time that it reduced the state's intervention, thus relocating some of the state's responsibilities to the individual responsibilities of the population, with the ability to take on these responsibilities determining whether one is a good citizen (does not rely on the state) or not. This can be seen in Bolsonaro's mention of the role of family and the reduction of the state's participation, as it is possible to see in excerpt 12:

Excerpt 12: "Quem tem abaixo de 40 anos, tem que se preocupar pra não transmitir o vírus pros outros. Mas pra ele, pra sua vida, é quase zero esse risco. Devemos, sim, a cada família cuidar dos mais idosos. Não pode deixar na conta do estado. Cada família tem que botar o vovô e a vovó lá no canto e é isso. Evitar o contato com eles a menos de dois metros. E o resto tem que trabalhar, porque tá havendo uma destruição de empregos no Brasil"/"Whoever is under 40 years old, has to worry about not transmitting the virus to others. But for himself, for his life, the risk is almost zero. We must, indeed, each family take care of the elderly. [The family] cannot leave on the account of the state. Each family has to put grandpa and grandma on the corner and that's it. Avoid contact with them under two meters. The rest has to work, because there is a destruction of work happening in Brazil."

At the end of this same excerpt, he mentioned the destruction of work happening in Brazil. Again, he put people in charge of fixing this destruction through "hard work", once again withdrawing the state's responsibilities. There was indeed a crisis in the labor market during the pandemic, especially for the most vulnerable and for people with little schooling,

but telling people that they "have to work" to overcome the crisis had absolutely no impact on solving the problem. As a matter of fact, women were the most affected workers in this period of job loss, mostly in sectors related to food, culture and education.[34]

Furthermore, the term "good citizen" (cidadão de bem), constantly used by Jair Bolsonaro and his supporters, can tell whom his government mainly ruled for. The term "good citizen" reflects a hierarchical order in Brazilian society. As explained by Corrêa (2022), the term gained popularity during the military dictatorship (1964–1985), a period that is worshiped by the ex-president and was used to distinguish the regime's supporters from its opponents. Moreover, the term also distinguished the middle class from the poor. After 2013, the term was also used to differentiate political opposites: on the one hand, 'the good citizen' was right-wing-oriented, the citizen whose values comprised religion, family, hard work, and tradition; on the other hand, the "bad citizen" was from the left, a supporter of progressive agendas and inclusive discussions. Everyone representing a threat to the good citizen was seen as an enemy: "[the enemies] are the feminists, the black movement, the unions, the due process of law, the traffic code, the teacher who scolds discrimination, any collective construction that works as a break." (Starling *et al.*, 2022, p. 17). From this perspective, the collective is a threat and must be destroyed.

The delineation of the target constituency was then clearly characterized. Bolsonaro was ruling for the stakeholders, upstanding citizens, the rich, influential business leaders (ex: Luciano Hang, the president of Havan and one of the financiers of "*gabinete do ódio*"[35]), business people from the agricultural sector, members of the armed forces, and the evangelical community, especially those holding important positions in political spheres.

An important and quieter goal of this political agent was (and until the present moment, it still is) to defend and maintain traditional values and economic prosperity for the rich, resonating with the interests of the agents aforementioned. Such actions were aligned with the support he received from these audiences, and that placed him in the position of the right leader to occupy the main post as representative of the right-wing populist cause. The spread of this ideology, fueled by traditional and conservative values, not only aimed at

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[34] According to IBGE, between the years of 2019 and 2020, 71% of the job positions lost were occupied by women, amounting to over eight hundred thousand lost vacancies. https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/economia/mulheres-foram-as-que-mais-perderam-postos-de-trabalho-na-pandemia-aponta-ibge/

[35] "Gabinete do ódio" is a group that propagated fake news about the Brazilian government (2022–2026) ruled by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Investigations conducted by Polícia Federal investigated a potential coup d'état and declared that the group is a criminal organization that conspires against democracy and the rule of law. https://congressoemfoco.uol.com.br/area/governo/documento-do-stf-explica-como-funciona-o-gabinete-do-odio/

opening the path for a successor to this extremist right-wing imaginary, but it also granted Bolsonaro and his family impunity for their actions.

Considering a broader scenario in Brazilian politics, the emergence and ascent of Bolsonaro's figure and what it represents was and still is a mark in this "old/new" era of the extreme right. He was the representative who claimed that traditional and conservative values are still strong and alive, thus stimulating the supporters of these values to emerge and shout out all sorts of conservative ideologies as the right ones to be followed. All this behavior came from a strong political position (the president) in an unapologetic, even aggressive, tone. This means that not for one moment did Bolsonaro aim at finding an agreement with his opponents, who were categorized as the dirt and communist left. His objective was to purely insult, defame, and discredit his opposition. The means to achieve that were hate dissemination, intimidation of opposing groups, targeting activists, artists, university professors, journalists, and communication vehicles. Bolsonaro not only pointed out the enemy; he also recommended totalitarian solutions for the governors who wished to stay in power.

Bolsonaro made use of some administrative strategies to achieve these goals throughout his mandate and make sure that his political actions would take root in Brazilian politics. Lynch and Cassimiro (2022) explain that one of Bolsonaro's measures was to put people of his trust in charge of important political positions, such as ministers and secretaries. The problem was that these people were put in charge of key political posts regardless of proven competence or expertise to occupy such places, because they were there mainly to safeguard and maintain political, social, and cultural hegemony. During the pandemic, Bolsonaro named four health ministers, and two of them (Nelson Teich and Luiz Henrique Mandetta) left the post due to disagreements with Bolsonaro about the use of chloroquine as a treatment for coronavirus[36].

5.1.3 What are the agent's values, what are their concerns, what do they care about?

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[36] The four health ministers during the mandate of Jair Bolsonaro are available in: https://noticias.uol.com.br/saude/ultimas-noticias/redacao/2021/03/15/mandetta-teich-pazuello-e-queiroga-os-4-ministros-da-saude-da-pandemia.htm. Access in March, 2024.

The rise of conservatism as a political force, particularly evident in the 2018 elections with the victory of the supposedly anti-political candidacy of Jair Bolsonaro, reflects a complex interplay of societal dynamics and historical contexts in Brazil. The emergence of a candidate who presents himself as anti-establishment, despite having a political career and family ties within the political sphere, was a propositional discourse to seduce the audience into believing that the Bolsonaro reckoned the failures of the political system and came as a solution to the problems of the nation and the hard working people. As presented in the review of literature, Bolsonaro was not an outsider in politics before occupying the position of president and selling the image of a "new sort of politician against the old politics"; he had over 27 years of political career by the time he assumed the presidency.

The ideology of conservatism is directly harnessed by notions of freedom and the roles of family and the state. Within the framework developed by the far-right and Bolsonaro himself, freedom meant being able to act upon conservative and traditional roles. That means, in the family circle, men and women should occupy the patriarchal roles attributed to them, and consequently, this would diminish the role of the state in providing for people because the neoliberal-conservative order says that a good citizen, men or woman, should be able to provide for themselves. The ideology of conservatism reinforces the importance of individual freedom in conjunction with moral and social order. Such conservatism does not seek changes in terms of innovation or improvement; in fact, it sees the changes in the family spectrum, for example, as an aberration that must be fixed.

An important feature of populism that can also be found in many of Bolsonaro's speeches is the nostalgic idealization of the past and the worship of authoritarian regimes, such as the military dictatorship in Brazil, because this era is depicted as an example of governance and social order. Drawing a parallel with nowadays and the period of the pandemic, we can see that the bravery that was worshiped in the regimes of the past, the manly figure of the male provider of the family, and the encouragement of individualism understood as 'freedom' were present in the discourse of the former president during the pandemic. However, the objective is very similar: to engage the spirit of individualism/freedom and to reduce the participation of the state. This can be seen in:

Excerpt 2: "Se você impede as pessoas de trabalhar, elas não levam um prato de comida pra casa"/ "If you prevent people from working, they do not bring food home."

Excerpt 3: "Para trabalhadores autônomos, o Brasil não pode parar. Para ambulantes, engenheiros, feirantes, arquitetos, pedreiros, advogados, professores particulares e prestadores de serviço em geral, o Brasil não pode parar."/"For autonomous workers, Brazil can't stop. For street sellers, engineers, stallholders, architects, bricklayers, lawyers, private teachers and autonomous workers, Brazil can't stop."

Excerpt 12: "Quem tem abaixo de 40 anos, tem que se preocupar pra não transmitir o vírus pros outros. Mas pra ele, pra sua vida, é quase zero esse risco. Devemos, sim, a cada família cuidar dos mais idosos. Não pode deixar na conta do estado. Cada família tem que botar o vovô e a vovó lá no canto e é isso. Evitar o contato com eles a menos de dois metros. E o resto tem que trabalhar, porque tá havendo uma destruição de empregos no Brasil"/"Whoever is under 40 years old, has to worry about not transmitting the virus to others. But for himself, for his life, the risk is almost zero. We must, indeed, each family take care of the elderly. [The family] cannot leave on the account of the state. Each family has to put grandpa and grandma on the corner and that's it. Avoid contact with them under two meters. The rest has to work, because there is a destruction of work happening in Brazil."

Part of this strategy relies on the investment of arguments that worship individualism. That means that the politics in favor of the common good are left aside to give way to the inflammation of the desires of small groups. Regarding the contradictions that will certainly be present in this discourse, "they will be invisible to the eyes of the media and the general public" (Empoli, 2019, p. 157).

In essence, Bolsonaro's far right government, with its appeal to conservatism, promises stability and continuity in a future that holds tight to the past and traditional values, offering the population a counter-narrative to 'moral decay', filled with aggressive and offensive speeches, expressing the upheaval of the 'good citizens' against those who deviated from the 'right' and 'good' mores.

5.1.4 What might be the positive and negative consequences of the various actions that are open to the agent?

Due to the actions performed by the ex-president and the poor administration of his government, one of the consequences we faced in Brazil during the first year of the pandemic was a weekly level of over five thousand officially registered deaths[37]. These deaths are the consequences of the structural denialism of Bolsonaro's government. Structural denialism is not concerned with administrative rationality or even with governmental success. Rather, it aims at creating a parallel reality where there is a different system of causalities and responsibilities in the real world (Lynch and Cassimiro, 2022). We can visualize this denialism when Bolsonaro minimized, in his own words, "the problem of the pandemic" in excerpt 7:

Excerpt 7: "Entramos (em) 2020, e tivemos o problema da pandemia que, no meu entendimento, foi superdimensionado"/ We entered 2020, and we had the problem of the pandemic, which, in my understanding, was oversized.

In order to make this type of discourse work in society, it is necessary to attack the institutions and vehicles that generate a common sense of what is reliable in the modern world, which are: the press, science, and academia.

However, we can identify in Bolsonaro's discourse features of what constitutes individual speech to address matters of the public domain. Some examples from particular speeches involve religion, popular knowledge, and traditional beliefs. When discussing issues that impact the general public, it is necessary to make use of coherent argumentation based upon grounded sources that have a sort of universal comprehension, in other words, common sense based on evidence and rationality on the matter. For example, throughout the pandemic, Bolsonaro made frequent use of discourses carrying popular knowledge without scientific corroboration, such as in excerpt 1:

Excerpt 1: "O que está errado é a histeria, como se fosse o fim do mundo. Uma nação como o Brasil só estará livre quando certo número de pessoas for infectado e criar anticorpos"/"What is wrong is the hysteria, as if it is the end of the world. A nation like Brazil will only be free when a certain amount of people are infected and create antibodies.".

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[37] To access more data regarding the number of notified cases and deaths per year, week and region, check https://infoms.saude.gov.br/extensions/covid-19_html/covid-19_html.html. Access in March, 2024.

Another characteristic of structural denialism is the "open war" with those with divergent political positions. This means that the political agent does not pursue dialogue with divergent parties; it aims to destroy rational foundation, and everyone who opposes this objective is considered an enemy, with no possibility of reconciliation. Furthermore, events which get out of their control and have negative outcomes are attributed to their enemies. In Brazil, this war was fought by Bolsonaro against governors:

Excerpt 14 - "Eu gostaria que todos voltassem a trabalhar, mas quem decide isso não sou eu, são os governadores e prefeitos"./"I wanted everybody to go back to work, but I am not the one who decides, it's up to the governors and mayors."

Excerpt 15 - "STF decidiu que os governadores e prefeitos é que são responsáveis por essa política, inclusive isolamento. Agora está vindo uma onda de desemprego enorme aí. Informais e o pessoal formal também. Não queiram colocar no meu colo. Compete aos governadores a solução desse problema que está acontecendo quase no Brasil todo"/ "STF decided that governors and mayors are the ones responsible for this policy, including isolation. Now there is a huge wave of unemployment coming: informal and formal workers too. Don't put this on me. It competes to the governors to solve this problem that is happening almost all over Brazil.".

A significant change observed by Empoli (2019) is that, with the political polarity of populism, there were modifications not only in the elites but also in the people. The latter was empowered by a sense of "the wisdom of the crowds," which consisted of a lack of trust in experts and, at the same time, gave space to the power of ordinary knowledge. Such new behavior is easily manipulated by social media, since propaganda is made to be catchy with fast adherence. That is, the content does not have to be realistic or even make sense, as long as it is convincing, as the author points out, "cultivating the anger of each one without worrying about the coherence of the collective" (Empoli, 2019, p. 21). According to the author, one of the consequences of this action is a change in the democratic game since the upcoming generations who are observing the current political dynamics are being, in a certain way, "educated" by the behaviors and slogans of populist politics, and this can shape their future political attitudes. In other words, when the leaders of today leave the political scenario, the

voters, who are accustomed to the mechanisms of populism, will seek out new and stronger populist politics instead of looking for traditional old politics.

Furthermore, the probable consequence aforementioned was already being managed through the rigging of the administrative organs of the state. This was given by the deliberate nomination of unprepared government officials who were aligned with the interests of the right-wing populist government. Areas such as education, culture, the scientific field, health, human rights, and environmental agencies were dismantled to a great extent. The institutions responsible for monitoring governmental misconduct were being neutralized through cooptation and intimidation (Lynch and Cassimiro, 2022). Some examples are the public ministry (MP), the federal police, and the judiciary. Moreover, we had several attacks on the Supremo Tribunal Federal (STF) and Tribunal Superior Eleitoral (TSE) (Rieger and Garbin, 2023).

In addition to the consequences discussed so far, research conducted by the United Nations (UN)[38], published in March 2024, revealed that political polarization (fueled by populist regimes) can impact the Human Development Index (HDI) of countries. In Latin America, the results are even more concerning, with only one fifth of the population trusting the political institutions and the government. The study shows that the lack of trust in these organs reflects a lack of trust in democracy itself. Likewise, this has implications for the social structure in the same way that it builds space for the advance of populist regimes and organized crime.

Brazil has improved in human development, although it has still not managed to recover the levels of social well-being from before the pandemic. In comparison to the rest of the world, Brazil is lagging behind in terms of returning to pre-pandemic indicators.[39] In the post period, areas such as education did not present good advances, which also contributed to the struggle in the development of HDI in Brazil.

It is important to give attention to the interplay between the slow paced development of HDI and gender disparities, especially in the post-pandemic period. Women in Brazil struggle with challenges in social, economic, political, and cultural areas. The slow progress in these areas affects not only gender issues; it also affects society in general. The prevalence

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[38] The complete report is available in:
https://oglobo.globo.com/economia/noticia/2024/03/13/polarizacao-politica-e-principal-barreira-para-cooperacao-e-crescimento-de-idh-no-mundo-afirma-orgao-da-onu.ghtml?utm_source=the_news&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_campaign=14-03-2024
[39] The complete report is available in:
https://exame.com/brasil/idh-brasil-nao-voltou-ao-patamar-de-2019-antes-da-pandemia-o-mundo-ja-se-recuperou/

of gender-based inequalities affects women's physical and mental well-being, undermining their ability to participate actively in society.

The COVID-19 pandemic has strengthened pre-existing gender inequalities, making it even more difficult for women to engage in many dimensions of development. The description of these impacts is fully presented in section 5.3, the section dedicated to discussing the impact of a populist government on women's lives during the pandemic.

5.2. THE RIGHT WING POPULISM OF BOLSONARO'S GOVERNMENT

As pointed out by Empoli (2019), voters see the flaws of populist leaders as qualities. That means the inexperience they show is a sign that they are not the same as the elite politicians; their incompetence is mistaken for authenticity; the international tensions stand for independence; and the fake news that takes over their propaganda is a symbol of freedom.

Data analysis displayed a combination of all of the factors aforementioned. In the pandemic, although Bolsonaro was not an inexperienced political agent, he made use of several strategies to distinguish himself from the "elite," such as the use of colloquial language, the "regular citizen" behavior, and the exacerbated use of jokes in serious moments (Moura And Corbellini, 2019). Furthermore, the incompetence in dealing with the administrative crisis of the country during the period, as well as the international tension marked by the attacks on the vaccines coming from China, were seen by his supporters as representations of independence and authenticity in his government.

Regarding fake news concerning vaccination, the justification for assertions against vaccination was based on the principle of individual freedom. Bolsonaro defended that people should make the decision of getting vaccinated or not, causing confusion and doubt about what was, at the time, the solution to the skyrocketing number of medical hospitalizations and deaths happening on a daily basis. It is possible to see this in excerpt 19:

Excerpt 19: "Lá no contrato da Pfizer, está bem claro nós (a Pfizer) não nos responsabilizamos por qualquer efeito colateral. Se você virar um jacaré, é problema seu (...) Se você virar Super-Homem, se nascer barba em alguma mulher aí, ou algum homem começar a falar fino, eles (Pfizer) não têm nada a ver isso. E, o que é pior, mexer no sistema imunológico das pessoas (...) Vocês vão ter que assinar o termo de responsabilidade, se

quiserem tomar. A Pfizer é bem clara no contrato: 'Não nos responsabilizamos por efeito colateral'”./"In the contract of Pfizer, it is very clear, we (pfizer) are not responsible for any side effects. If you become an alligator, it is your problem (...) If you become Superman, if a woman grows a beard, or if any man starts speaking in a high-pitched voice, they (pfizer) have nothing to do with it. And what is worse, messing with people's immune system (...) You will have to sign a liability term, if you want to take it. Pfizer is very clear in the contract: "We are not responsible for side effects".

Empoli contends that this type of discourse attracts "immediate adherence" because it has the power to assess people's fears, regardless of the veracity or coherence of the information conveyed. It does not have to make sense or even be real; it has to be emotionally reachable.

Conversely, Lynch and Cassimiro (2022) discuss how the notion of 'freedom of expression' is played as a tool to disseminate censorship, especially through offensive jokes, such as seen in the previous excerpt, *"Se você virar super-homem, se nascer barba em alguma mulher aí, ou algum homem começar a falar fino"/"If you become Superman, if a woman grows a beard, or if any man starts speaking in a high pitched voice.".*

The authors also argue that narrative control is central to the populist discourse. There is a clear effort to shape the collective understanding of events and how it develops gradually. In the case of this research, the event is the coronavirus pandemic. Bolsonaro manipulated this narrative, bringing the political spectrums of left and right into discussion with the purpose of undermining the image of the left, aiming to potentialize future electoral chances for his own benefit. As we can see in excerpt 10:

Excerpt 10: "Quem for de direita toma cloroquina, quem for de esquerda toma tubaína."/People from the right take chloroquine, people from the left take tubaine."

This reveals the real motives behind the narratives of populist, charismatic figures. This example illustrates how political movements incite people against the system in periods of public health emergencies, as was the case with the COVID-19 pandemic. In such cases, the political agent advocates for alternative knowledge, uses constant simplifications, and vilifies public health problems with the purpose of discrediting medical and academic authorities in the area (Casarões & Magalhães, 2020). By proposing the idea of rupture

between the people and the system, the political leader "presents himself as the defender of people's wisdom, praising fallacious ideas in favor of their political, social, and economic objectives" (Cimini *et al.* 2023, p. 5).

Furthermore, one legal strategy used by Bolsonaro's government was the State Secret, which grants the president the right to ask for secrecy from his acts and/or his agents for a certain amount of time. It is important to reinforce that secrecy does not only grant the president impunity but also encourages others to follow his example. In January 2021, the ex-president Jair Bolsonaro requested the secrecy of his vaccination card, and when asked about his reasons for doing so, he said it was only to mess around[40]. Three years later, in 2024, after the secrecy of the vaccination card was revoked, the investigation carried out by CGU (Controladoria Geral da União) concluded that the information present in the vaccination card was false[41]. The act is another feature of a populist leader, since he used the argument that he was protecting his privacy and his "right to free will," when in fact he was being fraudulent the whole time, flying to other countries without the protection required and partially granted by the vaccine, putting not only his life in danger but the lives of others as well. His actions, again, prove that Bolsonaro does not really care about national safety, as he claimed.

Data analyzed in chapter IV of this work revealed the naturalization of death present in Bolsonaro's discourse, for example, when he claimed that "we are all going to die one day" or that "there was nothing I could do", or even made jokes about not being a gravedigger. According to Lynch and Cassimiro (2022), nature's destruction, death, disease, or catastrophes are considered natural happenings, which are not worth caring for in the populist imaginary. Besides not taking responsibility for the government's acts, this sort of speech withdraws importance from the thousands of lives that were lost during that period, frees the ex-president from taking action, and focuses on the private interests of that right wing populist agent, which were protecting and increasing the prosperity of landowners, entrepreneurs, militias, the armed forces and wealthy supporters.

However, although the groups mentioned above are the ones who benefited from the populist government of Bolsonaro, they are not the only ones to whom his discourse was addressed. Bolsonaro's discourse was directed at everyone who exerted any sort of power, even if it was power embedded in subaltern relations, as is the case with his poor and

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[40] The complete report can be found in:
https://www.otempo.com.br/politica/bolsonaro-afirma-que-impos-sigilo-de-cem-anos-em-cartao-de-vacina-para-irritar-1.2712933.
[41] The complete report can be found in:
https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/geral/noticia/2024-01/cgu-conclui-que-certificado-de-vacinacao-de-bolsonaro-e-falso

middle-class supporters. Lago (2022) claims that Bolsonaro's discourse was built on the conceptions of the individual and the social constructions that dictate their micropowers on a daily basis. This discourse promised benefits for those who had any level of power: the owner of the small business, the husband who wanted power over the wife, and the police, who wanted more power over the population in the street. Bolsonaro protected these "micropower detainers" through his speech, which encouraged them to 'reclaim' their rights. According to Lago, this happens firstly through the order of discourse, when the oppressive discourse is masked by individual opinion and freedom of speech, and secondly, through the destruction of institutions whose function is to protect the vulnerable sides of the operation of power relations.

It is important to note that the whole discussion about the pandemic and the taking of action concerning safety measures does not only reinforce the populist polarity between Us X Them, but it mostly aims at strengthening the antagonism between right and left. Consequently, the objective of the populist leader is to co-opt those people "in the middle," who claim to not take any part, and make them lean to their side. Convincing these people is not achieved through explicit political arguments but through fake news involving the pandemic. The emphasis given to the fear of vaccination, for example, was a tool to disarticulate scientific knowledge and give space to the populist political speech that co-opted the "neither left nor right" electorate. If the person is not fully aware of the political manipulation, because the persuasion occurs through the health topic (the pandemic), they are convinced that the discourse is not really political, but rather that the political agent (Bolsonaro) is concerned with well-being of the public, and thus, they will believe this type of discourse.

Furthermore, right wing populism in Brazil has a great deal of power to mobilize the electorate. That is, the electorate is not only the receptor of the messages spread by the political agent, but they are also the promoters of this message and of the political agenda of this government. The message was easily spread through fake news and was highly capable of producing antagonisms against progressive agendas (Lago, 2022).

5.3 THE IMPACT OF A RIGHT WING POPULIST GOVERNMENT ON WOMEN'S LIVES IN THE PANDEMIC.

During the mandate of Jair Bolsonaro, he put some generals ahead of political seats. The presence of these actors in political positions reflected the government's values. The same was valid for the government's supporters, called *bolsonaristas*, since they shared the same ideologies. These actors were bothered by progressive and left-wing agendas and claimed that Brazil imposed 'order' again not only in terms of corruption but also in terms of identity agendas, considered "exotic" by the most traditional sectors of the population. One example was General Villas Bôas[42], who was concerned with the discussions on gender, race, and other progressive agendas. In his view (and in the view of the class he was representing), these discussions were disrupting national identity, amplifying national segregation, and tarnishing the country's image. Every attempt from the left to raise and open space for debates around identity, gender, and race was against the imaginary "order and progress" of the nation.

In the middle of the discourses pointing out all the wrong things the left was preaching, the one agent that was standing against them and who was already occupying a prestige position was Jair Bolsonaro.

The cult to the personality of Bolsonaro was part of a project of the radical right, including the dissemination of the far-right political culture of authoritarianism. According to the far-right, Brazilian society "used to have", or "was supposed to have" a natural and harmonic social order based upon Christian and patriarchal values, exerted by the family men through the monitoring of wives and children. This imaginary goes against the tolerant and plural idea of a state; it also refuses secularism (Starling, *et al*. 2022).

According to what the far-right preaches, the natural order of society has been taken over by communists whose objective is to destroy traditional family bonds, at the same time that they praise 'scientism', feminism, and homosexuality (Lynch And Cassimiro, 2022). This supposed campaign to destroy traditional costumes was/is sponsored by the communist "elites" , through representatives in the intellectual spheres (e.g., academics, researchers, artists), the media and state agencies in the areas of human rights, environment, education, culture, and international relations.

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[42]Eduardo Dias da Costa Villas Bôas is a general in the Brazilian Army. He was commander of the Brazilian army from 2015 to 2019. During the mandate of Jair Bolsonaro (2019-2022) he was an advisor to the institutional safety committee of the presidency.

On one side of the populist polarity, the new right in Brazil emerges with the purpose of halting the "elites" composed by the left. This new right is composed of followers of Olavo de Carvalho[43], neo fascists, neoliberals, and people in general with traditional values who were radicalized by this movement to fight the left. The actions proposed by the right were then justified as self defense of the people (the people X the elites) to protect the values of Christianity, patriarchy, and heterosexuality. In this scenario, Bolsonaro appeared as the leader able to defend the "freedom" of families against the alleged dictatorship of the progressivists. We can see some examples of these attacks against the media, the scientific community, and the left in:

Excerpt 16: "O Brasil está quebrado, chefe. Eu não consigo fazer nada. Eu queria mexer na tabela do Imposto de Renda, tá, teve esse vírus, potencializado pela mídia que nós temos, essa mídia sem caráter"./"Brazil is broke, boss. I can't do anything. I wanted to change the income tax, ok, there was this virus, potentialized by the media we have, this despicable media."

Excerpt 19: "Lá no contrato da Pfizer, está bem claro nós (a Pfizer) não nos responsabilizamos por qualquer efeito colateral. Se você virar um jacaré, é problema seu (...) Se você virar Super-Homem, se nascer barba em alguma mulher aí, ou algum homem começar a falar fino, eles (Pfizer) não têm nada a ver isso. E, o que é pior, mexer no sistema imunológico das pessoas (...) Vocês vão ter que assinar o termo de responsabilidade, se quiserem tomar. A Pfizer é bem clara no contrato: 'Não nos responsabilizamos por efeito colateral'"./"In the contract of Pfizer, it is very clear, we (pfizer) are not responsible for any side effects. If you become an alligator, it is your problem (...) If you become Superman, if a woman grows a beard, or if any man starts speaking in a high pitched voice, they (pfizer) have nothing to do with that. And what is worse, messing with people's immunity system (...) You will have to sign a liability term, if you want to take it. Pfizer is very clear in the contract: "We are not responsible for side effects".;

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[43] Olavo de Carvalho (1947 - 2022) was an important figure during the mandate of Jair Bolsonaro. The writer was known for preaching conservative and libertarian views, mainly accusing the left and defending the new right in Brazil. Here is more information about his disciples and his conservative movement: https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-46802265.

Excerpt 10: "Quem for de direita toma cloroquina, quem for de esquerda toma tubaína."/People from the right take chloroquine, people from the left take tubaine.

The excerpts above exemplify how Bolsonaro's government used the institutional apparatus, his power as head of state, and attacks on significant sectors of society to promote neoliberal necropolitics. Cimini et al. (2023) contend that, during this moment, the groups of people who hold little interest in the prevailing economic and political powers are left to die, or are simply left to their own means to survive. Such groups can be found in the peripheries of big cities and metropolitan areas, where the most vulnerable people are concentrated. These spaces combine an intersection of social and economic indicators, such as low income, low educational attainment, higher homicide rates, higher rates of feminicide, slums, a larger number of families with women as their main providers, higher numbers of informal employment, and higher unemployment rates. Considering this, Cimini et al. explain how necropolitics works based on these indicators, since its objective is to exclude the citizens who do not play an important role as consumers and who are also denied the right to the city and quality of life in urban spaces.

These elements reveal some features of the neoliberal, conservative, and negationist strategy of the Brazilian government during the pandemic. Cimini et al. (2023) explain that the strategy of disqualifying science and public health institutions was not a mere coincidence caused by ignorance of facts. In relation to gender, this strategy configured movements to limit advances in gender equality and mechanisms to sustain the patriarchal status quo. The authors argue that:

> The struggle for gender equality has historically encountered agents and factors that have sought to impede its progress. In addition to the inherent social system predicated on gender differentiation, social and political groups have actively sought to diminish the role and agency of women across various societal domains, including the political, economic, and social spheres (Rago, 1998; Scott, 1995). For instance, the sexual division of labor assigns women to domestic work, primarily associated with maternal and healthcare responsibilities, often characterized by low remuneration and lesser societal valuation compared to men's work. (Cimini *et al*, 2023, p. 6)

As the presence and support of the state diminishes, women and children often find themselves more vulnerable to various forms of hardship and exploitation. In the absence of state protection and assistance, women can face increased risks of domestic violence, economic insecurity, and limited access to essential services such as healthcare and education. Children, similarly, are at greater risk of exploitation, abuse, and neglect without the protective measures and social services provided by the state. In such circumstances, the

absence of effective governance can exacerbate existing inequalities and leave vulnerable populations without the necessary support and resources to thrive.

Concerning ideological features, throughout the mandate of Jair Bolsonaro, it was clear from the start that he ruled under patriarchal values and worshiped the role of the family. One of his objectives was to restore the traditional Brazilian family. By attributing value to this private sphere of social life, he intended to protect his own. That is, during the pandemic, it was important that families remained together despite the endless obstacles circulating in life at that moment. The role of women in the familiar circle was essential as caretakers, providers, and educators, both in productive and reproductive work.

In the administration sphere, adherence to ideological extremism (pro-president values) guaranteed political candidates administrative chairs. According to Lynch and Cassimiro (2022), the reactionary wing was responsible for managing and promoting a cultural war, which was one of the objectives of this populist government. Furthermore, it is important to reinforce that there was no solution proposed to this cultural war. The enemies were the government's critics, who were portrayed as liars, left-wing oriented and corrupt. There was absolutely no interest in overcoming any differences of any sort. There was just an interest in maintaining what Lynch and Cassimiro call an endless electoral campaign.

As mentioned in section 5.1.2, one of the goals of Bolsonaro's populist government was to strengthen the hegemony of extreme right values through public governance. Such a goal, if accomplished, can compromise decades of work conducted by scientists, academics, educators, activists, and other agents committed to the fight for rights. Under regular living conditions, this is already threatening; however, during the pandemic, these actions increased the struggles and the lethality of the coronavirus.

To conclude, post-pandemic research conducted with women indicates that the disproportionate burden of tasks traditionally assigned to women, influenced by gender norms, significantly impacted their mental health. This strain was exacerbated by factors such as economic concerns, sexual abuse, domestic violence, the 'third shift' workload, and unpaid reproductive labor, among others. A study by the non-governmental organization Think Olga[44] reveals that 45% of women aged 18 to 65 experienced these challenges. Additionally, 38% of women surveyed were the primary breadwinners for their families. These statistics underscore the profound impact of government actions on women's lives. Not only did these

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[44] The full report is available in:
https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/saude/noticia/2023-08/pos-pandemia-45-das-mulheres-mostram-algum-tipo-de-transtorno-mental

actions affect women during the pandemic, but they also obstructed the development of new public policies and measures to address issues that profoundly affect women's daily lives. Furthermore, these actions represented a backlash against women's rights and the protection of their mental and physical well-being. Bolsonaro's government oversaw the institutional dismantling of significant advancements in gender rights. A study conducted by Ipea (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada) (2023) showed that during Bolsonaro's mandate, there was a deinstitutionalization on gender issues in Brazil, marked by the reduction and stagnation on the instruments of public policies directed to women. One example cited in the work is the disassembly of women's ministry and its incorporation into family's ministry. According to the researchers from Ipea, the measure sees women exclusively by their role within the family, not as a singular individual. The outcome of the measure, as pointed out by the authors, was a reduction on the launch of services directed to women. Moreover, the Conferência Nacional de Políticas para Mulheres did not happen during the period. The event is an important moment to identify and raise awareness about the policies and programs related to women's rights.

Thus, the consequences of the actions taken during Bolsonaro's mandate extend beyond physical losses, as evidenced by the millions of deaths resulting from the inadequate management of the COVID-19 pandemic, and also encompass political, cultural, and ideological spheres.

Chapter VI
Final Remarks

"Neste dia de glória para o povo brasileiro, um nome entrará para a história nesta data pela forma como conduziu os trabalhos desta casa: parabéns, presidente Eduardo Cunha! Perderam em 1964. Perderam agora em 2016. Pela família e pela inocência das crianças em sala de aula, que o PT nunca teve... contra o comunismo, pela nossa liberdade [...] pela memória do coronel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, o pavor de Dilma Rousseff! Pelo Exército de Caxias, pelas nossas Forças Armadas, por um Brasil acima de tudo, e por Deus acima de todos. O meu voto é SIM."
Jair Messias Bolsonaro, Brasília, 17 de abril de 2016.

6. FINAL REMARKS

At first, this dissertation was not supposed to be a continuation of my master's thesis. Although I continued researching in the field of political discourse analysis and my object of study remained the discourses of the former Brazilian president Jair Messias Bolsonaro, the Covid-19 pandemic coincided with the time of my doctorate, beginning in March of 2020. This dissertation is the product of a person, a woman, a teacher, and a writer who also survived the COVID-19 pandemic. The common point between my master thesis and my doctoral dissertation is that they were both written while the content analyzed (actions, political results, elections, important announcements, and speeches from the former government) had outcomes and consequences. In the final remarks of my master's thesis, I reported the results of 2018's presidential elections. Thus, I thought it was reasonable to bring to these final remarks some important facts concerning the post-pandemic period and the post-mandate of Jair Bolsonaro, also because they can fit in my suggestions for further research.

Considering this, I divide this final chapter into six sections. The first is an update on political happenings in the post-pandemic period. The second section is where I revisit my research questions. The third part I bring a proposal of framework for analysis regarding women's issues in political discourses. The fourth and fifth parts are the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research, respectively. And to conclude, I discuss the political and pedagogical implications of this study.

6.1 POLITICAL UPDATES IN THE POST-PANDEMIC PERIOD

6.1.1 Bolsonaro's speech on September 7th, 2021

On Tuesday, September 7th, 2021, the ex-president Jair Messias Bolsonaro made a speech in São Paulo with open criticisms aimed at STF's (Supremo Tribunal Federal) minister, Alexandre de Moraes. The police estimated an audience of 125 thousand people during this speech. Bolsonaro stated that he would not comply with decisions made by the Justice system. He also reiterated his concerns about the security of electronic voting machines and called for "auditable elections." In the speech, Bolsonaro claimed that "we cannot accept an electoral system that does not offer any security" and "it is not someone from Tribunal Superior Eleitoral that is going to tell us that this process is safe and trustworthy"[45].

The speech was inflamed with mentions to the honor of the nation, an appeal to conservatism, and the defense of freedom. He finished it with "Brasil acima de tudo, Deus acima de todos"[46].

6.1.2 The attacks on TSE 2022

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[45] The full speech in Portuguese can be found here:
https://www.poder360.com.br/governo/leia-a-integra-do-discurso-de-bolsonaro-no-ato-de-7-de-setembro-em-sao-paulo/#:~:text=Agrade%C3%A7o%20a%20Deus%20pela%20minha,deve%20lealdade%20ao%20seu%20povo.
[46] To understand the meanings underneath "Brazil above all", it is worth the reading of "Deutschland über alles?: the national anthem debate in the Federal Republic of Germany", by Margarete Myrex Feinstein (2000).

A report produced by the project 'Democracia Digital', developed by Escola de Comunicação, Mídia e Informação da Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGV ECMI) and coordinated by Ruediger and Grassi (2023), presents general information about the public debate around the presidential elections of 2022 in Brazil. In summary, the study reveals that extreme right-wing groups that support former President Jair Bolsonaro were at the forefront of generating and spreading misinformation about the electoral process across various platforms, from September 2022 to January 2023. In general, Bolsonaro-aligned profiles played a prominent role in the broader political discourse, whether through politicians, influencers, ordinary users, or hyper-partisan right-wing media vehicles. The predominant narrative of these speeches focused on electoral fraud, attacks on institutions, and their links to anti-communist and anti-globalist theories. Additionally, there were concerns raised about the security of voting machines, calls for military intervention, and a return to printed voting. This period also revealed vulnerabilities in the electoral system, especially if we consider digital public discourses, particularly notable during the second round of the 2022 elections, when mentions of voting machine security increased by 1153%.

6.1.3 January 8th, 2023

January 8th, 2023, was the day that marked Brazilian history with the attacks on ministerial buildings in Brasília.. They were invaded by a crowd of Bolsonaro's supporters, who refused to accept the defeat of their candidate in 2022's presidential elections.[47] The presidential palace (Palácios dos Três Poderes) in Brasília was the target of a crowd that vandalized the space, breaking glass, furniture, paintings, and historical objects. The President of the Republic, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the National Congress, and the Supreme Federal Court were the targets of these extremist protests.

The federal police arrested 243 people involved in the acts. The event, along with the trial of *coup d'etat* and investigations about jewelry[48], integrates the inquiry into which Jair Bolsonaro is still being investigated in 2024.[49]

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[47] A chronological narration of the events of 8th January 2023 is available in: https://www.poder360.com.br/brasil/leia-a-cronologia-dos-desdobramentos-do-8-de-janeiro/

[48] The case of the jewelry involved the crime of embezzlement related to the ex-president. More details on this case can be found in: https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/articles/cer7jndk8ymo

[49] Some of the cases that compose the inquiry of Jair Bolsonaro are available in: https://valor.globo.com/politica/noticia/2024/02/25/tentativa-de-golpe-joias-e-8-de-janeiro-as-investigacoes-contra-bolsonaro.ghtml

6.1.4 Bolsonaro's speech in Avenida Paulista on February 25th, 2024

After making a public call for his supporters on his social media, Bolsonaro showed up on Avenida Paulista on February 25th, 2024, with the objective of defending himself from the accusations he was being investigated for. Just like in previous statements, his speech was loaded with words such as: God, the Bible, the nation, freedom, the family, and, of course, mentions of his time in the military. When approaching the topic of the pandemic, he used the emergency aid (in Portuguese, 'auxílio emergencial') as the main argument to exemplify what a good and caring government he conducted. Bolsonaro punctuated in his speech the values that should be worshiped: "We do not want socialism for our Brazil. We cannot admit communism among us. We don't want gender ideology for our children. We want respect for private property. We want the right to defend our own lives. We want respect for life from its conception. We do not want drugs to be released in our country."[50] The long speech is worth a meticulous analysis, as it was heard and applauded by over 185 thousand people, one year after the end of the mandate.

To conclude, the dynamics of the connections that organize Bolsonaro's regressive utopia aimed to provide a vision of the world; they provided the audience with a vision of a false past that was a safe place to be. For instance: strong masculinity instead of gender equality; the 'right' conduct to be adopted in social roles; an inflexible state that guarantees order and provides society with a feeling of protection.

Bolsonaro's rhetoric invested in this nostalgic discourse, trusting the impact of the promise of reinstating this falsely successful past, which was worshipped as "legendary times". The investment in this discourse was so strong that it became an object of desire and reivindication by the masses in the streets, as the events mentioned in this section exemplify. This rhetoric is grounded on arguments that want to restore a state that punishes, a state that grants security and order, and the supremacy of the nation. The 'restored Brazil' and the Brazil that works have features such as: defending the gender hierarchy and the patriarchal family as models of the organization of society; reclaiming public morality and the regulation of bodies, behaviors, and family bonds.

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[50] The full speech can be found here:
https://www.brasilparalelo.com.br/noticias/discurso-completo-de-bolsonaro-na-avenida-paulista-no-dia-25-de-fevereiro-de-2024

Starling (2022) discusses the danger of nostalgic discourses that worship the utopian past. The nostalgia replaces critical thinking and gives space to emotional bonds capable of projecting group imaginary and the fantasy of a "homeland" that is worth fighting for, no matter what the cost. The fight for this nostalgic past also leads to polarization because it dictates what is good and what is bad. The path back to this legendary past is marked by a constant fight with enemies who are conspiring against this restoration of the mythical past. Everyone can be the enemy: the teacher, the atheist, the journalist, the feminist, the student, the artist, the scientist, the LGBT community, among others. This "war" impedes democratic coexistence because it persistently raises flags to the enemies (everyone who disagrees with this order), and it makes frequent use of violence of all sorts towards the selected enemies. There is a continuum of mobilization that aims at intimidating and attacking democratic institutions. Furthermore, this regressive utopy facilitates the return of authoritarian regimes such as dictatorships (Starling, 2022).

6.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS REVISITED

1- What are the defining framings of women's issues and family values in the president's speech and how were they connected to the pandemic?

Women's needs were not addressed in any of the analyzed excerpts. The issues that were mentioned were addressed to the population in general, and they basically contained messages encouraging people to continue working and give up on social isolation. However, Bolsonaro's speeches do mention the importance of the family in surviving the pandemic. The care of people was attributed to the family, more specifically elderly care. As it was pointed out in the review of literature and in chapter V of this dissertation, women are the main agents responsible for the reproductive and unpaid work that takes place in individual homes. The worship of the family is crucial in this context, since the only return women get from this kind of job is supposedly love and kindness.

Bolsonaro repeatedly praised the ones who did the hard work during the pandemic, and several times reinforced the importance of continuing work in order to put food on the table. There are some unuttered layers regarding gender roles in this type of discourse. The overgeneralization of workers does not consider that there is a large percentage of women who are the main providers of their homes, as mentioned in Chapter V. Also, women were the

ones who occupied positions in the workforce most affected by high unemployment rates during the period. Women comprised the majority of workers occupying informal jobs and were also the employees who worked on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, since they were a large number of hospital cleaners, cooks, nurses, and doctors.

2- In what ways did extreme right populist discourses influence dominant positions towards gender roles during the pandemic of COVID-19 in Brazil?

The extreme right populist discourse aims at worshiping traditional values. This discourse venerates the good citizen, the nuclear family composed by father, mother, and children, and the individuality and freedom of the good citizen, who is the one that does not rely on actions from organizations, state programs, or social aids of any source.

As previously stated in question 1, women carry a heavier burden when it comes to supporting the family. Extreme right populist governments aim at undermining the sense of collectiveness and replacing state duties with individualized behaviors. Collective action and organization represent a threat to the populist system since popular groups are in a subaltern position in relation to the dominant class (rich, white, and male). An extreme right populist government does not intend to subvert social inequalities, and thus, the vulnerable members of the community who need the state's support are left to their own means of surviving. When we look at these groups, we see black people, women, the poor, and people who live outside urban areas, which also constitute the groups with the highest rates of deaths from COVID-19.

The victimization present in Bolsonaro's populist discourse outsourced the responsibility for the misfortunes that happened to the country to the work of enemies. The former president abdicated from public administration duties, and consequently, he freed himself from the obligation of naming each of these struggles and to propose solutions for them. The lack of management of common issues avoided dealing with the problem, which meant that the people had to face the consequences of the problems neglected by the government. In this scenario, women assumed multiple roles as managers of the problems,

and not only their own problems, but, as caretakers, they assumed the problems of the family, relatives, and the community they were inserted in.

3- How did differences in ideology manifest in the president's speech impacted gender issues in the pandemic?

Bolsonaro's discourse repeatedly resonated with his intentions as a right-wing populist president. His words rejected and attacked democratic order; they denied the legitimacy of his opponents, which were the scientific community, health and social authorities, institutional authorities, activists, and the people's sense of collectiveness. Bolsonaro's speech encouraged the violation of safety measures, such as social isolation, vaccination, and the use of masks; these measures were treated as mere "fussiness," and were portrayed as symbols of overreaction to the pandemic.

The ideology of individuality was strong throughout the speeches. People were advised to work on their own and to "figure it out" as a way to survive the pandemic. Death, in this discourse, was treated as unavoidable, and whoever perished was collateral damage. Responsibility was reallocated; it was removed from the state and placed on people's personal behavior, the media, the left, anyone besides the president and the government.

Bolsonaro methodically organized several initiatives to incite the rejection of institutionalized democratic laws. Villainizing political opponents was one of the strategies adopted by his government. The denial of the legitimacy of his opponents created a wave of political aversion among the population. The side of society that positioned itself against the government's measures was considered communist and immoral. Such behavior helped to create a fragmented antidemocratic conjuncture capable of increasing multiple crises happening at once, such as health, economic, ideological, and cultural crises, contributing to an even more unequal society.

Regarding the impact on gender issues, such discourses affected the fight for social equality; they hindered advancement in the acquisition of rights and slowed down the process of putting an end to the pandemic, extending the suffering of millions of women who faced the pandemic in disadvantage in terms of social and economic factors. Traditionalist and conservative discourses also preach how society must behave; they dictate what a good citizen

is and, as a consequence, how the conduct of everyone must be. In this sense, the discourse of family care expands to how women should be in the intimacy of their lives, loading them with the burden of being the main social actors responsible for reproductive work.

6.3 A FRAMEWORK FOR POLITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

I present a framework of analysis based on the premises of Political Discourse Analysis on analyzing women's representation in political discourses. In order to do that, I base the questions on the structures developed by Van Dijk (1998), used in this dissertation for data analysis.

1- In the lack of explicit addressing to women in political discourses, in which manners are the topics involving women's issues/interests built?

2- How is the rhetoric of the agent surrounding women's issues constructed? How are the values and interests embedded in the discourse?

3- Are women explicitly activated or passivated in relation to their actions? Do the actions have relation with other social agents such as children, husband, family's men, or others?

4- Regarding the superstructures of discourse, problem and resolution, how are the problems regarding women's issues presented? Do the resolutions seek individualized response or does it open space for public policies/state's intervention?

5- How are the values of family and traditionalism/conservatism manipulated in the discourse in order to justify women's social duties?

With these questions I hope to bring up two main concerns I had with this research, which are the lack of mentionings to women in the data, which is an issue that I have already struggled with in previous research, and the individualized burden of women in dealing with social problems and familiar circle.

6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The biggest challenge of this research was caused by the lack of mentions to women in the ex-president's speech. Curiously, this happened in my master's thesis as well, and I had to look for further data from other sources to conduct my analysis. Although the lack of

indexalization does in fact limit the analysis, it does not exclude the possibilities. What I had to do was to find a framework for analysis that could allow me to analyze not only the linguistic features of the discourse but also the rhetoric and contextualization of the speeches according to time, place, vehicle, and audience, which was done. That was also a challenge, since the model that I chose (Van Dijk, 1998) had been mostly applied for the analysis of European political discourses, and in Brazil I could not find any article using the framework as a guide to conduct data analysis. Fortunately, in 2023 I could attend an event on discourse studies in Bogotá- Colombia, where I had the chance to meet van Dijk in person and attend his lecture with an example of analysis using this model.

Choosing the speeches to compose data was also a challenge, since for this dissertation I decided to remain only with speeches from the first year of the pandemic, 2020, and the pandemic was declared finished only on May 5, 2023. Thus, the outcomes of the pandemic continued to happen for another two years. During this period, a lot happened with the main actor addressed in this research, and although these factors are connected to his behavior while he was still the president of Brazil, I could not include them in Chapter IV because they did not fit my criteria.

As the topic of this dissertation intersects with political sciences, I had to deepen my knowledge of the field in order to understand the very important terms that guided this study. One example is the term 'populism'. The use of the term is not new, it is not exclusively used in the field of political science, and it does not have one single meaning. To understand the concept and to apply the theory to Brazilian right-wing populism, I had to read and understand how it works in other countries, especially in the USA with Donald Trump. The deviation of subjects and issues first seemed to be a problem throughout the research, but at the end, the similarities and differences explained a lot about the mechanisms of extreme right populism in a North American country and a Latin American country because they revealed the mechanisms of political polarization and manipulation embedded in these discourses.

6.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Frameworks for political discourse analysis look mainly at the structure of argumentation. Early in this research, I thought of analyzing the data based on the principles of practical reasoning, which looks at arguments in terms of *claims (to defend an idea based*

on an interest), means (what to do and how), and goals, and also considering that this sort of argumentation is deliberative and derives from the agent's interests. The model of practical reasoning is explained by Fairclough and Fairclough (2011) and provides a structure for analysis of argumentation. The model tackles circumstantial and normative premises because it looks at facts in the present that shape and dictate claims and circumstances, and also because it looks at the "future" in terms of the desires of the agent, what the agent wants to achieve, and how these desires are based on values. The authors even propose a series of seven questions to analyze the values embedded in the discourse.

Although this model was the first framework chosen to conduct this analysis, for methodological reasons, in this research I decided to remain with Van Dijk's model for political discourse analysis because it proposed more elements for linguistic analysis, such as syntax and lexicon, for example. Considering this, I suggest further research using the practical reasoning model proposed by Fairclough and Fairclough, since the set of questions on values and their relation to goals can be very enriching for studies in this field. Furthermore, in the same way that I could not find examples of Brazilian research using Van Dijk's model, I could not find Brazilian research applying practical reasoning either. However, there are plenty of articles regarding European political discourses that have already conducted research with this framework.

A supplementary suggestion for further research regards the domains of discourse. Although political discourse comes, technically, from political agents, a lot of actions can be taken by non-political agents (e.g., the electorate or people who do not even vote) and impact the political conjuncture. In modern society, the digital phenomenon cannot be left out of research. Social media, in its turn, has proven to be a rich field containing the causes of social and political problems, and it is also a powerful tool to influence elections since it is an open space for people to not only passively access information but also to engage actively in the publication and spread of information. In this research, I did not look at virtual discourses, but I suggest that further research look at these discourses in terms of how opinative argumentation takes credit nowadays, being able to influence people and help sustain and perpetuate governments such as the one here analyzed.

A final suggestion is in the field of religious studies, intersected with gender studies. At the end of the chapter written by Miguel Lago (2022) regarding the conduct of Jair Bolsonaro, the author reinforced the need to look at extreme right discourses through a lens that academia and the left seem not giving enough importance to, which is religious discourse.

These discourses (that carry a religious tone embedded in political discourse) have shown to be of critical importance in electing conservative and traditionalist representatives. By studying religion and traditional values that are worshiped and that are being desperately rescued by this extreme right movement, we can visualize the threat this poses to the struggles for equality that activists, feminists, the black movement, and others have been fighting for.

6.6 POLITICAL/PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Fairclough (1989) argues that critical language awareness, through critical language study, should be part of language education. Language and Power (Fairclough, 1989) is a well-known work among language scholars, and its last chapter reinforces that the role of those who are acquainted with critical language studies is to make books like that (language and power) accessible to a large audience, in order to raise consciousness and lead to social emancipation from domination.

For Fairclough social emancipation addresses concrete concerns of social life such as "unemployment, housing, equality, access to education, the distribution of wealth, and removing the economic system from the ravages and whims of private interest and profit" (1989, p. 234). Regarding the ideological discussion and the concern with oppression, he claims that the oppressed will not acknowledge the oppression they suffer only by having this uttered by someone; rather, they need to experience the struggle provided by oppression. In this manner, struggle is related to consciousness raising and then acting upon it. The author also explains that this raise in awareness comes from contact with educators (formal and informal) with theoretical baggage who are very likely to be familiar with critical language studies.

Along with language studies, it is important that educators keep updated on political and global events as they take place. The combination of theory and social, economic, and political events can also lead to a broader understanding and critical positioning towards events. We need to invest in the familiarization with data and statistics, work with these numbers in the classroom, and show their relevance in local and global terms, thus

Understanding the motives, the consequences, and the options open to action. We need to work with real texts—from reports, from TV, and from social media.

Furthermore, with the updates on social media and the advancement of artificial intelligence, the need for regulation of false information spread in digital channels is more necessary than it has ever been. It is necessary to protect not only the user's personal data but also their judgment over facts.

Humanity is not free from living mayhem, such as we saw the pandemic of COVID-19. In times of crisis, such as a pandemic, it is imperative for both society and governments to be prepared to mitigate challenges faced by the population, and some challenges are uniquely faced by women. The pandemic has reinforced existing gender inequalities, which were not unknown before but that surely demonstrated the magnitude of issues like economic insecurity, domestic violence, and the unequal burden of caregiving responsibilities.

To diminish women's suffering in such crises, political institutions must prioritize equitable access to resources and support systems. This involves ensuring that economic measures address women's specific vulnerabilities, including wage disparities and job precarity. Moreover, combating gender-based violence requires coherent strategies that are able to provide safe means for reporting and that facilitate access to support services.

Regarding economic and social life, feminist movements have been pointing out the urgency for "socialization of the means of reproduction". The discussion approaches how reproductive work becomes the target of neoliberal exploitation and the reason for domestic debt. Domestic debt forces women to remain in one of the most psychologically and physically violent spaces: the home. Even when women receive government aid, it is still not enough to cover the expenses because now there are even more costs to sustain, such as internet connection bills and abusive interests for the loans made to pay for basic needs, among others. In this sense, it is important to demand salary adjustments, to offer public services for basic needs (water, electricity, and health services), to offer of negotiations to reduce debts and interests, and alternatives to the endless subordination of big corporations (Cavallero e Gago, 2020).

With an inclusive and efficient government posture towards these issues, gender policies can be better implemented in every given moment, so that when emergency planning is required, there are tools and mechanisms ready to assist. Surely, for this ideal scenario to happen, it is also of major importance that women compose boards of decision-making

processes. Group representation in positions of power is a step toward recognition and support for intersectional needs during crises.

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APPENDIX

The document where data was retrieved from has 42 pages and can be downloaded in this link: https://www.conectas.org/publicacao/boletim-direitos-na-pandemia-no-10/#wpcf7-f18339-o1