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Knowing Left from Right: Ideological Identification in Brazil, 2002-2006

Barry Ames and Amy Erica Smith

Abstract: Ideology, typically defined on a left-right spectrum, should provide a means of communication between elites and masses. After years of leftist party rule, have Brazilian voters internalized ideological divisions? Longitudinal surveys conducted from 2002 to 2006 reveal high nonresponse and instability in ideological self-identification. We find that the capacity to think ideologically is in part a function of political and social context. This capacity has real political consequences. A Heckman selection model reveals that those who refuse to take an ideological position or who exhibit high instability in self-identification tend to be latent rightists and to choose rightist presidential candidates. Moreover, they interpret the ideological spectrum differently from those who are more consistent in ideological self-placement. We thus make two contributions, showing how contextual factors influence ideological thinking and how low levels of ideological thinking affect the measurement of Brazilian public opinion.

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Introduction

To what extent do Brazilian citizens use the labels “left” and “right” to describe their own political views and to map the political landscape? Despite the prominence of catch-all parties, divisions between the two poles of the ideological spectrum form an important dimension of conflict among elites in Brazil (Coppedge 1997; Leoni 2002; Power and Zucco 2009; Saiegh 2009). The Workers’ Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, or PT) in particular has positioned itself on the left, demanding of its parliamentarians strict party loyalty and adherence to an ideologically oriented program (Ames 2002; Hunter 2008; Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñan 1997). While the party’s positions have moderated substantially, especially since its assumption of the presidency in 2003, it remains a keystone of the Brazilian left (Power and Zucco 2009; Samuels 2004, 2008). Moreover, during the presidential campaigns of 2002 and 2006, PT candidate Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva sought to differentiate himself ideologically from his top opponents, in both years from the center-right Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB). Research in American politics shows that ideological divisions at the elite level can trigger use of ideology at the mass level (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Hetherington 2001; Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1978). If so, we might expect Brazilian voters to have internalized left-right divisions and to use these categories in describing their political world.¹

Why is this question important? The left-right spectrum provides a means of communication between politicians and the electorate. While there are some signs the party system is consolidating at the elite level (Braga 2006, 2007; Melo 2006; Zucco 2009), the extent to which any party system can represent the masses effectively depends in large part on whether masses and elites think in the same language. Scholars of representation in Latin America emphasize the importance of congruence between ideological and policy preferences at the mass and elite levels (Kitschelt et al. 2010; Luna and Zechmeister 2005; Mainwaring, Bejarano, and Pizarro Leongómez 2006; Siavelis 2009). Congruence could be limited to isolated issues, or voters could associate parties with groups of issues independently of ideological labels. Such congruence may be rare, however. In most cases, those who are unable to think in ideological terms will have difficulty achieving ideological or policy representation.

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We illuminate this question with the results of a six-wave panel survey of Brazilian citizens conducted from 2002 to 2006. We first examine the extent of left-right self-identification among respondents in each wave. However, the longitudinal nature of the data enables a much tighter grasp on our research question. We examine results not only by wave, but also across waves; that is, we assess stability and change in response patterns. Most respondents, it turns out, report their own identification on the left-right spectrum in some waves and not in others. Moreover, even those who compliantly choose an identification from among the left-right response categories provided by the interviewer might exhibit instability in the categories chosen: for instance, reporting “left” in one wave and “center” in the next. Of course, even at the elite level ideological positions shift over time due to real change in political beliefs, but we argue that very high levels of instability in responses are *prima facie* evidence of an incomplete understanding of the left-right spectrum. Thus, the ability to use the left-right spectrum is not dichotomous; it cannot be evaluated simply by respondent reports of left-right self-identification. Rather, respondents can be arranged on a continuum based on their levels of ideological stability.²

After examining the degree to which Brazilian citizens self-identify on the left-right scale, we ask two interrelated questions. First, what determines whether respondents self-identify on the ideological spectrum, as well as the stability of their responses? Most importantly, ideological polarization at the elite level has an educative effect, helping voters think in terms of the left-right spectrum. In addition, Brazilians whose social and media environments include greater amounts of political information are more able to use left-right labels. Second, what are the consequences of low levels of ideological identification for the measurement of public opinion? Non-respondents and those with shaky understanding of ideological terms are different in politically important ways from those with more stable ideological dispositions. In particular, they are more likely to be latent rightists, and they express this latent tendency at the voting booth. They also identify different issues with the left-right spectrum than their more ideologically oriented fellow citizens.

This paper makes a further contribution that is both theoretical and methodological. We argue that the process by which respondents decide where to place themselves on the left-right spectrum is not causally inde-

2 This is similar to what Jacoby (1995, 2002) terms “liberal-conservative thinking” or “ideological thinking.” We assume that stability is an indicator of understanding of the spectrum. The fact that ideological stability functions very similarly to a dummy variable for whether the respondent provides any self-identification in statistical models, and that it is associated with other variables with which it should theoretically be associated, provides some evidence of the construct validity of this measure.

pendent from the process determining whether they provide any self-placement at all; many of the same factors affect both. Thus, the error terms of models predicting nonresponse and response direction will be correlated. This suggests the need for a selection model, since ignoring nonresponses while appraising the meaning of the spectrum will lead to selection bias.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. The next section lays out our expectations regarding the extent, causes, and consequences of ideological identification in Brazil. The third section offers background on contemporary Brazilian politics in the context of our longitudinal survey design. Section four discusses the data and variables as well as our selection model. Sections five, six, and seven estimate the extent of left-right identification and assess both its predictors and its effects. We conclude with the implications of our results for the study of ideology and for Brazilian politics.

Left-Right Self-Identification: Extent, Causes, and Consequences

Since Brazil's return to democracy in the mid-1980s, many studies have investigated the ideological tendencies of the Brazilian electorate. Singer (1999) and Carreirão (2002, 2007) both note that the proportion of Brazilians willing to identify their own positions on the left-right spectrum in surveys runs between 60 and 80 percent.³ This seems strikingly high, given that levels of party identification have hovered between 40 and 50 percent with little clear trend since democratization (Carreirão and Kinzo 2004; Samuels 2006).⁴ Still, even if just a quarter of voters fails to identify on the

3 Dating from Downs (1957) and Converse (1964; Campbell et al. 1964), political scientists have conceptualized *ideology* as having two core components: constraint, or the extent to which attitudes cohere in predictable ways; and contrast, or the extent to which individuals can be arrayed along a single dimension (Knight 2006). Scholars have traditionally interpreted self-placement along the left-right or liberal-conservative spectrum as evidence of ideology. We follow this convention, using the terms *ideology* and *left-right self-identification* interchangeably. However, we remain agnostic regarding the extent to which those who self-identify on the left-right spectrum actually understand the terms or have constrained political attitudes.

4 The Brazilian National Election Studies data used by Samuels show levels of party identification even lower than those found in the Datafolha data used by Carreirão and Kinzo (2004) and Kinzo (2004, 2005). Though early students of these attitudes in the United States concluded that ideology is cognitively more challenging than party identification (Campbell et al. 1964; Converse 1964), in the Brazilian political context left-right identification, despite the challenges mentioned above, might actually be in some ways easier than party identification, since it presents voters with a limited number of choices – right, center, and left – with an inherent order.

left-right spectrum, our ability to understand ideology in the electorate is compromised, since non-respondents are likely to differ in important ways from respondents.

Furthermore, many who are willing to choose a position from among the options “left,” “right,” and “center” supplied by the interviewer may not fully understand the positions they choose. Jacoby (1995) finds that while half of US voters succeed in locating their own liberal-conservative positions and those of candidates and parties, a lower portion has consistent candidate and party preferences, and even smaller fractions have consistent issue attitudes. Similarly, Carreirão (2002) finds that despite high levels of left-right self-identification, fewer than half of Brazilians locate the party of their choice correctly on the same spectrum, and less than a third give “minimally acceptable” open-ended definitions of left and right.

Ideological terms may be particularly difficult for Brazilian citizens to grasp for two reasons. Consider first Brazil’s multi-party system, which in an environment of generally low-elite level polarization may pose challenges to ideological communication between elites and masses.⁵ Politics such as Chile and France have been characterized by both high numbers of parties and high polarization, making it easier to attach the labels “left” and “right” to observed political conflicts than in multi-party environments of low elite-level polarization. In environments of low elite-level polarization, two-party systems may facilitate ideological identification. In the United States, for instance, the two major parties largely appropriated the labels for each end-point of the ideological spectrum, despite fairly low polarization. And consider Brazil’s political history. Over the past 40 years, the terms “left” and “right” have been politicized in strikingly different ways and degrees. Between 1964 and the mid-1980s, the military regime, wielding strong control over the media (Lima 1988), portrayed leftists as unpatriotic, anarchic, and misguided communist subversives. During the first two decades of democratic rule, a group of opposition parties led by the Worker’s Party (PT) formed a newly legitimized left. While the PT gradually moderated its social and economic positions, migrating from a socialist agenda to one affirming capitalism and gradualism, it nonetheless remained the standard bearer of leftism (Hunter 2007, 2008; Samuels 2004). In 2003 the PT became the party of government, holding the presidency and a key bloc in the Legislature. In the process, it moved toward the center and deemphasized left-right

5 As evidence to be presented below suggests, ideological polarization among Brazilians varies across time, in particular as a function of the electoral cycle. In general, however, while this article does not touch on evidence comparing Brazil with other countries, it is safe to say that elite-level polarization is lower in Brazil than in many countries with strongly organized and deeply rooted parties on both the left and right.

conflicts, but it continues to seek the support of its traditional leftist base. We thus expect that Brazilian voters will have a complex and at times confusing mix of associations with these terms.⁶

What affects the extent to which respondents are able to self-identify on the left-right spectrum in any given wave and to provide consistent, stable responses over time? For two reasons, polarization at the elite level triggers higher levels of ideological identification among the masses (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Hetherington 2001). First, politicians use ideological language. In periods of polarization, politicians emphasize their differences in ideological terms. Such polarization will vary partly as a function of the electoral cycle; at the height of campaigning, polarization often increases. Voters learn to use ideological labels from politicians. Second, in periods of low polarization, voters have a hard time understanding ideological differences even if politicians continue to use ideological language. Greater distance between candidates makes the difference between poles starker, facilitating the use of left-right categories. Thus we expect that the distance on the left-right spectrum between presidential candidates affects the ability to use these terms: the greater the distance, the higher the levels of left-right self-identification and ideological stability.

Other factors also affect ideological thinking. Voters immersed in social environments containing higher levels of political information will be more likely to identify on the left-right spectrum and will exhibit higher levels of ideological stability. Brazilian neighborhoods and social networks are characterized by many opportunities for casual discussion in the course of daily activities: at the supermarket, at the soccer field, at church, and at the neighborhood bar or bakery. Such discussions touch on many topics, including politics (Baker, Ames, and Rennó 2006). Voters learn the meaning of the ideological spectrum from these discussants; these sources give hints on appropriate answers regarding left-right self identification (Beck et al. 2002). Moreover, talking about politics with friends, family, and neighbors helps individuals learn to articulate their own political attitudes (Pingree 2007). Thus we hypothesize that Brazilians living in neighborhoods with higher educational levels and embedded in social networks with higher levels of political discussion will be more likely to identify their own position on the left-right scale in each wave and will exhibit greater ideological stability over time.

6 The terms *left* and *right* also have moral connotation in everyday speech in Brazil. As in English the word *dirito(a)*, or *right*, has two positive meanings in Portuguese, in the sense of “human rights” and “doing what’s right.” The term also refers to a body or field of law. The word *esquerdo(a)*, or *left*, has less common negative connotations; see <<http://forum.wordreference.com/showthread.php?t=1269625>>.

Beyond these primary hypotheses, we test the impact of a number of other variables. Political knowledge and education should lower nonresponse and promote stability (Almeida 2007; Carreirão 2002; for US-based evidence, see Jacoby 1991, 1995), just as they affect party identification (Kinzo 2005, Samuels 2006). Furthermore, those who are exposed to greater amounts of political information via the mass media will be more likely to grasp the use of ideological categories (Lima 2007; Miguel 2004). However, we expect effects to be stronger for newspaper readers and for radio news listeners than for television news viewers, since television news tends to focus on politicians' personalities, major political events, and during campaigns on the "horserace." Finally, we suspect that women will exhibit lower levels of left-right self-identification. The basis of the continued gender gap in political understanding, vote choice, and engagement in Brazil remains to be satisfactorily explained. Women's lower levels of ideological identification may be due to gender norms, to higher religiosity, or to lower political interest and involvement, although the latter factors are to some extent also included in the models. Nonetheless, we include sex as a covariate to avoid underspecification of the models.

After assessing the factors affecting left-right self-identification and ideological stability, we move on to evaluate these traits' political consequences. First, we argue, they affect the distribution of ideology in the electorate. Brazilians who use the ideological spectrum less fluently will tend to be "latent" rightists: were they to identify on the left-right spectrum, they would choose the response categories to the right of center. Moreover, they will tend to vote for rightist candidates. Voters who fail to identify on the left-right spectrum are typically of lower educational level and social status and are less interested in politics. They tend to value different features in politicians, focusing on personality and particularistic benefits – both clientelism and pork – rather than policy outputs (Almeida 2007). In Brazil candidates on the right have traditionally been associated with clientelistic benefits and personalism to a greater degree than have candidates on the left (Baiocchi 2003; Hunter 2007; Power 2000). Thus, rightist politicians will meet the demands – for pork, clientelistic benefits, or personalistic identification – of the non-ideologically-inclined to a greater degree than will leftists. And to the extent that ideological non-identifiers are interested in policy outputs, their policy preferences will tend to be to the right of center. Social commentators have long noted the conservative tendencies of poor Brazilians (Almeida 2007; DaMatta 1984). And identification with the PT has historically – at least until the Lula da Silva presidency – been strongly *positively* associated with social status, despite the party's redistributive aims (Carreirão 2007; Carreirão and Kinzo 2004). To the extent that scholars

assess the distribution of ideology or attempt to predict the vote based only on those who report a left-right self-identification, they will overestimate Brazilians' leftist tendencies.

In other words, the same factors that affect *whether* respondents choose to provide a left-right self-identification also affect *where* they are likely to place themselves on the spectrum. While some of these factors are measured in our data, others, such as clientelistic attitudes and motivation, are not. Thus, the error terms of models of nonresponse and direction of response will be correlated. The result is selection bias: models predicting left-right self-identification using non-random samples estimate coefficients incorrectly (Heckman 1979; Little and Rubin 2002). That is, we expect that nonresponse affects the *meaning* of the left-right spectrum. We demonstrate this using a selection model, developing a two-part function. The outcome equation predicts where respondents who choose a position self-locate on the left-right spectrum, while the selection equation predicts whether respondents choose a position. Furthermore, the meaning of the ideological spectrum is affected not only by nonresponse, but also by those who report left-right identifications in a given wave but exhibit instability in responses over time. The highly unstable will have much weaker understandings of the ideological spectrum. As far as they do understand the spectrum, they will tend to associate it with different issues than will their more stable fellow citizens.

What are these issues? Brazilian elites group issues along the left-right spectrum in different ways than politicians in other countries; this is likely to affect the meaning of the same spectrum in the masses. We first assess the impact of *tolerance for strikes* and *support for democracy* on self-reported leftism. Under the military regime, repression of labor and the socialist and communist parties led the left to align with the pro-democracy movement. Since the return to democracy, leftist politicians and municipal governments have sought to increase participation in politics and have generally been more tolerant of disruptions of public order (Abers 2000; Baiocchi 2003, 2005; Fausto 1994; Keck 1992; Meneguello 1989).⁷ Next, we examine the effect of attitudes towards neoliberal policies such as *privatization* and *free trade* on left-right self-identification. Opposition to free trade may not be associated with leftism in Brazil, where public support for free trade is widespread (Baker 2003, 2009; Magaloni and Romero 2008). Many politicians on the left, conscious of Brazil's export potential and sharing the perception that international trade negotiations have disadvantaged the nation, have embraced

7 Evidence of the association between support for democracy and leftism is mixed; while some find a positive association (Carreirão 2002; Singer 1999), others find a negative (Seligson 2007) or null relationship (Arnold and Samuels forthcoming).

trade. Third, we assess the effect of attitudes towards social spending on leftism. Note that Singer (1999) found little association between leftism and support for egalitarian economic policies. Assistance to the poor is the primary means by which politicians on both the right and left seek the support of low-income voters (Caldeira 1984; Zucco 2008). Moreover, many leftists have criticized President Lula da Silva's largest social spending program, *Bolsa Família*, as clientelistic (Bearak 2004; Oliveira 2006). Fourth, attitudes towards Lula da Silva should affect left-right positions. As the most prominent face of the left in Brazil for the past 20 years, and as leader of the PT, he anchors self-identification (Coimbra 2007). His supporters may infer their leftism from attitudes towards him; those disliking Lula da Silva may feel pushed towards affiliating with the right.

Finally, we consider three other factors. Education has traditionally been strongly associated with PT identification (Carreirão 2002; Nicolau and Peixoto 2007). In addition, Almeida (2007) shows that the highly educated are more likely to take progressive stances on issues ranging from clientelism to racism. Thus we expect that greater education will lead respondents to identify as leftists. Second, women – following long-standing patterns in Brazil – should be less leftist than men. Third, we hypothesize that older people will be less likely to identify as leftists, given their memories of authoritarian propaganda against leftists and communists (on age and socialization, see Converse 1969; Stoker and Jennings 2008; Valentino and Sears 1998).

Most importantly for our analysis, however, all these relationships should be found much more prominently among the most ideologically stable respondents. Among the ideologically unstable, left-right self-identifications will have little significance and few attitudes will predict leftism. Finally, we expect that nonresponse will also affect the meaning of leftism. Models of left-right self-identification that fail to take into account the non-random nature of the sample of self-identifiers will misestimate coefficients, leading to incorrect understandings of the left-right spectrum.

Brazilian Politics and the 2002-2006 Panel Survey

The longitudinal survey utilized here took place in a period of important changes in the ideological distribution of Brazilian elites. Waves 1 and 2 were implemented in April and August of 2002, prior to the early October first-round presidential election in which Lula da Silva finished first. The survey's third wave was implemented in October, before the runoff in which Lula da Silva beat José Serra (from the incumbent centrist PSDB). Lula da Silva's second-round win and the peaceful assumption of power by a leftist were especially significant given the repression of the left by the 1964-1988

military regime and the fact that opposition to a pro-labor president had sparked the 1964 coup. Lula da Silva's victory in 2002 is thus an early instance of Latin America's regional "left turn." He had campaigned in three previous elections as a socialist, and the opposition strove in 2002 to paint him once again as a radical. Thus, elite polarization was high at the peak of the 2002 campaign.

Wave 4 went into the field in 2004, 18 months into Lula da Silva's term. By this time, Lula da Silva was widely seen as a moderate. True, he maintained links (developed in his years as a labor leader) to civil society organizations (Hochstetler 2004), and he promoted new and controversial social programs (Silva 2004). But he also continued most of the economic policies of the previous administration (Hunter 2007, 2008; Hunter and Power 2005).

Waves 5 and 6 took place in August and October of 2006, at the beginning and end of the presidential election campaign. Lula da Silva's 48 percent in the first round sent the election into a second-round runoff. Arguably a centrist by the 2006 campaign, in the second round Lula da Silva stressed his leftist credentials (Hunter and Power 2007; Oliveira 2006). Thus the 2006 campaign should have led to heightened levels of left-right self-identification, though not as high as those found at the peak of the 2002 campaign.

Methods and Measures

The Survey

The survey – with 1,401 respondents present in all six waves – was implemented in two cities, Juiz de Fora (Minas Gerais state) and Caxias do Sul (Rio Grande do Sul state).⁸ Roughly demographically and economically equal, the cities' politics diverge sharply. Juiz de Fora is traditionally centrist, with a weakly organized left (the PT) and a strongly clientelistic center, the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB). Politics in Caxias do Sul has long been polarized between the PT, which had controlled two consecutive municipal governments, and a strong "anti-left" coalesced around a well-organized PMDB. The sample was clustered within 22 neighborhoods in each city, with on average 32 respondents per neighborhood.

This sampling design has both strengths and weaknesses. Of course these two cities are not representative of all Brazil. But they are typical of urban areas; the only inherent limitation of the two-city sample is the ab-

8 The National Science Foundation and the research endowment of the Andrew W. Mellon Professorship at the University of Pittsburgh provided grants supporting this research.

sence of rural respondents. Furthermore, the two-city focus enabled clustering within neighborhoods. As a result of this clustering, we can examine the impact of neighborhood context on ideological identification, while effectively controlling for municipal context in a way that would have been impossible in a more nationally representative study.

The use of panel data inevitably leads to concerns about attrition. Of the 4,871 respondents who were interviewed in Wave 1, only 1,401 were interviewed in all five subsequent waves, yielding an overall attrition rate of 69 percent. Most attrition occurred between the first and second waves, when 26.4 percent of the original sample fell out and between the third and the fourth waves, when 21.5 percent of the original sample dropped. However, response patterns are not monotonic; 483 participants fell out of the panel in one wave and returned in a later one, and 110 respondents interviewed in both Waves 1 and 6 had missed at least one previous wave.

Were those who stayed in the survey for all six waves different from those who did not? While some panel studies have found little bias from attrition, in other cases attrition has been shown to affect measurement of political behavior and attitudes as well as estimates of causal effects (Bartels 1999; Jennings 1996; Kruse et al. 2009; Sherman 2000; Traugott and Katosh 1979). We assessed differences between those present in all six waves and those who were not on a range of demographic, opinion, and behavioral variables. Demographic differences are very clear: respondents interviewed more often are substantially more likely to be female and slightly more likely to live in Juiz de Fora. They also tend to be older and to have lower educational levels. However, we find few differences on relevant political variables. For instance, after controlling for over-time variation in public opinion that applies to all respondents in each wave, response patterns have no effect on self-reported positions on a left-right scale or on related political attitudes. The exception is attitudes towards social spending, where those who drop out are somewhat more leftist. Moreover, extensive tests show that response patterns have no relationship to the ability to identify one's own or politicians' positions on the left-right spectrum, or to the ability to respond to others public opinion questions. Finally, they are unrelated to political knowledge or to most forms of media consumption. However, those who respond in more waves are substantially more likely to engage in political conversation, and to listen to political coverage on the radio. We conclude that attrition is likely to have little effect on our assessments of ideological thinking in the Brazilian electorate.

Measures

We measured left-right self-identification in each wave on a 5-point scale. The question has three nonresponse options: the usual “do not know” and “no response,” as well as “the respondent does not understand the meaning of these terms.” Interviewers did not read the last option aloud, marking it only when the respondent volunteered this answer. After examining the distribution of responses to this question, we treat all three nonresponse options as a single category throughout the rest of the paper.

What variables affect nonresponse and ideological stability? *Candidate polarization* measures the distance between candidates. The ideological positions of the top two presidential candidates in each wave are estimated using the mean of the positions respondents in the top knowledge category ascribe to them. The absolute value of the distance between the two candidates takes a value of 0.77 in the third wave, 0.43 in the fourth, 0.42 in the fifth, and 0.50 in the sixth.⁹ Because all respondents in each wave receive the same value on this measure, we are unable to enter it into equations predicting ideological stability. Our measure of stability, as discussed below, varies only across respondents but not over time. In the equation predicting non-response, we enter the measure of candidate polarization as a contextual variable; as a result, non-response is estimated using a hierarchical (or mixed) logit model.¹⁰

Next, *neighborhood education* is the mean educational level in each respondent’s neighborhood, based on the responses of the other interviewees from the same neighborhood.¹¹ We also include a dummy variable for the city of *Juiz de Fora* to verify that results for *neighborhood education* are not simply a proxy for some other contextual effect occurring at the municipal level. This is important because mean educational level is substantially higher in Juiz de

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- 9 The survey asked respondents to place candidates only in the last four waves, so this measure is unavailable in the first and second waves. As a result, the predictive model below is estimated on data from only the last four waves of the survey. In the fourth wave, the survey continued to ask about the candidates Lula da Silva and Serra, though the election was almost two years in the past.
 - 10 We recalculated the measure of candidate polarization using only the responses of the 409 interviewees who provided a left-right self identification in every wave. When we do so, scores for polarization become 0.67 in Wave 3, 0.45 in Wave 4, 0.42 in Wave 5, and 0.46 in Wave 6. This is correlated at 0.99 with the measure based on knowledge. The new measure has no effect on results in either the model of non-response or the selection model.
 - 11 In order to reduce multicollinearity with the respondent’s own education, and to ensure that we are measuring the effect of education at the neighborhood rather than the respondent-level, we remove each respondent’s own reported educational level from the neighborhood mean. The correlation between individual education and our measure of neighborhood education which removes the individual’s own score is 0.37.

Fora than in Caxias do Sul. Our last variable measuring social context, *political discussion*, is the mean (alpha 0.74) of the respondent's reported frequency of talking about politics with neighbors, friends, and family. *Political knowledge* measures correct responses to two questions regarding the name of the Vice President and the name of a country in the Mercosul agreement.¹² Dummy variables for media exposure are based on questions asking if the respondent accesses news from *television*, *newspapers*, and *radio*. Finally, *education* is measured as the number of years of schooling (recoded to run from 0 to 1); *female* is a dummy variable and *age* is in years.

We coded issue attitudes and predictors of leftism as follows. The *feeling thermometer for Lula* originally ranged from 0 to 10; as with nearly all other variables, it is recoded to range from 0 to 1. *Support for democracy* ranges from strong agreement with the statement that "sometimes a military government is better" (0) to strong agreement that "democracy is always better" (1). *Tolerance for strikes* is a three-category variable: 0 represents "strikes ought to be prohibited"; 1 means that "all strikes should be permitted." *Opposition to privatization* and to *free trade* are five-category variables for which 0 represents strong support and 1 represents strong opposition. *Support for land reform* and *social spending* are five-category variables for which 1 represents support for the policy, and 0 represents opposition to it.

Finally, we use indicator variables for waves in all time-varying models except the one predicting whether a respondent reports an ideology. These variables should pick up features of the political context at each particular moment in recent Brazilian political history that apply equally to all respondents in a given wave. In some waves, sympathy with the left or right may be particularly strong across the board, as a result of rises and falls in public opinion. These indicator variables are excluded from the model predicting whether respondents self-identify because that model also controls for political polarization. Since the polarization measure varies only across time, models controlling for both polarization and wave result in perfect multicollinearity. Models available upon request show that polarization is a much stronger predictor of ideological identification than are simple wave dummies.

The Selection Model

We have argued that the process determining which interviewees provide a left-right self-identification is far from random. Rather, it is a function of measured variables such as educational level and unmeasured ones such as

12 Unfortunately, knowledge questions varied across the waves, and these were the only two questions asked in every wave. Because of the small number of questions, about half of the sample is in the top knowledge category.

clientelistic attitudes and political interest. Heckman (1979) showed that an estimation using non-randomly selected samples could be interpreted as problem of specification error, or omitted variable bias, where some of the omitted variables are unobserved and affect both the selection process and the outcome of interest. Following Heckman, we develop a two-stage model; the first stage assesses the process of deciding whether to provide a left-right self-identification, while the second stage assesses location on the left-right spectrum among those who chose to respond.

More specifically, our model contains both selection and outcome equations. We define z_{it}^* , the respondent's latent, continuous propensity to identify on the left-right scale in a given wave, as a function of a vector of covariates w plus measurement error, e_{it} : $z_{it}^* = w_{it}'\alpha + e_{it}$. The selection equation models z_{it} , an indicator for whether the respondent was observed to self-identify in the given wave, as a probit function for which $z_{it} = 0$ if $z_{it}^* \leq 0$, and $z_{it} = 1$ if $z_{it}^* > 0$. Furthermore, we define y_{it}^* , the respondent's latent position on the left-right spectrum in a given wave, as a function of a vector of covariates x_{it} plus measurement error, u_{it} : $y_{it}^* = x_{it}'\beta + u_{it}$. We assume that both error terms are normally distributed with mean 0 and constant variance. The outcome equation models y_{it} , the observed position on the left-right spectrum, where $y_{it} = y_{it}^*$ if $z_{it} = 1$, and y_{it} is not observed if $z_{it} = 0$. Heckman showed that the observed values for y_{it} could be estimated using the following equation: $E(y_{it} | z = 1, y_{it}) = x_{it}'\beta + \rho\sigma_e\sigma_u * (\varphi [w_{it}'\alpha]) / (\Phi [w_{it}'\alpha])$, where ρ is the correlation of the error terms in the two models, σ_e and σ_u are the standard deviations of the two error terms, and $(\varphi [w_{it}'\alpha]) / (\Phi [w_{it}'\alpha])$ is the inverse mills ratio, λ . In order to achieve identification, at least one regressor in the selection equation must be unique (Greene 1997). However, all the regressors from the outcome equation do not have to be included in the selection equation. On an intuitive level, this equation tells us that models predicting left-right position based only on the non-randomly selected cases for which the dependent variable is observed will misestimate coefficients when the error terms of the outcome and selection models are correlated.

The Extent of Left-Right Self-Identification and Ideological Stability

Consider first the evolution of left-right self-identification. Table 1 shows that in all six waves self-identification was fairly symmetrically distributed between left and right. The distribution is bimodal: most respondents locate themselves at either the right or left. In all waves except the third, a somewhat higher proportion of the sample is right than left, but more respondents place themselves on the “center-left” than on the “center-right.” In

Wave 3, self-reported leftists jump from 18 percent to 24 percent of the sample. This jump likely reflects the endogeneity of self-reported position to candidate attitudes and the effects of Lula da Silva’s high popularity during the second round. In Waves 1, 2, and 4, around 38 percent of the sample was in one of the three nonresponse categories, while in Wave 3 the share dropped to 32 percent. Nonresponse rises in the last two waves, to 42 percent in the fifth and 41 percent in the sixth wave.

Table 1: Left-Right Self-Placement, Frequency and Percent

	Left	Center-Left	Center	Center-Right	Right	Does not understand terms	Does not know	No response	Total
Wave 1	259	120	152	55	297	286	186	46	1,401
	<i>18.5</i>	<i>8.6</i>	<i>10.9</i>	<i>3.9</i>	<i>21.2</i>	<i>20.4</i>	<i>13.3</i>	<i>3.3</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Wave 2	232	143	183	63	246	358	127	49	1,401
	<i>16.6</i>	<i>10.2</i>	<i>13.1</i>	<i>4.5</i>	<i>17.6</i>	<i>25.6</i>	<i>9.1</i>	<i>3.5</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Wave 3	297	163	148	46	297	333	91	26	1,401
	<i>21.2</i>	<i>11.6</i>	<i>10.6</i>	<i>3.3</i>	<i>21.2</i>	<i>23.8</i>	<i>6.5</i>	<i>1.9</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Wave 4	218	141	154	51	303	353	134	47	1,401
	<i>15.6</i>	<i>10.1</i>	<i>11.0</i>	<i>3.6</i>	<i>21.6</i>	<i>25.2</i>	<i>9.6</i>	<i>3.4</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Wave 5	230	134	162	39	252	383	160	41	1,401
	<i>16.4</i>	<i>9.6</i>	<i>11.6</i>	<i>2.8</i>	<i>18.0</i>	<i>27.3</i>	<i>11.4</i>	<i>2.9</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Wave 6	221	145	155	52	256	431	105	36	1,401
	<i>15.8</i>	<i>10.4</i>	<i>11.1</i>	<i>3.7</i>	<i>18.3</i>	<i>30.8</i>	<i>7.5</i>	<i>2.6</i>	<i>100.0</i>

This bimodal distribution among citizens is quite different from the one observed among the political class.¹³ As Power and Zucco (2009) have noted, Brazilian elites avoid association with the right. On the right end of the ideological spectrum, most legislators identify themselves substantially to the left of where their peers place them. The disjuncture between citizens’ and legislators’ self-placement has troublesome implications for the possibility of ideological congruence between elites and masses.

But the ability to use the left-right spectrum is more than a matter of responding “left,” “center,” or “right” when asked by an interviewer. Respon-

13 We thank an anonymous reviewer for this point.

dents may obligingly choose an answer from among those supplied without understanding its meaning. They may respond in some waves but not in others or exhibit great instability in the response category chosen.

Measuring Stability and Change

How stable is ideological identification? In each wave more than half the respondents report a position, but are these the same respondents every time? What proportion of the sample consistently fails to choose any label? Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents by the number of waves in which they fail to self-identify. Consistency in reporting is quite variable. At the most stable end, 409 respondents, 29 percent of the sample, report a left-right position in every wave. At the least stable end, only 131 respondents, fewer than 10 percent, never report one. So most respondents sometimes do choose a position and sometimes do not. One might suspect that respondents identifying a left-right position in five out of six waves differ little from those reporting one in all six. Indeed, a single data point could be missing due to measurement error unrelated to sophistication. About 45 percent of the sample falls into the five- or six-response category. As the number of waves missing identification rises, however, measurement error becomes a less plausible explanation. If a respondent identifies a left-right position in three waves but fails to do so in the other three, the respondent may, on the whole, not be thinking in terms of left and right. Even in waves where the respondent reports a position, skepticism should temper our interpretation of the response. Consistency of response thus provides important clues for understanding ideological identification.

Table 2: Number of Waves in Which Respondents Have Missing Left-Right Identification

Number of waves missing	Number of respondents	Percent of respondents
0	406	29.0
1	218	15.6
2	176	12.6
3	178	12.7
4	158	11.3
5	134	9.6
6	131	9.4
Total	1,401	100.0

Note: "Does not understand," "Does not know," "No response," and actual missing are all considered missing.

Stability also has to do with the consistency of chosen positions. Table 3 illuminates changes in left-right position from one wave to the next. We assign a value of 0 to right, 0.25 to center-right, 0.5 to center, 0.75 to center-left, and 1 to left, and then assess the absolute value of the change. Table 3, which presents the average change between consecutive waves, is limited to those who report a position in at least three waves, since those who respond very infrequently are more likely to manage to give the same position by chance when they do respond. As Table 3 shows, more than a quarter of this limited sample never changes its reported position, and a majority experiences an average change of 0.2 or less, but a third experience an average change of 0.3 or higher. In analyses not shown here, we find that a quarter of those who respond in every wave experience at least one change of 0.75 or higher. People experiencing changes of this magnitude can hardly be said to possess stable left-right identification.

Table 3: Average One-wave Change in Left-Right Position, among Those Who Report a Position in at Least Three Waves

Average change	Number of respondents	Percent of respondents
0	261	28.1
0.05 - 0.19	240	25.1
0.2 - 0.29	151	15.8
0.3 - 0.39	92	9.6
0.4 - 0.49	44	4.6
0.5 - 0.59	90	9.4
0.6 - 0.875	46	4.8
1	24	2.5
Total	948	100.0

Note: Left-right identification is scaled such that left = 1, right = 0. Change is computed as absolute value.

Creating an Index of Ideological Stability

Taken together, these measures of stability provide a more nuanced portrait of the use of the categories “left” and “right” than a simple statistic on the number of respondents reporting their own identification in any given wave. Combined, they create a time-invariant index of ideological stability. The first component is the number of waves in which a respondent identifies a position on the left-right spectrum (rescaled to run from 0 to 1). The second is the mean of a respondent’s consecutive-wave changes in position, with coding reversed so that higher values represent greater stability. For the 381 respondents who fail to respond in any set of consecutive waves, we assign this component a value of 0 (reasoning that the missing values result from

low levels of understanding of the ideological spectrum). Not surprisingly, given that these indicators measure stability based on the same survey questions, the index has an alpha coefficient of 0.84, and the component variables form a single, tight factor. The index has an approximately continuous distribution, with a mean of 0.59. At the bottom end, 131 people receive a score of 0 in every wave because they never identify with a left-right position. At the top, 89 respondents in each wave receive a score of 1.0. Compared to a binary variable simply measuring nonresponse, this index is an important methodological and theoretical advance.

The Bases of Ideological Response and Stability

What predicts whether respondents report a left-right position in each wave, and how stable their responses are over time? Table 4 reports the results of a hierarchical logit model predicting whether respondents provide a left right self-identification, and an ordinary least squares (OLS) model predicting the stability of their responses.¹⁴ Since ideological stability is a time-invariant measure, the second model is not longitudinal, and we enter respondent-level means of the variables that are time-varying. We see first that candidate polarization is a very important predictor of whether an interviewee is able to identify his or her own position on the left-right scale. This confirms our hypothesis that elite-level competition has an educative effect, helping masses grasp ideological terms and concepts. Second, neighborhood education, as expected, has a strong impact on left-right self-identification, though it does not affect ideological stability. Third, political conversation has a strikingly large impact on both left-right self identification and ideological stability. This result complements the finding of Baker, Ames, and Rennó (2006) that social networks motivated a large portion of the change in vote intention over the course of the 2002 campaign. Taken together, these two results suggest the great importance of the immediate social context in preparing Brazilians to interact with the political world. The dummy variable for Juiz de Fora, finally, is insignificant; thus the variable for neighborhood education is not simply serving as a proxy for some other contextual effect at the municipal level.

14 Random effects for respondents and for candidate polarization are omitted from the table for ease of presentation, but are highly significant.

Table 4: Predictors of Left-Right Self Identification and Ideological Stability

	Hierarchical logit: Reports Left-Right Identification	OLS: Ideological Stability
Candidate polarization	1.232*** (0.332)	
Neighborhood education	1.687** (0.611)	-0.016 (0.082)
Juiz de Fora	0.134 (0.126)	0.003 (0.016)
Political conversation	1.611*** (0.196)	0.254*** (0.048)
Political knowledge	0.656*** (0.140)	0.166*** (0.034)
Respondent education	1.000*** (0.268)	0.054 (0.042)
Views TV news	0.254 (0.188)	-0.005 (0.056)
Reads newspaper	0.539*** (0.105)	0.154*** (0.030)
Listens to radio news	0.290** (0.099)	0.031 (0.027)
Female	-1.535*** (0.144)	-0.139*** (0.017)
Constant	-2.274*** (0.407)	0.332*** (0.062)
Number of observations	5552	1401
Adjusted R-squared		0.273
Log pseudo-likelihood	-2876.13	

Note: Coefficients are significant at + p < 0.10; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001. OLS model of ideological stability is estimated using respondent-level means of time-varying variables.

Candidate polarization is omitted from that model because it varies only across waves, and not across respondents. Hierarchical logit model estimating whether a respondent reports an ideology is estimated using the xtlogit routine in Stata 10. Standard deviations of random effects for respondents and for candidate polarization are omitted for ease of presentation. We find a number of other strong results. Both political knowledge and education, as expected, strongly impact the likelihood of response, with coefficients of very similar sizes. In the model of ideological stability, the coefficient for education becomes insignificant, however. Moreover, some forms of media exposure prove to be highly important. Reading newspapers

has a fairly large impact on both self-identification in each wave and on stability in responses, while listening to radio news has a smaller effect. Exposure to television news, though, is completely insignificant. Last, Brazilian women are much less likely to self-identify on the left-right scale in any given wave; to the extent that they do self-identify, they additionally exhibit much lower levels of stability.¹⁵

Consequences of (Non)response and Ideological Stability

We have explored the extent of left-right self-identification and ideological stability, and we have shown that important features of the political and social context affect the ability to use the ideological spectrum. Now to the “so what” question: how does this capacity affect political outcomes?

It turns out that ideological instability and nonresponse affect the meaning of the left-right spectrum and the distribution of Brazilian voters across that spectrum. Because the sample of those identifying on the left-right spectrum is self-selected, both measured and unmeasured factors leading to nonresponse also affect where interviewees would have chosen to self-locate if they had, counterfactually speaking, responded. The observed ideological distribution is skewed from the latent one we would have observed if all interviewees had provided a left-right self identification. Moreover, we misestimate the coefficients of the predictors of choice of left-right location if we fail to take into account the fact that self-identifiers are a highly self-selected group.

Table 5 presents the outcome equation for a Heckman selection model for left-right self-identification. The selection equation of this model is provided in the first column of Table 4, assessing the predictors of whether a respondent reported a left-right self-identification. Note that the chi-squared test for rho (ρ) indicates that the error terms of the selection and outcome equations are correlated; thus we do need a selection model to specify the

15 The fact that women are likely to be non-responders, and that non-responders are likely to be latent rightists, suggests that women may tend to be latent rightists. This could provide a partial explanation for the continued gender gap in Brazil. We thank an anonymous reviewer for this important point. However, we are unable to confirm this in our data. Among responders, self-reported leftism for women is statistically indistinguishable from that for men. And while women tend to be non-responders, female non-responders are actually somewhat more “latently” leftist than are male non-responders. As a result, women are no more likely to be latent rightists in our data than are men. Nonetheless, the relationship between ideology and the gender gap in voting in Brazil merits substantial further investigation.

causal processes accurately. That is, not only variables such as education but also unmeasurables affect *whether* respondents provide a left-right identification as well as *where* they self-locate, thus creating selection effects.

Table 5: Heckman Selection Model (Outcome Equation) – Predictors of Leftism, Conditional on Ideological Stability

	Coefficient	Standard error
Lula thermometer	0.028	0.094
Support for democracy	-0.090	0.068
Tolerance for strikes	-0.215*	0.096
Opposition to privatization	0.148*	0.074
Opposition to free trade	-0.077	0.105
Support for land reform	0.001	0.071
Support for social spending	0.093	0.075
Female	0.036	0.065
Education	-0.164	0.138
Age	-0.006**	0.002
Ideological stability	-0.899***	0.234
Ideological stability X		
Lula thermometer ^a	0.283*	0.121
Support for democracy ^a	0.174*	0.087
Tolerance for strikes ^a	0.471***	0.121
Opposition to privatization ^a	-0.026	0.094
Opposition to free trade	0.044	0.136
Support for land reform ^a	0.104	0.089
Support for social spending	-0.090	0.095
Female	-0.004	0.081
Education ^a	0.472**	0.173
Age	0.005+	0.003
Wave 4	0.007	0.018
Wave 5	0.066***	0.018
Wave 6	0.020	0.017
Constant	0.803***	0.191
Rho	-0.192	0.066
Chi2(1) for test that rho = 0	8.90	
Prob > chi2	0.003	
Log pseudo-likelihood	-4019.072	
Wald chi2(24)	573.6	
Prob > chi2	0.000	

Note: Coefficients are significant at + p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001. Standard errors are robust and clustered by respondent. Only outcome model is presented above; selection model is a probit model similar to the logit model presented in Table 4. N (censored): 2,122; N (uncensored): 2,923. Analysis is limited to Waves 3-6.

^a The linear combination of the interaction and baseline terms is significant at p < 0.05 or better.

How do these selection effects impact the observed distribution of ideology in the Brazilian electorate? Based on the outcome and selection models, we de-

velop scores for predicted left-right self-placement among both those who actually self-identify on the left-right scale and those who do not. The predicted scores among those who fail to self-identify can be interpreted as their “latent” ideological tendencies: the response they would have provided, based on their issue attitudes and demographic characteristics, if they had chosen to respond.¹⁶ It turns out that those who fail to self-identify on the left-right spectrum are substantially and significantly more likely to choose *rightist* positions than are their fellow citizens who do respond. The mean predicted score for left-right self-identification is 0.56 for self-identifiers, and 0.51 for non-identifiers. This is a difference of one-tenth of the entire left-right spectrum. Thus, scholars who attempt to assess the ideological distribution of the Brazilian electorate will substantially overestimate the electorate’s leftist tendencies if they fail to take into account nonrespondents.

Furthermore, nonresponse impacts not only the observed distribution of ideology, but also the meaning of the ideological spectrum. The coefficients in the outcome equation of the selection model take into account additional information from nonrespondents who in an OLS model would typically be ignored. This has a substantive impact on the meaning of the ideological spectrum. When we estimate a simple OLS model of ideological position (results available upon request), ignoring nonrespondents, we find that the significance of two of the seven attitudinal predictors change.¹⁷

But the problem goes beyond nonresponse. Though interviewees receiving a 0 for ideological stability never identify their own position in any wave, those with values even slightly above 0 occasionally do so. Over a quarter of recorded left-right positions are from respondents with ideological stability scores below the median. The lowest non-zero ideological stability score is 0.08; a strikingly high 10 percent of respondents are assigned this value. We hypothesize that ideological stability affects the ability to connect issue attitudes to the appropriate ideological label. The response of a person scoring 0.08 should not be evaluated with the same seriousness accorded the response of a person scoring 1.0. Thus, both nonresponse and ideological stability will affect the interpretation of ideology among the Brazilian masses.

16 We estimated these predicted scores using both a “naive” model based on each respondent’s observed ideological stability score and a “fully informed” model in which we assigned each respondent an ideological stability score of 1.0. Results are very similar under both models, and the substantive conclusions remain the same: those who fail to self-locate have a strong latent tendency to choose rightist positions on the left-right scale. Predicted scores under the “naive” model are reported here.

17 The variables for which significance changes are attitudes towards privatization and democracy.

In the outcome equation of the selection model, reported in Table 5, we interact each independent variable with ideological stability. Among the least stable respondents, reported leftism should have little meaning, while it should mean a great deal to the most stable. Before discussing the results, a caution about interpretation: left-right self-identification is missing for all respondents who scored zero on ideological stability. Thus the non-interacted coefficients in the outcome equation have no intuitive meaning by themselves; they represent the independent variables' impact on left-right self-identification among those who never in fact self-identify – a logical impossibility. However, the interaction terms represent the change in the impact of each variable over the range of stability scores. Summing a variable's interacted and non-interacted coefficients, we see the impact of that variable when ideological stability is 1.0, its maximum score. For a respondent whose stability is, for instance, 0.08, a given variable's impact on leftism will be the non-interacted coefficient plus 0.08 times the coefficient for the interaction term. To aid in interpretation of the results, Table 6 reports predicted values of leftism across the range of various independent variables for respondents at different levels of ideological stability.

Table 6: Predicted Values of Leftism at High and Low Levels of Ideological Stability

	Ideological stability = 0.08		Ideological stability = 1.0	
	Variable at minimum	Variable at maximum	Variable at minimum	Variable at maximum
Lula thermometer (0 - 1)	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	0.36	0.66
Support for democracy (0 - 1)	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	0.49	0.57
Tolerance for strikes (0 - 1)	0.56	0.38	0.42	0.67
Opposition to privatization (0 - 1)	0.39	0.53	0.47	0.58
Opposition to free trade (0 - 1)	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Support for land reform (0 - 1)	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	0.48	0.58
Support for social spending (0 - 1)	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Female (0 - 1)	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Education (0 - 1)	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	0.37	0.68
Age (16-102)	0.64	0.19	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>

Note: Variable ranges shown in parentheses. For each predicted value, all other variables are held at their means except female, which is set to 1. *ns* variable is not significant at this level of ideological thinking.

Tables 5 and 6 strongly confirm our fundamental hypothesis: the meaning of leftism is contingent on ideological stability. Most variables have little impact among the least stable. Tolerance of strikes, opposition to privatization, and support for social spending are the only significant predictors of leftism among people near the bottom of the scale. For tolerance of strikes, furthermore, the relationship is the opposite of what we would expect: people who report themselves as being leftists are less tolerant of strikes. We also find one socio-demographic cleavage: older people are very substantially less likely to identify as leftists.

Turning to the interaction terms, note that the magnitude, sign, and significance of many coefficients vary significantly based on the respondent's ideological stability. Superscript notes in Table 5 identify the variables for which the linear combination of the baseline plus interaction terms is statistically significant; these variables are significant predictors of leftism among the most ideologically stable. In this group, nearly every attitudinal variable is significantly related to leftism, with the notable exception of attitudes towards free trade.

The impact of issue attitudes on leftism among the highly stable tells an interesting story. The strongest result for this group is the very high degree to which leftism is related to attitudes towards Lula da Silva. Beyond support for him, tolerance for strikes – which now works in the expected direction – is the most important attitudinal predictor of leftism, demonstrating the continuing importance of tolerance for public disorder in the name of social justice. Support for democracy and land reform as well as opposition to privatization are also significant (though smaller) predictors of leftism.

Which hypotheses are disconfirmed? Attitudes towards free trade and social spending have no effect on self-identification as a leftist. Still, the largest predictor of leftism (beyond support for Lula da Silva) is not an issue attitude or ideology, but rather education. Among the highly ideologically stable, cleavages by age disappear, but a large educational gap opens up.

We have thus shown that low levels of ideological self-identification and stability affect the meaning and the distribution of the left-right spectrum in the Brazilian electorate. Do they also affect electoral behavior? Given that they lead to an overestimation of the observed leftist tendencies of Brazilian voters, we suspect that they also influence estimates of vote intention. In particular, those who fail to self-identify on the left-right spectrum and those who exhibit low levels of ideological stability should be more likely to vote for rightist candidates.

Table 7: Probit Models – The Effects of Ideological Stability and Candidate Polarization on Vote for Lula da Silva

	Dependent variable: Vote for Lula da Silva	
Ideological stability	0.203** (0.078)	
Reports L-R identification		0.108* (0.054)
Lula thermometer	4.347*** (0.150)	4.354*** (0.150)
Support for democracy	0.034 (0.059)	0.034 (0.059)
Tolerance for strikes	0.587*** (0.086)	0.601*** (0.085)
Opposition to privatization	0.615*** (0.066)	0.608*** (0.066)
Opposition to free trade	-0.084 (0.077)	-0.087 (0.077)
Support for land reform	0.265*** (0.062)	0.267*** (0.062)
Support for social spending	0.037 (0.064)	0.034 (0.064)
Wave 3	-0.118 (0.079)	-0.126 (0.079)
Wave 4	0.178* (0.082)	0.172* (0.082)
Wave 5	0.028 (0.084)	0.03 (0.084)
Wave 6	-0.101 (0.079)	-0.099 (0.079)
Constant	-3.486*** (0.160)	-3.432*** (0.158)
Number of observations	4606	4606
Pseudo R-squared	0.468	0.467
Log pseudo-likelihood	-1665.350	-1666.831

Note: Coefficients are significant at + p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

Table 7 shows the effect of non-response and ideological stability on the likelihood of voting for Lula da Silva versus his second round opponent from the center-right PSDB in the presidential elections of 2002 and 2006.¹⁸ Because our models include many people who did not self-identify on the left-right spectrum, we obviously cannot control for ideology, a typical covariate in vote choice models. However, we include the many issue attitudes that we have shown above are causally prior to ideological self-placement as an instrument for ideology. We find, as we hypothesized, that nonidentifiers and the ideologically less stable are much more likely to vote for Lula da Silva's opponent. Thus, estimates of vote choice based only on those who are able to place themselves on the left-right spectrum will overestimate the leftist vote in Brazil.

Discussion and Conclusion

To what extent do Brazilian voters use the ideological spectrum to classify their own political views and to map the political landscape? We find moderately high levels of left-right self-identification, levels that are higher than those of party identification. After examining the stability of left-right self-identification, however, we are skeptical about the extent to which many self-reported ideological orientations represent enduring, meaningful dispositions. A fraction report consistent, stable left-right identification over time. Among the least stable respondents, many fail to attach their attitudes to the appropriate left-right labels. And we find that only half of those choosing a left-right self-identification in surveys label correctly the political candidates and prefer the one who is perceived as closer.¹⁹

An important debate has evolved over the degree and stability of party identification in the Brazilian electorate. While many authors have described high levels of personalism and low party sympathy (Almeida 2006; Ames 2001; Kinzo 2005; Mainwaring 1999; Nicolau 2006), other scholars point to increasing party system stability and reduced electoral volatility (Braga 2006, 2007; Marengo dos Santos 2006). Our results show that as far as the party system is stabilizing, that stabilization is not a result of a stable distribution of ideology in the electorate. While levels of left-right self-identification are

18 For the 2002 election, the models are based on Waves 2, 3, and 4, in which respondents were asked to choose between Lula da Silva and Serra of the PSDB, the top two candidates in that election. For the 2006 election, models are based on Waves 5 and 6, in which respondents were asked to choose between Lula da Silva and his principal opponent, Geraldo Alckmin from the PSDB. Since voters were not asked to choose between Lula da Silva and Serra in Wave 1, these models omit that wave.

19 Analysis available upon request.

fairly high, many Brazilians able to identify their own positions on a left-right spectrum do not have a clear understanding of an ideological content behind the label.

These findings are worrisome. The ability of Brazilian elites to represent the masses ideologically is limited in that a large portion of voters fails to identify on the ideological spectrum or has only the shakiest understanding of that spectrum. Elites may still represent masses in important other ways, addressing local interests, distributing pork, or providing clientelistic goods. However, the representation of programmatic or policy interests may suffer.

Our results also shed light on the debate over the electoral “left turn” that began in Latin America in the middle of the first decade of the new century (Castañeda 2006; Cleary 2006; Schamis 2006). The election of Lula da Silva in 2002 as Brazil’s first leftist president since the return to democracy may be considered an early instance of this trend. A few authors have argued that Latin America’s left turn resulted not from an increase in the number of leftist ideologues among the masses, but rather from fairly standard retrospective economic voting (Arnold and Samuels forthcoming; Doyle 2009; Murillo, Oliveros, and Vaishnav forthcoming; Panizza 2005). Our results support that skepticism. The distribution of ideology in the Brazilian electorate is actually to the right of its traditional measurement. Furthermore, not only do we find that the mean left-right position among those who choose to self-identify varies little over time (though our panel may be too short to find much change), but for many respondents leftism is far from a deep-seated disposition that one would expect to drive voting.²⁰ Nonetheless, there are some individuals for whom leftist voting probably results from a real and strong ideology (Holzhacker and Balbachevsky 2007).

Beyond lessons for scholarship on Brazil and Latin America, our results contribute to the study of ideology in public opinion in several ways. First, we have built on previous studies demonstrating how political context and institutions affect ideological thinking and political sophistication, showing the impact of the immediate social context as well (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Gordon and Segura, 1997; Hetherington 2001; Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1978). Second, we have developed the construct and measure of ideological stability, finding that it strongly affects the ability to connect issue attitudes to a fitting left-right label. Third, we have shown that the processes of deciding whether to provide a left-right self-identification and where to locate on the ideological spectrum are interrelated, and that the most appropriate way to estimate these processes involves a selection

20 The mean position on the left-right spectrum among those who choose to self-identify is 0.50 in Wave 1, 0.51 in Wave 2, 0.53 in Wave 3, 0.47 in Wave 4, 0.51 in Wave 5, and 0.51 in Wave 6.

model. While our findings are limited to two cities in Brazil, the approaches and methods apply in many other democratic contexts.

How do Brazilians develop the ability to use the left-right spectrum? First, we find that Brazilians often pick up the meaning of ideological labels from political elites. Formal and informal learning also has a major impact on the ability to use the categories “left” and “right.” This learning occurs in a variety of contexts – at school, through the media, in political conversations with friends, family, and neighbors. Our finding coincides with Almeida’s (2007) conclusion that education defines the major cultural divides in Brazil. Ideological use should grow over time, through generational replacement and, we hope, improved educational standards. Improved educational standards in turn should lead not only to increasing ideological identification, but to a rise in leftism among Brazilians.²¹

Among the most ideologically stable Brazilians, many attitudes meaningfully impact where respondents place themselves on the left-right spectrum. These relationships likely result from the way Brazilian elites frame and group issues. Leftism is strongly affected by support for Lula da Silva, tolerance for social disorder, and pro-democracy attitudes. In this group, then, the left is still associated with opposition to military rule. Some traditional social and economic issues – including privatization and land reform – are strongly associated with leftism in the way classically supposed, while support for social spending actually leads respondents to identify on the right. Attitudes towards free trade, by contrast, have no direct impact on left-right self-identification.

Most importantly, though, this paper shows the effect of nonresponse and low ideological stability on the measurement of Brazilian public opinion. For one thing, the ideological spectrum has different meaning among those at low levels of ideological stability. In this group, younger voters as well as those who support social spending but oppose strikes and privatization are all more likely to self-identify on the left. The reasons for the association with age are not entirely clear, though we suspect a combination of legal associations with the word “right” and memory of the military government’s anticommunist propaganda. For another, those who are unable to position themselves on the ideological spectrum are not randomly sampled from across the population. Rather, their latent ideological orientations put them to the right of those who do take a position on the spectrum, and they are significantly more likely to vote for rightist candidates.

These results leave a number of questions about the evolution of ideology. First, given the importance of attitudes towards Lula da Silva for left-

21 We thank an anonymous reviewer for this point.

right self-identification, how will the left-right distribution of the Brazilian electorate change as Lula da Silva exits the presidency? Will the transition to another president – whether center-right or center-left – affect voters’ abilities to use the ideological spectrum? How will voters’ perceptions of the issue content behind the left-right spectrum evolve as the Brazilian democratic system matures and as memories of military rule become ever more distant? These questions provide important opportunities for research well into the new decade.

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Diferenciando a Esquerda da Direita: Identificação Ideológica no Brasil, 2002-2006

Resumo: Ideologia, geralmente definida no espectro esquerda-direita, deveria servir como um meio de comunicação entre elites e as massas. Após anos de governo de um partido esquerdista, os eleitores brasileiros internalizaram divisões ideológicas? Análises longitudinais conduzidas entre 2002 e 2006 revelam um alto nível de não-resposta e instabilidade em auto-classificação ideológica. Descobrimos que a capacidade de pensar ideologicamente é em parte uma função do contexto político e social. Essa capacidade tem conseqüências políticas concretas. Uma análise de dados através do Modelo de Seleção de Heckman revela que aqueles que se recusam a adotar uma posição ideológica ou que exibem altos níveis de instabilidade em auto-classificação ideológica tendem a ser direitistas em potencial e a escolher candidatos de direita a presidente. Além disso, eles interpretam o espectro ideológico de modo diferente daqueles que são mais consistentes em sua classificação ideológica. Assim, fazemos duas contribuições, mostrando que fatores contextuais influenciam o pensamento ideológico e que baixos níveis de pensamento ideológico afetam a mensuração da opinião pública brasileira.

Palavras chave: Brasil, Ideologia, Orientação da esquerda, Comportamento sociopolítico, Opinião pública

Appendix

Table A: OLS Model – Predictors of Leftism, Conditional on Ideological Stability

	Coefficient	Standard error
Lula thermometer	-0.005	0.074
Support for democracy	-0.097*	0.053
Tolerance for strikes	-0.175*	0.079
Opposition to privatization	0.065	0.061
Opposition to free trade	-0.096	0.076
Support for land reform	-0.023	0.059
Support for social spending	0.041	0.063
Female	-0.021	0.053
Education	-0.053	0.116
Age	-0.005**	0.002
Ideological stability	-0.955***	0.196
Ideological stability X		
Lula thermometer	0.350***	0.097
Support for democracy	0.183**	0.071
Tolerance for strikes	0.411***	0.102
Opposition to privatization	0.070	0.080
Opposition to free trade	0.061	0.098
Support for land reform	0.117	0.077
Support for social spending	-0.053	0.079
Female	0.029	0.069
Education	0.433**	0.151
Age	0.004	0.002
Wave 4	-0.002	0.015
Wave 5	0.055	0.015
Wave 6	0.012	0.015
Constant	0.775	0.153
Number of observations	4427	
R-squared	0.199	

Note: Coefficients are significant at + p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001. Standard errors are robust and clustered by respondent. Analysis is limited to Waves 3-6.