

# **What is the political culture for young Brazilians? The process of political socialization through social networks**

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*In this paper, we sought to analyze if the internet and social networks usage could be impacting the constitution of an assertive political culture among young people in South Brazil. We hypothesize that although these new socialized agents are widespread among the young, apathy and disinterest in politics remain. To test our hypothesis, we analyzed data from a survey conducted with secondary school students from Porto Alegre in 2015 and 2019 for values related to democracy, feelings about politics, responsiveness, and political efficacy. Results confirm that the political culture of the young remains apathetic, but those socialized by new agents seem to be closer to developing an assertive type of political culture.*

*Keywords: Brazil, youth, political culture, political socialization, social networks*

## **Introduction**

The apathy for political affairs among young people is not recent in the Brazilian scenario. Low levels of political interest, participation, and distrust of youth corroborate the establishment of a hostile political culture towards democracy and its institutions, leading the youth to disbelief in politics (Baquero, 2018). The novelty appears with the usage of new information and communication technologies, especially within the internet and social networks, which are becoming a socializing agent of the new generations, aside from family, school, and other media types. In addition, the internet is enabling different forms of interaction and social participation, which allows young people to publicly express their views on politics, creating a new space for free-speech interaction.

This possibility impacts political socialization, which comprehends the process of internalization of norms, traditions, and political values of the society. In this sense, this article proposes the following question: "Is the use of internet and social networks impacting the constitution of a civic political culture of the Brazilian youth?" In this regard, we aim to verify if the appropriation of the internet and social networks by young people impacts their interest, participation, and trust in politics. Our main hypothesis is that, even though it is a new socializing agent, the internet is not corroborating the

internalization of more democratic values, furthermore, maintaining the low level of interest in politics.

According to Dayrell (2003), youth is constituted by a series of experiences lived by individuals in different contexts, from socioeconomic, ethnic, generational, and even geographic contexts, with different ways of interpreting politics and democracy. Especially within the context of social inequality existing in the country, it is clear that there is no homogeneous youth, but rather youth(s) as a plural. In this paper, we explore the youth(s) between 13 and 25 years old attending secondary school in the city of Porto Alegre, south of Brazil.

This paper applies a quantitative protocol through survey data used for descriptive and inferential data analysis to meet its purpose. Data consists of surveys conducted by the Latin America Research Center (NUPESAL / UFRGS)<sup>1</sup> in the scope of the project “Democracy, media, and social capital: A comparative study of the political socialization of young people in southern Brazil”, coordinated by Marcello Baquero and Rodrigo González. Surveys were applied in 2015 and 2019, with 690 and 863 individuals, respectively, aged between 13 and 24<sup>2</sup>, attending public and private secondary schools of Porto Alegre, capital of Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil).

The paper is divided into three sections, apart from this introduction and the final remarks. First, we draw a general discussion of political culture, socialization agents, and new media, followed by a contextualization of the Brazilian youth and its relation to politics. Secondly, we bring data from our research to address the political culture of youngsters from Porto Alegre/RS to test our hypothesis. To do so, we divide the respondents according to the institutions they appointed as the most relevant source of political knowledge, considering three main groups: traditional agents (family, church, friends, and school), mass media (printed journals, television, and radio) and new media (internet and social media). Thirdly, we cross those groups with variables of political culture to verify if youth socialized by new agents are more assertive by validating if there is a positive and significant relation between the main agent of socialization and variables of interest in politics, participation, and sense of efficacy in politics. Our final remarks then follow this discussion. Results show that although young people are more socialized by digital agents this does not mean they are more assertive on politics. Thereby we see a decrease in interest in politics and a long-lasting disillusion with the political system in this new generation that continues reproducing a hybrid type of political culture.

### **Political culture, socialization, and internet among young people**

A political system is represented by its culture, which reflects behavioral features and settles a pattern of values (Easton, 1957). Therefore, the importance of citizenship, socialization and political culture have been long-standing principles for understanding youth participation in democratic systems. In this regard, we address political culture as “the specifically political orientations – attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes about the role of the self in the system” (Almond & Verba, 1963, p. 12). Scholars that employ this framework pioneered by Almond and Verba (1963) additionally found in their studies that the transmission and reproduction of values and

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<sup>1</sup> The Research Center on Latin America (Nupesal/UFRGS) is allocated in the Graduation Program of Political Sciences from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. It was created by Professor Marcello Baquero in 1985, and since then has been developing a vast experience in quantitative research regarding the youth.

<sup>2</sup> According to the UNESCO theoretical framework (2014), youth is described being aged 15 to 24 years old. We extended this age ratio, to 13-24, as in first year of secondary school most students are aged 13.

beliefs within society occur through the political socialization process (Almond & Verba 1963; Baquero, Baquero, & Morais 2016; Schmidt, 2000).

Academics like Jennings and Niemi (1974) and Sigel (1989) emphasized political socialization as a permanent process through the experiences of individuals through their lives. Political socialization is also part of cognitive development that evolves along stages (Piaget, 1977; Vygotsky, 1991). Besides, it is related to the civic education of a subject, which corresponds to a systematic diffusion of knowledge about the government and public affairs, once there is no mechanical reproduction of democratic attitudes and values (Niemi & Hepburn, 1995; Niemi & Sobieszek, 1977).

Initial studies on socialization focused on the impact of family in the early years as the main influencer on political attitudes (Beck & Jennings, 1975; Hyman, 1959). The second phase of studies considered school as a central player in socialization, especially in the context of inequalities, when families did not meet a minimal socioeconomic and/or cultural background (Banks & Roker, 1994; Beck, 1977; Bernardi & Costa, 2018). Therefore, considering socialization as a dynamic process, it is crucial to understand the role and influence of the different agents. Later, to comprehend electoral behavior, various studies approached the impact of the mass media, and more recently, the effect of the internet and social media on voter's decisions (Freire, Masson, & Turgeon 2018; Miguel & Birolli 2011).

Recent research repositioned the importance of examining the youth as political actors and, in this sense, their socialization process (Baquero et al., 2017). The concept of political socialization displays a valuable role in understanding the connection between youth, politics, and the internet (Morais, 2021). Political participation is likewise influenced by political socialization processes, especially among young people (Fuks, 2011).

Following social changes related to economic and technological transformations, people became more likely to reassemble around identities, which became the only source of social meaning (Castells, 2011). The development and use of new technologies showed great potential for the mobilization of civil society by creating new possibilities for sociability far from the state institutional structures (Gohn, 2016). Given the transformation of participation channels, Norris (1999) studied the possibility that despite decreasing participation, citizens are likely to become more active through new channels as in social networks and internet forums, establishing new patterns of civic engagement. What Norris (1999) calls critical citizens represents individuals more politically engaged and concerned about displaying their discontent with the political system. Moreover, Dalton and Welzel (2014) consider that the dissatisfaction with the functioning of the democratic institutions in effectively promoting well-being generated a more assertive type of citizenship. In this sense, the assertive political culture, or the critical political culture, means a culture of participation and civic engagement while respecting human rights and democratic values. Both concepts were developed because individuals are more willing to engage in politics to contest traditional forms of authority, displaying low levels of confidence in political institutions yet engaging in new forms of political manifestations (Dalton & Welzel, 2014; Newton & Norris, 2000; Norris, 1999).

The concept of new media (or digital media) refers to the internet and social media, markedly to differentiate from analogical forms, usually mentioned as "mass media" (Chandler & Munday 2011; Martino 2014). Albeit mass media operated in a unilateral manner, where individuals were silent receivers of information, the internet, and social media offer a platform where people can actively take part in informing themselves – for better or for worse. Despite all benefits of digitalization, there are still negative impacts

on democracy that pose new challenges, such as disinformation, fake news, and polarization through algorithmic biases.

Hence, the internet and social networks position themselves as new socialization agents of youth, and differently from traditional agents – such as family, school, church, and friends – and the mass media – like print newspapers, television, and radio – they can have an impact of ‘auto socialization’, in the sense that sources of information are conditional to the own agent’s findings.

### **The Brazilian scenario**

The Brazilian democratization in the 1980s, after over 20 years of dictatorship, represented a contradictory process between formal democracy and social inequality (Baquero, 2001). The authoritarian history and a past of political and economic instability have created obstacles to building a democratic culture in the country. Moreover, the lack of a participative civil society and weakened political institutions have contributed to a fragile democracy. A general lack of interest in politics has been observed, along with low levels of political participation and trust in the institutions, leading to apathy, individualism, personalism, patrimonialism, and even corruption (Baquero, 2008). Therefore, we observe what Baquero called a hybrid political culture, where there is a predominance of authoritarian behavior and values combined with a positive perception of democracy as an ideal, but not as a social practice, which is associated with a context of inertial democracy that has been long reproduced since the re-democratization (Baquero, 2018).

Acknowledging contemporary politics in Brazil, we feature the same patterns reproduced repeatedly. In June of 2013, protests arose all over Brazil, having as the main characteristics a spread distrust in political institutions, and general dissatisfaction with outcomes from the political system such as poor public policies and corruption (Filgueiras, 2018). Demonstrations were characterized by the strong participation of young people. It was initially a plural movement, organized mainly by social media, drawing the debut of Brazilian online activism. However, its ideological orientation gradually shifted, being identified as ambiguous mobilizations (Secco, 2013; Avritzer, 2016; Pinheiro-Machado, 2019). A diffusion of anti-politics visions was strengthened in the following years within a strongly polarized society (Baquero, Ranincheski, & Castro, 2018).

Therefore, demonstrations arose once more in 2014, related to the World Cup and aggravated within the electoral scenario, and in 2015 and 2016, with movements pro and anti-impeachment of the former president Dilma Rousseff. There was a strong political activation online by new groups created in 2013, yet displaying a different profile, no party identification, and an appeal to moral values (Gohn, 2016). By 2018, the far right-wing candidate, Jair Bolsonaro, benefited from Brazilian crises and cleavages to win the elections, representing an illiberal backlash (Hunt & Power, 2019). The political scenario in Brazil by 2015, when the survey was conducted, was marked by the recent presidential election held in October of 2014, massive corruption scandals and accusations, the impeachment process of President Dilma Rousseff, and for demonstrations pro and against the government and the impeachment (Bernardi, 2017). By 2019, the far-right-wing president, Jair Bolsonaro, was in his first year of mandate, after the controversial 2018 elections marked by spread misinformation on the internet and social media, especially by WhatsApp’s messaging app.

Avritzer (2018) observes a pendular democracy in Brazil that moves from democratic waves to antidemocratic reversals. The 2018 elections displayed a rise in online campaigns, and Bolsonaro adopted aggressive campaigns on social media and WhatsApp. While "Temer and Bolsonaro's government are part of a shift toward reducing the democratic governance spaces", anti-authoritarian movements also emerged or were strengthened during the 2018 elections, which showed that digital politics can likewise impact democratic developments (Lima, 2020).

While in 2015, 97.1% of Brazilian homes had a television, in 2019, this percentage remained stable at 96.4%. On the other hand, internet access increased from 57.8% in 2015 to 82.7% in 2019. The landscape of internet access in the country was shaped mainly by the growing importance of mobile phones used for this purpose. By 2019, 94% of Brazilian residences had a mobile phone – with 81% of people aged over ten years old owning a mobile for personal use –, it was the main device for internet access, used for this purpose by 98.6% of Brazilians, compared to 46.2% of access via computers. By 2015, 17.3% only accessed the internet via mobile, while in 2019, this rate represented 58%. In 2019, the age group that used the internet the most was between 20 and 24 years old (92.7%). This percentage accounts for 90.2% for those aged between 14 and 19 years old, and 77.7% for those aged between 10 and 13 years old (IBGE, 2015 and 2019).

The construction of youth citizenship is a strategic issue in the Brazilian democracy, notably due to the difficulties imposed on the socialization of these young people by the structural framework of the Brazilian political culture. The Research Center on Latin America (NUPESAL), coordinated by Professor Marcello Baquero, has periodically analyzed data on political socialization in Southern Brazil, seeking to assess what young people think in a longitudinal perspective; this has generated a series of relevant articles, dissertations, and theses (Silveira, 2005; Zorzi, 2016; Bernardi, 2017; Moraes, 2021; Bernardi & Costa, 2018).

For instance, Baquero and Baquero (2014) found that in Porto Alegre, 55% of young people in 2001, 58% in 2004, and 67% in 2010 did not usually participate in any political activity. Bernardi (2017), when comparing the process of political socialization during high school, in the years 2002 and 2015 in Porto Alegre, found a discrepancy in civic competence and the valorization of democratic attitudes among young people from public and private schools – while private students were much more interested and engaged in politics, students from public schools lacked interest in civic engagement. The data showed a significant disparity in the quality of the educational system between public and private schools, which is reproduced in the index of civic competence (Hoskins, Villalba, Van Nijlen, & Barber, 2008). Within this framework, we can argue the existence of multiple types of young people. According to Dayrell (2003), youth consist of a series of experiences lived by individuals in different contexts (i.e., socioeconomic, ethnic, generational, and even geographic) whom each has different ways of interpreting politics and democracy.

### **Data Analysis: the youth of Porto Alegre/RS**

In this section, we analyze data regarding youth people from Porto Alegre. As appointed in the relevant literature regarding important socialization agents (Beck, 1977), the data shows how each agent performed in 2015 and 2019. To observe the impact of social media and the internet on the political culture of the youth, we divided our respondents according to their answers regarding which institution was the most relevant when forming an opinion on political issues. To analyze the impact of new media, we then applied the following clusterization:

**Table 1**

*Importance of socialization agents when forming an opinion on political issues (%)<sup>3</sup>*

Agent	2015	2019	Agent	2015	2019
Family	38.6	35.7	Traditional agents	63.3	58.9
School	17.7	16.0			
Church	3.4	3.3			
Friends	3.6	3.8			
Printed Journals	7.8	7.5	Mass Media	15.3	16.2
Television	7.3	8.4			
Radio	0.2	0.4	New Media	21.4	24.9
Internet	18.8	22.0			
Social media	2.6	2.9			
Total	100	100	Total	100	100

N 2015 = 586, N 2019 = 837

Source: Nuposal, 2015, 2019

When observing Table 1 above, we first pointed it out that the traditional agents were the only group that lost influence, with a 4.4% decrease, as a primary source of socialization for young people when forming their opinions on political issues. Meanwhile, the mass media showed an increase of 0.9% and the new media of 3.5%. For the mass media, we notice a shift where television became the most influential, overtaking printed journals. Regarding the margin of error in both years of only 0.05, we can observe that even with the slight changes during the period, the media, and in particular the new media, occupied some space that used to be from traditional agents.

Table 2 shows the access to the internet in each group in 2019, as for 2015 we did not have this data available. As we can see, internet access is widely distributed between all groups, but higher among youth socialized by new media.

**Table 2**

*Access to the internet in 2019 (%)*

	At home	At School	Mobile Access
Traditional Agents	96.0	57.8	89.3
Mass Media	94.6	57.9	83.5
New Media	97.5	67.0	94.1

N 2015 = 586, N 2019 = 837

Source: Nuposal, 2019

<sup>3</sup> When forming an opinion on political matters, which of the institutions below do you consider most important?

**Digital socialized agents and political culture: are they more assertive?**

Regardless of each agent's power in the socialization process, it is essential to account for the young as an individual with its interests developed in an environment of multiple influences. Therefore, the variable of interest in politics is highly insightful, as it indicates how much the young person is willing to engage in politics.

**Table 3**

*Socialization agents x Interest in politics (%)*

	Year	Much	Little	Nothing	Total
Traditional agents	2015	23.5	59.0	17.5	100
	2019	18.6	55.9	25.6	100
Mass Media	2015	13.6	68.2	18.2	100
	2019	19.5	62.4	18.0	100
New Media	2015	37.5	53.3	9.2	100
	2019	30.7	55.6	13.7	100

N 2015 = 569.  $p = .000$ , N 2019 = 837.  $p = .000$

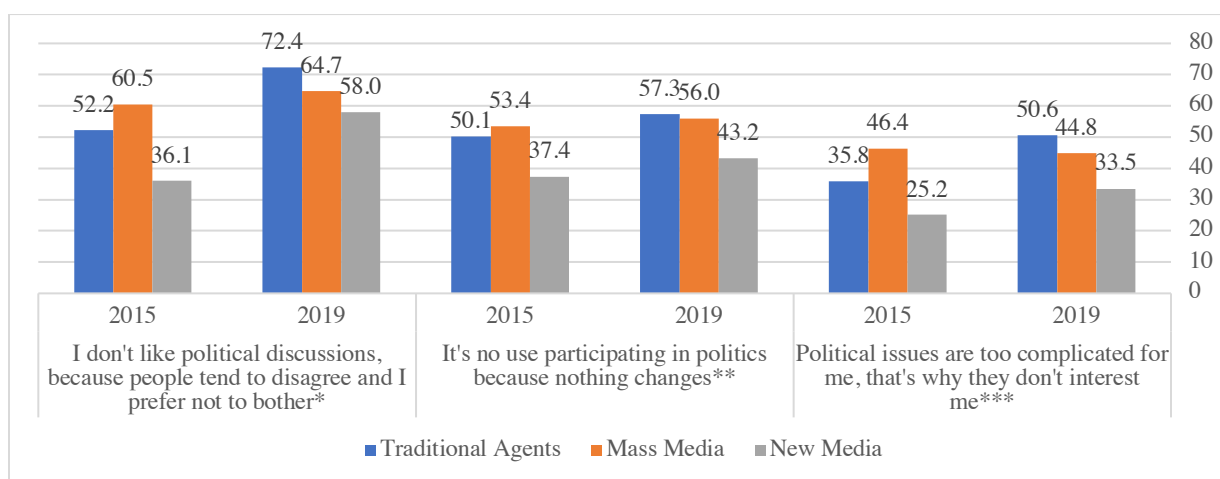
Source: Nuposal, 2015, 2019

According to Table 3 above, we conclude, first, those young people in their majority display little interest in politics. However, this group has reduced among those socialized by traditional agents and mass media. Nonetheless, the ones socialized primarily by traditional agents overall lost interest in politics, given the almost 5% decrease in those very interested and over 8% increase in those not interested at all. Meanwhile, those socialized by mass media mostly shifted from little interest to much interest, once the latter has increased almost 6%. On the other hand, there was a decrease in interest in politics for those socialized by social media – a loss of almost 7% among the very interested ones and a rise of 4.5% among those not interested. Still, they are the group presenting the youngest people with high interest in politics and least young people not interested at all in the matter, both in 2015 and 2019.

Interest in politics is also important concerning political efficacy, as individuals will only be interested in subjects they can somehow understand or relate to. A sense of efficacy and system responsiveness is one of the main aspects that encourage people in general (especially youths) to engage in politics. Since the 1950s in political science and the mid-1970s in psychology, many scholars have been debating the concept of political efficacy (Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954; Almond & Verba, 1963; Easton & Dennis, 1967; Beaumont, 2010; Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995). Although they disagree in some aspects regarding definitions or measurement methods, most authors corroborate that strong political efficacy is positive for democracy and correlates with political participation (Easton & Dennis, 1967; Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991; Kahne & Westheimer, 2006).

**Graph 1**

**Internal Political Efficacy: Accordance to the affirmations regarding itself in the political system (%)**



N 2015 = 569.  $p^* = .001$ ;  $p^{**} = .027$ ;  $p^{***} = .006$

N 2019 = 837.  $p^* = .001$ ;  $p^{**} = .003$ ;  $p^{***} = .000$

Source: Nupesal, 2015, 2019.

First, we observe a general trend of decline in political efficacy when comparing 2015 and 2019, which is more prominent for the first affirmation: “I don’t like political discussions because people tend to disagree, and I prefer not to bother”. The graph above displays the proportion of young people that agreed or partly agreed with the proposed statements. While by 2015, those socialized by mass media were the ones who liked the least political discussions, by 2019, those socialized by traditional agents took the lead. However, the percentage for mass media only increased less than 4% in the period, although traditional agents and new media raised over 20% each.

Regarding new media, this change is likely to be related to the growing hostility in the online environment in the country. According to data from the V-Dem Institute, between the period, the use of hate speech by political parties went from periodically to exceptionally often, and the use of false information from rare occasions to extremely often. Moreover, the country presented serious polarization in both years, with an even higher level in 2019 (V-Dem, 2021). Concerning traditional agents, we highlight a trend present in the 2014 elections, and strengthened by 2018, of fights between family and friends due to political discussions regarding shocking points of view, which was likewise present in the online environment, as the example of WhatsApp groups (Ortega, 2018).

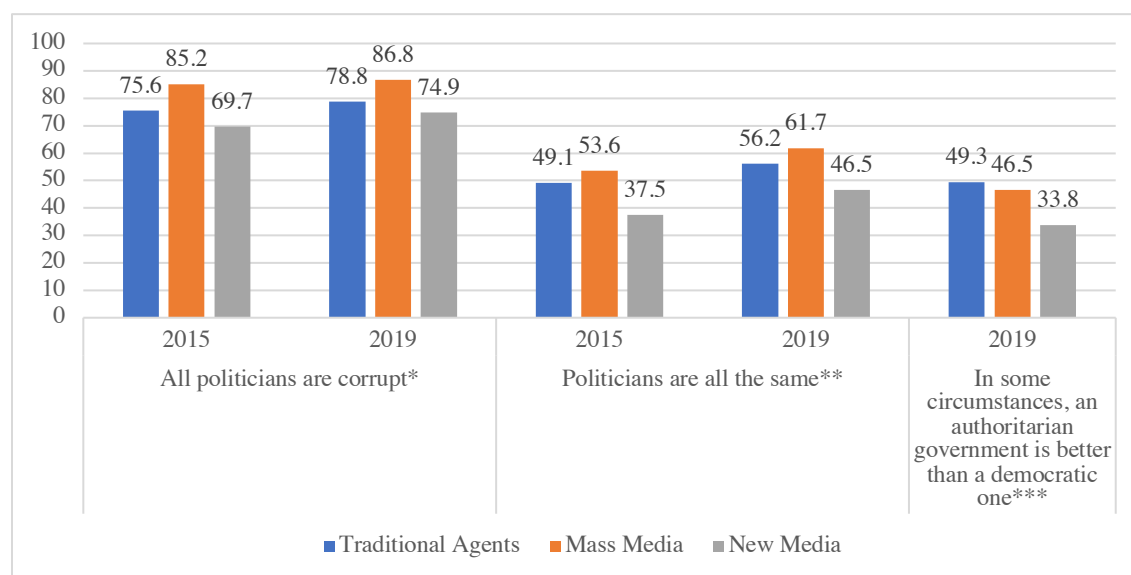
Considering the second affirmation, “It’s no use participating in politics because nothing changes”. First, we observe that young people socialized by new media are the most participative ones, once the majority disagreed with the affirmation in both years, especially in 2015. All groups presented a growing skeptical view about participating in politics, yet by 2019 the ones socialized by traditional agents and media had the most similar opinions about the matter.

Finally, regarding the last affirmation, “Political issues are too complicated for me, that’s why they don’t interest me”, first, we observe a trend, among young people primarily socialized by traditional agents and by new media, of reducing understanding about politics, being this gap between the period higher for the former. On the other hand, those

socialized by mass media remained more stable, with a slight increase in their understanding of politics. Nevertheless, those socialized by new media are the ones that disagree the most that politics are too complicated.

## Graph 2

*External Political Efficacy: Accordance to the affirmations regarding the political system (%)*



N 2015 = 569.  $p^* = .034$ ;  $p^{**} = .040$

N 2019 = 837.  $p^* = .034$ ;  $p^{**} = .040$ ;  $p^{***} = .001$

Source: Nupesal, 2015 and 2019.

Graph 2 displays the visions of young people about the political system. First, we see that young people, in general, perceive corruption as widespread among politics, led by those primarily socialized by mass media, both in 2015 and 2019. The second affirmation about politicians being all the same displays lower agreement but the same trends as analyzed before, both of a growing perception and those socialized by mass media presenting higher agreement with it.

In 2014, corruption was among the main topics on social media, reflected both by the campaign that moderated the public opinion and the internet regarding the political system and the media cover of news about corruption, mostly selectively processing the information on corruption associated with the Workers' Party (PT) (Avritzer, 2016). This rhetoric persisted the following years, especially used by the conservatives to criminalize the left-wing and create a selective outrage. Therefore, corruption appears as the core topic of disregard about the political system, with Operation Car Wash connected to the perception of the political class as corrupt (Gallego, 2019). In the 2018 elections, Jair Bolsonaro employed the anti-corruption movement as one of his campaign lines (Maitino, 2018). According to Costa (2018), the perception of corruption in Brazil accentuates the lack of support for the political system and weakens democratic attitudes.

Finally, the third affirmation ("In some circumstances, an authoritarian government is better than a democratic one") was only available in the 2019 database. It was added to the analysis, given its relevance. By that, we conclude that those socialized primarily by

new media present the most democratic views instead of those socialized by traditional agents.

**Table 4**  
*Socialization agents x Participation in protests (%)*

	Year	Participate	Have participated before	Don't participate	Total
Traditional agents	2015	8.8	33.3	57.8	100
	2019	11.7	21.7	66.6	100
Mass Media	2015	19.5	30.5	50.0	100
	2019	14.1	28.9	57.0	100
New Media	2015	17.9	32.5	49.6	100
	2019	17.6	28.8	53.7	100

N 2015 = 544, N 2019 = 828.  $p$  2015 = .02,  $p$  2019 = .01

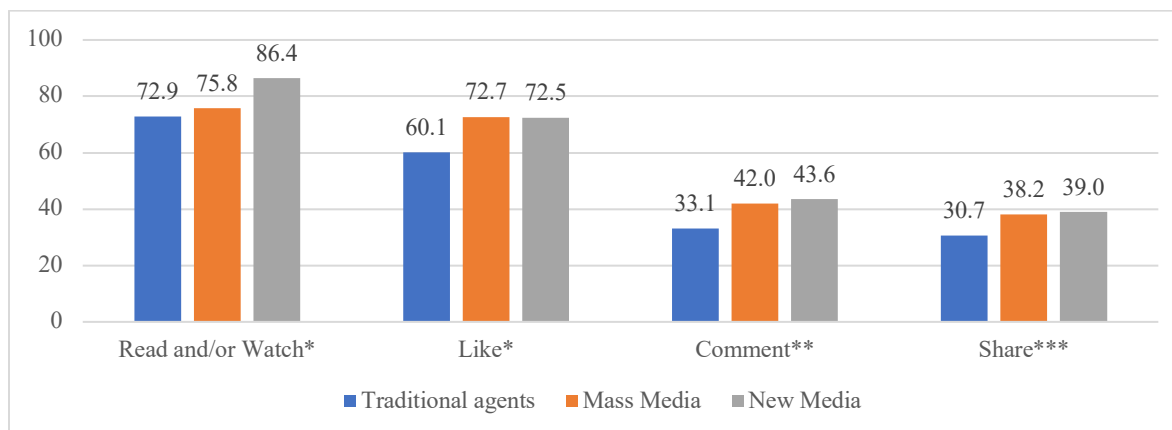
Source: Nuposal 2015, 2019

When analyzing the participation of young people in protests, according to Table 4 we first observe that most of them do not participate. Those socialized primarily by mass media were the ones who participated the most in protests in 2015, followed by new media, which overtook the lead in 2019. Considering 2015, those socialized by mass and new media participated more than double those socialized by traditional agents. However, in 2019, while those who participated remained stable among those socialized by new media, this rate decreased for mass media and increased for traditional agents. Taking into consideration those who answered they had participated before (participate occasionally), we have a few observations: 1) for traditional agents, some have started participating more, but the majority completely stopped participating in protests; 2) for mass media, all of them stopped participating; 3) for new media, most of them stopped participating.

Costa (2019) observed that, by 2017, Brazil developed critical citizens, more politically engaged in demonstrating their dissatisfactions towards the political system, being the media a core actor to mobilize people by criticizing the system. However, they were not mobilized and engaged based on democratic and civic values. Both the traditional media and the internet influence the participation of Brazilians in protests, along with elements such as perception of corruption and the existence of anti-PT sentiment.

**Graph 4**

*On social media, what do you usually do when your friends post about political issues (2019) (%)*



N 2019 = 818.  $p^* = .001$ ,  $p^{**} = .015$ ,  $p^{***} = .05$

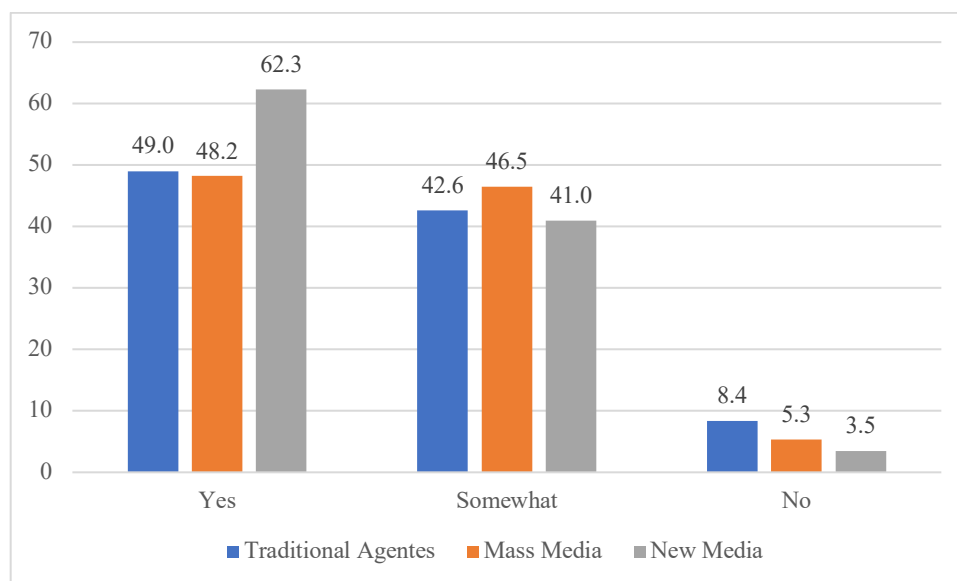
Source: Nupesal, 2019

According to the graph above, young people primarily socialized by new media are generally more engaged on social media, but it happens at different levels according to the action. First, it is essential to highlight that they read or watch the video on the post more than the others, which shows that they tend to be more aware of the ongoing debates and trending political issues. On the other hand, the question was related to friends, and given the filter bubble and echo chamber logics of social media, there is a chance that people will be exposed to the same kind of content, according to their network. Likes are the second most popular reaction. However, for this category, those socialized by mass media do it slightly more than those by new media, and both over 10% for those socialized by traditional agents.

For comments, those socialized by new media do it more, but those socialized by mass media have a closer engagement in this type of online activity. As the comments section is too a way of engaging in political discussions and expressing points of view and opinions, only one-third of those socialized by traditional agents engage on it, while those socialized by mass and new media are more eager to do it. Finally, the same trend is observed for sharing and, even if it is the least popular way of engaging in social media, we see that between 30% and 39% share the information, so we notice the information's potential to circulate on social media.

**Graph 5**

*Can social networks be instruments of political participation (2019) (%)*



N 2019 = 768.  $p = .008$

Source: Nupesal, 2019

Finally, according to Graph 5 above, as expected, we observe that those young people primarily socialized by new media believe the most in the role of social media as instruments for political participation. They are more likely to join political discussions on social networks and engage in internet mobilizations. Hence, as observed before, we conclude that those socialized by new media are more participative online and offline. The difference between traditional agents and mass media is slight, both for 'yes' and 'somewhat'. However, it is important to highlight that those socialized by mass media and traditional agents are mainly divided between 'yes' and 'somewhat', mostly understanding social media as instruments of political participation. This observation can be related to several factors, such as the risen access to the internet in the country and the growing role of social media in the 2018 elections since it was the core mechanism for political campaigns.

### Final remarks

One of the reasons to study the relation between new technologies and political culture in Brazil was the broad participation of young people in the protests of June 2013. It triggered several political developments that still reverberate in the country. Furthermore, studies point to the internet as a new socializing agent by which young people are 'auto socializing' and internalizing values (Baquero, Baquero, & Moraes, 2017; Moraes, 2021). Therefore, in this paper, we sought to analyze if the use of the internet and social networks could be impacting the constitution of an assertive political culture among the young people in the south of Brazil. We hypothesized that although these new socialized agents are widespread among the young, apathy and disinterest in politics remained. To test our hypothesis, we studied data from a survey conducted with secondary school students from Porto Alegre in 2015 and 2019 for values related to democracy, feelings about politics, responsiveness, and political efficacy.

We conclude that even if the importance of the internet and social networks as socializing agents for young people in Porto Alegre has not shown a substantial difference among the studied period, with apathy and disinterest even arising, the role of these agents on the way that young people perceive politics has been reshaped. Even though young people's apathy regarding politics remains and even arose between 2015 and 2019, youngsters socialized by new agents are still more eager to understand politics<sup>4</sup>, feel more interested in the subject<sup>5</sup>, and are more willing to participate in politics<sup>6</sup> than those socialized by other groups.

Overall, young people perceive politicians as corrupt and inefficient and reiterate claims of low effectiveness in the democratic system while claiming that participating in politics does not change reality and that their families have little influence on political decisions. However, these numbers are lower among young people primarily socialized by new media hence we observe that political efficacy and efficiency are the highest among them. This group shows the highest levels of political interest and is also more likely to use social networks to engage in political issues. They read (86.4%), like (72.5%), comment (43.6%) and share (39%) more posts/ videos about politics than the other groups, likely to be more well informed about topics, while they are also the group that agrees the most that social networks can be an instrument of political participation (62.3%). Accordingly, those socialized by new media are the ones that participate the most in political protests (46.3%).

These data point that in Brazil, differently from the claims of Dalton and Welzel (2014), the political culture remains similar to the previous generations. In this context, the internet as a socializing agent corroborates with reinforcing the existing political culture. In this sense, whereas we cannot say the internet and social networks made the political culture of youngsters more assertive, we can observe that those who pose them as the primary agent are closer to an assertive political culture, even though the majority of youngsters continue to show sign of a hybrid political culture. It is also important to underline that this research was conducted prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, so digital media's impact will be even higher if explored nowadays.

Regardless no major shift was revealed by the data. It is important to reaffirm as Agre (1997), that the internet can renew the institutions and clearing society from authoritarian legacy. Nevertheless, citizens must understand the different ways by which the internet can combine with broader social processes. That means significant investment is required on quality education, so young people can learn how to use the internet and social media as a tool for empowerment and knowledge, hence, increasing political engagement.

Once dealing with a brand-new phenomenon implies constant changes, research on this area requires further attention. Still, this paper brings considerable contributions, especially by indicating that even with no significant changes in the short period analyzed, young people socialized by the internet and social media display relevant differences that may represent a potential for democratic stability.

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<sup>4</sup> Only 33.5% of youngsters socialized by new media agreed with the sentence "Political issues are too complicated for me, that why they don't interest me"- being the lowest levels among the analyzed groups in 2019.

<sup>5</sup> 30.7% of youngsters socialized by new media said they feel much interested in politics in 2019 - being the highest levels among the analyzed groups in 2019.

<sup>6</sup> 43.2% of youngsters socialized by new media agreed with the sentence "It's no use participating in politics because nothing ever changes"- being the lowest levels among the analyzed groups in 2019.

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