

# 15

## PARTISANS, ANTI-PARTISANS, AND VOTER BEHAVIOR<sup>1</sup>

*David Samuels and Cesar Zucco Jr.*

When Brazil redemocratized in the 1980s, scholars declared its party system “inchoate” (Mainwaring 1999). They wondered whether its institutions impeded the emergence of strong parties (Ames 2001). And they worried that party and party-system weakness boded ill for the health of Brazil’s nascent democracy (e.g. Lamounier 1990; Weyland 1996). It is true that some saw a glass half full rather than half empty and suggested that Brazil’s legislative parties were more cohesive than expected and more importantly that, despite the party system’s fragmentation, Brazilian democracy functions about as well as others in the region (Figueiredo & Limongi 1999; Montero 2014; Melo & Pereira 2013). However, Brazil’s recent political and economic crises—culminating with the 2016 impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff—again highlight the dysfunction of parties and the party system.

After the 2014 elections, 27 parties—that is not a typo—had at least one seat in the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of Brazil’s legislature. This is an extraordinary level of fragmentation, given that ethnic, linguistic, or religious cleavages do not drive party formation in Brazil. After the recent political crises, Brazilians held the lowest degree of confidence in their parties of any country in the region (Latinobarómetro 2016b), and, by 2016, 72 percent of Brazilians said they did not identify with any party, the highest level since survey firms began asking the question in 1989 (Datafolha 2016). Disillusionment with their agents of representation corroded Brazilians’ faith in democracy. In 2016, only 32 percent agreed that “Democracy is preferable to all other forms of government,” a decline of 22 points from the previous year (Latinobarómetro 2016a).

For millions of Brazilians, the biggest disappointment was the dismal trajectory of Dilma’s party—the Workers’ Party or PT (for *Partido dos Trabalhadores*). The PT grew out of grass-roots social movements and union opposition to the military regime in the late 1970s, and it had carefully and deliberately cultivated an image as Brazil’s most programmatic party, with strong links between voters and elected officials. The pronunciation of the party’s acronym (PT) in Portuguese gave rise to the nickname applied to its supporters: *petistas*, who grew along with the party’s electoral performance, from 0 percent of the electorate in 1980 to almost 30 percent just a generation later.

The PT’s image changed following the election in 2002 of its long-time leader Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva as president. The incentives of winning elections and governing forced the party to ally with former rivals and move to the political center, compromising on or even abandoning some of its long-held policy commitments. This dilution of the PT’s leftism actually paid

dividends for several years. As Brazil's economy grew, and as millions of Brazilians moved into the middle class, the PT picked up hordes of new supporters.

However, Dilma's inability to respond to the onset of a recession in 2013 and the PT's involvement in corruption scandals eroded the party's support. Corruption represented a betrayal of the party's core principles, the so-called *modo petista de governar* or "PT way of governing," which had at its core a commitment to transparency and honesty in government. By 2014, the party's support was ebbing rapidly, as many Brazilians (and many observers) concluded that Brazil's way of doing politics had changed the PT more than the PT had changed Brazil's way of doing politics. The PT's rise and fall suggests that it is not impossible to build a programmatic party in Brazil, only that it is very difficult to do so—and especially difficult to maintain that reputation once power is won. The PT set high standards for itself and failed to live up to them. Brazil's other parties never set such high standards, and their own sketchy behavior helps explain why Brazilian voters view them in such a poor light. In 2016, after Dilma was impeached by a Congress full of corrupt politicians,<sup>2</sup> and after the PT's own ethical failures, Brazil's parties and party system had reached a low point.

Why focus on mass partisan attitudes? For one, as we will show, partisanship—particularly for the PT—has had an under-appreciated impact on voters' attitudes and behavior since redemocratization. A focus on partisanship also sheds light on a hidden element of mass attitudes in Brazil—"negative" partisanship, voters' *rejection* of a particular party—again, particularly the PT. Since the 1980s, attitudes both for *and* against the PT have powerfully shaped Brazilian voters' attitudes and behavior and thus have shaped its party system.

These pro- and anti-PT attitudes are symbiotically related. One cannot explain the spread of anti-PT attitudes, for example, without first understanding the spread of positive partisanship with the PT—nor can one understand why so many Brazilians remain uninterested in parties and partisanship without understanding why some are interested.

This chapter explores the evolution and meaning of positive and negative partisanship in Brazil, focusing on *petismo* and *antipetismo*. The topic carries significant historical interest in terms of revealing the main contours of Brazil's party system in voters' minds for the last 30 years. It also remains relevant for thinking about the future of Brazilian politics. The question of party collapse has attracted attention in recent years (Lupu 2016; Seawright 2012; Morgan 2011). It is true that the PT is down, but we do not count it out. Given its organizational density and links to organized civil society, it is likely the PT will remain a player in Brazilian politics for years to come.

### Partisanship and Anti-Partisanship

The concept of "party strength" has three elements (Key 1952), each of which speaks to different aspects of the nature and process of representation: (1) parties in government, (2) parties as organizations, and (3) parties in the electorate. Debate about the relative strength of Brazil's parties has focused on the first element (e.g., Figueiredo & Limongi 1999; Amorim Neto 1998; Pereira, Power, & Raile 2011). In Brazil, work on the second element has concentrated on the PT (e.g., Amaral 2003; Samuels 2004; Hunter 2010; Ribeiro 2010), and relatively little research exists on the third element, the strength of parties in voters' minds (however, see, e.g., Balbachevsky 1992; Carreiraõ 2002; Braga & Kinzo 2007; Kinzo 2004, 2006; Rennó & Cabello 2010). This leaves important questions about the relationship between voters and parties both unasked and unanswered.

As opposed to most of the literature on partisanship in any context, we focus both on positive and negative partisanship, two distinct sets of attitudes central to this third element of

party strength. Much research has focused on positive partisanship, otherwise known as party identification. Party ID is a form of social identity, an affective psychological attachment to a group, and a heuristic that voters use to simplify and make sense of politics. It can shape voters' opinions, motivate their political engagement, and impact their vote choices (e.g. Miller & Shanks 1996; Green, Palmquist, & Schickler 2002; Lavine, Johnston, & Steenbergen 2013). When party ID is high, scholars can easily make sense of voting patterns, because people who identify with a party almost always vote for candidates from that party.

From a comparative perspective, the aggregate level of party ID in Brazil has never been high (Huber, Kernell, & Leoni 2005; Kitschelt, Hawkins, Luna, Rosas, & Zechmeister 2010). For most Brazilians, candidates' charisma and ability to deliver constituent services have been more important factors shaping vote choice. The PT, however, successfully cultivated a wide base of partisan identifiers in the electorate. By the mid-2000s, just 25 years after its founding, about 30 percent of Brazilians identified with the PT. Moreover, the PT always had a disproportionately large share of partisans. In the 2000s, more than half of all Brazilians who identified with any party were petistas. No other party—large or small—successfully cultivated such a widespread psychological attachment to so many voters.

For about 35 years, the growth of petismo mirrored the party's electoral success. But the spread of party ID with the PT also instigated a reaction among many voters, a disdainful attitude towards the PT known as antipetismo. Little is known—in Brazil or elsewhere—about negative partisanship, voters' *rejection* of a particular party. This may be because scholars assume that negative and positive partisan attitudes mirror each other (Greene 1999). However, positive and negative partisanship are not always flip sides of the same psychological coin. The latter can emerge autonomously and can have distinct effects on voting behavior.

Table 15.1 is a simple 2 × 2 table that identifies the range of possibilities. First, “hard-core” partisans have both positive and negative attitudes. They not only identify with a party but also strongly reject another. A second group (on the lower left) has positive feelings for a party, but lacks strong negative sentiments against any party. These two groups of individuals are functionally equivalent if we only examine the “positive” partisanship question on most surveys.

A third group, on the upper right, contains “negative partisans,” those who reject a party or parties. For example, an Argentine voter could be anti-Peronist without identifying with any party (Torre 2003). Or, in the US, voters might be sure, for example, that they would never vote Republican, even though they might not consider themselves Democrats. These “negative partisans” are missing from most analyses of parties in the electorate. In the Brazilian context of relatively few partisans, we gain the most value added when we separate negative partisans from nonpartisans.

Finally, members of the last group, on the lower right, are nonpartisans. They have neither positive nor negative attitudes towards parties.

Table 15.1 The Four Possible Voter Types

		Strong Identification with In-Group	
		Yes	No
Strong antipathy for out-group	Yes	Hard-core partisans	Negative partisans (pure anti-partisans)
	No	Positive partisans	Nonpartisans

Voters with powerfully negative attitudes towards one party may not know which candidate or party they like, but by affirming that they “would never vote for” or “strongly dislike” a particular party they have greatly narrowed their choices. Ignoring negative attitudes means loss of a great deal of useful information about voters’ likely behavior.

Negative partisanship is an unrecognized yet powerful factor helping explain voting behavior in Brazil. Even though many Brazilian voters have never held either positive or negative partisan attitudes, at times almost half have held strong positive and/or negative attitudes towards the PT alone. Moreover, positive and negative partisanship are not psychological mirror images: many Brazilians identify with a party without feeling negatively about any, whereas others feel strong antipathy for a party without developing a positive attachment to a different one.

This means that partisan attitudes provide far more structure to Brazil’s “party system in the electorate” than many observers have perceived. To be clear, we are suggesting that the story of partisanship in Brazil—both positive and negative—is mainly a story of how people feel about the PT. Most positive partisans in Brazil, since the 1980s, have identified with the PT. Likewise, most negative partisans intensely dislike the PT—and do not have a positive affinity with any party.

In what follows, we illuminate the extent of positive and negative partisanship in Brazil over the last 30 years. Then we explore the factors associated with *petismo* and *antipetismo*, demonstrating that the roots of positive and negative partisanship do not lie with demographics or standard measures of ideology. Instead, they are rooted in different views about the nature of politics and the desirability of using democracy to promote social change.

Negative partisanship, it should be noted, is not the same as “rejection” of certain candidates, frequently measured in electoral polls and trumpeted during pre-electoral periods in Brazil as signaling that some candidate is doomed. Although rejection is often treated as something fundamentally more stable than vote intention, to our knowledge there have been no studies of whether this is actually the case. We argue and present evidence that anti-partisanship is in fact similar to partisanship in that it is relatively stable, has predictable behavioral and attitudinal consequences, and helps structure voters’ worldviews by inducing them to engage in motivated reasoning.

### **The Extent of Positive and Negative Partisanship**

We begin with aggregate levels of positive partisanship, using surveys from Datafolha that began in 1989 asking the question, “What is your preferred party?” (“Qual é o seu partido político de preferência?”). Figure 15.1 provides the proportion of Brazilians who identify with any party, as well as the share who identify with the three largest parties: the PT, the PSDB (Party of Brazilian Social Democracy), and the PMDB (Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement).

The figure shows overall levels of party identification, as well as identification with the three main parties. Data come from Datafolha surveys, aggregated by quarter for each year; the figure reports a three-period moving average. Quarters with missing data were linearly imputed.

Figure 15. reveals four things about the ebb and flow of partisanship in Brazil since the 1980s. First, even at its highest level, the aggregate level of partisanship—about 50 percent—falls below the world average (Huber et al. 2005; Kitschelt et al. 2010).

Second, the PMDB has steadily lost support. This is likely because it is a loosely organized federation of state and local leaders who lead clientelistic electoral machines. Although it was the only legal opposition party under the 1964–1985 military regime, redemocratization removed the party’s unifying principle.

Third, the PSDB—which held the presidency from 1995 to 2002 and served as the main opponent to the PT governments—has never attracted more than a small slice of the electorate.

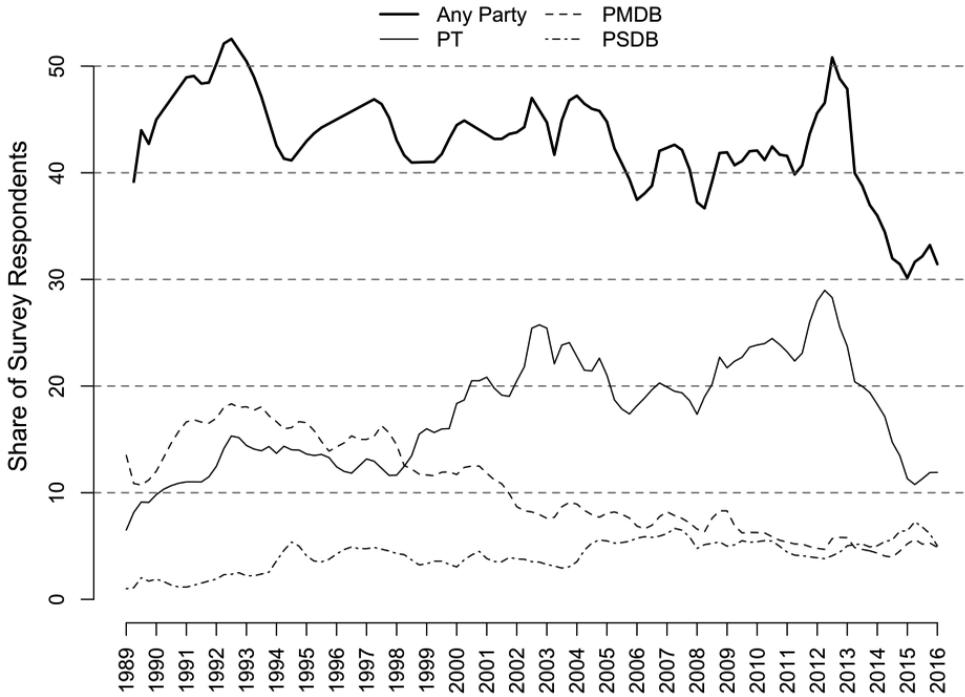


Figure 15.1 Party Identification (1989–2016).

Like the PMDB, the PSDB is a loosely organized federation of regional leaders (Roma 2006) and it relies, not on a coherent political vision, but on those leaders’ personal popularity, their effectiveness in government, and their connections with business leaders and academic economists who serve as technocratic support for the party in office.

Finally, through 2013, the PT was the only party to succeed in cultivating a sizable number of partisans. At its founding, the PT professed that it would be the party of activists—that it would reach out to average Brazilians who wanted to change their society from the bottom up. As Figure 15.1 reveals, these efforts paid off handsomely for many years. But the PT’s reputation took a huge blow after 2013, as Brazil’s economy stagnated and as PT leaders became mired in a series of disturbing corruption scandals.

### Negative Partisanship

Let us now turn to levels of negative partisanship. Scholars commonly identify *positive* partisans by their responses to survey questions about party sympathies or preferences. Data that analogously identify *negative* partisans are harder to come by. Long-term series such as the Datafolha surveys explored in Figure 15.1 do not exist.

We identified seven distinct surveys since 1989 that asked about negative partisanship. All asked a variant of a question about whether the respondent disliked particular parties. We use responses to these questions to operationalize negative partisanship. Specifically, negative partisans are those who fit into the top-right cell of Table 15.1—those who dislike a party but do not identify with another.

Table 15.2 Partisans and Anti-Partisans (1989–2014)

	1989	1994	1997	2002	2006	2010	2014
Hard-Core Partisans	30.40	40.30	32.72	18.83	29.20	21.74	14.05
Positive Only Partisans	21.02	14.85	15.51	27.57	20.37	27.48	17.78
Negative Partisans	7.89	12.15	10.33	19.78	12.06	21.34	22.57
Nonpartisans	40.69	32.70	41.44	33.82	38.37	29.44	45.61

Note: Table shows estimates of the share of the electorate that fall in each of the four comprehensive and exclusive categories (that is, the columns all total 100%). Data sources are described in the Appendix.

Table 15.2 reports aggregate levels of positive and negative partisans for the seven surveys. The rows mirror the four cells in Table 15.1. “Hard-core” partisans identify with a party and dislike another. “Positive only” partisans only identify with a party, but dislike no party in particular. “Negative partisans” dislike a party but like none, and nonpartisans answer “No” to both the positive and negative partisanship survey questions.

As in Table 15.1, Table 15.2 reveals that the aggregate level of partisanship peaked in the late 2000s and then declined. However, around the same time, the number of negative partisans in the electorate grew, spiking in 2002. It then declined but soon recovered, almost doubling by 2014. Table 15.2 confirms that the combination of positive and negative partisans encompasses a large proportion of Brazilian voters, reaching more than 60 percent of the electorate in 2006.

Table 15.2 reports aggregate figures in electorate, but it hides the most basic fact about positive and negative partisan preferences in Brazil. In the same way that Figure 15.1 showed that most positive partisans are petistas, most negative partisans are antipetistas.

Table 15.3 offers broader evidence of the extent to which the PT has become the focal point of the party system in voters’ minds, by including antipetistas. Here, “Hard-core petistas” both identify with the PT and dislike another party. “Positive only” petistas identify with the PT, but do not dislike a party. “Other partisan antipetistas” are hard-core partisans for other parties who dislike the PT, and “pure antipetistas” have no positive party ID, but dislike the PT.

Partisan attitudes in Brazil clearly revolve around the PT. By the start of Lula’s first term, about 40 percent of Brazilians were either petistas or antipetistas—and this number held steady until about 2013, when petismo went into decline. Circa 2016, when voters had turned further away from all of Brazil’s parties, attitudes for or against the PT still dominated whatever partisan sentiments existed in the Brazilian electorate.

It is important to reiterate that the attitudes of most antipetistas are not a function of their sympathy and support for another party. Given the large number of antipetistas in the electorate, one might think that the PT’s rivals would find success recruiting partisans, but other parties

Table 15.3 Petistas and Antipetistas (1989–2014)

	1989	1994	1997	2002	2006	2010	2014
Hard-Core Petistas	5.52	11.80	8.75	10.16	13.70	10.30	7.14
Positive Only Petistas	2.00	3.45	5.43	16.70	10.42	17.35	10.30
Pure Antipetistas	1.04	4.75	5.75	9.12	6.47	10.10	15.59
Other Partisan Antipetistas	4.21	10.30	10.94	4.15	8.99	5.30	5.01
Total	12.76	30.30	30.86	40.14	39.58	43.05	38.04

Note: Table shows estimates of the share of the electorate that falls in each of four exclusive categories. Data sources are described in the Appendix.

have failed to recruit antipetistas. Antipetista antipathy for the PT is not an out-group bias derived from sympathy for one of the PT's rivals.

The evidence reveals a largely unrecognized aspect of mass attitudes in Brazil: during the 1990s and 2000s, a large plurality of voters held either positive or negative partisan attitudes—or both. Of these groups, the PT is clearly Brazil's "most hated party"—but since redemocratization it has also won the competition for "most loved" party. The proportion of petistas declined during Dilma's curtailed second term, but we still know little about the extent to which both partisan and anti-partisan attitudes have shaped voter behavior. In the next section, we shed some light on this question, showing that both positive and negative partisan cues have powerfully shaped Brazilian voters' opinions.

### **The Strength of Partisanship and Anti-Partisanship**

Are partisanship and anti-partisanship "real"? Social Identity Theory implies that positive and negative partisan attitudes matter to the extent that they are stable over time and to the extent that they shape voters' views and choices at the ballot box. We use panel data and survey experiments to test the strength of positive and negative partisan attitudes in Brazil.

#### ***Bounded Partisanship***

Party ID is a weak psychological attachment if a voter identifies with one party but then identifies with another when asked the same question again in a subsequent survey. It is not obvious how much time-consistency would be sufficient to call partisanship "real." Some scholars demand that partisans stick with one and only one party over a long period of time (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes 1960; Miller & Shanks 1996; Green, Palmquist, & Schickler 2002). But this does not reflect the way most voters think. Using long-term panel data from Germany and the United Kingdom, Zuckerman, Dasovic, and Fitzgerald (2007, p. 44) found that only 1 percent of partisans would live up to this standard. Most people are actually "bounded" partisans. They "pick a side by not picking the other side," oscillating between identifying with a party and having no partisan affiliation, and only rarely switching between parties (*ibid.*).

Partisanship—for the PT at least—is bounded similarly. In both the 2010 and 2014 Brazil Electoral Panel Surveys (BEPS; Ames et al. 2010, 2015), although only about 58 percent of petistas answered "PT" from one wave of a three-wave survey to the next, in both years nearly all petistas "picked a side by not picking a side." That is, in both surveys about 95 percent of those who identified as petistas in one wave of the survey picked either the PT or no party in a subsequent wave—a level similar to that in Germany, the UK, Mexico, or the US (Samuels & Zucco Jr. 2011). (The proportions of consistent responses over time and of "bounded" partisans were much lower for Brazil's other parties.)

#### ***Evidence from Cueing Experiments***

If positive and negative partisan attachments were "real," then party labels should also convey reference-group information to both petistas and antipetistas. That is, people who identify with a party and receive information about that party's positions ("party cues") should agree more with their party when compared with partisans of the same party who do not receive the cue. Likewise, individuals who dislike a party and who receive information about that party's position should agree *less* with that party than individuals who dislike the same party but who do not receive the cue.

To confirm the impact of positive and negative partisanship, we implemented several survey experiments. Although some specifics differed between the early and later waves of these studies, each asked respondents about their partisan attachments and subsequently questioned participants about their preferences on several different policies. Each policy question presented two polar positions and asked respondents which they agreed with most. The experiment consisted of randomly showing different variants of each policy question to different respondents. Respondents in the control group were presented with a policy question that stated that “some” politicians supported one position whereas “others” supported the opposing view. Respondents assigned to the experimental treatment condition saw party labels (PT and PSDB) attached to either position, which reflected those parties’ actual positions.<sup>3</sup>

We chose topics with varying levels of salience and with varying levels of baseline support among petistas and antipetistas. After all, if the baseline level of agreement between partisans and their party is very high, it is unlikely that an experiment of this kind would find any “additional” effects of the party cue.

Our experimental results consistently confirm that both in- and out-group biases strongly shape partisans’ and anti-partisans’ political opinions. PT partisans who received “their” party’s cue were always more likely to agree with the PT’s position. The same effect emerged for antipetistas. When shown the PT’s party cue, antipetistas moved further away from the PT position for every question we posed. This is especially impressive given antipetistas’ low baseline level of agreement with the PT. Even when agreement with the PT was already very low, the PT cue still managed to reduce the level of agreement even further.<sup>4</sup>

Partisan attitudes matter in Brazil, just as they do elsewhere. Petistas exhibit “bounded” partisanship, both when the PT was on the rise (2010) and when it entered a period of decline (2014). In addition, both positive and negative partisanship shape voters’ opinions as Social Identity Theory predicts: Given just a simple party cue, both in-group and out-group biases shape attitudes. Petistas and antipetistas are able to map the policy space after receiving minimal information about their party or the party they dislike. Our findings suggest that, even in confusing multiparty systems, just a little bit of structure in the psychological landscape of the party system can help voters make sense of the policy space.

### **Paths to Petismo and Antipetismo**

At times, more than half of all Brazilians have positive and/or negative partisan attachments, mostly for or against the PT—and these attitudes powerfully shape political attitudes. Who are these petistas and antipetistas? Are they similar in any way, and what differentiates them?<sup>5</sup>

Conventional wisdom identifies PT supporters as “workers,” whereas antipetistas are members of the socioeconomic elite. To what extent is this true? It turns out that this conventional wisdom is false: socioeconomic status has never sharply divided petistas from antipetistas. In recent years, a small socioeconomic gap has emerged between members of the two groups, but even today, demographics does not divide petistas from antipetistas—nor does left–right ideology or attitudes about the government’s role in the economy. Moreover, members of both groups share relatively liberal attitudes about abortion and gay rights.

The paths to petismo and antipetismo do not lie with differences in demographics, ideology, or attitudes about salient issues. Instead, the point of departure for these divergent paths lies with individual psychology. Social Identity Theory suggests that there is a universal human desire to establish and perpetuate group boundaries. All individuals feel some need to accentuate inter-group distinctions by highlighting in-group social similarities as well as out-group differences (Brewer 1991; Hogg 2005). We assume that some Brazilians are predisposed to like or dislike

the PT. The PT was born as a fundamentally “anti-authoritarian” party, both politically and culturally. As such, some Brazilians will have an affinity for the PT, based on their psychological attributes—in particular, their anti-authoritarian personalities.

Anti-authoritarians insist on individual moral and political autonomy, reject authority and hierarchy, and do not fear diversity (Stenner 2005, p. 14). Such people seek to alter the cultural status quo and are relatively more likely to be engaged in sociopolitical activism, which means they are more likely to be recruited by PT activists. Their social networks activate and feed the process of politicization and acculturation, enhancing the likelihood that they would come to identify with the PT. By contrast, individuals psychologically predisposed to *dislike* the PT will tend to have authoritarian personalities. In this sense of the word, authoritarians reject diversity and insist upon sameness. They believe that individual autonomy should yield to group authority (Stenner 2005; see also Feldman, 2003, and Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003). They express lukewarm support for democracy and strongly favor “law and order” approaches to politics.

Psychological authoritarianism resembles negative but not positive partisanship. It is “a groupiness that comes from wanting to be part of some collective, [but] not from identification with a particular group . . . [it] originates in wanting the self and others to conform to some system, not in commitment to a specific normative order” (Stenner 2005, p. 18). We do not have direct evidence that petistas are psychologically anti-authoritarian whereas antipetistas are psychologically authoritarians. What we do have is evidence from public opinion surveys that supports our story that the differences between petistas and antipetistas does not lie with demographics, ideology, or attitudes. We can also show that motivated reasoning—driven by individual psychology—shapes petismo and antipetismo. When Brazilians arrive at the end of one of the paths to positive or negative partisanship, they have been primed to either agree or disagree with virtually anything associated with the PT. Motivated reasoning drives petistas to support their party blindly during both good times and bad. Antipathy for the PT has similar effects, cornering antipetistas into holding contradictory views about the role of government in the economy and into holding consistently negative views about PT management of the economy, regardless of objective economic indicators.

### ***Socio-Demographic Attributes***

To what extent does self-identification as a party of “workers” mean that petistas are members of a distinct social class? Likewise, are antipetistas—as petistas have long claimed—typically members of Brazil’s socioeconomic elites? To explore the extent to which members of the two groups come from distinct socioeconomic groups, Figure 15.2 reports results of linear probability models for each year for which we have data. The dependent variable is binary, in the case of income indicating that the respondent belongs to the highest-income group, defined as reporting family income above 7.5 minimum wages in 1989 and 5 minimum wages in all other years, and in the case of education indicating that the respondent belongs to the highest-education group, defined as having completed high school.

These indicators are regressed on a set of categorical variables that include whether the respondent was a nonpartisan, a petista, an antipetista, a partisan of another party, or a pure anti-partisan of another party. The figure reports the estimated probability that these positive and negative partisans fall into one of these high social status groups.<sup>6</sup>

In each part of the figure, the horizontal dotted line estimates the probability that nonpartisans are members of either the highest-income or highest-education category. The first thing to notice is that both positive and negative partisans—of all parties—are almost always more likely than nonpartisans to come from the highest socioeconomic status groups.

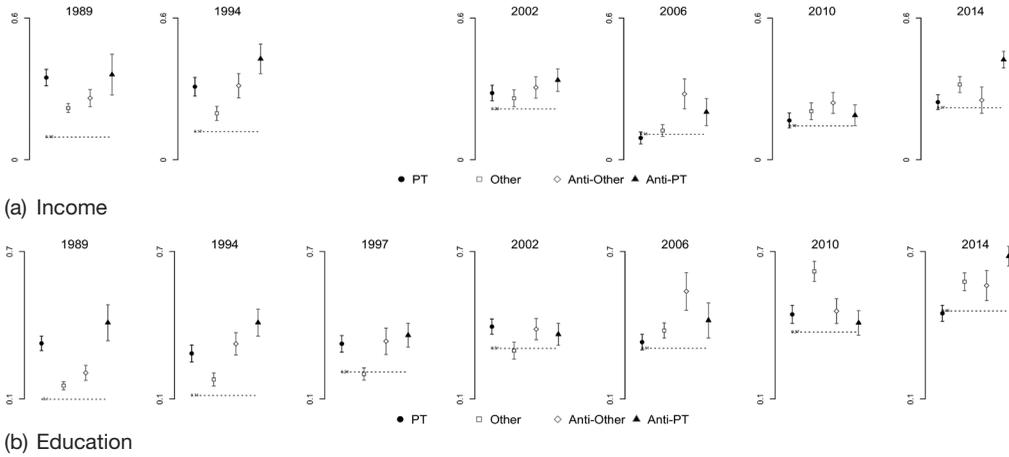


Figure 15.2 Income and Educational Characteristics of Partisans and Anti-Partisans (1989–2014).

The second thing to notice in Figure 15.2 is that no wide gap in socioeconomic status has historically differentiated petistas from antipetistas. Although a small gap did appear in 2014, historically, members of both groups have had relatively high socioeconomic status. It is true that, by the 2000s, petistas were less likely to be found among Brazilians with the highest socioeconomic status, but antipetistas only grew more likely to come from this group in 2014.

The PT’s origins lie partly in blue-collar industrial and white-collar public-sector unions, but the party has also long enjoyed support among social activists, intellectuals, and students—Brazilians who are likely to earn more than average and have higher than average educational attainment. For their part, antipetistas are only slightly more likely to come from relatively high-status socioeconomic groups than petistas.

This means that social class—at least as measured by income or education—does not sharply divide petistas from antipetistas. The divide between the two groups is instead cultural, a split within Brazil’s middle and upper-middle classes, linked to aspiration for social change versus resentment of social change.

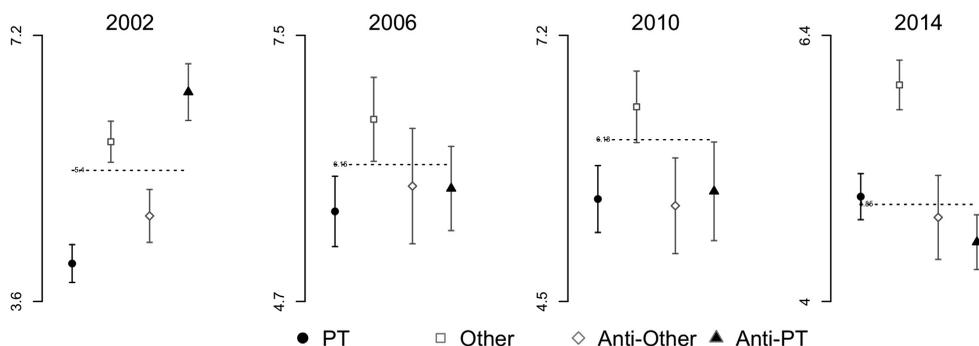
### Political Attitudes

Demographic attributes can paint only a broad picture of the groups that support or oppose different parties. Still, as with demographic attributes, several standard survey questions about ideology and redistribution also fail to differentiate petistas from antipetistas.

Observers of Brazil expect ideology, measured as self-placement on a left–right scale, to differentiate petistas from antipetistas. Yet, although petistas have always been to the left of other partisans, petistas and antipetistas do not fall as predicted on either side of the liberal/conservative ideological divide.

As Veiga (2007) and Samuels (2008) noted, the PT’s moderation in the 1990s meant that, by the mid-2000s, leftist ideology no longer predicted individual identification with the party. The relative increase in petismo among less-educated and lower-income Brazilians probably also helped weaken the connection between ideological self-placement and petismo.

Figure 15.3 supports this story. In 2002, petistas placed themselves to the left of nonpartisans, whereas antipetistas placed themselves to the right of everyone else. The gap between petistas and nonpartisans narrowed in 2006 and disappeared completely by 2014, when petistas were no



This figure reports the average ideological self-placement of members of each group on a left-right scale. Questions had different wordings and sometimes different scales across surveys. Data sources are described in the Appendix.

Figure 15.3 Ideological Self-Placements of Partisans and Anti-Partisans (2002–2014).

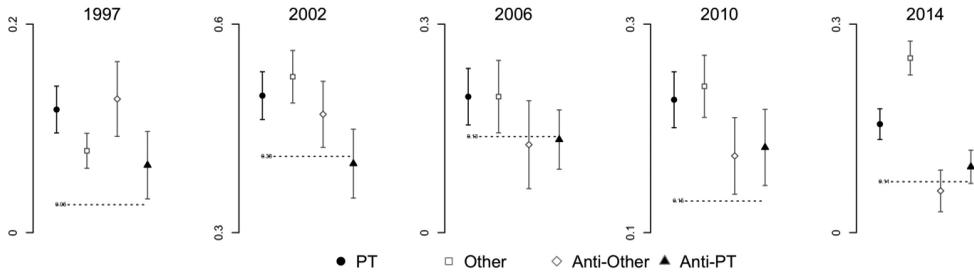
more liberal or conservative than nonpartisans. Perhaps more surprisingly, Figure 15.3 reveals that antipetistas have not consistently identified as ideological conservatives, except for early in the period. In every other year for which we have data, the average antipetista’s self-placement was indistinguishable from that of the average petista.

In results not shown here, we also found that petistas and antipetistas do not differ in their attitudes about the role of government in the economy: Petistas are no more “interventionist” than other groups, and antipetistas are not more likely to favor “free-market” solutions (Samuels & Zucco Jr. forthcoming). Likewise, attitudes about such hot-button social issues as abortion and gay rights, which divide liberals from conservatives in many countries, do not divide petistas from antipetistas. In other words, as both petismo and antipetismo grew in the electorate in the 2000s, the ideological gap between the two groups disappeared. In addition to demographics, ideology and attitudes do not clearly divide petistas and antipetistas.

### Political Engagement

A key reflection of the differences between petistas and antipetistas lies with the way that members of both groups engage in politics. We have known for some time that individual engagement powerfully predicts (positive) partisanship in Brazil, just as it does in other countries (Samuels 2006). Politically engaged citizens are more likely to become partisans because they tend to come into repeated contact with or be recruited by others who already identify with a party (Carmines & Stimson 1989).

The same is not true of negative partisans. Individuals who dislike a party may encounter others who share their feelings, but their predominant sentiment is repulsion, rather than attraction. This suggests that petistas will be more engaged in civic and/or political activism than nonpartisans, which is the root that eventually flowers into an in-group partisan attachment. This hypothesis follows conventional wisdom about petistas, but there is no analogous conventional wisdom about antipetistas. It is possible that antipetistas believe individual engagement in politics could make a difference—after all, millions of anti-PT protesters took to the streets in recent years. However, participation in a protest *against* something is not the same as actively working *for* something. We hypothesize that antipetistas will resemble nonpartisans rather than other partisans, in terms of their political engagement.



Figures report share of members of each group who reported having participated in at least one type of civil society group. Data sources are described in the Appendix.

Figure 15.4 Political Engagement of Partisans and Anti-Partisans (1997–2014).

We explored surveys that asked whether and to what extent respondents were involved with one of several types of civil society organization (CSO), such as social movements, unions, and residents’ or neighborhood associations. Because the list of potential CSOs differed across surveys, results show only whether respondents said they were involved in at least one such group. Figure 15.4 reveals that, as hypothesized, in every year petistas are more likely to be actively engaged in civil society activism than both nonpartisans and antipetistas. Likewise, as expected, antipetistas tend to resemble nonpartisans, being more likely to be engaged in civil society activism than members of that group in only two of the five years. Among partisans and anti-partisans, antipetistas are the least engaged group.

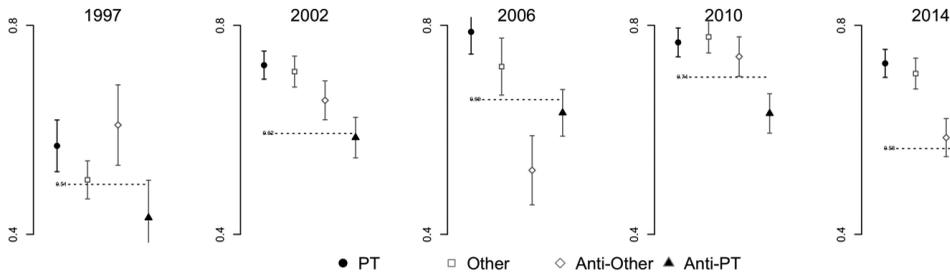
The results for political engagement may seem paradoxical, given the massive anti-PT protests in recent years. Yet, despite the protests, there are far more antipetistas among Brazilian voters than there were protesters on the streets. Moreover, participating in a protest may offer a fleeting feeling of being part of something larger than oneself, but development of an in-group attachment that results in a positive partisan sympathy requires commitment to sustain political engagement over the long term.

### Attitudes towards Democracy

The results for political engagement provide a clue about the roots of the difference between petistas and antipetistas. Given their refusal to identify positively with a political party, despite the powerful political feelings they hold, antipetistas hold an ambivalent attitude about institutionalized forms of democratic political participation. They may even hold an anti-system attitude towards democracy itself.

Survey evidence supports this claim. On the one hand, we expect petistas to favor democracy strongly. On the other hand, we know that antipetistas are not particularly conservative in ideological terms, and we have some clue that they are less likely to be engaged in civil society activism than petistas. Do these sentiments apply more broadly, to democracy as a system of government? To what extent does antipetismo reflect skepticism about the democratic process itself?

Figure 15.5 shows that, in 1997—more than a decade after military rule ended—antipetistas remained the group most skeptical about democracy. These sentiments have apparently never changed, as antipetistas’ feelings about democracy are always either no different from or less positive even than nonpartisans. In contrast, petistas have always been more favorable towards democracy than nonpartisans and are typically the most pro-democracy group. Although neither



The figure reports the share of members of each group that agree that democracy is the best political system. Question wording was not exactly the same across surveys. Respondents who said “Don’t know,” did not answer, or who were indifferent were considered as not agreeing with the statement. Data sources are described in the Appendix.

Figure 15.5 Support for Democracy among Partisans and Anti-Partisans (1997–2014).

demographics nor left–right ideology differentiates petistas and antipetistas, attitudes about the desirability and efficacy of participation in politics and towards democracy as a system of government seem to be fundamental.

### Attitudes about Government Policies and Performance

The roots of the divide between petistas and antipetistas do not lie with demographics, left–right ideology, or different opinions on important policies. Instead, political psychology plays a powerful role. Brazilians with a positive attitude towards social change are likely to view democracy as a tool for promoting such change, and they view social activism as a necessary component of any such effort. Such individuals are likely to become petistas. In contrast, individuals with negative attitudes towards social change are less likely to get involved in civil society and, thus, less likely to come into contact with partisans of any party or develop positive sentiments towards a party. Such individuals develop only negative partisan attitudes—most often against the party that embodies the approach to politics they dislike, the PT.

Positive and negative partisanship should shape individuals’ perceptions of government policies and performance. This is known as motivated reasoning, defined as individuals’ unconscious tendency to both seek out and fit information they receive to conclusions that suit their preconceived notions about what is good or right. Social psychology research suggests that individuals engage in motivated reasoning to maintain a stable social identity. Motivated reasoning shapes cognition itself, altering perceptions of the relative importance or credibility of information or sources of information.

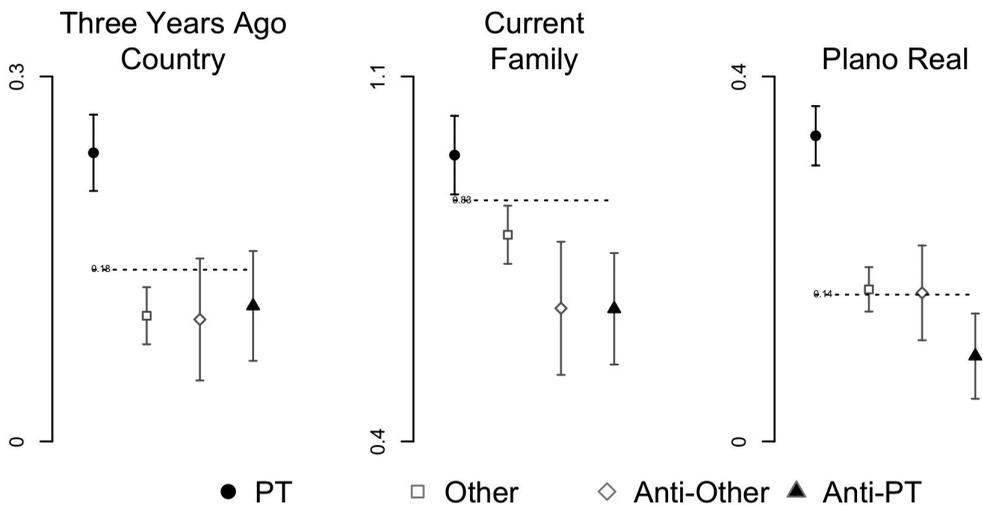
Motivated reasoning implies that, when a party is associated with a particular policy, partisan attitudes will override individuals’ actual attitudes about that policy, or even factual information about the policy’s true effects. We expect petistas and antipetistas to be hypocrites on two issues central to Brazilian politics in recent years: the state of the economy and perceptions of corruption. For example, when the PT was in power, and Brazil’s economy was growing, were petistas more likely than members of other groups to say that they were doing well—as was Brazil? Did antipetistas say they were doing worse—and that Brazil was doing worse? Likewise, motivated reasoning implies that petistas would perceive corruption to be a bigger problem when other parties are in power, whereas antipetistas should believe corruption to be worse under the PT.

If motivated reasoning is at work, then partisan attitudes should cause perceptions of economic performance and/or corruption, rather than the other way around.

### Perceptions of the Economy

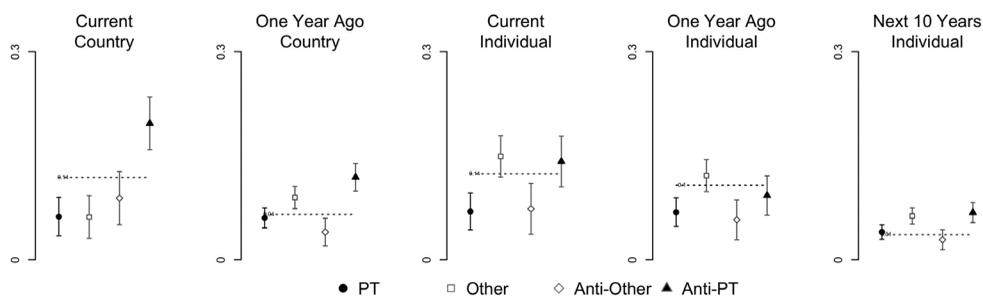
Data for years prior to Lula’s election are limited. However, Figure 15.6 reports the proportion of different groups of respondents who evaluated economic performance in 1997 negatively. The first panel reports the share of respondents who believed inflation to be worse than three years earlier. The second panel reports the share of respondents who stated that their family’s economic situation was bad or very bad, and the last panel reports the share of respondents who believed that Brazil’s economy had worsened after the *Plano Real*, an economic stabilization program implemented in 1994 under President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (PSDB). In 1997, Brazil’s GDP grew 3.4 percent. This is, by any objective standard, a robust level of growth. Even so, petistas engaged in motivated reasoning, expressing the most negative views of any group on all three measures of economic performance.

We have more detailed data for more recent years. Brazil’s economy grew relatively rapidly under the PT governments between 2003 and 2013. In Figure 15.7, we see that petistas and antipetistas differ markedly in their assessments of the state of the economy circa 2010. In particular, antipetistas were far more likely to consider the country’s economic situation as being bad or very bad—a patently ridiculous notion, given that GDP grew more than 7 percent that year. They were also more likely to say that the economy was doing worse than one year before—even though growth had even been *negative* in 2009! Egotropic individual-level assessments of the economy were more weakly associated with partisanship, but the pattern persists:



The first panel reports the share of respondents that consider the country’s economic situation worse than three years earlier. The center panel reports the share of respondents that consider their family’s economic situation as negative. The last panel reports the share of respondents in each category that evaluates the Real stabilization plan as bad. Data sources are described in the Appendix

Figure 15.6 Negative Evaluations of the Economy (1997).

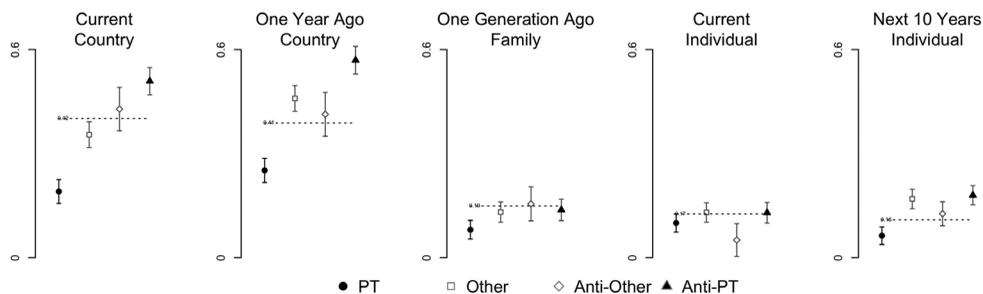


The first two figures report the share of respondents by type that evaluated the country’s economic situation as bad or very bad, and worse than one year before. The next two surveys report the share of respondents by type who evaluate their personal economic situation as bad or very bad, and as worse than one year ago. The last panel reports the share of respondents who consider it unlikely that they will be better off in the next ten years. Data sources are described in the Appendix.

Figure 15.7 Negative Evaluations of the Economy (2010).

petistas had a more positive assessment of their own economic condition as well as the state of the economy more broadly.

The same pattern of motivated reasoning appears in 2014, as in Figure 15.8. By that year, Brazil’s economy was objectively doing worse, experiencing zero GDP growth. Although anti-petistas were no more or less likely to feel they were doing well personally, they were far more likely than any other group to think Brazil was doing poorly and worse than one year before. The contrast between antipetistas and petistas is particularly stark. Antipetistas show more negative expectations, and petistas more positive expectations, than any other group: 50 percent of petistas approved of President Rousseff’s management of the economy in the first semester of 2014, whereas only 5 percent of antipetistas did.



The first two panels report the share of respondents by type who evaluated the country’s economic situation as bad or very bad, and worse than one year before. The third panel reports the share of respondents who thought that their quality of life was worse than their parents’. The fourth panel reports the share of respondents who evaluate their personal economic situation as bad or very bad, and the last panel reports the share of respondents who believe it unlikely that they will be better off within the next decade. The last question is from the ESEB; others are from the BEPS. Data sources are described in the Appendix.

Figure 15.8 Negative Evaluations of the Economy (2014).

### Perceptions of Corruption

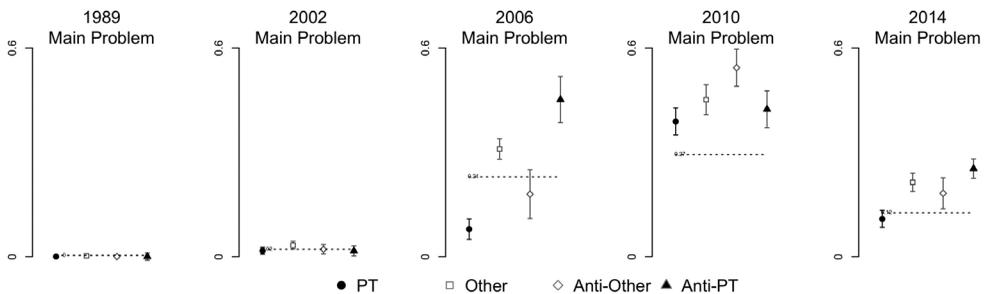
Although corruption is endemic to all of Brazil’s political parties, the PT has taken the lion’s share of the blame for corruption in the recent *Lava Jato* scandals. Why? There may be several explanations, but one answer highlights the importance of the PT’s label as both a positive and negative symbol for many Brazilian voters. The PT’s strong party label helped it cultivate partisans, but the prominence of its “brand name” also explains why only the PT has attracted such enmity. Just as the PT’s label attracted partisan supporters, the spread of its brand name also gave people who disagreed with it a clear target. Other parties have no coherent image, and their party labels are meaningless. When a politician from the PT is accused of corruption, voters are more likely to associate him or her with the party. The same cannot be said of politicians from other parties—they are held to accounts as individuals, not as members of a larger group. In this way, the PT’s unique historical strength in Brazil’s party system—its widely recognized party label—is also its Achilles’ heel.

Figure 15.9 lends credence to the notion that attitudes about corruption are an effect rather than a cause of positive and negative partisanship, showing variation in different groups’ views about the importance of corruption since 1989. What stands out in this figure are the similarities between petistas and antipetistas in years where corruption scandals did not dominate the headlines (1989, 2002, and 2010), and the differences in the other years, those when the *mensalão* and Lava Jato scandals were roiling the political system.

As is true of partisans in other countries, motivated reasoning turns petistas and antipetistas into hypocrites. The evidence here suggests that both positive and negative partisan attitudes are prior to, and thus shape, cognition. Petistas and antipetistas filter in information that fits their preconceived notions about the world and filter out contradictory information. They do so to help maintain their own social identity.

### Conclusion

Nonpartisans, typically defined in the literature as those without a positive partisan attachment, have always formed a significant share of Brazilian voters. In this chapter, we have shown that a substantial portion of these voters actually hold negative partisan attachments. Moreover, in the same way that most positive partisans in Brazil have been (and continue to be) petistas,



The figure shows shares of members of each group that reported corruption as the main problem for Brazil. Note that the scale of the figures varies. Data sources are described in the Appendix.

Figure 15.9 Attitudes towards Corruption (1989–2014).

most negative partisans have been (and continue to be) antipetistas. We report evidence that negative and positive partisanship are similar psychological constructs. In other words, like positive partisanship, negative partisanship shapes behavior and induces motivated reasoning. The main implication of these results is that the impact of the PT as a structuring force of Brazilian electoral politics has been understated. Extrapolating from these results, we expect the PT/anti-PT duality to continue to be relevant into the future, even as positive partisanship for the PT declines.

Evidence presented in this chapter also suggests that the differences between petistas and antipetistas do not lie with demographic or social class distinctions, and they cannot be boiled down to a conventional polarization between liberals and conservatives. In fact, petistas and antipetistas share many political views—about, for example, state intervention in the economy or gay marriage. Instead, petismo and antipetismo are likely rooted in authoritarian and anti-authoritarian psychological predispositions. The PT's roots lie in anti-authoritarian politics, and some individuals have an affinity with such discourse and praxis.

We suggest that antipetismo emerged as a response to the rise of the PT and the way it claimed that it would engage in politics, by promoting social, political, and economic change through mass, grass-roots participation. The PT's ability to attract partisan supporters grew with its electoral success. But, like an increasingly powerful magnet, its growth also increasingly repulsed Brazilians who rejected its approach to politics—those who viewed democracy ambivalently to begin with and who opposed the PT's efforts to promote social change. That is, to become an antipetista, one must not merely disapprove of the PT's performance in government: one must reject the PT's ostensible principles. Antipetismo is not driven primarily by PT corruption or incompetence. It rests, instead, on opposition to political, social, and economic change.

Petismo, in contrast, requires not only a particular predisposition to endorse the party and its principles, but also the possibility of recruitment. Individuals who were active in CSOs were more likely to be recruited by the PT, which deliberately followed a strategy that we have described as “mobilizing the organized” during much of its existence. The links forged with partisans through an organizational and procedural attachment to the party could be sustained even as the party's platform was moderated. However, the party's poor performance in office and its repeated links to massive corruption scandals have eroded its partisan support. Given the nature of partisanship, however, we expect relatively few petistas to adopt new partisan attachments quickly. In fact, they may “return to the fold” if the PT manages to regain the mantle of a strong opposition party or to enjoy consistent success in winning elections and governing at the subnational or national level.

## **Appendix**

Figure 15.1 was constructed from surveys fielded by Datafolha. The number of available surveys varies considerably over time, and so, to make the most of all the data available, we pooled surveys by year (effectively treating them as a single survey), instead of picking one or a few surveys each year.

We obtained the survey data from the CESOP repository. The reference codes of all surveys used are DAT00196, DAT0021, DAT00274, DAT00298, DAT00312, DAT00333, DAT00376, DAT00461, DAT00857, DAT00870, DAT00980, DAT01045, DAT01599, DAT01603, DAT01604, DAT01692, DAT02495, DAT02499, DAT02500, DAT02502, DAT02503, DAT02508, DAT02522, DAT02524, DAT02525, DAT02526, DAT02619,

DAT02531, DAT02533, DAT02534, DAT02535, DAT02537, DAT02538, DAT02544, DAT02552, DAT02553, DAT02557, DAT613393, DAT613419, DAT0328, DAT03281, DAT613485, DAT03284, DAT03286, DAT03288, DAT03292, DAT813519, DAT813538, DAT03372, DAT03925, and DAT03864.

Tables 15.2 and 15.3, as well as Figures 15.2–15.9, are based on a different set of surveys that asked questions that allow us to gauge negative partisanship (or anti-partisanship). Table 15.4, below, lists all the surveys in this set, as well as the wording of the questions used for positive and negative partisanship.

Table 15.A1 Negative Partisanship Surveys

Year	Survey	Type	Wording	Positive Question
1989	IBOPE 00192	Closed & multiple	E por qual ou quais destes partidos o(a) Sr(a) tem antipatia?	O(a) Sr(a) tem preferência ou simpatia maior por algum destes partidos políticos? [If yes] Qual?
1994	IBOPE 00339	Open & multiple	E de qual partido o(a) sr(a) gosta menos?	De qual partido político o(a) sr(a) gosta mais?
1997	FPA 01825	Open & multiple	E quais são os partidos políticos que você não gosta?	Qual é o partido político que você prefere?
2002	ESEB 01838	Closed & multiple	Agora gostaria de saber com mais detalhes o que o(a) Sr(a) pensa de alguns partidos políticos. Por favor, use uma nota de 0 a 10 para indicar o quanto o(a) Sr(a) gosta do partido que eu vou mencionar. Zero significa que o(a) Sr(a) NÃO gosta do partido e dez que o(a) Sr(a) gosta muito	Existe algum partido político que representa a maneira como o(a) Sr(a) pensa? [If yes] Qual o partido que melhor representa a maneira como o(a) Sr(a) pensa?
2006	FPA 02483	Closed & multiple	E quais são os partidos políticos de que você não gosta?	Qual é o partido político que você prefere?
2006	ESEB 02489	Closed & multiple	Agora gostaria de saber com mais detalhes o que o(a) Sr(a) pensa de alguns partidos políticos. Por favor, use uma nota de 0 a 10 para indicar o quanto o(a) Sr(a) gosta do partido que eu vou mencionar. Zero significa que o(a) Sr(a) NÃO gosta do partido e dez que o(a) Sr(a) gosta muito	Existe algum partido político que representa a maneira como o(a) Sr(a) pensa? [If yes] Qual o partido que melhor representa a maneira como o(a) Sr(a) pensa?
2010	ESEB 03928	Closed & multiple	Agora gostaria de saber com mais detalhes o que o(a) Sr(a) pensa de alguns partidos políticos. Por favor, use uma nota de 0 a 10 para indicar o quanto o(a) Sr(a) gosta do partido que eu vou mencionar. Zero significa que o(a) Sr(a) NÃO gosta do partido e dez que o(a) Sr(a) gosta muito	Existe algum partido político que representa a maneira como o(a) Sr(a) pensa? [If yes] Qual o partido que melhor representa a maneira como o(a) Sr(a) pensa?

2014	ESEB 03928	Closed & multiple	Agora gostaria de saber com mais detalhes o que o(a) Sr(a) pensa de alguns partidos políticos. Por favor, use uma nota de 0 a 10 para indicar o quanto o(a) Sr(a) gosta do partido que eu vou mencionar. Zero significa que o(a) Sr(a) NÃO gosta do partido e dez que o(a) Sr(a) gosta muito	Existe algum partido político que representa a maneira como o(a) Sr(a) pensa? [If yes] Qual o partido que melhor representa a maneira como o(a) Sr(a) pensa?
2014	BEPS	Open & Single	Há algum partido do qual o(a) Sr.(a) não goste? [if yes] Qual é este partido?	Atualmente o(a) Sr.(a) simpatiza com algum partido político? [If yes] Com qual partido o(a) Sr.(a). simpatiza?

## Notes

- 1 The material in this chapter comes from our forthcoming book for Cambridge University Press, with roughly the same title.
- 2 Independent watchdogs claim that 299 of the 513 legislators serving at the time of the impeachment had at least one “judicial imbroglio,” several of whom have more than 20 different occurrences. See [www.contasabertas.com.br/website/arquivos/12770](http://www.contasabertas.com.br/website/arquivos/12770) or [www.ebc.com.br/noticias/politica/2016/04/cerca-60-dos-deputados-federais-que-julgaram-dilma-tem-pendencias-na](http://www.ebc.com.br/noticias/politica/2016/04/cerca-60-dos-deputados-federais-que-julgaram-dilma-tem-pendencias-na)
- 3 For a detailed description of the experiments, a first experiment dealing only with partisanship, and discussion of the results, see Samuels and Zucco Jr. (2014). See Samuels and Zucco Jr. (forthcoming) for one dealing with both positive and negative partisans.
- 4 The experiments showed, as well, that PSDBistas are also swayed by in- and out-group cues, even though they are a significantly smaller group than the PT. We also found that neither partisans of other parties, nor nonpartisans were affected by PT and PSDB cues on the policy positions. Our conclusion was that the in- and out-group sentiment extended only to the PT and PSDB, probably because of their relevance in the presidential electoral disputes.
- 5 The data in this section come from a set of Datafolha surveys from 1989–2016 that use an identical question to measure partisanship, along with a set of ten surveys covering the same period but sponsored by different organizations and designed without reference to each other, that employ different questions to measure both positive and/or negative partisanship. See Samuels and Zucco Jr. (forthcoming) for additional analyses and complete details about methods and sources.
- 6 We employed robust standard errors in the construction of the confidence intervals to ensure complete analogy with a difference in proportions test.

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