

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSITIES
IN ANALYSES OF YOUTH AND
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

*A IMPORTÂNCIA DAS DIVERSIDADES
NAS ANÁLISES SOBRE JUVENTUDES
E PARTICIPAÇÃO POLÍTICA*

*LA IMPORTANCIA DE LA DIVERSIDAD
EN LOS ANÁLISIS DE LA JUVENTUD
Y LA PARTICIPACIÓN POLÍTICA*

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ABSTRACT: This work brings together data and analyses derived from an accumulation of documentary and empirical research on the relationship between young people and politics and their forms of participation. We show that in this field, it is important to consider the diversities of young people, their political practices, the relationship between young people and the parliamentary sphere, and their political and ideological positions. The emphasis on diversity, specifically on its inclusion in collective decisions, is also one of the Youth's teachings on how to improve democracy - what we call the democratization of institutions.

KEYWORDS: Youth. Political Participation. Diversities.

RESUMO: *O presente trabalho reúne dados e análises derivados de um acúmulo de pesquisas documentais e empíricas sobre a relação das juventudes com a política e*

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suas formas de participação. Mostramos que nesse campo é importante considerar as diversidades: das juventudes, das suas práticas políticas, da relação dos jovens com a esfera parlamentar e dos seus posicionamentos políticos e ideológicos. A ênfase nas diversidades, especificamente na inclusão delas nas decisões coletivas, também é um dos ensinamentos das juventudes sobre como aprimorar a democracia - o que denominamos de democratização das instituições.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Juventudes. Participação Política. Diversidades.*

RESUMEN: *Este trabajo reúne datos y análisis derivados de una acumulación de investigaciones documentales y empíricas sobre la relación entre los jóvenes y la política y sus formas de participación. Mostramos que en este campo es importante considerar las diversidades: de los jóvenes, sus prácticas políticas, la relación entre los jóvenes y la esfera parlamentaria y sus posiciones políticas e ideológicas. El énfasis en la diversidad, específicamente en su inclusión en las decisiones colectivas, es también una de las lecciones que aprenden los jóvenes sobre cómo mejorar la democracia, lo que llamamos democratización de las instituciones.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Juventud. Participacion política. Diversidades.*

Introduction

This paper addresses various aspects of political participation among youth, specifically focusing on their relationship with institutional and non-institutional politics, as well as the lessons learned on enhancing democracy. Our analyses demonstrate the importance of considering the diversities within youth and their inclusion in collective decision-making processes.

A common definition of youth takes into account the age of individuals. In Brazil, the Youth Statute of 2013 (Brazil, 2013) defines youth as the population group aged between 15 and 29 years. However, this definition is limited as it does not encompass the social traits that characterize this group. In this work, we adopt a social and relational definition, as proposed by Pablo Vommaro (2015), who views youth as a dynamic, historical, and socially and culturally constructed relationship. Thus, youth constitutes a social category that is constantly evolving.

Furthermore, we do not perceive youth as a homogeneous bloc. Aware of the diversity inherent in youth, we consistently refer to them in the plural form throughout this paper.

To elaborate on this point, the common imagination often associates young people with white males who are students and do not need to work. However, the experience of being young is markedly different for women, Black individuals, Indigenous peoples, the poor, residents of marginalized areas, workers, people with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community (lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender individuals, queer people, intersex individuals, asexuals, and other possibilities of dissident genders and sexualities). Consequently, youth are diverse among themselves, and social cleavages such as race, gender, sexuality, region, labor market attachment, disability, and social class significantly impact how youth construct and express their identities (Araújo; Perez, 2023). This perspective is crucial for highlighting the social inequalities that permeate the experience of being young.

It is essential to emphasize that the markers of race, gender, sexuality, region, labor market attachment, disability, and social class should not be analyzed in isolation, as they intersect with one another—an insight reinforced by the teachings of Black feminist movements (Crenshaw, 2002). Such considerations lead to analyses that differentiate, for example, the experiences of a Black young woman living in a marginalized area from those of a white young man residing in an affluent region.

We also understand political participation in a broad sense, recognizing the diverse forms of political engagement among youth, as well as their political and ideological stances. Political participation may occur through voting, participation in protests, or activism on digital social networks. In this expansive sense, political engagement can also manifest through affiliation with political parties, social movements, collectives, or in an individual capacity.

Participation can align with ideals associated with either the left or the right within the political and ideological spectrum. According to Bresser-Pereira (2006), left-wing political groups can be understood by their willingness to disrupt the existing order in the name of social justice, while right-wing groups advocate for the status quo. Although there is a notable association between the political behavior of youth and leftist ideals, there has been increasing attention in recent years towards right-wing or even anti-partisan positions (Araújo; Perez, 2021).

Recognizing the importance of reflections and actions that consider the diversity of youth, the primary objective of this work was intentionally to highlight this aspect in discussions regarding youth and political participation. Therefore, the central aim of the article is to underscore that, in the realm of political participation, it is essential to consider the diversity of youth as well as the importance of their inclusion in collective decision-making processes.

To contextualize the bibliographic production concerning the political participation of youth, this work also presents a general review of the publications in

the field. This overview illustrates the scarcity and significance of additional studies exploring the political participation of youth—a central task of the present article.

By highlighting the diversities within youth, we counter certain prevailing perceptions, particularly those rooted in common sense, which regard youth as homogeneous blocs. According to this common perception, youth are predominantly composed of white males and students who show little interest in politics, and when they do engage, they take to the streets with progressive ideals.

In contrast to these views, we demonstrate in this text how youth are diverse in their composition and political practices. The primary intention of the text is to address the importance of these diversities as one of the central lessons for youth on how to enhance our democratic system.

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Methodologically, this research is qualitative and involves a bibliographic review. Published articles on youth were reviewed using the tools available on the Scielo platform. Scielo (Scientific Electronic Library Online) is an essential platform for academic research and the dissemination of scientific knowledge in Brazil and Latin America. We utilized this platform to search for articles on youth and employed its filters, such as year of publication, field of knowledge, journal name, and most cited articles, to detail the areas in which studies on youth are published, as well as the main approaches utilized.

In a more detailed manner, Section One of the present work presents a mapping of how youth are addressed in the scientific literature. This task was accomplished through a consultation of scientific articles available in the Scielo database (Latin America) that contained the word “youth” in the title or abstract, resulting in over 11,000 works. We first analyzed the years in which these articles were published. Subsequently, we examined the ten main areas that publish works on youth, the ten leading journals, and a summary of the content of the ten most cited articles. To conclude this section, we briefly revisited critical authors in the field of youth studies. This search and analysis of the literature on the field of youth served to situate the main themes and highlighted the scarcity of studies on political participation.

After providing a more general contextualization of the works in the area of youth, the second section of the work focuses on the primary subject of this study, which is to address aspects of political participation among youth. We anticipated that the research conducted on Scielo would yield works discussing political participation among youth in a more general context. However, as demonstrated in Section One, the majority of the available works in Scielo are concentrated in the health field, while those in the social sciences tend to focus on case studies with few overarching reflections on the field.

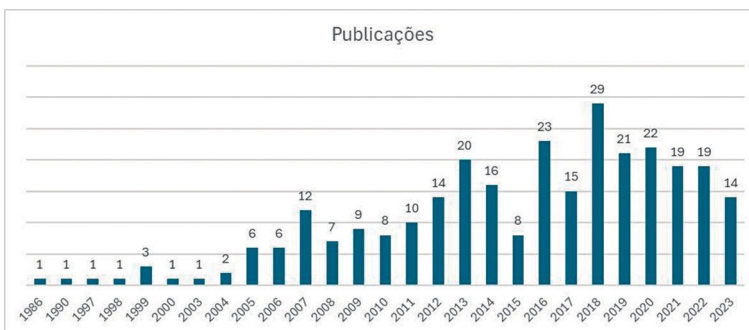
In light of this limitation, texts regarding youth political participation were selected based on individual knowledge. We selected texts that explore aspects of youth political participation that we consider important for a review of the subject, specifically: the presence of youth in protests, rejection of institutional politics, their right-wing positions within the political and ideological spectrum, and their affiliation with collective organizations. We conclude the second section by highlighting some lessons from youth on how to enhance democracy through the inclusion of diversity in collective decision-making processes. The choice of topics addressed within the realm of possible political participation among youth was intentional: the objective was to emphasize the importance of recognizing the diversities of youth and the significance of their inclusion in collective decision-making.

1. Studies on Youth

In this section, we provide an overview of the bibliographic production concerning youth, based on the articles available on Scielo related to young individuals. Specifically, we demonstrate the growth of scholarly works, the primary areas and journals in which they are published, and the content of the most cited articles. Additionally, we mention key authors in the field of youth studies, even if their works were not among the most cited in the search mechanism utilized in the present research, Scielo.

The social construction of youth, particularly as subjects of rights, is a recent and evolving phenomenon. Evidence of the increasing reflection on youth can be seen in the growth of scientific articles published on this demographic, notably from 2005 onwards. A search on the Scielo website for articles containing the term “youth” yielded over 11,000 works. We categorized a portion of these works according to the year of publication. The results are presented in Graph 1.

Graph 1 – Number of Articles on Youth by Year of Publication



Source: Adapted from Scielo, 2024.

Graph 1 illustrates the number of publications concerning youth from 1986 to 2023, highlighting a significant increase in production starting in 2005. Until 2004, the number of publications remained low and stable, with only a few years recording more than one or two publications. From 2005 onwards, there is a notable rise, with peaks in production occurring in 2012 and 2014, reaching 20 and 23 publications, respectively. The year 2018 marks the apex, with 29 publications, followed by stabilization at elevated levels in subsequent years, ranging between 14 and 22 publications.

The increase in articles related to youth can be attributed to at least three factors. First, the number of scientific articles has grown as part of the publication requirements imposed on researchers and postgraduate programs. Second, the rise in publications within the field of youth studies reflects an increasing interest in the topic. Third, youth and the concept of youth itself constitute a recent social and political category. The need for a specific focus and the development of public policies for youth has emerged from social movements within the field. Due to the relationship between the activist community and the federal government led by the Workers' Party (PT), regulations were established for youth, the most significant of which is the Youth Statute, enacted in 2013. This indicates that the political category of youth formally entered the realm of public policies in Brazil just over ten years ago.

Furthermore, research conducted on the Scielo website regarding publications in this field reveals that scientific works on youth are produced across various disciplines and aspects, among which the field of health stands out.

Specifically, we filtered the publications about youth on the Scielo site according to the thematic areas defined by the Web of Science. The results identified the ten primary areas publishing research on youth, namely: Health (1825 articles), Sciences (1805), Multidisciplinary (1539), Educational (1279), Research (1250), Education (1248), Environmental (1004), Public (946), Psychology (945), and Occupational (938). These data unveil the diverse possibilities for interpreting youth and how they have been addressed, particularly within the fields of health and education.

It is important to consider that the substantial number of articles published on youth within the health sector can, in part, be attributed to the fact that this field produces more articles than others. Similarly, the significant volume of publications in the area of education relates to its size; however, in this case, one explanation is that the educational system is predominantly composed of children, adolescents, and young people.

The prominence of the health and education sectors becomes even more evident when we examine the journals that publish the most articles on youth. To this end, we filtered the results found in Scielo based on the journals in which the articles were published. The ten journals with the highest number of publications

concerning youth are as follows: *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva* (432), *Cadernos de Saúde Pública* (409), *Revista de Saúde Pública* (268), *Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Niñez y Juventud* (261), *Revista Brasileira de Medicina do Esporte* (247), *Última Década* (191), *Revista Brasileira de Cineantropometria & Desempenho Humano* (119), *Revista Brasileira de Epidemiologia* (112), *Saúde e Sociedade* (112) and *Ciência Rural* (98). An examination of the journal titles further underscores the predominance of the health sector in studies on youth.

However, the selection of these journals reveals an interesting aspect: youth constitutes a specific field of study and publication. Two journals in the social sciences specifically focus on youth. The *Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Niñez y Juventud* (ranked fourth for publications on youth) is dedicated to children and youth from the perspective of the social sciences; it is published by the *Centro de Estudos Avançados em Infância e Juventude* (Cinde) and the University of Manizales (Colombia). In turn, the *Revista Última Década* (ranked seventh for articles on youth) is published biannually by the Center for Youth Research and Action, part of the Department of Sociology at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Chile. It is noteworthy that these two journals, dedicated specifically to the field of youth studies, publish works in the area of social sciences, highlighting the significance of this field of reflection in studies on the subject.

We also selected the ten most cited works from Scielo that included the word “youth” in their abstracts. Generally, the most cited articles address the following themes (in descending order): public health, psychology, sociology, and cultural studies.

Detailing the content of the ten, most cited articles on youth, some of them address health issues, ranging from mechanisms of brain injury associated with trauma to the use of substances such as ecstasy (MDMA) and their pharmacological and toxic effects. Another central theme in the most cited articles is the vulnerability of young people in contexts of poverty, where they are frequently exposed to various forms of violence and social exclusion. The transition of youth to adulthood, particularly regarding work and education, is another significant focus. Cultural and religious influences are also examined, especially concerning how they shape youth behavior. Finally, although less directly focused on youth, some articles touch on the issue of population aging and its social implications. There is a notable lack of studies on the political participation of youth.

Notably, well-known authors in the field of youth studies and social sciences, such as Miriam Abramovay, Regina Novaes, Helena Abramo, José Machado Pais, and Maria da Glória Gohn, did not appear in this search. However, given the importance of these scholars, we consider it crucial to mention them in this work. Miriam Abramovay is a pioneering sociologist in research on school violence and youth in Brazil, highlighting the connection between social exclusion and violence

in schools. Regina Novaes, an anthropologist, is recognized for her research on youth and religiosity, which is fundamental to understanding the relationships between youth, culture, and religion in contemporary Brazil. Helena Abramo has distinguished herself through the study of youth cultures, analyzing how young people construct identities and resistances through music, fashion, and language. José Machado Pais is a Portuguese sociologist known for his work on youth transitions to adulthood, exploring the importance of culture and leisure in shaping youth identities. Finally, Maria da Glória Gohn is a fundamental reference in youth studies, significantly contributing to understanding youth mobilizations and their social dynamics in Brazil.

In summary, the overall review of works in the field of youth studies indicates that it is a recent and growing field, particularly emphasizing the health sector, which has many publications on the physical and mental health of young people. The field lacks reflections on political participation, a task we undertake in the following section.

2 Some Aspects of Youth Political Participation

Following the general review of the field in which works on youth are published, we now turn to discussing some aspects of their political participation. Specifically, we address the importance of youth participation in protests and elections, the diversity of political ideologies, contemporary forms of political mobilization exemplified by collectives, and the teachings of youth regarding the importance of including diversity in collective decision-making. These aspects were intentionally chosen given that the central objective of this article is to highlight that, in the realm of political participation, it is essential to consider the diversity of youth as well as their inclusion in collective decisions.

2.1 Protests

Although a certain perspective insists on associating young people with political apathy, the history of youth organizations' participation in significant events demonstrates their active and vital mobilization.

To cite a few examples of youth participation in street protests, the National Union of Students (UNE) played an important role in notable events such as: the struggle against the military dictatorship in the mid-1960s; the large marches known as “*Diretas Já!*”, which called for direct elections for executive positions in the period leading up to the redemocratization; the protests known as “*caras pintadas*”

against the corruption of former President Fernando Collor de Mello's government in 1992; in 2013, during the "*Jornadas de Junho*" (June Journeys), when thousands of Brazilians took to the streets in favor of social rights and against the exclusionary and ineffective nature of parliamentary politics; in the occupations carried out by students in universities and high schools in defense of education in 2016; and in the protests of 2019 (the last before the pandemic), when young students took to the streets against the budget cuts announced by the Ministry of Education that year, already under President Bolsonaro's administration. Even the pandemic could not contain the active political struggle of youth, who took to the streets in protests advocating for vaccination (Perez; Vommaro, 2023).

In the largest cycle of protests in Brazil's recent history, in June 2013, youth, alongside thousands of Brazilians, took to the streets with diverse agendas that included the right to the city, the recognition of rights for women, Black individuals, and the LGBTQIA+ community, as well as criticisms of a corrupt state incapable of guaranteeing social rights (Perez, 2021).

Protests did not cease in June; on the contrary, they multiplied. The streets revealed a contestation surrounding more left-leaning or right-leaning political and ideological projects: on one side, leftist demonstrators defended the Workers' Party, rights for groups more subjected to social oppression, and broadly, democracy itself; on the other side, supporters of the project represented by former President Jair Bolsonaro attacked leftist agendas and democracy itself (Perez, 2021).

However, the streets are not the only form of political participation for youth, although they are an important space often associated with being the primary locus of political action for young people.

2.2 Youth, Political Parties, and Elections

A certain critique of potential apathy among youth may lead one to believe that they are uninterested in elections and that their participation would not significantly impact electoral outcomes. However, in Brazil, individuals aged 16 to 29 account for 24% of the electorate, which means that nearly a quarter of all voters were aged within this bracket in 2022.

Youth engagement in elections is already evident and can be further encouraged. For instance, at the beginning of 2022, the Brazilian Superior Electoral Court (TSE) began to publicize data indicating a decline in young voters' interest, which had decreased from 4 million to fewer than 900,000 in a span of ten years. Initiatives to stimulate voting among individuals under 18 years of age were promoted by the TSE and embraced by society. Consequently, by the end of 2022, there were 2,116,781 eligible voters aged 16 and 17 who were registered to vote using electron-

ic voting machines, representing over 1.3% of the national electorate. This figure marked a 51% increase in potential voters compared to 2018, when this age group totaled 1.4 million voters (0.95% of the total) (TSE, 2023). In March 2022 alone, at the peak of media campaigns, 290,000 adolescents registered to vote, reflecting a 45% increase from the previous month (G1, 2022). These results indicate positive signs regarding young people's interest in elections.

Research indicates that young people are not disinterested in politics per se; rather, they are disengaged from the manner in which political parties operate (Araújo; Perez, 2021). The rejection of political parties has manifested itself as antipartisanship (unfavorable sentiments and rejection of any political party). Youth antipartisanship relates to negative experiences with political parties and the historical formation of democracies, which leads to a diminished perception of the necessity for the existence of political parties among voters (Araújo; Perez, 2021).

In addition to this explanation, youth particularly harbor suspicions toward political parties for other reasons. One such reason is the difficulty of entering these institutions, which are dominated by individuals who fit the profile of the political elite: predominantly white, older men from wealthier social classes and regions. In fact, the presence of young federal deputies (aged up to 29 years) in the Brazilian Parliament remains limited: of the 513 members of the current legislature, only 18 are young. This statistic underscores young people's challenges in gaining representation in arenas dominated by older adults, such as Parliament.

Another factor contributing to this mistrust of parties is the ongoing campaigns against the largest and most influential party: the Workers' Party (PT), which has facilitated the election of five of the six presidents elected in the past 20 years. It is important to note that in 2011, corruption cases involving the PT were adjudicated and broadcast on open television, receiving extensive media coverage. As a consequence of that context, political parties became associated with the PT and its corruption scandals. This association is one of the seeds of the largest cycle of protests during Brazil's democratic period: June 2013 (Perez, 2021).

The protests of June 2013 revealed intense criticisms regarding the manner in which politics is conducted within traditional arenas, particularly by political parties. Indeed, many demonstrators expressed hostility toward the presence of political party banners during the June protests (Perez, 2021).

Nevertheless, this distrust has not succeeded in diminishing the prominence of youth within political parties and elections. A notable example is the election of young politicians such as Nikolas Ferreira, who was elected as a federal deputy in the most recent election, receiving 1.47 million votes, making him the most-voted federal deputy in Brazil and the history of Minas Gerais.

2.3 Youth and Political Ideology

The emphasis on the diversity of youth should also serve as a guide for analyzing their political behavior, particularly in terms of ideological alignment. Due to their involvement in social movements and significant moments of progressive political transformation, a certain perception has developed that youth consistently align with leftist ideologies and act as revolutionary agents. Literature on youth has reproduced and reinforced this perception. Indeed, early studies on youth tended to address the subject through the lens of social transformation, viewing youth as either a central or, at least, a relevant actor in social movements and the revolutions of social behavior patterns (Melucci, 2001).

However, in the last decade, the participation of youth has become increasingly evident not only in leftist social movements but also in reactionary and conservative movements. For instance, in Brazil, during the mid-2015 and 2016 period, the Free Brazil Movement (Movimento Brasil Livre, MBL) gained considerable prominence in Brazilian politics as it organized numerous demonstrations advocating for the impeachment of former president Dilma Rousseff (PT).

The election of young federal deputies also illustrates the political diversity among youth: individuals affiliated with right-wing and left-wing parties have been elected.

To highlight this diversity, we will name the young federal deputies (aged up to 29 years) elected in 2022, categorizing them according to their party ideologies. Among the leftist young deputies is Tabata Amaral from the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB), Pedro Campos, also from PSB, Dandara from the Workers' Party (PT), and Camila Jara, also from PT. On the right, we have Nikolas Ferreira, André Fernandes, Matheus Noronha, and Ícaro de Valmir, all from the Liberal Party (PL), in addition to Neto Carletto, Amanda Gentil, and Lula da Fonte from the Progressives (PP), and Emanuelzinho from the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB). On the far-right, we find Kim Kataguirí and Yandra de André, both from *União Brasil (UNIÃO)*, and Pedro Aihara from the *Patriota (PATRIOTA)*. Amom Mandel from *Cidadania (CIDADANIA)* and Maria Arraes from *Solidariedade (SOLIDARIEDADE)* occupy positions in the center-right.

These data challenge the prevailing perception that associates youth primarily with the left, as there is a significant presence of deputies on the right. The results also confirm the central argument of this article: that youth are diverse. What may be most surprising is the almost equitable division between young individuals who identify with leftist and rightist ideologies. According to studies by Araújo, Barros, and Perez (2023), based on the 2020 Latinobarómetro data, in Brazil, there is a small difference between youth identifying as left (25%) and those identifying as right (20%). Thus, the association of youth with leftist ideologies does not hold when we examine empirical reality and scientific data.

However, it is also important to note the presence of youth who position themselves at the center, nearly half (49.2%) of the young respondents in the 2020 Latinobarómetro survey (Araújo, Barros, and Perez, 2023). This centrist stance may reflect a genuinely moderate opinion or, alternatively, difficulty identifying with specific ideological categories.

Another crucial aspect is the fear many young people experience when considering political engagement. Carrano (2024) argues that the increasing political polarization in Brazil creates a hostile environment for young people wishing to express their political views. Many youths fear social rejection, leading them to avoid political debates, particularly on social media, where discussions often become more aggressive. Another point highlighted by the author is the fear of reprisals, both in family and social contexts. Young people feel that their opinions may be misinterpreted or that they could face negative consequences for expressing their political beliefs, prompting them to adopt a stance of silence or neutrality.

In this context, it is essential to mention that in Brazil, with the rise of a right-wing political project, there has been a strengthened push for censorship against leftist ideals. Particularly in schools, initiatives such as “*Escola Sem Partido*” (“School Without Political Parties”) and the prohibition against discussing so-called “gender ideology” have resulted in both veiled and, at times, explicit censorship. Discussions of leftist topics in schools, such as feminism and, more broadly, social inequality reduction, have become fraught with caution and apprehension.

Under Jair Bolsonaro’s government (2018–2022), Brazil experienced a period of censorship and suppression of basic civil rights. The country is now in a phase of reconstruction, coexisting with the authoritarian legacies of that period. Nevertheless, many young people continue to embrace their historical role by taking a stand, as seen in their presence both on the streets and online, where they challenge behaviors that perpetuate various social inequalities, such as sexism and racism.

2.4 Collectives

The diversity of youth is also reflected in the ways they organize politically. Youth align themselves with social movements, political parties, and, more recently, organizations referred to as collectives. It is crucial to examine collectives because they demonstrate the diversity of political engagement forms among youth and foster this diversity by involving it directly in organizational decision-making processes.

Although no single definition captures the various types of organizations labeled as collectives, they are typically characterized by more fluid and horizontal forms of political mobilization (Perez; Souza, 2020).

This type of organization began to proliferate following the June 2013 demonstrations. The youth who participated in June 2013 criticized the way politics was conducted within traditional organizations, such as political parties. These traditional organizations were seen as overly hierarchical, centralized, and lacking in inclusivity. To overcome these limitations, youth have been organizing in a more horizontal manner through collectives. Many young people, having been politically socialized during the 2013 protest cycle, adopted this form of organization (Perez, 2019).

Generally, collectives advocate for the inclusion of diversity within the realm of rights and political decision-making. They do so by focusing on groups with more limited access to rights, such as women, Black individuals, the LGBTQIA+ community, young people, and those living in peripheral communities (Rios; Perez; Ricoldi, 2018). This advocacy is expressed, for instance, through exposing rights violations that highlight sexism, racism, and LGBTQIA+ discrimination, as well as through actions aimed at safeguarding and advancing these rights.

Additionally, collectives believe that these populations (women, Black individuals, the LGBTQIA+ community, young people, and residents of peripheral areas) should be actively involved in organizational decision-making. For these youth, it is not enough for the state to secure rights (though this is essential). Expanding the concept of inclusion, collectives argue that marginalized groups should have the opportunity to make decisions on significant issues across all organizations, including those collectives to which they belong (Perez; Souza, 2020).

Thus, collectives demand not only the inclusion of the broader population within the sphere of social rights but also their participation in all collective decision-making processes—making them pioneers in enabling such inclusion. There is an insistence that organizational structures allow for the inclusion of groups traditionally excluded from political decision-making. These demands are not merely rhetorical: the collectives themselves are structured to facilitate the participation of these groups in a collective and horizontal manner.

Consequently, today's youth are organizing politically in ways that differ from previous generations' traditional structures, such as political parties, which many young people view as excessively hierarchical, bureaucratic, and therefore inefficient (Perez; Souza, 2020).

However, the formation of collectives does not mean that young people do not affiliate with political parties or traditional organizations. Instead, it reflects a critique of these entities and an attempt to transform them, even from within. This is evidenced by the presence of feminist and Black collectives within political parties, which also illustrates the diversity of political engagement among today's youth.

2.5 The Importance of Diversity for Enhancing Democracy

Youth have been demonstrating that diversity is essential to understanding social inequalities. Additionally, they have shown that diversity is key to improving the democratic system.

Exploring these insights further, young people indicate in various studies (Perez; Souza, 2020) a realization that democratic institutions have not been, and are still not, sufficient to substantially improve their lives. In other words, while Brazil may have progressed in terms of electoral democracy, it has not yet developed a substantive democracy capable of reducing widespread and varied social inequalities.

These perceptions are partly explained by the intense mobilization of civil society in Brazil, which has highlighted that social inequalities extend beyond social class and intersect with gender, race, sexuality, generation, and region (Perez; Ricoldi, 2023). Young people, upon recognizing that democratic institutions perpetuate exclusions and replicate structures such as racism and sexism in Brazil, develop a strong sense of disillusionment with these institutions.

Thus, youth reveal the shortcomings of our democratic system and point to solutions. The democratic regime could be improved through transforming institutions to become more horizontal and inclusive. This inclusivity would involve both the realm of rights and the sharing of critical organizational decisions with the majority of the Brazilian population—women, Black individuals, LGBTQIA+ individuals, young people, and residents of peripheral communities.

Institutions should take inspiration from collectives, which are characterized by a commitment to inclusivity. Collectives operate in a more horizontal structure with reduced emphasis on leadership, allowing all members to participate in collective decision-making (Perez; Souza, 2020). This organizational model would overcome the limitations of more traditional structures, like political parties, that are often criticized for being closed-off and hierarchical.

Bringing these two messages together, young people are pressing political organizations to open themselves to the diversity of the Brazilian population. They teach that all collective decisions, especially the most significant ones, should include those most impacted by the presence or absence of public policies. This advocacy for incorporating diversity in collective decision-making can be understood as the democratization of institutions.

The democratization of institutions would be achieved through the inclusion of diverse groups (women, Black individuals, young people, residents of peripheral areas, LGBTQIA+ communities) in the collective decision-making of all organizations.

This population, often referred to as “minorities,” is, in fact, the majority. As such, they should participate in the decisions that directly affect their lives, according to the teachings of youth organized in collectives.

Through democratization, institutions would be able to make decisions and implement actions that are more aligned with the realities of the majority population since these individuals would be involved in those decisions. This approach would yield more effective actions, as the perspectives would inform them of those with less access to rights.

With the democratization of institutions, a substantive democracy could be achieved, one capable of reducing social inequalities and ensuring rights for all. Achieving this form of democracy would encourage youth and the broader population to support such a regime. Thus, the solution to constant right-wing attempts at coups and disruptions lies in pursuing a different ideal of democracy, one that is more inclusive and collective.

Final Considerations

This study provides a general overview of publications on youth, revealing the dominance of the health sector. The lack of research on youth and politics underscores the need for further studies in this direction. We suggest expanding forums for discussions on youth within the social sciences.

Our work also highlights the importance of recognizing the diversity among young people and their varied forms of political participation. Young people have exemplified diversity’s value, which should remain a key perspective in reflection and action within the social sciences.

What we wish to underscore most in this study are the lessons young people impart on social inequalities and ways to address them. Youth have shown that inequalities stem from the fact that most of the population—women, Black individuals, LGBTQIA+ people, young individuals, and residents of peripheral areas—are not included in key decisions affecting the collective. Using the concept of “place of speech,” these young people have been compelling older generations to adopt new ways of thinking and acting that demand democratization across all power structures.

Indeed, these changes are neither simple nor immediate. Including the majority of the population in decision-making positions requires those currently in power to open themselves up to groups they may not be accustomed to working with. The first step is to adopt an open stance toward what youth have to teach. Most importantly, it is essential to include young people in political and collective decisions.

We therefore suggest that young people be heard and included in discussions that are part of their daily lives, as well as in others, recognizing that they offer valuable insights into how political practice can lead to a more just society. According to the teachings of young people, a fairer society must be built by including diversity, which includes the youth themselves.

We believe that, if the voices and suggestions of young people regarding the inclusion of diversity within institutions—what we term the democratization of institutions—are heeded and implemented, our system could progress toward a democracy that substantively reduces various social inequalities.

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