

LOOKING BACK AND INTO
THE TROUBLED BRAZILIAN
POLITICAL SCENE

THE ROLE OF FAMILY POLITICAL
TRANSMISSION

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Centro de Investigação
e Estudos de Sociologia

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Correspondência:

CIES-Iscte, Iscte – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

Av. das Forças Armadas, 1649-026 Lisboa

Tel.: (+351) 21 046 4018

E-mail: cies@iscte-iul.pt

LOOKING BACK AND INTO THE TROUBLED BRAZILIAN POLITICAL SCENE

THE ROLE OF FAMILY POLITICAL TRANSMISSION

Maria Gilvania Valdivino Silva

Maria Gilvania Valdivino Silva, is integrated researcher at the Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology of the University Institute of Lisbon. She has a degree in History from the Universidade Estadual Paulista (Unesp) and a Masters and PhD in Education from the Faculdade de Educação da Universidade de São Paulo (FEUSP). Develops research in the area of Sociology and Education and works mainly on the themes of Families, Political Socialization, Politicization, Generations, Popular Classes and ABC Paulista.

Email: maria.gilvania@iscte-iul.pt | Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0256-3259>

Abstract This working paper aims to contribute to the important debate on the relationship of individuals — and families — with politics. And it takes as background the current and troubled political and democratic context of Brazil. To this end, I present a brief contextualisation of the Brazilian political scene of the last decade and use data from a long-term research conducted between 2013 and 2017, with families living in a popular neighbourhood in the industrial suburb of ABC Paulista (São Paulo/ Brazil). I demonstrate how politics can be immersed in people's daily lives, entering the family universe and I present the stories of two families that in 2016 displayed some of the characteristic elements of the political clashes present in current Brazilian society and that mark, not only the 2022 election campaign, but also the three previous presidential elections. I intend, therefore, to demonstrate and defend the relevance of the family and family socialization in the formation of the ways of reacting and perceiving to matters of political order.

Keywords: Political socialization; Political transmission; Families; Brazilian politics

Introduction

This working paper aims to contribute to the important debate on the relationship of individuals — and families — with politics in a particularly effervescent and troubled context of Brazilian political and democratic history. It discusses how politics embedded in people's daily lives and into families' universe and dynamics and aims to understand how certain groups of individuals react, (re)interpret, transmit and assimilate politics.

To this end, I focus on the relationship between two generations of residents of a working-class neighbourhood, Ferrazópolis, located in an industrial suburb known as ABC Paulista, in São Paulo/Brazil, and partly use the results of a long-term research (Silva, 2017) to give a more informed and historical lens to the current political scene: the presidential election in the lookout. The main analytical theme of this research is the political transmission between two generations, with special emphasis on the family political transmission. I used qualitative and quantitative methodology, namely, ethnography, application of household questionnaires and conducting interviews (Silva, 2017). The results are relevant for us to reflect on the current Brazilian political scenario. This is so because it addresses political education and its development in different spaces of socialization that contribute to the construction of political identifications, although my particular interest was to understand the role of family socialization, of

political transmission in an intimate and affective environment for the construction or deconstruction of identifications.

In times of such important and defining elections for the future of Brazil, looking at the way different individuals and groups learn to perceive and react to politics can contribute to a better understanding of the complex Brazilian political scenario. I focus on a more ordinary type of relationship with politics, the one perceived and performed by common people, which penetrates everyday life, and as such is present in conversations and discussions on a daily basis revealing the more organic formation and transformation of values and ways of perceiving oneself in the world, culminating in identifications, passions and/or rejections that also reflect in the political act of voting (Mayer, 2010; Muxel, 2008).

Looking at the politics of everyday life led me to look at a particular neighbourhood (Ferrazópolis) and, in this territory, at families. For a long time and in many households, politics has undeniably been part of everyday life, especially, in households of militant parents or professional politicians (Silva 2016; 2017; Canedo, 2002). However, the expansion of the space of politics in the lives of ordinary families is not an isolated and particular phenomenon in Brazil, which may have some explanatory factors. Firstly, something that is not new, is the increasing media coverage of elections and the daily life of candidates and parties, in addition to the spectacularization of corruption cases, and recurrence of various crises (Muxel, 2008; Jinkings et al., 2016; Silva, 2017). Secondly, the dizzying increase of online information on mobile phones, that bombard not only true content but is also lying and manipulated. These changes in the propagation and consumption of political information have contributed to the greater presence of politics in the daily lives of families who previously, claimed not to even discuss these issues in a deliberate and conscious manner. Thirdly, to the Brazilian scenario is added the symbiosis — which only increases since the 1980s — between religion and politics and that is characterized, mainly, by the immersion of “neopentecostal” religious (the evangelicals) in professional politics. This implies that politics also permeated the practice of religiosity, socializing

people, formatting ideas, values, and customs. This also means that there is even more politics inserted in the lives of millions of Brazilians (Bohn, 2004; Mariano, 2004; 2009; 2011).

In a moment in which many eyes around the world look at Brazil, I present my contribution (still under construction, it is true), on how the current Brazilian political scenario has been constructed and being drawn for some years now, from the point of view of the insertion of politics in everyday life and the construction of identifications. And I do so from a perspective that goes beyond the numbers of electoral polls and public opinion surveys, which are necessary, but alone do not reflect the full complexity of people's relationship with politics. To this end, the text begins with a brief contextualization of the Brazilian political scenario of the last decade, especially from 2013 to 2022. I seek to elucidate important events such as the advance of the phenomenon of contrariness and dislike to Worker's Party [PT], known as "antipetismo" (in a free translation, anti-Petism), the Parliamentary Coup that ousted President Dilma Rousseff in 2016, the arrest of Lula da Silva in 2018, the election of Jair Bolsonaro in the same year and the emergence of bolsonarism. Then, I will address part of the data obtained in my doctoral research (2017). The goal is to demonstrate how institutional administrative politics, crises and scandals are interwoven into the daily lives of individuals and families. Finally, I briefly present the story of two families, to demonstrate how many of the elements of political behavior that are observed today among the Brazilian population and that make up the complex and tense picture of national politics could already be observed, albeit in a seminal way, in the lives of these families of Ferrazópolis a few years ago.

Brief portrait of the Brazilian political scenario of the last decade

First of all, it is necessary to go back a few years in recent Brazilian history.

In 2013, the political scenario was going through a period of turmoil and new actors were entering the scene. The so-called "Jornadas de

Junho” (in a free translation, June 2013 Days) were a catalyst event for many social demands and sectors. From then on, an increase in “antipetismo” was perceived, and it gained more and more strength among different sectors of the Brazilian population, especially among the middle and upper classes. As said, the June Days themselves brought to the fore both new political actors, with strong middle-class participation, and new (or revamped) flags of claim, ranging from the right to public transport, education, and health, through the fight against corruption, to conservative agendas, such as the criminalisation of abortion.

The electoral campaign for the Presidency of the Republic in 2014 took place amid a strong political polarization between the PT and the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB) — which was not a new feature and had marked the Brazilian electoral scenario since 1994 (Singer & Loureiro, 2017). It happens that the split was gaining new contours, and in 2014, it was evident that it extrapolated the limits of the electoral campaign, reaching even further into traditional media such as TV, radio, and newspapers and expanding enormously to the internet. After the result of the 2014 elections, in which Dilma Rousseff emerged victorious, the polarized debate remained and intensified in 2015, inflamed both by traditional media and by the actions of the most diverse political groups on social networks. Roughly speaking, the population¹ was divided between those who, on the one hand, associated only the PT with corruption scandals and, therefore, thought the party should leave the government. More conservative sectors began to associate the PT with communism and incompatible with an ideal of Christian morality. On the other side were people supporters of PT, those who understood that during the PT government Brazil had advanced in unprecedented social gains. Such polarization has lengthened over time, gaining more strength in the process of construction of the possibility of the impeachment of president Dilma (in 2016). It remaining relatively active

1 It is worth informing the reader that voting in Brazil is compulsory for all literate citizens between the ages of 18 and 70.

even after the conclusion of the impeachment, modifying itself and continuing to spread to the daily lives of people and families, unfolding in a schism of unknown contours in Brazil (Carreirão, 2002; Jinkings et al., 2016; Singer, 2015). The excerpt below recounts a discussion witnessed in 2015, during the field research I conducted in Ferrazópolis. The father João, a former metalworker, union and PT militant, who was 62 years old at the time and his son, Jonas², 33 years old, also a metalworker, with no engagement with unions or parties. The disagreement occurred shortly after a family lunch.

Researcher: Are you in favour of public policies of income redistribution, for example, Bolsa Família³?

Jonas: No, I am opposed to that. I don't think the government has to give money because it makes people complacent. If you're hungry at home, it would be better to give lunch at school. I think that this Bolsa Família just accommodates people, it only helps the PT to stay in power, as if it were a way to guarantee the vote of those who receive it. The government should give people work, not accommodate them. And there's another thing: a lot of people receive it without needing it.

João: I think you're wrong about that, don't you remember the reports about people starving in the drought in the Northeast of Brazil? Well, after Lula and the Bolsa Família, we don't see that anymore. You can watch the Jornal Nacional⁴ and you won't see it.

Jonas: But it's wrong just the same, the people from the Northeast of Brazil are the ones who end up being the most accommodating, they have to get used to working and not making money without giving anything in return.

João: But they work, who said they don't? The hard thing is the drought! The Bolsa Família kills hunger, it helps people. That's what you're wrong about. And I'm even going to leave because I'm not going to fight with you, it's wrong to think like that, you don't seem to understand!

(Field notebook records, 2015).

2 These names are fictitious. The names of all interviewees have been changed to preserve their identities.

3 Bolsa Família is the name of a federal programme of cash transfers to poor families, expanded during the PT governments.

4 Jornal Nacional is the main Brazilian TV news program.

This type of discussion within the family or among friends and neighbours was not uncommon, and I was able to witness some more similar situations while conducting field research.

The fact is that, despite its victory at the ballot box in 2014, the PT suffered a significant loss in popularity, and suffered the impact of the shrinking of its parliamentary base of government. Feelings such as disappointment, resentment and distrust, even among the party's supporters (voters, militants, sympathisers and members of left-wing social movements), only increased in the face of constant news of party members' involvement in corruption scandals. There was a strong media coverage of anything that could link the PT to corruption, even in fragile cases (Jinkings et al., 2016).

Cases not tried, news constantly repeated, coverage in all the newspapers. Manipulation of information on social networks, increase of Facebook pages aimed at unmasking the corrupt, and emergence of protest channels on Youtube led by people who defined themselves as "a partisan" built a scenario of strong presence of politics — or opposition to institutional politics — in people's daily lives.

Governance mishaps, involvement in increasingly mediatised scandals, the disappointment of the population and rising unemployment due to the economic crisis mark the year 2016 in Brazil, until then, the most tumultuous of the Brazilian political scene in the post-military regime period. Between the months of May and August, the process of impeachment of the elected president was carried out, resulting in the inauguration of the vice-president, Michel Temer. The new president put into practice a governmental platform even more distant, or even opposite, to the one that had been victorious at the ballot box — intensifying policies of economic austerity and fiscal adjustment. As previously announced, the political polarization that, since 2013, was gaining the media, the internet (social media — and an increased consumption of information via WhatsApp(r) groups), the streets and homes, was becoming increasingly heated, culminating also in discussions among friends and even family members regardless of social stratum.

Obviously, this polarization (or fragmentation) also permeated the routine of the Ferrazópolis neighbourhood. If on the one hand, many residents still argued that, despite all the problems of the PT governments, the party was the only one to promote improvements in their lives, as poor and needy workers. On the other hand, there were not a few residents who, at the time of the field research (2014-2017), have not shown support for the PT, or even engaged in activities that reminded them of politics, including participating in the research. Given this troubling scenario, data collection was carried out and the difficulties imposed on its application constituted, contradictorily, a rich possibility of observation the dynamics of the neighbourhood and the behaviour of the residents in relation to politics, especially in such a complex and troubled period.

After the research was carried out, the country's political scenario became even more complicated. We witnessed a moment of reconfiguration of the Brazilian right-wing and expansion of its field of influence (Rocha, 2018; Singer, 2021). Allied to this, came the advance of the conservative far-right, which gained strength and personified itself around a name: Jair Bolsonaro. A congressman whom the media used to characterize as "controversial". A politician who openly defended the return of the Military Dictatorship, police torture, the arming of the population and who collected prejudiced, racist and misogynistic statements in his political career.

In 2018, when the possibility of a new candidacy of Lula da Silva for the Presidency of the Republic was on the horizon and the former president was in first place in the polls, numerous corruption investigations were advancing against Lula. At this moment, in the midst of a judicial process strongly questioned due to the absence of evidence and partiality of the judge who conducted the case, the former president was convicted and arrested in April 2018. With that, he was removed from the race for the presidency, because with the arrest, he lost his political rights. Amid these events, Jair Bolsonaro, gained notoriety on the internet and social networks and the "improbable candidate" (Singer, 2021) was elected in 2018 as president of Brazil under the slogan "Deus acima de tudo. Brasil acima

de todos” in a free translation, something resembling the old Germany Nazi slogan: *“God above all. Brazil above all”*. A new political phenomenon was beginning in Brazil, aggregating different right-wing expectations, garnering supporters among those discredited with politics and huge more conservative portions of the population: the Bolsonarism, which according to Reis (2020, p. 1) refers to a “set of proposals and values⁵ associated with the political rise of Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency of the Republic” and that cannot be understood only as a Brazilian issue, even if it has other denominations around the world, because it is part of “an international context of reaction to mutations perceived as deadly threats to traditions, values and customs” (Reis, 2020, p.1).

In 2019, after findings of illegalities in the conduct of investigations and the conviction of former President Lula da Silva, he was released and resumed his political rights. Amidst all this, the Brazilian population remained politically fragmented, the economic crises did not relent, the Covid-19 pandemic occurred along the way and the Brazilian government was marked by one of the worst management of the pandemic worldwide under Jair Bolsonaro, who adopted a denialist stance in the face of the public health emergency situation and which ultimately contributed to the advancement of the spread of the virus among the Brazilian population (Ventura & Reis, 2021). Almost 700,000 Brazilians died because of Covid-19.

We are in 2022 and another troubled electoral campaign begins, marked by heated tempers and violence, continued dissemination of fake news, constant threats of a military coup by the president, in addition to the constant lies launched to undermine the reliability of the electoral process and provocations against the judiciary. Brazil is experiencing one of the most important electoral campaigns in its history.

5 Although it is relatively new, Bolsonarism has been characterised as a political movement and these proposals and values cover elements such as the defence of the military Dictatorship and militarism, the antagonistic division of society between good and bad, non-partisanship but strong personalism, and the bringing together of a series of conservative and religious values that would be based on a fundamentalist Christian morality (Reis, 2020; Solano, 2019; 2020).

A look at the family transmission

Amidst so many striking and destabilizing events of the Brazilian political scenario are people — experiencing, interpreting and building ways of dealing with politics, but also with the direct consequences of institutional politics in their lives. People with values that are formed and transformed amid the contexts in which they live and from the learning that formed their understanding of the world and, their position in the world. In the attempt to understand the intricacies of the processes of political socialization and what clues it may give us about the current political situation in Brazil, I try to understand what the stories of families living in this popular neighbourhood tell us.

Family histories carry common elements, and in the case of the families analyzed in the Ferrazópolis neighbourhood — a popular, low-class neighbourhood in an industrial region of São Paulo — such as social origin, migration, work and housing experience (Bertaux, 1979; Nico & Silva, 2021, Silva, 2017). These elements constitute experiences capable of exerting a strong influence on the modes of socio-political and cultural representation at stake in the transmission process. The understanding of the intricacies of the transmission of values and behaviours on politics between families in the two generations analysed (parents and children) was based on the principle that transmission is a fluid process, which does not result in the simple reproduction of opinions, behaviours and attitudes of the older generations nor in the total rupture in relation to the beliefs and attitudes of the parents (Muxel & Percheron, 1988; Tournier, 2010; Percheron, 1993).

The first studies on political socialization attributed to the family a fundamental role in the transmission of values and political attitudes, especially those related to political parties and voting. Although advances in studies in political socialization demonstrate the importance of other instances and stages of life throughout the socialization process, the family remains one of the essential “places” of primary political socialization,

whose effects would tend to be durable (Bargel, 2009; Darmon, 2006; Percheron, 1993; Tournier, 2010).

I conducted a study of families in their “extended form” (Muxel & Percheron, 1988, p. 59), which allowed me to deal with different generations of the same family at different stages of the family trajectory and with differences in their socialization processes. The generations are understood from two major dimensions of the generational phenomenon, namely: (i) the relationship ties, addressing family relations and (ii) the social framework of the generational group, mainly in terms of access to schooling and the labour market and the way of relating to politics (Mannhein, 1993).

I observed the elements that tend towards continuity, as well as those that lean towards breakups, resulting in processes marked by permanencies and ruptures between generations. The analysis of family trajectories carried out is inserted within a perspective of politics from the point of view of intimacy, through which I sought to better understand the process of transmission regarding the relationship between politics and affectivity in the family group and in the relation to peers.

The analysis of other instances of political socialization, not only institutional and public ones (such as political parties, various associations, and unions, among others), offers an important contribution to the understanding of how individuals relate to politics. The process of political socialization would begin, then, in the space of affective exchanges with the “significant others” in different types of situations, such as a political stance taken by parents or a discussion and even a manifestation of support for parties, candidates or causes of common interest in the private environment, in the family environment. In this sense, an analysis of politics that also contemplates “[...] the private sphere [of people’s lives] sheds light on the modes of subjectivation of politics and allows apprehending the affective dimension of political existence” (Muxel, 2014, p. 14). In other words, it is about apprehending how the relationship with politics and the way of reacting to issues of this order is built amidst other relationships in the

intimate environment and, in this specific case, regarding the affective relationships between parents and children (Leclercq, 2016).

I was then able to detail two models of transmission that I named (i) solid and direct transmission and (ii) porous and indirect transmission. I worked with the idea that there are different types of transmission between family generations, especially regarding political values and behaviours. Paying attention to the context in which families would be inserted, the weight of historical events on the socializing processes and, furthermore, the generation effects, which would act in the transmission of historical events to the extent that they act both in the “first rationalizations” of the experiences lived — depending on the historical moment and on the social place occupied by the mobilized individuals and groups — and retrospectively since they also influence the re-signification of these experiences (Ihl, 2002, p. 142; Tournier, 2010).

Based on what was dealt with in the specialised literature on intergenerational transmission, I then prepared a classification of the types of transmission put into practice by the families analysed, which varies, as already announced, between solid and porous transmissions. The *solid transmissions* refer to processes in which there is political engagement on the part of the parents and, also, interest and understanding about strictly political issues, such as trade union and/or neighbourhood militancy or engagement in common causes that aim at the search for rights and collective improvements. There is also a more refined understanding of the political system, commonly attributed to higher levels of education, but which may also be acquired through different experiences of political engagement and participation throughout the trajectories of the generational groups analysed.

Porous transmissions, on the other hand, are characterized by little interest and understanding, by the parents’ low level of engagement in political activities, or by a higher level of interest on the part of only one of the parents, which among the families in the neighbourhood occurs mainly on the paternal side. Regarding cases of political disagreement between spouses, specialized literature points out that the mother usually has a

certain advantage in transmitting political preferences to her children, since in most families, the mother has the strongest presence in the upbringing of children, as she ends up having a closer and more affectionate relationship with her children (Muxel, 2008; Percheron, 1993).

In general, the incidence of solid or porous transmissions depends on variables such as the capacity of understanding/interpretation of political events, related to the level of education of individuals and the relationship that parents have with politics, which may range from engagement to repulsion to issues of this order (Muxel, 2008; 2014; Percheron, 1993).

The analysis of political transmission in the group studied, that is, poor families living in a popular neighbourhood with a working-class tradition, does not necessarily occur in terms of ideological frameworks (within the spectrum of right and left), as in the cases analysed by French researchers, in the wake of the first studies on political socialization (Percheron, 1993). The study proves that not even the terms right and left were understood by most residents. In the same way, the meanings of the word ideology and other terms proper of the political field are understood in a diffuse way, although this does not mean a total absence of understanding about politics. It should also be noted that many residents do not consider themselves competent to discuss issues of this order, which is often related to low schooling and, consequently, the absence of cultural and political capital, as well as the low incidence of political sophistication (Bourdieu, 1977; Fuks & Pereira, 2011, p. 124; Gaxie, 1987).

Part of this diffuse understanding of politics can also be associated with the absence of specific political training, even among some first-generation militants, since the “organisations” in which they were active (trade unions, PT) did not always give priority to the political training of their staff. This type of understanding is not exclusive to the neighbourhood studied and is quite common in Brazil (Carreirão, 2002; Solano, 2019). In addition to all these elements, there is the weight of the crisis context and the lack of credibility of the entire Brazilian political party system. Most Brazilian respondents to the Latinobarómetro survey stated that they would not vote for any party in 2018:

Table 1 Which party would you vote for if elections where next Sunday (2018)

Category	%/Total	Frequency
No answer	1,6	19
Don't know	23,1	278
Vote null/White	7,6	91
Don't vote/No-one	39,9	480
No registered/ Insuficiente age	0,4	5
BR: Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT)	19,9	240
BR: Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (PMDB)	1,6	19
BR: Partido Comunista do Brasil (PC do B)	0,2	3
BR: Partido Socialista Brasileiro (PSB)	0,4	5
BR: Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro (PTB)	0,2	2
BR: Partido Democrático Trabalhista (PDT)	0,1	1
BR: Partido Verde (PV)	0,2	3
BR: Partido Social Liberal (PSL)	0,4	5
BR: Partido Social Cristiano (PSC)	1,0	12
BR: Partido Social Democrático (PSD)	2,2	27
BR: Rede Sustentabilidade (REDE)	0,1	1
BR: Solidariedade	0,1	1
BR: Partido dos Democratas - DEM	0,1	1
BR: Partido Novo - NOVO	0,2	3
BR: Partido Socialismo e Liberdade	0,6	7
BR: Podemos	0,1	1
Total	100,0	1204

Source: Latinobarómetro, 2018.

Considering what has been said so far, I present in a very summarized way, vignettes of the trajectory of two families, I chose to bring an example of solid political transmission and another one of porous transmission, in this case, I could perceive some clues about transformations in the political behavior of people who lived in a place so commonly associated to the Brazilian leftist past and to the Workers' Party. Which may help to understand how the right, especially, that of a more radical and conservative nature has extended its reach among the popular classes, and the case presented demonstrates what occurs via conservative and religious values (Solano, 2019).

Domingo's family — "Family that militates together stays together"

Domingo's family is a family composed of father, mother and three daughters, but which at the time of the interview constituted a household of three people (father, mother and one daughter).

Pedro Domingos is the father (born in 1949), he is a retired metal-worker who has actively participated in the strike movement in the ABC Paulista since the late 1970s. He is an ex-trade unionist, a militant of the PT since the party's foundation and a militant in the neighbourhood association. The wife and mother of this family is Elenice Domingos (born in 1950), housewife and adviser to a PT councillor. Elenice is also a PT militant, part of the mothers' movement and a neighbourhood association activist. She is a known political leader in Ferrazópolis, just like her husband, but she has never worked as a metal worker. Another member of the household is the daughter Luciana (born in 1983), a health worker in the city of São Bernardo do Campo. Luciana is affiliated to the PT, but she does not militate in political parties or associations.

The Domingos family is a very representative family among those who have a strong engagement in the studied neighbourhood, more to the left and related to the PT. Like most families with some political engagement in the neighbourhood, Pedro Domingos' father was the first to get involved in this universe in a more intense way and followed the existing tradition in Ferrazópolis, strongly marked by engagement via the workers' and trade union movement. Pedro is a retired metalworker, who became involved in the trade union movement in 1976 and has been a militant member of the PT since the party's foundation, as well as in neighbourhood associations. His wife Elenice, previously not aligned with political issues, became politically engaged to accompany her husband and both are figures of support and reference for their neighbours. The peripheral neighbourhoods and neighbourhoods with unplanned growth in Brazil grew and developed due to the collective efforts of the residents who lived there. It was the struggle of the residents and their engagement in neighbourhood movements that forced the state authorities to invest in basic housing conditions, such as basic sanitation (albeit deficient), the subdivision of streets, the organisation of public transport, the regularisation of house deeds, the arrival of public bodies such as crèches, schools and health centres. The

recognition of Pedro and Elenice in the neighbourhood is due to their strong commitment to making these improvements happen since the 1970s.

I was able to accompany the family on some visits made between May and August 2016. Continued in contact with them until 2020. When Elenice passed away due to complications from Covid-19 months later, I could no longer contact Pedro, who was the contact person in the family.

I interviewed Pedro and Elenice at their family home. Both granted me their respective interviews in their living room, purposely decorated with a huge red sofa, alluding to the political party of their choice, the Workers' Party (PT). They told me their life stories, their past and childhood in the countryside, poverty, and the process of immigration to an industrialized region in search of a job. Then, the insertion in the factory work and the difficulties faced as a family of workers. The outbreak of strikes and the growth of the union movement. The strong link with the figure of Lula da Silva, who emerged from the same movement of which Pedro was part, "the metallurgists of the ABC", which went down in Brazilian history as a workers' movement that fought for dignity and better living and working conditions, which contributed to the re-democratization of Brazil, which gave rise to the largest political party of the Brazilian left (PT) and other workers' federations.

And on his life and political trajectory, Pedro said:

Listen, my militancy came stronger in the trade union movement. I entered the trade union movement as soon as I entered the metallurgy; I entered in 1976, at a time of very harsh military dictatorship. That same year I already met Lula and I got totally involved with the union. I worked practically at the doorstep of the union, all I had to do was walk 15 minutes and I would arrive at the union. Our company had a very tough union director, Mr. Joaquim. He would leave a meeting with the workers and go straight to the personnel department of the company, he was on the company's side, not ours. This behaviour of his was a remnant of the trade union movement of the dictatorship, that skinflint trade unionism, poor guy, I even feel sorry for him, but that's how it was before Lula; it was he who helped to change things.

So, right away I got involved, I started to do clandestine military [...] Girl, I'll tell you: I plunged into it!

(Pedro Domingos, man, 67 y.o, retired trade unionist and PT militant interviewed in 2016).

Pedro's trajectory in union militancy resembles those of other workers who became engaged in the 1970s (Tomizaki, 2005). In the process of engagement, Pedro cites the figure of Lula as a triggering element, but he also cites the feeling of dissatisfaction with the union director of the company where he worked.

This triggering figure, which for Elenice, was her own husband.

I worried, I was worried, I was afraid he wouldn't come home. There were so many police that we saw in the street, so many things... At the time, in the beginning, I didn't participate in anything, and I lived with this preoccupation. There were times when he went out to work and it was dawn and he didn't come back, he was even arrested several times, and I was left here, without a telephone to get news, I had to go and ask others for a favour to try to get news from him. One day he came and had a serious talk with me, he said that either he would go up and fight for his job or we would lose everything. Then I said: "So go. Fight for what you need because I am here; without a job how can we live? Then, from that day on, I started to support him more, and I also met him like that, messing around with politics, here it only got worse, what was I going to do? Fighting was the only thing that could be done. Then, also, as the girls were getting older, I participated more, together with him and together with other women here in the neighbourhood, because there were many in the same situation as me.

(Elenice, female, 66 y.o, PT militant, interviewed in 2016)

Elenice relates the drama she lived in the first years of her marriage, marked by the fear for her husband's safety as well as by the fear that he would lose his job, the only source of income they had. Pedro, in turn, recalls that at the beginning of his trajectory as a union militant he was not supported by his wife, as happened in many cases of metalworkers who dedicated themselves to militancy activities. Many women had reservations about union militancy, because the family ended up being left in

second place; work and union activities took up practically all of their time. It is common to hear reports from metalworkers who dedicated themselves to militancy and feel the regret of having lost important family moments. In the case of Domingos' family, Elenice chose to support and accompany her husband in his militancy activities and the whole family started to take on the struggle of the metalworkers. Although Elenice's engagement seems to have been influenced by her husband, she became involved in movements with demands related to her reality, as was the case of the "empty pots movement", the struggles for schools, as well as the struggles for improvements in the neighbourhoods and for the expansion of public health, schooling and leisure for the population, activities that she still carries out today.

In many militant families, when there is an agreement between the parents, politics becomes omnipresent and occupies the entire space of family exchange; "the omnipresence of politics becomes in itself an influence, a conditioning" (Muxel, 2008, p. 90). It was in this environment of the strong presence of politics in family life and with the agreement between the parents, that Pedro and Elenice raised their three daughters, among whom, only one was still living with them in 2016, Luciana, whom I was able to interview.

Politics, although I don't live it as my parents did, concerns many things in my life. It is not possible to separate my parents' militancy, a whole life that they dedicated to improving things not only for us but also for the people here in the neighbourhood, to the way I see the world today. I simply can't get away from it all, you know? The history of the Union, the history of the PT goes through the history of my parents. It is like I told you, I can't simply change sides, because it concerns the way I was raised, it is something that involves what I am and what I believe in. (Luciana, female, 30 y.o, administrative, non-militant, interviewed in 2016).

Given the broad dimension that politics occupied in Pedro and Elenice's lives, the couple saw it as something "natural" for them to take their daughters, even if they were children, to meetings, assemblies, protests and

marches; it was the environment in which they lived and worked and, consequently, it should also be the environment of their daughters. According to Pedro, this was part of their learning process and this was how he and his wife mediated their daughters' experience of the world and, in this way, defined the reality of the children, absolutely inserted in the parents' political universe, which according to Leclercq (2016) is usually quite recurrent in families of militants. In the case of Domingos' family, we observe the incidence of a political transmission that occurs in an intentional and direct way, because the parents made a point of keeping their daughters in strictly political environments and even considered this as part of the educational process.

Luciana subtly demonstrated that the moment was not favourable for people supporting the left and the PT, even in a neighbourhood with a political tradition of supporting this sector of Brazilian politics. The crisis, the corruption scandals, and the advance (or return) of the Brazilian right in its plurality contributed to the fact that "being petista" or a supporter of the PT became a motive for mockery, if not hatred. Domingos' own home had been the target of vandalism for its known relationship with the PT. Luciana had a grudge and, according to her, resentment. She believed there was ingratitude on the part of many of her neighbours toward her parents, who had dedicated themselves to the collective struggle in the neighbourhood for most of their lives. Luciana recalled that friendships were broken, political discussion ceased to be a pleasure, and concern for her parents' physical integrity was a constant.

Despite this, Luciana also claimed that being leftist and being from the PT was something she could not simply change, it was part of her, she learned at home. This is because her family is marked by this identification. Her parents, Pedro and Elenice, knew each other from their hometown, but they married and started a family after migrating to the city of São Bernardo do Campo. Their life trajectory is mixed with political militancy and the "struggle" for quality of life for themselves and for those close to them, consequently, the history of this family as well. The education of the daughters was based on the ideals

they shared, and the presence and absence of the parents were also related to the time dedicated to politics. Even the material and concrete gains of dignified living conditions were strongly related to their political activity, which also provided a network of contacts and social capital (Bourdieu, 1998) that resulted in support face of difficult situations, such as the search for employment for Elenice and, eventually for her daughter.

This family is strongly aligned with left-wing engagement, which reflects the political tradition existing in the neighbourhood where they lived for most of their lives. However, this kind of engagement and direct and conscious political transmission from parents could occur in a more right-aligned family, which does not appear in this text because I did not have contact with any of them in 2016, a trend that was not common in a traditionally left-wing neighbourhood. But in the face of the reactivation of the Brazilian right that was already underway at this time (Singer, 2021), some elements that are now more frequently observed in several Brazilian households were already present, among them conservative values and strong relationship of Christian values with civic duties and political orientation. All this existed in the Xavier family, which we will get to know below.

The Xavier's: "Distance from politics and a religious life"

The trajectory of the Xavier family, selected as representative of a trend of political behavior found in the neighbourhood that corresponds to families and individuals who perceive and declare themselves as "apolitical", or not very interested in the subject. These are, therefore, individuals who have no history of engagement or participation in any political-associative organization and who claim not to like or know nothing about the universe of politics, resulting in processes of intergenerational transmissions that are especially subtle, porous and diffuse with regard to the ways of dealing with politics between family generations. It is important to remember that the so-called "apoliticism" does not mean ignorance in relation to politics, as it concerns a way of dealing with politics and a very clear positioning

based on the pretension of distancing oneself from questions of this order (Percheron, 1993).

The Xavier family are the couple Joel (born in 1961) and Ione (born in 1967), both migrants from the countryside, plus three children, Adilson (born in 1987, fruit of Ione's first marriage), Ismael (born in 1994) and João Pedro⁶ (born in 2005). I will focus on the life stories of the parents and eldest son Adilson.

In telling their lives, both Ione and Joel marked the passage of time in their trajectories using events in their professional lives as a reference, for example, through the years in which they were hired or fired in the factories where they worked. Ione, unlike all the other women presented so far, is an industrial worker, having worked in factories since she was very young and even worked in metallurgical companies, as we will see below. Thus, due to the more intense experience of the productive world than the other interviewees, Ione Xavier uses time markings based also on the world of work. Politics did not appear spontaneously in her parents' life narratives, but only when they were asked to talk about it. However, it was common for them to refer that it was something of little relevance in their lives.

Joel and Ione have lived in ABC Paulista since the 1980s, but moved to Ferrazópolis in 1994, later than the foundation of the neighbourhood (which dates to the 1970s). At that time, the family was composed by Ione, Joel, Adilson (Ione's first son, then aged 8) and Ismael, the couple's unborn son. For the couple, this move represented social decline, but also a strategy to get back on their feet financially, lean on family members and take advantage of the support and care network provided by the family that already lived in this neighbourhood.

As I mentioned earlier, the eldest son, Adilson was also interviewed and just like his mother and stepfather, he told his life story without presenting any

6 The information about the couple's youngest son appears only by way of knowledge and information about the family nucleus, because at the time, he was still a child. In addition to the ethical criteria of opting not to interview children in this study, one of the criteria for defining the research subjects was generational and this youngest son was not part of either of the two generations under analysis for the study.

time marking in function of the policy — his account was carried out in function of the periods of his schooling, which is high and which place him in a select group among the residents of the neighbourhood (Silva, 2017). The young man has two higher education degrees, in mathematics and in civil engineering, but at the time of the interview, a moment of political and economic crisis (and of the construction sector) in the country, he was unemployed. The questions about politics were answered as Adilson was questioned, however, the political themes appeared eventually intertwined with his religious and work trajectory. According to the boy, in his home, politics was a subject that was rarely approached, restricted to moments of elections, and was only the subject of occasional conversations with his biological father, with whom he lived only a few times a month.

When I went to my father's house, they were always there talking about politics. It filled my patience, to be honest, I found it annoying when they started these conversations, I was a kid, I didn't care about that. But, can you imagine, that bunch of metalworkers, gathered every weekend, having a barbecue and talking about what? They talked about the need to elect Lula, they badmouthed Fernando Henrique [Cardoso]⁷, they asked for a workers' government! I witnessed this in my childhood, although today I think very different things.

(Adilson, man, 30 y.o, unemployed, non-militant, interviewed in 2016)

Regarding the values learned from his family, Adilson highlights, on the part of both his mother and father, honesty, obedience and responsibility as fundamental values that were transmitted to him from childhood.

The political socialization in his maternal family, which did not discuss politics nor considered it necessary to approach this subject in the family environment, resulted in a more fluid type of transmission of values of this order to the children. In Adilson's trajectory, there is also the fact that he spent his childhood divided between his mother's house and his biological

7 Fernando Henrique Cardoso was president of Brazil for two consecutive terms between 1994 and 2002 for the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB) which is a centre-right party opposed to the Workers' Party.

father, and that, in his father's house, politics was a more common subject and something that bothered him. During this daily life divided between his father's house and his mother's, and the distance between his maternal family and politics, political exchange only existed at his father's house. And Adilson spent most of the time at his mother's house, an environment where political exchange was almost non-existent. All this contributed to the absence of a socialization properly focused on politics in the family environment in which his mother was present, in addition to the absence of more direct transmission strategies about this universe (Muxel, 2008; Percheron, 1993). In the case of Adilson, the young man claims to be aware of a certain influence of his father's behavior and political positioning on his way of relating to politics, so that this would have influenced his first votes, for Lula. However, strongly disappointed with the latest political events, namely corruption and the difficulty in responding to crises, he claims not to believe in the existing political parties in Brazil and has a strong grudge against the PT. In his words:

The PT that my father was proud to defend no longer exists and, because of that, is not a political party worthy of deserving my support
(Adilson, man, 30 y.o, unemployed, non-militant, interviewed in 2016).

Different from the situation of strong understanding and union in the previous family, which extended to political militancy, besides the lack of interest in politics among the Xavier family, an important fact marks a change in the behaviour of part of this family nucleus: in the mid-2000s lone and Joel went through a marriage crisis and the solution found by the couple was to expand their religiosity. lone became an evangelical and shortly afterwards Joel did the same — in a particularly intense way, the *Neopentecostal* religion becoming the omnipresent subject in the family's life. Before this religious conversion of his parents, the whole family was Catholic, but not very practicing. Adilson was a teenager at the time and refused to attend the new religion. At this time, Adilson started attending the Catholic Church

more and more assiduously, as it was among the young members of the church that his best friends were. Although there was a progressive Catholic tradition in the neighbourhood, Adilson began to attend another group, with a more conservative bias. It was not his family, but his peer group, his neighbourhood and school friends, and the religious group that contributed to the inculcation and reinterpretation of certain values and political perceptions in Adilson. He clearly mentions the fundamental role that religion played on the way he perceived politics.

I am sure about one thing: I don't want to be a leftist, because the values of the left and of Christianity clash. And I'll tell you, I say this because I know people who have left the church because they are left. The person left the church because the ideals began to clash too much, so he had to decide and left the church. I don't want that for me; I prefer to preserve my Christian vision, that is my decision.
(Adilson, man, 30 y.o., unemployed, non-militant, interviewed in 2016).

Besides religion, the political and economic crisis in which Brazil was immersed since then, hit Adilson in a concrete way, with job loss. Adilson was fired in 2014 during a strong crisis in the real estate and construction sector in which he worked. Disappointment with the government of the country, perception of change in relation to what his biological father believed, absence of political exchange in the family environment, but much presence of this exchange among friends and religious practice added to the concrete consequences of political and economic crises in his daily life seem to have contributed to the way Adilson interpreted and related to politics at the time we interviewed him. Meanwhile, his mother and stepfather continued to claim no interest in these issues. The stepfather remained assiduously in church and Christian values became increasingly relevant in his life.

Currently, many analyses place religious people in Brazil within the same "package" as evangelicals, a relevant group in Brazilian politics. It is a reason for attention and concern on the part of politicians and candidates, a public that is talked about and tries to meet demands. It is the second largest religious group in a strongly religious country. In a country

where religion increasingly permeates the meanderings of State policies (even though we have a secular State defined by the constitution). They are holders of converting moral values related to Christianity that influence public policies and state directions. Religious who are considerable allies of the current government, concerned with these values to the point of placing them above economic and practical issues in their lives.

Final notes — and still many uncertainties

First, regarding the 2022 presidential elections⁸, the current scenario is more favourable to Lula da Silva, who maintained and increased popular support. However, as I mentioned at the beginning of this working paper, Brazilian democracy and political institutions are in a troubled moment and under threat. This is not only from the point of view of ideas, but of incitements (and concretisations) of actions by people and groups. Such actions also have their share of popular support. Now, the candidate for re-election also mobilizes masses around his ideals. Bolsonarism is a political movement in force and will not cease to exist, although it may lose strength with a possible victory of Lula (Solano, 2019; 2020).

There is a crucible of events resulting in the current political situation in Brazil. I certainly have not had access to much of it. However, some hints of this huge iceberg began to become visible when I was developing my long-term research. At the time, the relationship with politics was strongly marked by feelings of disillusionment, frustration. Despite this, many maintained militancy and/or political and ideological convictions even against all the adversities that the context presented. This is the case of the Domingos family, and which was clearly mentioned by Luciana.

On the other hand, there are those who have widened their distance even further from politics, especially institutional and party politics. And yet, individuals and or entire families who got involved in associative

8 This working paper was written on the eve of the first round of the 2022 Brazilian presidential elections.

activities considered non-political, but which were absolutely permeated by the context. Looking at the Xavier family with low political exchange in the family, especially in the trajectory of Adilson, I invite you to reflect on an element, which is striking in Adilson's relationship with politics and which is fundamental for the understanding of different nuances of the behaviour (political or not) of the Brazilian popular classes, it is religion.

There is an intense relationship between religion and politics in Brazil. And much is asked about this relationship, as well as about the relationship between religion and the perception of ideological axes, the framing in these axes and the influence in the vote. The search for answers goes through the way religion is inserted in people's lives and in the case of Adilson and his family, which represents many other Brazilian families, formed by low class workers and with little or no institutional political interest, for not seeing in it, conditions to improve their lives, but that, on the other hand, demonstrate, for several legitimate reasons, little disposition to engage in other types of collective causes properly political. However, they have a disposition for religiosity — and the Church is an associative space, a welcoming environment, sometimes a place of leisure and, in extreme cases of vulnerability, the only institution on which many people and families can rely in times of need. Looking at these families can be a clue to follow.

In this case, even if we are dealing with a family defined as "apolitical" or little or not interested in politics, which also represents a way of positioning themselves politically, somehow politics is present in their lives, whether by the media coverage of politics, or by the intense discussions among neighbourhood residents. Or else, because according to Muxel (2008, p. 102), somehow in the midst of social coexistence "we understand half words, we produce diminutions, we fabricate shortcuts to interpret the political reality of the environment. We react to a sentence introduced by television information. We agree, we comfort, we opine" about politics.

Unlike the Domingos⁹ family, in which politicization was "total" in most homes in the neighbourhood, it would not be an exaggeration to say

that, in Brazilian homes, this strong presence of politics is not a common thing. It remains for us, researchers, to try to understand by which means and in which instances politics enters people's lives, and with which intensity. That is what I have been focusing on in recent years, looking at families. But I am also interested in understanding which experiences are capable of having an impact on people's political behaviour (understood in a broad sense). In fact, the existence of certain experiences will reflect in the understanding and political action, as well as in the act of voting, a defining element of the directions of a country.

In my attempt to understand the internal differences of these families, even if they have been presented here in a summarized way, I seek to see variations as to how they relate to politics. The agreement on politics, the level of engagement and the existence or not of political exchange within the family contribute to the existence of different types of political transmission. Such transmissions, in turn, are not always consciously put into practice, can be classified as more solid or porous (and, sometimes, contradictory) and depend a lot on the way parents relate to politics and, also, on the types of close and affective relationships existing in the family daily life. And their results (with maintenance and changes) throughout life and among families should be more present on our radar of studies as researchers. After all, the vote might be individual, but politics are socially embedded across time.

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9 The Domingos was a left-wing family, but today they could easily be a family more aligned to the right.

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