

## ARTICLE

# Students' occupations in Brazil in 2015 and 2016: subjects and trajectories

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### ABSTRACT

This article communicates general results of a national study on high school occupations in Brazil in 2015 and 2016. It aimed to interpret the meanings of the participation of teenagers in this student movement, highlighting the characterization of the subjects who played a leading role in the occupations and educational, family, and political trajectory. The methodology employed included qualitative and quantitative analysis of 80 semi-structured interviews granted in 2019 and 2020 by young people from 10 different states, who were high school students in 2015 and 2016 and occupied their schools. The analysis was guided by the following categories: political subjectification, (Jacques Rancière's), meaning (González Rey's), and trajectory (inspired by Lahire and Bourdieu). The results: revealed the popular character of the movement; female students' protagonism, and the decisive influence of the occupation experience in the definition of educational trajectories, among others aspects.

### KEYWORDS

student movement; political subjectivation; educational trajectory.

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## **OCUPAÇÕES SECUNDARISTAS NO BRASIL EM 2015 E 2016: SUJEITOS E TRAJETÓRIAS**

### **RESUMO**

O artigo comunica resultados gerais de pesquisa nacional sobre as ocupações secundaristas no Brasil em 2015 e 2016. Teve como objetivo a interpretação dos sentidos da participação de adolescentes nesse movimento estudantil, destacando a caracterização dos sujeitos nas ocupações e as trajetórias educacionais, familiares e políticas pós-ocupação. Como metodologia, a análise qualitativa e quantitativa de 80 entrevistas semiestruturadas concedidas em 2019 e 2020 por jovens que, em 2015 e 2016, eram estudantes do Ensino Médio que ocuparam suas escolas, de 10 diferentes estados. Orientam a análise, as categorias de subjetivação política de Jacques Rancière, de significado de González Rey e de trajetória (inspirada em Lahire e Bourdieu). Os resultados que se destacam: o caráter popular do movimento; o protagonismo feminino e a influência decisiva da experiência da ocupação para a definição de trajetórias educacionais entre outros aspectos.

### **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

movimento estudantil; subjetivação política; trajetória educacional.

## **OCUPACIONES ESCOLARES EN BRASIL EN 2015 Y 2016: SUJETOS Y TRAYECTORIAS**

### **RESUMEN**

Este artículo comunica los resultados generales de una investigación nacional sobre las ocupaciones escolares por estudiantes secundarios en Brasil en 2015 y 2016. Tiene como objetivo interpretar los significados de la participación de los adolescentes en este movimiento estudiantil: la caracterización de los sujetos en las ocupaciones, así como las trayectorias educativas, familiares y políticas. Como metodología, el análisis cualitativo y cuantitativo de 80 encuestas semiestructuradas concedidas en 2019 y 2020 por jóvenes que en los años de 2015 y 2016 eran estudiantes secundarios que ocuparon sus escuelas en 10 estados diferentes. El análisis está guiado por las categorías de subjetivación política (Jacques Rancière), significado (González Rey) y trayectoria (inspirado en Lahire y Bourdieu). Entre los resultados, se señala: el carácter popular del movimiento; el protagonismo femenino; y la influencia decisiva de esta experiencia para la definición de trayectorias educativas.

### **PALABRAS CLAVE**

movimiento estudiantil; subjetivación política; trayectoria educativa.

## INTRODUCTION

I am grateful to occupations for showing me that there is a possibility of carrying out a healthy, participatory, democratic, dialectical teaching, and even pedagogical learning process, and occupations were fundamental for the choice of my profession and for the way I see my profession today (Esperança, Espírito Santo State).

Adolescents, who were high school (HS) students, surprised society by organizing and leading the most important progressive protests in Brazil in 2015 and 2016, the movement of public-school occupations was a protest against various regressive measures in educational policies implemented, initially, by different state governments and, later, by Michel Temer's federal government (2016–2018). Thus, they made the image of teenagers as merely immature or pre-political people even more outdated. And their ability to create powerful meanings for this experience, in the short and medium-term, was also surprising and showed its importance for their own life trajectories. Therefore, the thesis that participation in a social movement is usually a remarkable experience in the lives of the people who build it (Gohn, 2011) is endorsed. In addition, it demonstrated the power of this experience among adolescents, who are individuals living the early stage of youth (Melucci, 1997).

This article communicates general results of the national survey “High school occupations in Brazil in 2015 and 2016: education and political self-education of the occupiers”. The research dealt with the subjects of the occupations, the “*secundas*” — an abbreviation for “*secundaristas*” (high school students) — as those students called themselves in this movement. It was carried out through a partnership between 12 higher education institutions in Brazil, forming teams in ten states (Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Paraná, São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Espírito Santo, Rio de Janeiro, Goiás, Ceará, and Pará).<sup>1</sup>

The article aims specifically to interpret the meanings of the adolescents' participation in this student movement, highlighting the characterization of the subjects who starred the occupations and the education, family, and political trajectories after occupations. The methodology used included the qualitative and quantitative analysis of 80 semi-structured interviews carried out between 2019 and 2020 with young people who were HS students in 2015 and 2016 and who occupied their schools in the ten states described above. According to the project approved by the Ethics Committee of *Universidade Federal de Alfenas*, Minas Gerais (UNIFAL-MG), CAAE 4809518.1.0000.5142, the individuals interviewed are referred to by pseudonyms chosen by themselves.

Rancière's (1996) category of political subjectivation was very important as a starting point, in dialogue with the classic category of political socialization, and the categories of sense and meaning by González Rey (2010). Finally, the notion of

1 Research results and sources are available at <https://www.unifal-mg.edu.br/occucoes-secundaristas/>.

trajectory inspired by Bernard Lahire (1997) and Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (1975) also supported this study.

The interviews and their analyses enabled us to know the medium-term impacts of adolescents' participation in collective actions. During the occupation movements, those adolescents, even if for a brief moment, constituted themselves as political subjects, helping to reveal the potential meanings of participation in a radical collective experience, in the same sense that this word contains: from the root, from something that completely crossed the constitution of their subjectivities. This experience tends to be chosen as a milestone in their life trajectories, albeit with a relative contradiction: it marks the subjects both through the political experimentation of horizontal democracy and through workshops with alternative educational content and methodologies, as well as through threats, violence, and persecutions experienced during and after the protest.

This article presents the main results of the influences of the school occupation experience on the trajectories of people who, as teenagers, participated in the student movements of 2015 and 2016, that is, the *secundas*. First, it presents social, economic, and political data about them, as well as their relationships with their families. Second, it presents data that indicate the influences of the occupation experience on their educational and political trajectories, as well as on their family relationships.

## SUBJECTS

The 80 people interviewed did not form a random sample of participants in the occupations, given that the main objectives of the research are qualitative, that is, they seek to know the meanings of the experience of participation in these movements. Having subjectivity as a macro-concept, we take here sense and meaning as defined by Rey (2010), inspired by Vygotsky, when dealing with subjectivity constituted through social and cultural interactions. In this proposition, the senses can be defined as symbolic-emotional orientations that subjects build and rebuild through the social relations and cultural mediations of which they are a part; meanings are one of the zones of these senses, through which subjects interpret the senses that guide them, both toward themselves and the social world. For González Rey, meanings are more stable and lasting than senses. In this way, the interviews present, above all, meanings ascribed by the *secundas* to their experiences in the movement, which indicate the different subjective meanings constituted by those people: the effort of analysis is itself an interpretation of these meanings and senses, attributing a new layer of meanings — via research — to the event of HS occupations (Rey, 2010).

Recruitment for the interviews took place from the academic and political networks formed by the research teams, based on personal acquaintance and indications; sometimes, searches were also made on the internet's social networks and even, in Paraná, an online form was used. Care was taken to recruit more females than males, respecting the evidence from all previous studies and the teams' contact with the movement, in which girls made up the majority of students in protest and occupied prominent positions. We sought to interview people from both the capital

and the interior of the states; both activists and independent; students from both central and peripheral schools. In general, they were between 16 and 18 years of age when they participated in the movements in 2015 and 2016; and when they granted interviews, in 2019 and 2020, they were between 19 and 21 years of age.

Despite its qualitative and non-random nature, the sample has a certain representativeness and the quantitative data extracted are valuable for the general analysis, complementing interpretations guided by the qualitative analysis that was carried out in each state. We used the MaxqDa software to produce data from the analysis of semi-structured interviews, which followed a script composed of four themes: school trajectory; political formation; occupation experience; and post-occupancy trajectory.

Regarding gender, 56.25% (45 individuals) interviewees were women, 41.25% (33) were men and 2 individuals declared to be non-binary (2.5%). As previously stated, there was an effort to guarantee the relative primacy of women over men, in addition to the important meeting with people who did not fit the hegemonic binary bias of gender relations.

The occupation itself, provided me with contact with feminism, those were the first moments when I realized that women can lead. (Cimeire, Santa Catarina)  
There, at school, there were girls who, because of the movement that we made, the mystics, they wanted to participate in feminist movements. (Mel, São Paulo)

Regarding the characteristics of the municipalities that had schools occupied, in relation to the number of mentions per student, those outside of the capital predominated — countryside, coastal, and metropolitan region of the capital, totaling 66.25% of the mentions (53). Twenty-seven mentions (33.75%) referred to schools in the capital. In this case, it reflects the effort to guarantee representativeness by the schools outside the capital — even if not statistical, but as a guarantee of the presence of reports — in these student movements that were largely internalized, in many cases being characterized as the first significant political manifestation after years in several small towns.

In relation to occupied public schools, we created the following typology:

- Prestigious schools: those that have some selection process (such as federal technical institutes), keeping some prestige for their historical role in the education of elites (such as a central school in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais) or are application schools of public universities;
- Central and middle-class neighborhood schools — this group excludes the prestigious ones mentioned above, even though they are often located in central regions;
- Peripheral schools: located outside the central region and neighborhoods, mostly attended by middle class individuals.

The research had little success in recruiting students from schools that we called “peripheral” (Chart 1), despite the fact that these schools were indicated by the bibliographic research as the type that best characterized this student movement.

**Chart 1 – Type of school occupied by the people interviewed  
(in relation to the number of mentions).**

School type	n	%
Central	48	60
Peripheral	22	27.5
Prestigious	10	12.5
<b>Total</b>	80	100

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Our networks and contacts had numerous limitations in recruiting *secundas* from peripheral schools, in order to more fairly represent their importance to the movement. Even so, the results were significant. Most people in our academic and political networks supported those occupying central or prestigious schools, usually because of the proximity of these schools to their places of residence and work. In the daily life of the occupations, despite their importance, peripheral schools received less attention from the media and supporting organizations (such as parties and trade unions), and usually experienced more severe repression from the police and even threats from drug dealers. In peripheral schools, students who were neither activists of autonomous collectives nor activists of organizations, who called themselves independents, were prominent, both as leaders and as a base. The independents showed political action but were not affiliated to any partisan youth groups, student entity or school alumni.

We handed out some forms for people to sign up, proposing workshops for the occupations. [...] And people signed up, but they were always available for schools in the center. Never to the peripheral schools, the farthest schools. (Juliana, Paraná)

In peripheral schools there was more repression, not in central schools, even because of the profile of the students and the surrounding population. (Resistência, Goiás)

The interviews revealed the predominance of individuals belonging to central schools, located in central regions or in middle-class neighborhoods, even in cases where their students were adolescents from the periphery — such as escola Fernão Dias, in the neighborhood of Pinheiros, in the capital of São Paulo. That school, despite being the second occupied school, was the one that received the most attention from the media and from activists. Central schools tended to have leaders from both independents and activists from autonomous collectives, and from student organizations; but the base was independent.

In schools classified as prestigious, the tendency was for the occupation to be carried out by activists from students' organizations and youth parties, places where their organizations acted more organically. Federal technical institutes, in particular, were more present in the second wave of occupations, in the second half

of 2016, when higher education (HE) institutes were also occupied, adapting the tactic used by HS students.

It was verified later, however, that despite this limitation in access to peripheral schools, our sample of secondary schools was predominantly from lower socioeconomic strata.

Regarding the political-organizational situation of the person interviewed at the time of the occupation, we had an interesting balance: 40 students (50%) were independent; 40 (50%) belonged to some organization. Among the organizations, practically all were clearly on the leftist side of the political spectrum. Regarding the organizations involved, they mainly belonged to the youth of political parties (24 affiliations, highlighting the *União da Juventude Socialista* – UJS [11 people] and the *Levante Popular da Juventude* – LPJ [4]), followed by: student unions (4), autonomous collectives, and identity groups (4), *Pastoral da Juventude* (catholic youth movement) (3), official students' entities (2), and political party (1).

As for the form of participation of the *secundas* in the movement, we created the following typology:

- Leaders or references: there is a certain tendency to deny the presence of “leaders”, especially in occupations organized by independents and autonomous collectives, not because of the influence of right-wing movements (which had been preaching the denial of politics), but rather by the adoption of ideals of horizontality and participatory democracy. Despite this, it was explicitly or implicitly assumed in almost all the interviews that some people came to occupy prominent positions for mobilization, day-to-day organization, and dialogue with support networks; euphemistic terms such as “references” or even “informal leaders” are sometimes used to refer to them;
- Base: although the term is not common in this movement, the category expresses the condition of people who, in general, did not participate in the mobilization phase, who became engaged after the movement had been announced (out of curiosity, solidarity with friends or because of being convinced of the importance of the agenda), but they were active in the different commissions created (security, cleaning, food, and communication), in workshops, and other training activities that replaced the routine classes.

There is also an interesting balance between the two categories referring to the form of participation in the secondary school movement (Chart 2): 50% (40) of the people interviewed played a role of reference or leadership; 50% (40) were part of the base.

When comparing the form of participation in the occupation with the political-organizational situation of the people interviewed, despite not finding an overlap between the reference and the organized conditions, a trend was observed that those already organized usually occupied leadership positions in the movements (Chart 2), that is, 70% (28) of the organized people occupied reference positions, while, 70% (28) of the independents were part of the base.

Chart 2 – Form of participation in the occupation in relation to the political-organizational situation of the person interviewed.

Situation					Total	
Form of participation	Reference/leadership		“Base”			
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Independent	12	30	28	70	40	50
Organized	28	70	12	30	40	50
<b>Total</b>	40	100	40	100	80	100

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

It might be relevant to mention that it was much easier to find people who occupied the position of leadership, as well as those who were organized, to be interviewed. First, for the greater chance of being contacted by our academic and political network. Second, for the greater attribution of importance to this experience by those who came to occupy such positions. We inferred that the influences of the HS movements of 2015 and 2016 were amplified beyond the people who had an active participation, creating an extension of collective action. But such influence was, really, stronger among those who recognize themselves as *secunda* or occupant of the school, even in the base condition, who presented deeply rooted formative, socializing, and political aspects.

The first in-depth analyses of the states, as in Minas Gerais, indicated three results (Groppo and Oliveira, 2021):

1. there was a correlation between the type of participation and previous political socialization, that is, the people who were leaders and organized tended to belong to families with greater political, cultural and/or economic capital;
2. The majority of independent *secundas* taking part in the occupation experienced a differential moment in their trajectories of relationship with politics, becoming interested and involved with political issues and social movements thanks to the occupation — for these reasons the occupation was, above all, a moment of political subjectivation; and
3. even for those who already lived in the organized condition, the occupation had a strong impact on their political education, and the occupation was, in fact, their first direct participation in a political action.

Given the general data on the 10 states and the 80 interviews, we verified whether those results can be generalized.

Partial result I, on the importance of the family in political formation, was not clearly confirmed when analyzing the general data. This aspect is addressed again later, when we approach the *secundas*' relationship with their families. The general results tended to endorse results II and III above. These are discussed below.

As already mentioned, we found a great subjective influence on the occupation experience. The category of political subjectivation by Rancière (1996) supports the understanding of the meanings of the *secundas*' participation in these movements. First, because the occupations originated processes of active rejection by *secundas* of the way in which some institutions and adults conceive the social roles of adolescents and students, namely, as subjects not qualified for political action and who should be passive in defining educational curricula and policies. This rejection produced a certain disidentification of the *secundas* regarding caricatured images produced by common sense about adolescents and HS students (Grosso and Silveira, 2020).

Second, because those occupations, even if relatively ephemeral and brief, were a time and place for the displacement of gender identities: women rethought their feminine condition and *secundas* reconstituted gender relations, applying and developing a type of HS and popular feminism (Silveira, 2019). This displacement allowed, in the *secundas*' own words, that other classically subordinated identities also came to be re-signified and brought to the center, during the students' movement, including people of LGBTQIA+<sup>2</sup> sexual orientation and black people. (Pacheco, 2018).

We noticed that, for the most part, those who occupied the school were women, black women, and LGBTQIA+. Those who were in charge of the occupations were these people, with these identities, which is very interesting. They are the most marginalized within the school, but the ones who at that time fought for active duty and directed the occupation (Gustavo, Paraná).

Our research gathered quantitative and qualitative data that support the hypothesis of the strength of disidentification in relation to the students' and adolescents' condition, as well as the displacement of gender identities and sexual orientation. But the data was less clear in relation to ethnic-racial identities. First, because ethnic-racial themes played a secondary role in workshops and formative practices; gender and sexual orientation issues were added to the educational and political agendas, to a greater extent, followed by ethnic-racial themes. Second, the self-declaration of color and race by the *secundas* we interviewed did not show great presence of black people, but it rather reflected the ethnic-racial characterization of the lower and lower-middle strata of Brazilian society (IBGE, 2010), according to Chart 3.

However, data on the sexual orientation declared by the people interviewed showed that students with sexual identities that are currently subordinated and persecuted tended to actively participate in the occupations. People who declared LGBTQIA+ sexual orientation made up 53.75% of the research sample (Chart 4).

When the form of participation in the occupation was correlated with gender and sexual orientation (Chart 5), the importance of women in this movement was

2 Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgenders, Transsexuals, Queers, Intersex and more.

**Chart 3 – Color/race declared by the people interviewed.**

Color/race	n	%
Black (Black and brown)	38	47.5
White	38	47.5
Indigenous	1	1.25
Not declared	3	3.75
<b>Total</b>	80	100

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

**Chart 4 – Sexual orientation declared by the person interviewed.**

Sexual orientation	n	%
LGBTQIA+	46	57.5
Heterosexual	26	32.5
Unknow	4	5
Not declared	4	5
<b>Totals</b>	80	100

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

**Chart 5 – Form of participation in the occupation regarding gender and sexual orientation.**

Form of participation	Gender			Sexual orientation			Total
	Female	Male	Non-binary	LGBTQIA+	Heterosexual	Unknown or not declared	
Leadership	33	6	1	19	17	4	40
Base	12	27	1	24	14	2	40
<b>Total</b>	45	33	2	43	31	6	80

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

noticeable. Out of 40 leaders, 33 were women. In relation to sexual orientation, the LGBTQIA+ condition did not determine a difference in the form of participation, coming to endorse the thesis that, since the construction of the movement occurred via central positions of women, other identities which were secondary in the school routine — and in society in general — gained prominence, mainly lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, equally distributed in the leadership and in the base of the occupations.

When Rancière (1996) developed the category of political subjectivation, he had first thought of the workers' movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in which the

term “proletariat” came to define a collective political subject through the re-signification of the merely socioeconomic condition of the “working class” (Rancière, 1988). But Rancière (1996) soon collected other examples to think about the category, such as the plebeian revolts in Ancient Rome, the feminist movement since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and May 1968, among others. These are mobilizations that bring what is at the heart of the category of political subjectivation, namely, the constitution of collective subjects during dissent — which is the moment of genuine “politics” —, a moment that reveals the equality between all speaking and acting beings, despite the prejudices stimulated by the social order (which affirm the “natural” inequality between social classes, genders, races, age categories, and other forms of social classification).

In this sense, it was a stimulating exercise to verify the socioeconomic origin of the *secundas* interviewed. Despite the difficulty to find *secundas* from the peripheral schools, even in the central and prestigious schools, those who came from the popular stratum predominated. Something observed in the second and most famous student occupation in 2015, at escola Fernão Dias in the prestigious Pinheiros neighborhood, in the capital of São Paulo, it was not generalized. That is, HS students from private schools, belonging to upper middle stratum, helped to support, as activists of autonomous collectives, the movement of a school that, even if central, was composed of students who lived in the peripheral regions of the capital of São Paulo.

To classify the four socioeconomic strata used here, we started from data collected by the interviews, considering: family income; schooling of guardians; and responsible profession. This is how we characterize the strata:

- Upper-middle stratum: presence of at least three of these elements: Family income (FI) above 4 minimum wages (MW); complete HE of at least one person or guardian; responsible person is a self-employed professional, entrepreneur or highly specialized professional;
- Middle-low stratum: presence of at least two of these elements: FI from 3 to 4 MW; HE of at least one person or guardian; responsible is an entrepreneur or highly specialized professional;
- Popular stratum I: presence of at least two of these elements: FI of 2 MW; complete HS of at least one guardian; responsible is a professional with specialization;
- Popular stratum II: presence of at least two of these elements: FI below 2 MW; elementary school or incomplete HS education of guardians; responsible is a professional without specialization.

The *secundas*' classification in socioeconomic strata is presented below (Chart 6). There is a small presence of people from the upper-middle stratum (5 people, or 6.25%), while the lower-middle stratum is more significant (16 or 20%). However, the presence of 59 people from the popular strata I and II, composing almost 3/4 of the sample, led us to consider that the student occupation movements, in addition to adolescents and HS students, with strong female and LGBTQIA+ presence, were popular movements.

**Chart 6 – Classification of the people interviewed into socioeconomic strata.**

Stratum	n	%	n	%
Medium-high	5	6.25	21	26.25
Medium-low	16	20		
Popular I	33	41.25	59	73.75
Popular II	26	32.5		
<b>Total</b>	80	100	80	100

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

When the correlation between socioeconomic stratum, color/race, form of participation, and political-organizational condition was carried out, there were interesting indications that, different from what it might seem when considering the occupation of escola Fernão Dias, there was a tendency for people from the popular strata to exercise leadership and reference positions. This might be due to the fact that they came from organizations in which they found space to act or that they came to form. The data collected confirmed this (Chart 7), in which the superiority of white people in leadership positions and organized conditions compared to black people was not observed. In fact, there was significant presence of black people who were organized and leaders. But more importantly, the data revealed that leadership positions tended to be occupied by people from the lower strata.

**Chart 7 – Organizational condition and form of participation in the occupation in correlation with socioeconomic stratum and color/race (n).**

Form of participation	Socioeconomic stratum		Color/race		Total
	Popular strata	Middle strata	Black and brown	White and others	
Leadership	32	8	18	22	40
Base	27	13	20	20	40
Political-organizational condition					
Organized	29	11	18	22	40
Independent	30	10	20	20	40
<b>Total</b>	59	21	38	42	80

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Thus, there are indications of relevant “grassroots” work by the different organizations where the *secundas* worked, such as youth groups in political parties, autonomous collectives, and *Pastoral da Juventude*; but also, a certain phenomenon of “self-education”, in the figure of school alumni and identity collectives. Other studies

on the occupations of São Paulo highlighted the formation of networks of activists from autonomous collectives and activists from left-wing parties, who criticized the Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* – PT) and had been working in the periphery (Barros, 2017; Campos, 2019).

Far from being merely reactive or “spontaneous” movements, the occupations were also marked by a period that Melucci (1989) considered crucial in all collective action: latency. This helps to explain the strength and dissemination capacity of the occupations. Among the elements of latency, however, there are those arising from the students' and adolescent-juveniles' dynamics, which, regardless of the contact with those organizations and networks, have been outlining responses and alternatives in the face of the contradictions of the school and socioeconomic reality itself — which threatened young people and their families with a precariousness process. It is not by chance that the first occupation took place in a school in Greater São Paulo, in Diadema, which was largely independent and had only had sporadic contacts with the autonomous network that came to organize most of the first occupations in São Paulo — but not the first.

At the end of this item, general data about the *secundas'* relationship with their families is presented. Two questions from the interview script were addressed, which dealt with the themes: the influence of the family in the individuals' political education; and changes in personal (including family) life after the occupation. The results of the former are addressed here, while the latter is discussed in the next section.

The interviewees' recognition of family influence on their political formation was approached (Chart 8). The data did not give much support to the classic theses of political socialization, about the decisive influence of the family in the political education of people with political commitment (Oppo, 1998). Half of the people interviewed (40) did not recognize family influence and 2 people did not report family influences.

**Chart 8 – Recognition by the person interviewed of the influence of the family in their political formation.**

Recognition of family influence	Socioeconomic stratum (n)			General: Total	
	Medium high and medium low	Popular I	Popular II	n	%
Yes	14	13	11	38	47.5
Not	7	18	15	40	50
Not reported	0	2	0	2	2.5
<b>Total</b>	21	33	26	80	100

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

As for those who recognized some influence, that is, 38 people (47.5%), only 8 recognized a *stricto sensu* political education, including party and union activism. Eleven pointed out other kinds of influence that were not directly political, such as encouraging studies and valuing education (4), religiosity that created social aware-

ness (3), independence of the women in the family, the mother's struggle for survival and the drag queen uncle (4). Eight reported the influence of only one parent, and 7 pointed to other people (brothers [3], grandfather, godmother, uncles, and stepfather). Finally, 2 people reported breaking with a conservative political education coming from their families. Among the 40 people who did not see family influence (50%), the majority considered the family little or not interested in politics, but 4 people indicated divergences of political position, even leading to conflicts (2 people) — which is a political influence — even if of a conservative profile, or for provoking conflicts.

A correlation was made between the data on family influence on their political education with other variables: performance in the occupation; political-organizational condition; socioeconomic stratum; gender; sexual orientation; and color/race.

No difference was found in the answers between acting as a leader or a base participant. There were also no significant differences in terms of color/race. The condition of being organized was correlated with a slightly higher level of family influence in political education (21 organized *versus* 17 independent). Regarding the socioeconomic stratum, all 5 people from the upper-middle stratum reported family influence — but one of them said that it was old-dated and he had to break up with it and influence his mother, who became a political party activist along with her son. Political differences reached extreme points, such as the aggression of this lower-middle class *secunda*:

I got slapped in the face! Literally. My father almost tied me up at home, and my mother only argued with me all the time. My father used to say: “You don't work to see that you're not gonna change the world! You won't be able to change the world.” But I didn't give a shit! (Fernanda, Minas Gerais).

Family influence in the political education of the family was mostly seen among middle strata, however, recognition by the popular strata is significant (Chart 8). Recognition of influence was proportionally higher among women (54.35%) than among men (40.62%) and proportionally higher among people with heterosexual orientation (51.85%, or 14 people) than LGBTQIA+ (44.44% or 20 people).

The quantitative results allowed us to conclude that there is a relatively greater influence of the family among people of the middle social strata, confirming, in this sense, theses that relate possession of economic capital, cultural capital, and political capital — the latter with the sense of enabling action in political institutions, laws, and values of representative citizenship (Oppo, 1998).

However, when considering the correlation shown in Chart 6, it was observed that both the organized condition and the performance as a leader showed little correlation with the socioeconomic stratum of origin in the sense expected by the classic theses of political socialization. In fact, the data in Chart 6 opposes this expectation, since leaders from the popular strata were more frequent in absolute and relative terms. Although the influence of the family in the individuals' political education was relevant in all strata, including the popular ones, even if in an indirect way of encouraging studies and converting religious education into social awareness, the data allowed us to affirm the multiple origin of the elements of the *secundas*'



when they were asked to define the movement using one word only. Several people found it difficult to answer the question, nine did not answer, and 8 used two words or more. Figure 1, thus, records 82 mentions and 42 words.

The most frequent keyword was hope, with 9 mentions, followed by resistance (8). Learning, struggle, and revolution appeared with 5 mentions each. Transformation was mentioned 4 times, while growth, experience, and strength had 3 mentions each. These results emphasize not only the vigor of the experience of occupying, but its resignification throughout life trajectories, something that the qualitative analyses of the interviews have emphasized since the beginning of this research. The young participants, when reporting memories of their political experience as teenagers in HS, revealed how much and how this experience has been mobilized for making decisions and taking different positions; not only in what is specifically political, but also in the education sphere, in the professional career, and in their family relationships — leading to the overflow of this experience into other spheres of life, which are also politicized.

Occupations were very important for my entry into politics, for popular work. [...]. I am the product of an occupation, so everything I am today was at some point a result of the occupation. (Esperança, Espírito Santo).

Given these examples of the importance of the occupation experience, in this section we also address the data that revealed the aspects of life trajectories most affected by it, namely, education trajectory and family relationships. Also, we want to analyze data on the influences in the political trajectories of *secundas*, which were less linear and quite subject to the regressive political scenarios experienced since 2016 in our country. There are several other aspects of the lives of these young people that were influenced by this experience, such as religiosity and sexual orientation, which cannot be addressed here, but which have been analyzed by other team members.

The notion of trajectory has much to do with the analysis of the sociology of education on the school trajectory, as defined by Bittar (2015, p. 49): “[...] the paths taken by individuals throughout their school life.”. In Brazil, there is a consistent legacy, the result of research by sociologists of education such as Marília Pinto de Carvalho, who keeps a dialogue with references such as those of Pierre Bourdieu and Bernard Lahire, among others (Senkevics and Carvalho, 2020). These approaches tend to discuss the influence of school experiences at a given level of education in relation to subsequent ones, or else to more prolonged or definitive factors, external to the school (socioeconomic status, schooling of guardians, gender, race, sexual orientation, etc.). However, the following data indicate how important the impact of an extra-daily youth experience can be — in this case, participation in a protest or collective action of a political nature.

The data also allow for a dialogue with the notion of trajectory by Lahire (1997), which is more phenomenological and emphasizes the multiple possible paths and the influence of the subjects’ decisions to build the meanings of their trajectories. But they also make us dialogue with the more structuralist perspective

by Bourdieu and Passeron (1975), who illustrate how much individual work in the construction of their trajectory is, precisely, the tool through which social structures operate their own reproduction, through the concept of *habitus*.

Chart 9 provides data on the educational situation at the time of the interview. As previously mentioned, the interviews were carried out in 2019 and 2020, that is, between 4 and 6 years after the events of the movement in which they participated.

**Chart 9 – Educational situation at the time of the second interview.**

Education status	n	%
Studying HE	59	73.75
Just finished HS	11	13.75
Attended HE, but dropped out	4	5
Still studying HS	2	2.5
Attending Technical Education	2	2.5
Evaded from HS	2	2.5
<b>Total</b>	80	100

HE: higher education; HS: high school.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Fifty-nine people, that is, 73.75% of young people who were HS students in 2015 and 2016, had become HE students in 2019 or 2020, almost 3/4 of our research subjects. A relevant part of the interviewees explicitly recognizes the occupation movement as a major or even the main influence on their decision to attend HE. The movement presented information about admission, gratuity, and the quota policy in public HE in workshops, as well as created interest in a particular professional career, often giving political and collective meaning to this interest, beyond individual ascension.

So, in that period we started [...] doing activities even about entrance exams and how access public universities is [...], lectures on vocational topics [...], also an explanation of what the quotas and access modalities were like (Ana Paula, Rio Grande do Sul).

This is the main influence reported by the *secundas* of their participation in the movement. See the data from the 2019 Higher Education Census, by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (*Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira – INEP, 2019*). The adjusted net rate, that is, the percentage of the Brazilian population aged between 18 and 24 years who attended or completed HE, was 25.5%, that is, 1/4 of this age group. If we consider this data as an indicator, not as a directly comparable measure,

there is a much greater tendency for those who acted actively in the HS movement of 2015 and 2016 to join HE, practically  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the *secundas*.

Out of the 59 *secundas* who were in HE, 43 (that is, almost 73%) attended state or federal public institutions; 16 attended private HE (just over 27%). There is an inversion in relation to the general proportion, since most of the students in HE in Brazil today are in private institutions: “With more than 6.5 million students, the private network has three out of four undergraduate students.” (INEP, 2019). Among those who completed HS, 7 said they intended to attend HE, 2 had no intention, 2 did not inform, and 1 planned to attend technical education.

The type of course and professional career chosen were also influenced by the occupation, but mainly the meaning of this choice, which, as mentioned, also tends to have collective and political significance.

The occupation directly influenced the experiences I had, because at the technical arts school we also carried out projects, the arts school in the occupation really became arts, because we walked around the occupation with a circus vertical rope, there were people dancing. [...] I already liked theater; I also had this idea of thinking about education. Then I saw there was an arts undergraduate course at the state university. Then I said: that’s it! (Ruth, São Paulo).

There, in the occupation, I met several lawyers, judges, and they were people who talked to me a lot about the law and opened my mind. And I was like: “Hey guys, I want to be this when I grow up.” I came to think like this, for all the support I had (Marielle, Pará).

Another fact that distinguishes *secundas* from the general population, including other young people of their generation, is the declared vote in the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of the 2018 presidential elections, which elected the extreme-right candidate. Only one person declared having voted for the elected president — and, in the interview, he claimed to have changed his position again, returning to being progressive as in the time of the occupations. Sixty-five declared having voted for the center-left candidate (81.25%), four did not vote (they had not taken their voter registration card), and one voted blank. This information points to a progressive political position, even from those who voted resignedly for the PT candidate, as they yearn for a more progressive candidacy.

However, as shown by the following data, this did not necessarily imply an activist engagement or an increase in adherence to the organized political condition. We saw in the previous section (Chart 2) that half of those who were interviewed were organized, while half of them were independent. However, we had not informed that among the 40 independents before the occupations, a large part, that is, 30 people, did not report any type of associative activity, not even religious, philanthropic or of assistance.

Chart 10 shows the political-organizational condition at the time of the interview. Data, at first, are disheartening in view of the hypothesis of greater

**Chart 10 – Political-organizational situation at the time of the second interview.**

Situation	n	%
Independent	41	51.25
Organized	39	38.75
<b>Total</b>	80	100

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

political engagement raised by the experience of the occupation since a decrease was observed in the number of people in the organized condition: there are now 39 people (38.75%). Affiliations to left-wing party youths still predominate among organized people (15), still emphasizing UJS and LPJ; but they almost tie with affiliations to left-wing parties (13), especially the *Partido Comunista do Brasil* (Brazilian Communist Party) — almost always from *secundas* who were affiliated to the UJS. Finally, four interviewees joined HE student entities: central students' office and academic centers. Attention is drawn to the disappearance of mentions of autonomous and identity collectives, indicating that this form of participation has suffered even more with the regressive sociopolitical context in our country.

At first, the influences of the students' occupations in Brazil in favor of activist engagements in the country are much lower than those observed in Chile by Ruiz (2014). However, the different developments observed in the Chilean political life between the occupations of 2006 and the present, in a progressive sense, must be considered. Brazil has experienced great drawback since 2013, especially from 2016 onward. In other words, there is a quite unfavorable context regarding progressive engagement in Brazil today.

But it is also necessary to consider that, among the 41 people who were independent at the time of the interview, only 8 people did not express any kind of political or associative commitment prior to the occupations. Eight approached or even joined a youth party or party, always on the left-wing. Fourteen stated that they occasionally participate in progressive acts and demonstrations, in addition to nurturing sympathies and interest in left-wing party organizations. Five people said they carry out their activism through the arts (dance and theater). Three mentioned working in a university outreach project, one is a member of a non-governmental organization, and one joined a social project. Finally, 1 person said that their engagement is “in life”, through acting in favor of the rights of minorities at work and in the family.

I work in my life, I work with my sister, I work with my family, and I pass on to the people I work with the need to always keep growing, in this movement of helping and wanting to change, of wanting to evolve, of wanting to improve our country (Carolina de Jesus, Minas Gerais).

The data show lower degree of depoliticization of *secundas* and a higher degree of progressive politicization that does not always find a place in party

organizations and student entities, while the autonomous collectives that were formed were not strong enough to overcome the political and social setbacks of the years following the movement of occupations. The occasional frequency of demonstrations and a certain willingness to engage or re-engage illustrate a significant readiness on the part of the current young generation for new protests and progressive collective actions, especially when it is possible to recreate the horizontal and participatory character experienced in the occupations. This last conclusion endorses the reasons alleged by *secundas* for engaging in extension projects, non-governmental organizations, and social projects, and even in the arts: these are actions of greater flexibility and directed towards identity and inclusive policies, with greater ability to approach populations in situations of social injustice and dialogue with them.

Since I entered college, I created an intention that, if I participated in a social movement, I wanted one agenda to guide all others — race. But this agenda that I wanted was not a guide in any of the social movements I'd read or heard about. So, I ended up wanting to leave and preferred to stay alone in the social project and in this outreach project (Isadora, Ceará).

These data endorse the propositions of Oscar Aguilera Ruiz (2016), when he demonstrates how young people share a profound critique of the ways in which society and traditional forms of political participation are organized. The Chilean anthropologist, going further, observes that the cultural conditions of participation are becoming what appears to be a generational rupture between traditional political cultures and the politics of youth cultures (Ruiz, 2016).

Finally, during the cross-referencing of quantitative data, attention was drawn to the changes in the *secundas'* relationships with their families, influenced by the experience of occupying. This is a less marked influence when compared to educational trajectories, but clearer than the one recorded just above, on political trajectories. While the importance of the family in the *secundas'* political education had already contradicted the expectations of classical theories on political socialization, both because of its medium importance and because it was not strictly political, the reports on changes in family relationships were surprising due to their relative magnitude (Chart 11).

**Chart 11 – Recognition of changes in family relationships after the students' occupation movement.**

Report	n	%
Recognizes changes	49	61.25
Does not recognize changes	14	17.5
Does not report changes	17	21.25
<b>Total</b>	80	100

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Chart 11 is based on the answers to the question: “Were there significant changes in your personal life after the occupations?”. The question did not explicitly direct the answer to family relationships, but there was an expectation that, if they had occurred, they would be reported there.

Few reports that recognized change did not ascribe it, at least partly, to the occupations. Around a quarter of the reports recognized that the changes were only negative, highlighting the conflicts due to political-ideological differences (6 interviews), which is also involved in the rupture with the mother in one interview, and with the father in another. Finally, there was a report of conflict due to non-acceptance of the interviewee’s sexuality. Another three quarters of the reports registered positive changes, highlighting: more respect, understanding and dialogue (11 interviews), political influence in the family (8), more autonomy, independence, and freedom from the family (3), acceptance of sexual orientation (2), leaving home (2), forming one’s own family (2), and support (2).

The reports deserve a qualitative analysis of their own, but it is worth bringing here some inferences from the data above and from a few more examples. Gaining respect within the family, as well as creating mutual understanding and an environment for dialogue within the family, can mean building healthier and more positive family relationships through the synthesis of various contributions, among which the occupations stand out. The occupations, on the one hand, were a powerful educational process, which provided the participants with new or greater understandings of themselves and the world, as is abundant in the reports; but, on the other hand, as the reports themselves prove, they were a kind of test: they tested the *secundas*’ capability to do something constructive, to demonstrate courage, to have a prominent and leading role before the community, and even to lose shyness.

When I took on a role in the occupation, I think that in a way the family started to look at me in a different way, no longer as a daughter or niece who doesn’t take many initiatives, but as a political subject. I think I took that role. I was no longer just any teenager, I was a political subject, just like all the other colleagues in the occupation (Natalia, Paraná).

But it is perhaps more surprising that 8 *secundas* started to consider themselves as a political reference for the family, both in the strictest sense of concern with issues of institutional policy, representative democracy, and social rights guidelines, and in a broader sense, such as the assumption of ethnic-racial identity and the encouragement of family members to resume their educational trajectories. “From the occupation until nowadays, I became the political reference of the house, of the family. Whenever there is a political matter, I’m in the middle of it, or they ask for my opinion.” (Bernardo, Ceara).

As a last aspect regarding family relationships, we report the result of the correlations made between the recognition of influence and the variables that were used in this article. A slightly higher tendency was observed to recognize changes

in the relationship with the family among people who were leaders in the occupation (28 people, against 21 of those who were base members). However, there was a slight tendency towards greater recognition of changes in the relationship with the family among those who were independent at the time of occupation (27 people, against 22 who were organized). No relevant differences were observed in recognition between males and females, while the difference from an ethnic-racial point of view was small, with recognition by 59.5% of white people against 63.2% of black and brown people.

The variables in which we found the most significant differences refer to socioeconomic strata and, mainly, to sexual orientation. LGBTQIA+ people recognized influences much more than heterosexuals, that is, 73.3% LGBTQIA+ people versus 48.2% heterosexual individuals. This data calls for a more refined analysis, which focuses on the reports. It is possible to advance about the presence of reports regarding the achievement of family respect in relation to the non-heterosexual sexual orientation of the *secundas*, alongside reports that emphasize, on the other hand, the construction of greater respect for oneself, the way in which earning the respect of one's own family was achieved. However, there are also reports of conflict and misunderstanding.

Today my family is very open about my sexuality, very receptive about my activism, but I think it was fundamental for them to kind of reject this side of mine in the beginning, to make me what I am today. I don't think I would have fought as hard if it wasn't for their resistance (Kamilo, Santa Catarina).

As for the socioeconomic stratum variable, the recognition of the change increases as one goes from the popular stratum II to the middle strata, that is, 53.8% of *secundas* from the popular stratum I recognized the changes, against 63.6% in the popular stratum II, and 75 % in the middle strata. As observed with the differences regarding sexual orientation, the differences related to social strata demand a qualitative analysis, approaching the reports, but starting from the observation that, in all strata, recognition is relevant, and was reported by over a half of the people interviewed. In all strata, positive aspects were recognized, in different degrees, such as the construction of an atmosphere of trust, respect, and dialogue; the political influence flowing from young subjects to the family nucleus; and, finally, the ability to gain acceptance of one's behavior before the family — including LGBTQIA+ sexual orientation and political action.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Our analyses, which sought to characterize the subjects of the HS movements of 2015 and 2016 in Brazil — students who occupied public schools — as well as to interpret the influences of this experience on the trajectories of such adolescents, had as main sources the reports given in semi-structured interviews

for the national survey reported here. These reports brought the meanings that those *secundas* created and recreated around this experience and these influences in their trajectories. The data presented in this article, although mainly quantitative, help in the interpretation of the subjective and social meanings of the occupation experience. They allow us to understand the main veins of these senses and what is general in this experience, but also the specificity influenced by social, ethnic-racial, gender, and sexual orientation variables.

The reports constitute a profile of the HS occupation movement that was eminently popular, female, LGBTQIA+, and independent, without excluding the support of people from the middle strata, the participation of men, heterosexual individuals, and political organizations. The occupations contained processes of political subjectivation that sheltered people of different social *status* at a time — that of politics as disagreement (Ranci re, 1996) — which instituted equality of speech and action. However, this was only possible through the “front-line” action of people who tended (and still tend) to be disqualified and seen as politically disabled from the point of view of the “police”: teenagers, HS students, students from public schools, daughters and sons of the lower classes, girls, and LGBTQIA+ people.

It seems relevant to emphasize that even though the movement placed the ethnic-racial agenda in the background in relation to the feminist and LGBTQIA+ issues, it did not under-represent black and brown people: they occupied leadership positions on an equal footing and were already gaining space in organization policies that helped in the latency of this collective mobilization. On the other hand, the research had difficulties in obtaining interviews with *secundas* from schools located in the periphery, due to the limits of our own network of contacts and, as we bring here now, also due to a trend observed in the way of telling the history of the occupations — which was revealed very early on, when the precursor occupation of Diadema gained a secondary role in certain narratives compared to that of the prestigious neighborhood of Pinheiros, in the capital of S o Paulo:

I discovered that activist movements often don't name those who do it. So, there are going to be a lot of people featured in the book [...] that we think have done a lot, but they haven't done much. They often give [...] guidelines, give notions, but we are not there to receive it, we are there to build it (Have, Minas Gerais).

Our research sought to overcome this limitation by diversifying the characteristics of those who granted us an interview and taking care to also indicate people who were not activists, in addition to making an effort to obtain at least some reports from the periphery. We discovered that the severe repression of the movement, during and after the protest, frightened and silenced some *secundas*, especially those who remained independent; we had several denials, but those who came to grant interviews rarely showed apathy or were short in words. Occupying the schools was an experience in the sense of the collective construction of a

political subject, as well as an experience of the fullness of the political being in a radical democratic, participatory, and horizontal experiment.

The influences that *secundas* have transferred to their personal trajectories are numerous and powerful. The data highlighted school trajectories and, accordingly, future professional trajectories: three quarters of those we interviewed are in higher education, almost always public, in courses and careers that have received some influence from the occupation experience — through workshops, educational activities, or the admiration of the gesture of solidarity by supporting professionals. The HS protest emerged as a powerful instrument for accessing higher education and in the formulation of school and professional projects. In the absence or insufficiency of specifically educational actions emanating from the education systems, *secundas* instituted a rebellious public policy of access to public HE, combining diverse influences, such as the political education emanating from part of their families — including the incentive to “study” —, the political education from a small part of the teaching staff during basic education, the support of political and union organizations, and the re-signification of school and youth experiences.

The occupation movement was, thus, not only political but also educational. Perhaps better, the political meanings of the HS protest overflowed institutions and political spaces — even due to their even greater closure since 2016 — and gave new meaning to life trajectories. As we have analyzed in other works, HS feminism makes women and men rethink their conditions and gender relations. Also, the occupations were spaces for assuming the sexual orientation of a relevant number of *secundas*, formerly under the shadow of discrimination and insecurity regarding their identity; they were even a place to rethink or think better about religiosity. In this article, the social and cultural dimensions of political protest, in the form of influences on life trajectories, could also be glimpsed in the changes in family relationships.

More than half of the interviews acknowledged changes in family relationships: generally positive; almost always keeping a relationship with the experience of the student movement. The experience of having been a *secunda* does not pass unscathed by their families, even in those — which were the majority — that did not influence their political education. At the same time, families were also revealed as a place of expression of the recent political-ideological aggravation of Brazilian society. The results of the politicization experienced by teenagers who became *secundas* did not have a single direction: they ranged from the conquest of the position of political reference to the rupture with the family nucleus, even though the construction of a space of respectful coexistence was more common.

In conclusion, the results presented here indicate the meanings and powerful influences of the conjunction between so many experiences of adolescents as political subjects: in personal trajectories, in family relationships, in political scenarios, and in educational systems. However, as young people, their stories are still pierced by the anguish of their immediate defeats, by the retreat of progressive organizations, by the regression of representative democracy, and by the

severe penalization of the new generations of the popular strata in response to the effects of the economic crisis.

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