

How Mayors Hurt Their Presidential Ticket: Party Brands and Incumbency Spillovers in Brazil

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Much of the literature in distributive politics suggests that parties are advantaged nationally when they control office at the local level. But is this invariably true? Whatever advantage control over the local patronage machinery may offer, local governments might under some conditions tarnish their parties' labels and thus hurt up-ticket candidates. Using a regression discontinuity design in mayoral races in Brazil, exogenous variation in fiscal resources, and a survey experiment, my analysis demonstrates the critical role that party labels play in linking national and local elections. I show that the presidential tickets of parties with strong brands suffer an electoral penalty in municipalities governed by copartisans, especially when voters are dissatisfied with the local government. Loosely organized parties with weak party labels do not suffer a similar disadvantage. Hence, this study shows that for programmatic parties with strong party brands, mayors can sometimes be a burden rather than an asset.

Politicians and pundits alike assume that local allied governments help presidential candidates win elections: mayors and governors provide useful organizational resources and their popularity among their constituents can spill over to their parties' candidates. Similarly, workhorse models of distributive politics typically assume that reelection-seeking presidents use fiscal transfers to reward copartisans in the hope that stronger local incumbents will transfer votes to the president (see, e.g., Broлло and Nannicini 2012; Grossman 1994).

Prior empirical research on the role of copartisan incumbents in helping national-level candidates win elections presents mixed evidence. For Japan, Park (1998) argues that "local politicians clearly serve as a primary force in national-level electoral campaigns. Securing the cooperation of local politicians is critical to the success of the electoral campaign" (76; cited in Scheiner 2006). Ames (1994), studying the 1989 presidential race in Brazil, argues that presidential candidates fare better in co-partisan-held municipalities because mayors control strong electoral machines and patronage resources (95).¹ Magar (2012) finds that governors help national legislative

candidates get elected in Mexico by "transferring" votes from one category to the other.² Other studies, however, find no evidence that incumbents help their national-level copartisans win elections. Broockman (2009) finds that US presidential candidates do not perform better in districts with copartisan congressional incumbents. Also for the United States, Erikson, Folke, and Snyder (2015) show that presidential candidates are in fact hurt at the state level by having a governor from the same party.³

The idea that local incumbents benefit their parties in national elections rests on the assumption that local incumbents use their access to office and popularity to mobilize electoral resources in favor of their parties. But in countries where incumbency is a disadvantage at the local level, such as India (Nooruddin and Chhibber 2008; Uppal 2009), Brazil (Klašnja and Titunik 2017; Schiumerini 2017), and Romania (Klašnja 2015), there are reasons to suspect that the capacity of local officials to broker votes for their parties is not the whole story. In particular, I argue in this article that local office-holding may influence national-level elections by affecting the reputation of parties for handling public affairs.

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1. For Brazil, see also Avelino, Biderman, and Barone (2012) and Novaes (2017).

2. See also Jones (1997) on Argentina, who studies the effect of gubernatorial races on the effective number of parties in national legislative elections.

3. There is also a large and related literature on presidential "coattails." For a review, see Meredith (2013).

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My analysis underscores the role of party labels in linking national and local elections. Some parties successfully cultivate strong party labels, that is, brands that connect politicians and enable voters to assign similar ideas, policies, and even capabilities to politicians running under the same label. In contrast, weak party labels are rubber stamps: for voters, politicians sharing these labels may or may not promote similar policies or share similar trajectories. I argue that the strength of party labels mediates electoral spillovers across levels of government, both positive and negative. Strong party brands convert the performance of incumbents into collective goods for all politicians who share that label. But if candidates and incumbents are only circumstantially linked (e.g., because they typically switch parties or because candidates shy away from campaigning using partisan symbols), voters will ignore the partisan affiliation of candidates and incumbents. That is, parties with a recognizable brand name should experience more of a reputation effect, both positive and negative, from local office-holding. This is in contrast with the unconditional relationship between party strength and the capacity of incumbents to deliver votes to their party's candidates.

To evaluate the effect of copartisan mayors on presidential outcomes, I analyze data from every presidential and mayoral election occurring during 1996–2014 in Brazil. This country offers a unique opportunity to evaluate the role of local office-holders during national elections. Municipal and presidential elections are offset by two years, allowing for a clear interpretation of the effect of local incumbency. In addition, Brazilian parties vary greatly in the strength of their party labels. By all accounts, the Workers' Party (PT)—the national incumbent party in 2003–16 and runner-up in 1989–98—has a strong brand: it has a coherent program of social change, a disciplined membership (both in Congress and at the local level), and deep roots in civil society (Celso 2006; Hunter 2010).⁴ By contrast, other parties, including the Brazilian Party for Social Democracy (PSDB)—in power in 1994–2002 and since then the runner-up—are best described as “loosely organized federation[s] of regional leaders” without a coherent political program (Samuels and Zucco 2014b, 215).

The main empirical challenge of estimating the effect of local incumbency on national elections is that which party is elected locally likely varies as a function of factors, such as the poverty rate, that also influence the party's presidential vote share. I overcome this difficulty by using a regression discontinuity (RD) design in “close” mayoral elections.⁵ I com-

pare presidential vote shares in municipalities in which parties lost the last mayoral race with ones in which they won. To tease out the reputation mechanism from competing explanations (such as the capacity of mayors to mobilize clientelistic networks for their parties), I use data on exogenous fiscal transfers, which are likely to shape the capacity of local governments to deliver local public goods, and survey data (including an original survey experiment) that explore how the partisanship and performance of mayors affect the electoral choices of Brazilian voters. I expect that voters' satisfaction with local public goods will affect national vote shares for the incumbent party for parties with strong brands: the PT but also issue-oriented parties, such as the Popular Socialist Party (PPS) and the Green Party (PV). For parties with weaker brands, such as the PSDB and the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB), I expect no such thing.

I show that the impact of copartisan mayors on their presidential tickets varies widely across parties. In particular, PT presidential candidates suffer an average penalty of 3 percentage points in municipalities governed by the PT. The PPS and the PV also suffer large penalties from local incumbency. By contrast, parties with a weaker party brand—the PSDB and PSB—do not fare better or worse in municipalities governed by the same party. I further show that PT presidential candidates lose more votes in places where mayors have fewer fiscal resources. In contrast, PSDB mayors do not hurt or help their presidential candidates, regardless of whether the municipal government is resource poor or resource rich. I show this by exploiting exogenous changes in the availability of fiscal resources at the local level.

This article proposes that party performance at the local level influences voters' evaluations of national candidates, but only when local and national politicians belong to a party with a strong brand. I investigate this mechanism using two sets of survey evidence. With individual-level data collected during the 2010 presidential campaign, I first show that voters dissatisfied with the local government are less likely to vote for the PT presidential candidate if they are governed by a PT mayor. No similar effects are found for the likelihood of voting for the PSDB candidate in PSDB-controlled municipalities. I also use an original survey experiment to show that voters who are hypothetically assigned to a PT mayor are more likely to condition the selection of national candidates on the performance of the mayor than those assigned to a PSDB mayor.⁶ Taken together, these findings confirm the presence of up-ticket incumbency effects but show them to be

4. Below I discuss the impact of recent corruption scandals on PT's brand.

5. The assumption for causal identification is “continuity” in potential outcomes. See Imbens and Lemieux (2008).

6. This survey also provides novel evidence that confirms what others have found before: that voters perceive the PT as having a stronger brand relative to the PSDB and the PSB.

mediated by the strength of party labels and the perceived performance of incumbents.

Research on developing party systems underscores parties' inability to hold their office-holding members committed to the party but cannot explain these patterns (see, e.g., Mainwaring and Scully 1995). If anything, we would expect that cohesive and disciplined parties benefit from local incumbency, while less unified parties suffer from unruly local factions fighting with each other. In Brazil, parties at the local level are typically portrayed as weak, patronage-oriented, and personalistic organizations, with the PT being the exception. Yet I demonstrate that it is the PT, paradoxically, that hurts its presidential candidates.

In the next section I discuss why party labels mediate electoral spillovers between incumbents and candidates. I then discuss the party system and the important role played by local governments in Brazil. Next, I explain my research design and the dependent variables. I then present the general result: that there are up-ticket incumbency effects, mainly negative ones. The following sections use fiscal and survey data to show that only those voters governed by the PT consider the performance of the local government when choosing a president. In the penultimate section I evaluate my argument in light of alternative explanations. I end by discussing the contributions of my argument to the literature on electoral coattails and party building.

INCUMBENT PERFORMANCE AND THE PARTY BRAND

Much of the literature in distributive politics suggests that parties are advantaged nationally when they control office locally. Local incumbents can use local resources to mobilize voters and poll watchers in favor of their parties' candidates (Stokes et al. 2013), and they are knowledgeable about the preferences of voters and local groups (Albertus 2012). Recent studies also suggest that local incumbents improve the reputation of their parties on governance issues (Holland 2016; Lucardi 2016). This idea, however, rests on one of two assumptions. One is that local incumbents want their copartisans to be elected. Recent analysis, however, questions the universality of this assumption (Nellis 2016; Novaes 2017). The other assumption is that voters perceive a partisan link between incumbents and candidates. But in places where particularism and weak party discipline prevail, "there is little reason to expect citizens or politicians to associate co-partisans across levels of government" (Rodden and Wibbels 2011, 637).

I argue that the strength of party labels and the performance of incumbents jointly shape up-ticket incumbency effects. If party labels are strong, a good performance at the local level should increase electoral support for copartisan can-

didates in the national election. Likewise, with strong labels, poor performance by local officials is expected to hurt up-ticket candidates. In turn, when party labels are weak, voters will not associate local and national politicians, and thus controlling local office will not affect the vote shares, either positively or negatively, of other candidates running under the same label. Table 1 summarizes these expectations.

This argument draws on the large literature in the United States—dating back to Campbell et al. (1960)—that shows that voters use party labels as heuristics that convey information about a party's candidates. When parties cultivate a brand, party labels provide voters with information about the ideological position of the party, the competence of party officials, and their likely behavior in office.⁷ Filippov, Ordehook, and Shvetsova (2004) put it best: "a label converts the private benefit a politician might derive from good actions into a public good for all politicians who share his or her label" (186). Local incumbents associated with a strong brand will have a direct impact on the "running tally" of the party, especially on issues of local governance. Local officeholders provide voters with concrete examples of how their parties govern, such as what policies they promote, their ability to manage the economy, and the honesty with which they govern.

Yet many parties resemble a "cacophony of blocs and individuals" (Stokes and Miller 1962, 545) more than the organized brand-name producers depicted in Downs's work (1957). Parties with weak labels may have strong local organizations, but typically these operate without coordination with each other. Voters governed by a brandless party at the local level learn little about the party at the national level: voters may not recognize the party brand or may not link national and local politicians to the same political group. Candidates from such parties rely on building good personal reputations among voters, and voters focus on the individual characteristics of candidates to make voting decisions.

Two factors are critical to voters' ability to connect politicians running under the same party label: interparty differentiation and intraparty consistency (Lupu 2016b). The party must distinguish itself from other parties. If parties converge on most issues, voters will have a hard time distinguishing one party brand from another or linking individual politicians to particular brands. For intraparty consistency, the behavior of party officials must not be too disparate across districts and over time. If leaders and rank-and-file partisans hold opposing views, come from different backgrounds, or frequently change their position on relevant issues or switch parties,

7. Parties can have strong substantive labels denoting programmatic stances or strong symbolic labels that communicate their belonging to a political group (Kitschelt et al. 2010, 62).

Table 1. Electoral Spillovers to Copartisans, Party Label Strength, and Incumbent Performance

| | Strong Label | Weak Label |
|----------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Positive performance | Positive spillovers | No spillovers |
| Negative performance | Negative spillovers | No spillovers |

voters will find it difficult to identify the prototypical partisan. If incumbent officeholders frequently side with the opposition, switch parties, or refuse to campaign using the symbols and platform of the party, voters may also ignore or confuse their partisan affiliation.

The dominant expectation in the distributive politics literature is that strong parties are more likely to coordinate around shared goals such as electing a presidential candidate; thus, local incumbency should be an asset to these parties. But strong parties often have recognizable party brands that affect how voters evaluate party members in toto. Popular incumbents improve their party's reputation among constituents. But those who underperformed in the eyes of voters hurt their parties. Hence, in countries where subnational incumbents, both parties and individuals, suffer from a systematic disadvantage, we may expect, on average, upstream negative effects conditional on party labels being strong.

Recent research on retrospective voting has noticed the problematic normative implications of evaluating some officials on the basis of the performance of others (e.g., when local incumbents are blamed or rewarded for the performance of the national economy; see Gélinau and Remmer 2006). Here I am arguing something different: voters may punish or reward candidates on the basis of the performance of their copartisans not because they misattribute responsibilities but because they use strong party brands to judge the collective reputation of their parties' candidates.

MAYORS, PARTIES, AND LABELS IN BRAZIL

To study how party labels and local performance influence presidential elections, I focus on Brazil. This country provides an excellent case to test my argument: the strength of party labels varies widely across parties, local governments are key players in the provision of public goods, and local and presidential elections are offset by two years, allowing for a clean test of the effect of local incumbency on national contests.

Party labels in Brazil

The previous section identified two factors that determine the degree to which party labels enable voters to link local and national politicians: the levels of interparty differentiation and of intraparty consistency. Parties in Brazil are highly hetero-

geneous across these two dimensions, but the norm is organizationally weak and personalistic parties with weak electoral attachments and diffuse party labels. The root of this lack of party institutionalization lies in the open, statewide proportional list rules for national deputies (Ames 2002; Samuels 1999).⁸ Scholars portray parties as an amalgam of local politicians who have little in common with one another and who act with no central coordination. The PT, founded in the early 1980s by a clandestine union movement, is an outlier on these dimensions (Amaral 2010; Hunter 2010).

The uniqueness of the PT is well established in the literature and provides key variation on party label strength. There are several indicators of the strength of PT's brand relative to other parties, like the PSDB and the PSB.

First, the PT is the only party in Brazil with a large base of partisans, as Samuels and Zucco (2014b) show: "PT's deliberate efforts to cultivate an image have paid off. . . . Since 1989, the proportion of Brazilians who call themselves *petistas* has grown from about 5% to about 25%" (215). By contrast, the PSDB "never attracted more than a small slice of the electorate" and "never deliberately sought to cultivate a coherent collective public image beyond technocratic effectiveness" (215). In the words of another regional expert, "relative to the PT, the PSDB is far less institutionalized, far less disciplined, and far more decentralized" (Lupu 2016a, 91).

Second, party brands that are distinguishable by voters need some internal coherence. Only the PT (perhaps like other more extreme ideological parties) seems to have the level of coherence that would allow voters to identify a common denominator around the party's candidates. I conducted a representative survey of Brazilian voters—which I describe in more detail below—and asked them to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the following statements applied to the PT, the PSDB, and the PSB: (a) "members of this party share similar ideas about public policy," (b) "members of this party are loyal to the party. They are unlikely to switch to other parties," and (c) "the party has a coherent program that is different from the policies proposed by other parties." Brazilians were significantly more likely to agree with all these statement when evaluating the PT compared both to the PSB and to the PSDB.⁹ In a survey conducted in 2002, only 40% of respondents had heard about the PSDB. By contrast, 80% of respondents knew about the PT, and 78% correctly linked Lula to the PT, but only 29% linked Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the sitting president, with his party, the PSDB (Kinzo 2006).

8. But parties appear to be stronger in the National Congress (Figueiredo and Limongi 2000).

9. For each item, parties were presented in random order to respondents. See app. D; apps. A–D are available online.

Third, the PT is more disciplined. Outside of the PT, party switching is ubiquitous in Brazil. An analysis of lame-duck mayors shows that 8% of PT mayors switched parties, whereas the average for all parties was 53% (Klašnja and Titunik 2017). Klašnja and Titunik conclude that “parties on the left, in particular the PT, stood out in the first decades of the New Republic as more disciplined, cohesive, and programmatic than their counterparts on the center and the right” (134).

The distinctiveness of the PT is in fact sharpest at the local level, where the party built a reputation for handling public affairs in a distinctive manner. During the 1990s and early 2000s, the *modo petista de governar* (PT way of governing) encouraged popular participation and policies to help the poorest segments of society, while also promoting greater government transparency (Barreto, Magalhães, and Trevas 1999). Hunter (2010) notes that “the PT remained quite distinctive even after moderating ideologically . . . in the period leading up to Lula’s 2002 presidential victory” (39).

Mayors and elections in Brazil

In the First Republic (1889–1930), local notables, known as *coronéis*, used their access to personal wealth, public resources, and means of coercion to mobilize votes for state and national candidates. In modern Brazil, too, local politicians play a key role (Ames 1994; Novaes 2017). Brazil is a presidential democracy with 26 states plus one federal district and 5,500 municipal governments. Local governments are in charge of collecting taxes and providing several public goods and services, including education, basic health services, transportation, and garbage collection. Most of the municipal revenue comes from intergovernmental transfers; local governments have ample discretion on how they allocate these resources. Mayors are elected by popular vote every four years. If a city has more than 200,000 voters, the election is held under a runoff system. Otherwise the mayor is elected through plurality rule. The two-round system also applies to state and national executive elections. The elections of the president, governors, and national legislators take place simultaneously, while municipal elections are staggered by two years.

I study local and presidential elections held in Brazil in 1996–2014, thus including five presidential contests: two under a PSDB government (1995–2002) and three under a PT government (2003–14). Table 2 shows data for parties that won more than 5% of the national vote in at least one election since 1998. For each of these parties, I focus on municipalities where the party came either first or second in the previous municipal election.¹⁰

10. Electoral data come from Tribunal Superior Electoral (<http://www.tse.jus.br/>).

In Brazil, political candidates often run in electoral coalitions or alliances that include multiple parties. This is true at both the national and local levels. Given my interest on how party brands influence voters’ evaluations of copartisan politicians, I focus on mayors affiliated with the party of the presidential candidate. Mayors who belong to coalition parties may help mobilize voters at the local level but are not expected to shape the reputation of the president’s party (something I discuss further below).

RESEARCH DESIGN

The main challenge to causal inference is that a party’s underlying level of support in a district is expected to boost both its chances of winning, locally, and its vote share in national elections. I overcome this challenge by using a close-election RD design. In this design, the score or running variable of party j is its vote share minus the vote share of its closest opponent; when this score is positive, a municipality is in the “treatment” group: party j wins the mayoral election. If the party ends up in second place, the municipality is in the “control” group. This design relies on a basic “continuity” assumption: at the exact point where party j wins or loses the election (when the score is essentially zero), counterfactual outcomes should be continuous. That is, the only differences at the discontinuity should be those affected by the outcome of the election (i.e., whether the candidate from party j wins or loses the race). I am therefore able to isolate the effect of party j ’s local incumbency from other factors (such as the wealth or political traits of a municipality), some of which would be difficult to measure or observe.

To estimate the effect of local incumbency, I fit two separate local-linear regressions above and below the cutoff, using a bandwidth around the cutoff that minimizes the mean squared error (MSE) of the regressions. The RD effect is merely the difference between the two estimated intercepts. I report the bias-corrected confidence intervals and p -values developed by Calonico, Cattaneo, and Titunik (2014).¹¹ For municipalities with a runoff election, I focus on the result of the second round. The results are unaffected if these municipalities are excluded from the sample.

The identification assumption that municipalities near the cutoff—those where party j runs a close mayoral race—should look on average alike is essentially unverifiable. But, for each party, I find no statistically significant differences for municipalities in which the party came either first or second in the mayoral race for a number of relevant pretreatment

11. The appendix reports results for a large number of possible bandwidths and estimators.

Table 2. Results for First Rounds of Presidential Elections, 1998–2014

| | 1998 | 2002 | 2006 | 2010 | 2014 |
|------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| PSDB | Cardoso: 53.06%* | Serra: 23.19% | Alckmin: 41.64% | Serra: 32.61% | Neves: 33.55% |
| PT | Lula: 31.71% | Lula: 46.47%† | Lula: 48.61%† | Rousseff: 46.91%† | Rousseff: 41.59%† |
| PPS | Gomes: 10.97% | Gomes: 11.97% | Allied to PSDB | Allied to PSDB | Allied to PSB |
| PSB | Allied to PT | Garotinho: 17.86% | . . . | Allied to PT | Silva: 21.32% |
| PV | Sirkis: .31% | . . . | . . . | Silva: 19.33% | Jorge: .61% |

Note. Results shown for parties that won more than 5% in at least one presidential election. The Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL) obtained 6.85% in 2006's elections but did not control any municipality until 2012 and controlled only three municipalities after that, so it is not included in the analysis.

* Elected in first round.

† Elected in second round.

covariates. This includes, among others, the party's previous electoral performance during a presidential race and whether the district was controlled by the party before the mayoral election (see app. A).

INCUMBENCY HURTS THE PT BUT NOT THE PSDB

Let us start with the PT, the party that governed Brazil between 2003 and 2016. My analysis shows that presidential candidates from the PT are in fact hurt by having a mayor in office. Pooling all presidential elections together, from 1998 to 2014, PT presidential candidates suffer, on average, a 3-percentage-point reduction in their vote share in cities and towns with PT mayors (table 3). The effect is negative and significantly different from zero, with robust 95% confidence interval ranging from -5.6 to $-.5$ percentage points. This finding contradicts the conventional wisdom that, because the PT suffers less from party switching and other signs of being a weak party, presi-

dential candidates can count on mayors' machines to deliver votes. Although PT mayors may help mobilize votes for the party's candidates, by winning office they cost the party a large number of votes. The graphical analysis validates the regression results (figs. 1A and 1B).

PSDB presidential candidates, running under a much weaker party brand, neither benefit nor suffer from having a mayor from their own party in office. All estimates are small (plus/minus .5 percentage points) and statistically insignificant despite the much larger sample size. As noted above, the PSDB is a loosely knit organization of regional politicians who have not cultivated a coherent brand. Hence, voters are not able to extract information about the presidential ticket from the performance of the mayor. As expected, the graphical analysis shows no discontinuity at the cutoff (figs. 1C and 1D).

Table 3 also reports results for the other major presidential parties in Brazil—the PSB, the PPS, and the PV. These parties offer additional variation in party label strength, have won

Table 3. Regression Discontinuity Effect of Copartisan Mayors Winning at Time t on Their Presidential Tickets at $t + 2$ for Various Parties, 1996–2014

| Party | Estimate (1) | 95% CI (2) | p (3) | h (4) | n_t (5) | n_c (6) |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| PT | −2.91 | [−5.671, −.167] | .038 | 16.98 | 1,183 | 1,191 |
| PT (2nd round) | −3.15 | [−5.675, −.513] | .019 | 20.30 | 1,197 | 1,235 |
| PSDB | .49 | [−1.670, 2.802] | .620 | 17.23 | 2,336 | 2,583 |
| PSDB (2nd round) | −.57 | [−2.502, 1.493] | .621 | 21.88 | 2,080 | 2,292 |
| PSB | .29 | [−2.885, 4.120] | .730 | 15.04 | 294 | 320 |
| PPS | −9.09 | [−20.817, .656] | .066 | 16.03 | 136 | 120 |
| PV | −4.31 | [−9.749, .089] | .054 | 20.87 | 160 | 128 |

Note. Outcome: vote share of copartisan presidential candidate. Running variable is the party's margin of victory at t . Estimate is average treatment effect at cut-off estimated with local linear regression with triangular kernel weights and mean squared error optimal bandwidth. Columns 2–6 report, respectively, 95% robust confidence intervals, robust p -values, main optimal bandwidth, and the number of observations in the treatment and control groups.

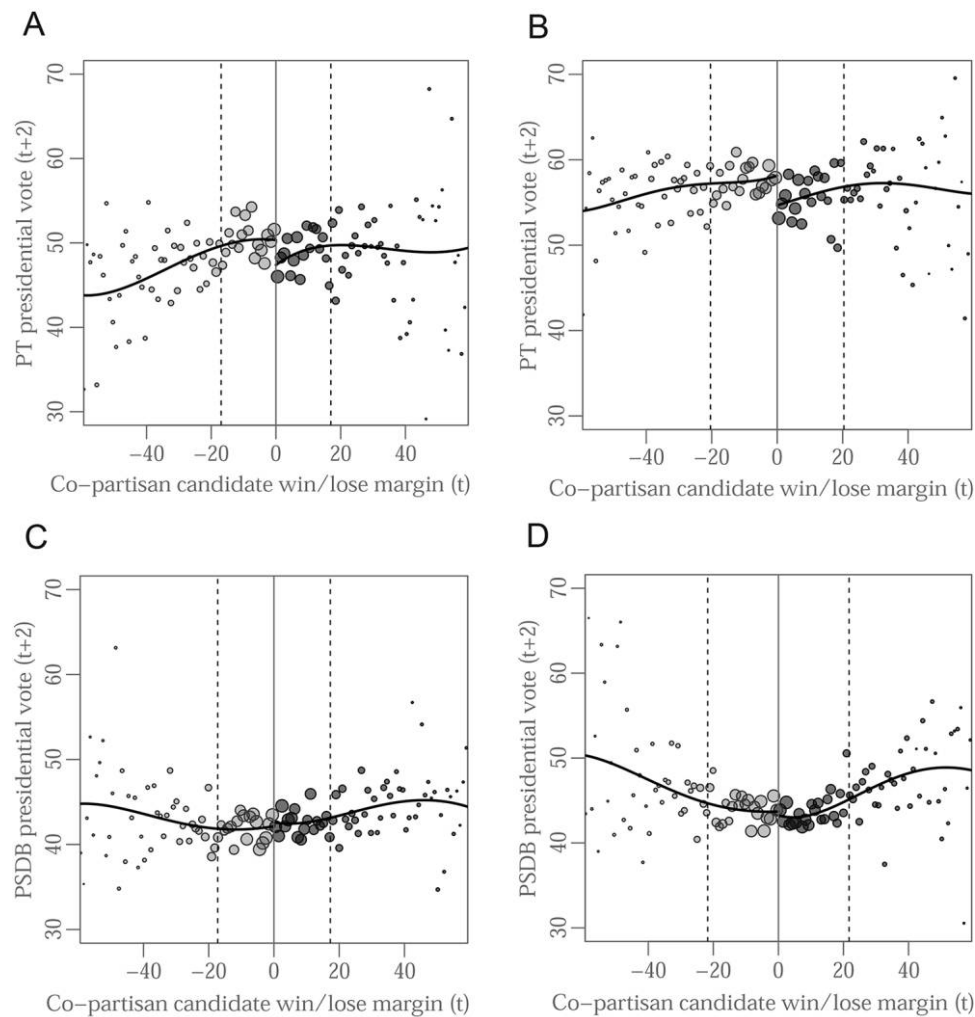


Figure 1. Presidential vote versus lagged mayoral vote margin for the PT and the PSDB. Circles (binned means of municipalities at 1% intervals) indicate average vote shares at the municipal level for the presidential ticket in places where a copartisan mayoral candidate wins or loses. Circle size is proportional to the number of municipalities in each group. Dashed lines indicate the limits of the MSE-optimal bandwidth. Fitted lines estimated using local-linear regression. A, RD plot: PT, first round; B, RD plot: PT, second round; C, RD plot: PSDB, first round; D, RD plot: PSDB, second round.

more than 5% of the votes in at least one presidential election, and each control more than a few municipalities.¹² For the PSB, a party with a diffuse brand (see app. D), the effect of incumbency is small and not significant. There is no “jump” in its presidential vote share at the cutoff either (see app. A). Both the PPS (a derivative of the Brazilian Communist Party, which competed in 1998) and the PV (which competed in 1998, 2010, and 2014) are penalized in places with a copartisan mayor. The PPS suffers a penalty of around 9 percentage points. The effects for the PV are smaller: a penalty of around 4%. Although these are weak partisan organizations in their territorial coverage, their leftist, issue-oriented agendas may

provide these parties with relatively stronger party brands compared to the PSDB and the PSB. Future analyses should investigate the relative strength of these parties’ brands further.

One concern with the RD design is that it only estimates a “local” effect (i.e., places where party j won or lost by a small margin). Do these results hold in municipalities in which the mayor won by a larger margin? In the appendix, I show results for difference-in-differences estimators using year and municipal fixed effects for all municipalities. Again, PT mayors have a negative impact on their party’s performance in presidential elections of roughly 3% (same as the one estimated using RD). The effect of local incumbency is considerably smaller for the PSDB (a positive .6%) and is not statistically significant. I also replicate the analysis presented here showing results for a range of bandwidths and models, including a difference in means at the 1% bandwidth (see app. A).

12. These results should be interpreted with caution, as the sample sizes are considerably smaller.

I have uncovered negative up-ticket effects for Brazilian parties with strong party brands (the PT, PPS, and PV) and no up-ticket effects for parties with weaker brands (the PSDB and the PSB). The up-ticket effects should only be a penalty if voters are consistently unhappy with their local governments' performance. That poor local performance is widespread in Brazil finds support elsewhere (e.g., Ferraz and Finan 2008). If mayors' weak performance erodes voters' support for their presidential tickets, we should observe that the penalty varies with the performance of mayors for parties with strong brands but not otherwise. I explore this possibility next.

LOCAL PERFORMANCE HURTS THE PT BUT NOT THE PSDB

In this section, I focus on the PT and the PSDB, the two largest presidential parties for which I have sufficient data to explore the link between mayoral performance and the fate of their presidential candidates. Three kinds of evidence, at the municipal and individual level, indicate that the relationship between mayoral and presidential elections is shaped jointly by party labels and the performance of the party in office rather than by the weakness of partisan organizations or by a failure in local party brokerage for votes.

Exogenous changes in fiscal resources

Scholarly studies on the incumbency advantage argue that variation in incumbency effects is largely determined by differences in levels of public goods provision (Nooruddin and Chhibber 2008; Schiumerini 2017; Uppal 2009). The logic is that when governments have the financial resources to provide public goods, citizens reward incumbent parties at the polls. But when the government lacks resources, citizens sanction the incumbent party. I expect that voters in municipalities with few resources will punish the mayor's presidential ticket but only if the party label of the mayor is sufficiently salient to voters. Of course, other local characteristics may simultaneously influence the availability of fiscal resources at the local level and the effect of copartisan mayors during presidential races, such as local bureaucratic capacity. To deal with this inferential threat, I follow Brollo et al. (2013) and examine the effect of intergovernmental transfers that change exogenously at predetermined population thresholds.¹³

The most important source of municipal revenue in Brazil is the Fundo de Participação dos Municípios (FPM), which represents roughly 40% of total local revenues. Within each state, the allocation of these federal transfers depends on population brackets: two municipalities in the same population bracket and the same state receive, in theory, identical

transfers. In practice, however, yearly population estimates do not perfectly predict FPM transfers. Brollo et al. (2013) deal with this issue by using a population-based “fuzzy” RD design, with population thresholds serving as an instrument for the transfers actually received.¹⁴

For each party, I estimate the moderating effect of revenues by fusing these authors' fuzzy RD design and fiscal data with my own close-election RD design. I do this by including an interaction term between the treatment (i.e., whether a candidate from party j won or lost the election at time t) and the FPM transfers received by the municipality, instrumenting actual transfers with those that a municipality should have received on the basis of its population bracket only. This model relies on the same continuity assumption for causal identification as before: counterfactual outcomes should be continuous at both the population and victory-margin cut-offs. Under this assumption I can identify the interactive effect of revenues and incumbency using a model of the form

$$y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Incumbency}_i + \beta_2 \text{Margin}_i + \beta_3 \tau_i + g(P_i) \\ + \lambda_i + \gamma_i + \beta_4 \text{Incumbency}_i \times \text{Margin}_i \\ + \beta_5 \text{Incumbency}_i \times \tau_i + \varepsilon_i, \quad (1)$$

where Incumbency_i takes values 1 if party j won the mayoral race and 0 if it was the runner-up; Margin_i is the electoral margin of party j 's mayoral candidate; λ_i and γ_i are time and state fixed effects; $g(\cdot)$ is a high-order polynomial in the population of the municipality (P_i); and τ_i are actual transfers, which I instrument using population-based theoretical transfers. As before, I estimate this model using a local-linear regression with triangular weights around the MSE-optimal bandwidth using Margin_i as the running variable. Brollo et al. (2013) only provide data for mayors taking office in 2000 and 2004; thus, I restrict the analysis to the presidential elections of 2002 and 2006. Following these authors, I cluster standard errors at the city level.

Table 4 reports coefficients from both reduced-form and instrumental-variable regressions—where theoretical FPM transfers are used as an instrument for actual FPM transfers. When a municipality receives more revenue because it is on a higher population bracket, the local penalty on PT national candidates declines. By contrast, additional revenue has no discernible effect on the capacity of PSDB mayors to deliver votes for their presidential ticket. The varying effect of additional revenues on the PT and the PSDB is clearly seen in

13. In app. B I show results using other designs and estimation strategies.

14. For further details about the allocation of FPM transfers and the validity of the fuzzy RD, see Brollo et al. (2013).

Table 4. Reduced-Form and IV Estimates: FPM Transfers and Local Incumbency on Presidential Vote Shares

| | PT Sample | | PSDB Sample | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
| Incumbent | −14.010** (5.507) | −15.155** (5.986) | 3.089 (3.589) | 2.953 (3.742) |
| Margin | −.394 (.489) | −.412 (.498) | −.052 (.189) | −.054 (.186) |
| Incumbent × margin | .696 (.572) | .747 (.582) | −.195 (.304) | −.176 (.299) |
| FPM (theoretical) | .424 (.399) | | −.201 (.206) | |
| Incumbent × FPM (theoretical) | .347** (.143) | | −.005 (.081) | |
| FPM (instrumented) | | .454 (.450) | | −.241 (.246) |
| Incumbent × FPM (instrumented) | | .367** (.155) | | −.004 (.086) |
| Constant | 35.606*** (9.676) | 34.163*** (9.704) | 50.769*** (6.869) | 51.159*** (6.901) |
| Region FE | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Term FE | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| N | 178 | 178 | 465 | 465 |

Note. Outcome: vote share of copartisan presidential candidate. Models 1 and 3 report reduced-form estimates, while models 2 and 4 report results from instrumental-variable (IV) regression, instrumenting FPM transfers with theoretical FPM transfers. For models 1 and 2, the sample includes PT-close races within the mean squared error (MSE) optimal bandwidth; for models 3 and 4, the sample includes PSDB-close races within the MSE-optimal bandwidth. The models control for a third-order polynomial in normalized population size, term dummies, and macroregion dummies. All models include the margin of victory of the copartisan candidate and its interaction with the incumbency variable. Observations use triangular weights computed from the electoral margin of the copartisan candidate. Clustered standard errors in parentheses. FE = fixed effects.

* $p < .01$.

** $p < .05$.

*** $p < .01$.

figure 2. Figure 2A shows that an increase in FPM transfers of 1 standard deviation (R\$1,410,000) translates into an increase of 5 percentage points in the presidential vote share of the PT when the party controls the local government. The effect of additional revenue for the PSDB is basically zero. Voters may misattribute a lack of resources to poor effort or competence of local officials—a point I discuss below—but their evaluations of local mayors only translate into penalties or rewards for national candidates when the parties have strong brands.

Before evaluating the mechanisms of my theory using individual-level data, let me mention that my analysis is consistent with voters' expectations being systematically miscalibrated: the average effect of incumbency for the PT is negative, and voters punish or reward the party for exogenous changes in FPM transfers that some municipalities receive simply because they are on a higher population bracket. Brollo et al. (2013) find that incumbents receiving larger transfers experi-

ence a bump in their probability of reelection. Their explanation is that larger transfers worsen the quality of the political candidates challenging the incumbent. But my explanation that voters credit local officials for exogenous additional resources and punish them for exogenous shortfalls is certainly plausible. Voters have been found to misattribute responsibility for the quality of public goods in Brazil (Schiumerini 2017) and the United States (Achen and Bartels 2016). Survey data collected for this article show that, in Brazil, 67% of voters believe the honesty of the mayor to be the most important predictor for the quality of local public goods; 54% see the capacity of the mayor to manage the economy as the most important determinant of the budget (see app. D).

Quality of local public goods

In this section, I analyze individual-level data from the 2010 Brazilian Election Panel Study (BEPS), a nationally representative panel survey composed of three waves of surveys

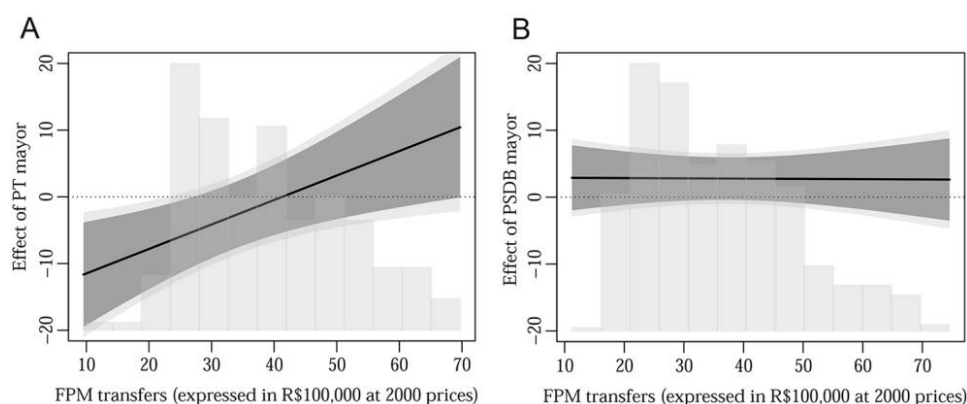


Figure 2. Marginal impact of local incumbency on presidential vote shares for different levels of FPM resources, using estimates from models 2 and 4 in table 4. Histogram shows the distribution of FPM transfers. Gray polygons represent 90% and 95% confidence intervals. A, PT sample; B, PSDB sample.

conducted in the field in 2010 (Ames et al. 2013). This evidence allows me to test directly who is rewarding or punishing the PT and why. For instance, if bad performance in PT-held municipalities leads some voters to punish the PT presidential ticket, we should observe that it is those who are dissatisfied with the mayor's performance who are less likely to support the PT presidential candidate. We should also observe that voters do not judge the PSDB presidential ticket differently in cities governed and those not governed by the party, regardless of their evaluation of the local government.

To test this hypothesis, I use the latest individual information available in the panel survey: a total of 2,669 respondents located in 55 cities and 17 states. I create two samples, one for the PT and one for the PSDB. I only consider respondents from cities where the PT (PSDB) came first or second in the last mayoral election. For each sample, I regress vote intention—whether the respondent thinks she will vote for the PT (PSDB)—for the upcoming presidential election on the treatment variable (whether the mayor is a copartisan of the presidential ticket), a performance evaluation of the local government, and the interaction of these two terms. I use a question from the BEPS in which respondents were asked to rank the services provided by their local government from 1 (very bad) to 5 (very good).¹⁵ In addition, all regressions include the vote margin variable of the copartisan mayoral candidate and state-level fixed effects. I also report models with individual-level controls, including the age, partisanship, education, income, and gender of the respondent. The appendix shows that after controlling for these variables, there are no significant differences on a number of pretreat-

ment covariates between cities where the PT (PSDB) came first in 2008 and those where the party came second, including lagged presidential vote shares.

As seen before, survey respondents are more likely to punish the PT ticket, but not the PSDB ticket, when a copartisan of the candidate is in office locally (table 5). On average, PT mayors reduce the likelihood of voting for the PT presidential candidate by 28 percentage points (model 1). Again, the coefficient for the effect of a PSDB mayor on voting for a PSDB presidential candidate is smaller (almost half the size, 16%) and not statistically significant. As hypothesized, the penalty that PT mayors impose on their party's presidential ticket is moderated by how happy respondents are with the local government. Figure 3 plots interaction effects for models 2 and 5. Respondents unhappy with a PT local government are significantly less likely to support the PT presidential candidate than those who are satisfied with the provision of public goods from the local government. By contrast, the slope of the marginal effect of being governed by a PSDB mayor on supporting the PSDB candidate does not change with the respondent's opinion of the local government.

Party brands and performance

I also conducted a survey experiment with Brazilian voters in March 2018 to assess the joint effect of local performance and party labels during national elections. The survey contained 840 completed interviews and included quotas for gender, age, and education.¹⁶ I first asked respondents to rank the PT, the PSDB, and the PSB in terms of their ideological consistency, brand distinctiveness, and internal discipline (see table D4; tables A1–A12, D1–D4 are available online). Although my

15. The exact question is, "Would you say the services provided by your local government are: (1) Very bad, (2) Bad, (3) Neither good or bad, (4) Good, or (5) Very good."

16. See app. D for details.

Table 5. Linear Probability Models: Effect of Mayor's Performance on Vote Intention

| | PT Sample | | | PSDB Sample | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 | Model 6 |
| Incumbent | -.281** (.120) | -.421*** (.139) | -.480*** (.083) | -.159 (.112) | -.068 (.186) | -.085 (.175) |
| Margin | .001 (.003) | -.001 (.003) | -.000 (.002) | .005* (.003) | .001 (.003) | .002 (.003) |
| Performance | | -.056*** (.016) | -.045*** (.009) | | .013 (.036) | .025 (.034) |
| Incumbent × performance | | .069*** (.024) | .063*** (.014) | | .003 (.045) | -.020 (.044) |
| Copartisan | | | .403*** (.046) | | | .533*** (.093) |
| High school degree or more | | | .002 (.033) | | | -.036 (.048) |
| Makes less than R\$510 monthly | | | -.006 (.006) | | | .001 (.008) |
| Age | | | .001 (.001) | | | -.001 (.001) |
| Female | | | -.057** (.025) | | | .019 (.020) |
| Constant | .364*** (.062) | .516*** (.075) | .490*** (.090) | .384*** (.062) | .364*** (.112) | .364*** (.118) |
| State FE | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| N | 908 | 800 | 798 | 807 | 710 | 710 |

Note. Outcome: vote for copartisan presidential candidate (0, 1). Dependent variable is a dummy indicating that the respondent intends to vote for the PT (models 1–3) or the PSDB (models 4–6) presidential candidate. The PT (PSDB) sample includes respondents in cities where the mayoral candidate of the PT (PSDB) came either first or second. Age is measured in years. Robust standard errors clustered at the municipality level in parentheses. Data from Brazilian Election Panel Study (2010). FE = fixed effects.

* $p < .1$.

** $p < .05$.

*** $p < .01$.

survey was carried out amid a sprawling corruption scandal that affected the PT in particular (see below), Brazilian voters in my sample still perceive the PT as the most cohesive, distinctive, and disciplined party of the three. I then presented them with a vignette experiment. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of four scenarios in a 2×2 factorial design.¹⁷ Scenarios posited that the mayor's perceived performance was either good or bad (I call this the *performance* treatment) and that she was a partisan of the PT or of the PSDB (I call this the *partisanship* treatment): "Imagine a person like you who lives in a different city. This year, she has to vote for president. She is **displeased/pleased** with her local government, headed by a **PT/PSDB** mayor: public services have **worsen/improved** dramatically in the last months."

Respondents were asked, on a scale of 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely), to report how likely they thought the person would "vote for political candidates from the mayor's party in the following national elections." Respondents who were presented with a hypothetical PT (PSDB) mayor were also asked to indicate, on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), the extent to which they agreed with the following statement: "How the **PT/PSDB** governs at the local level is informative of how it will govern at the national level." These two outcome questions followed immediately after the experimental vignettes. To estimate the treatment effects, I run ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models, with robust standard errors. For the outcome about voting for political candidates from the mayor's party, I include, as regressors, the partisan treatment, the performance treatment, and an interaction term between the two treatments. For the second outcome I just include the partisan treatment in the regression.

17. The appendix shows balance tests consistent with random assignment.

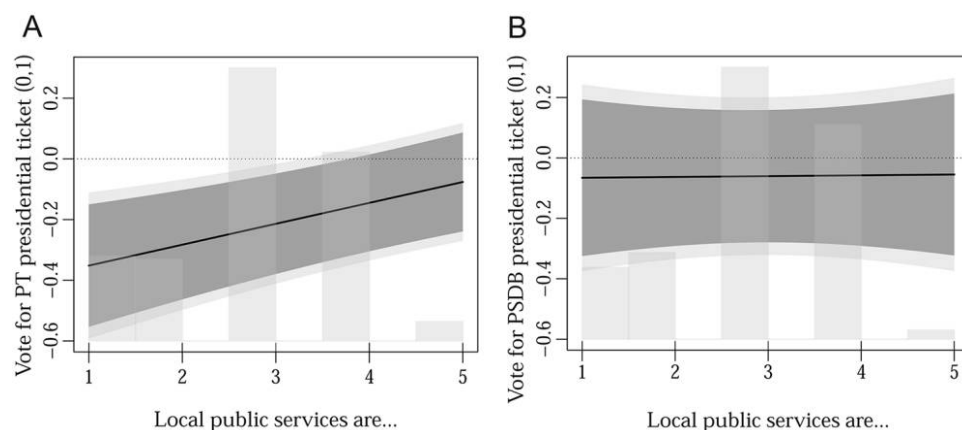


Figure 3. Marginal impact of local incumbency on a dummy variable indicating support for the presidential ticket of the mayor for different levels of satisfaction with local public goods, using estimates from models 2 and 5 in table 5. Histogram shows the distribution of satisfaction with local public goods. Gray polygons represent 90% and 95% confidence intervals. A, PT sample; B, PSDB sample.

The results of this experiment support the theory and mechanisms posed in this article. Respondents assigned to a PT mayor responded more strongly to the performance of the mayor compared to those assigned to a PSDB mayor, with those assigned to an underperformer PT mayor being less likely and those to an overperformer PT mayor being more likely to support copartisans of the mayor than those assigned to a PSDB mayor (see table 6). Respondents assigned to a PT mayor were also significantly more likely to take the performance of the mayor as a cue for the performance of the party at the national level than were those assigned to a PSDB mayor. For all these models the effects are relatively modest (a movement of less than 1 point in the respective scales), but the treatments were also relatively unobtrusive, involving very minor changes in the wordings of the vignettes (after having respondents report their perceptions about these parties).

DISCUSSION

Parties with strong brand names experience a collective punishment when their local officeholders perform below expectations while holding office. They experience a reward when their local leaders perform above expectations. I have shown that voters who reside in municipalities controlled by the PT are more likely to punish the PT presidential ticket, particularly in places where local governments are resource poor and where voters are dissatisfied with local services. The PSDB and the PSB—both loosely organized parties with high rates of party switching, a lack of central coordination, and ambiguous programmatic goals—do not suffer from a similar disadvantage when they perform badly or an advantage when they perform well. Apart from the PT, other parties with relatively stronger brands—issue-oriented parties like the PV and the PPS—also suffer a disadvantage. My finding of a

negative reverse coattail bolsters those of previous studies in Brazil (e.g., Klašnja and Titiunik 2017; Schiumerini 2017).

The penalty suffered by the PT, which is both large and robust, is best explained by voters judging parties with brand names as teams, incorporating the performance of local incumbents in their evaluation of copartisan candidates. The same logic does not apply to weak parties. However, while RD allows for causal identification of the effect of being governed by a specific party relative to being governed by other parties,

Table 6. Effect of Mayor's Partisanship and Performance

| | Vote for National Copartisans Model 1 | Local Performance Is Informative Model 2 |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| PT mayor | -.264* (.135) | .344** (.135) |
| Good performance | 1.020*** (.131) | |
| PT mayor × good performance | .337* (.196) | |
| Constant | 2.360*** (.094) | 4.009*** (.093) |

Note. Dependent variable in model 1 is a five-point measure that indicates whether the respondent is very unlikely (1) or very likely (5) to vote for a national copartisan of the mayor. Dependent variable in model 2 is a seven-point measure on whether the respondent highly disagrees (1) or highly agrees (7) with a statement about local performance serving as indication of national performance. Robust standard errors in parentheses. $N = 840$.

* $p < .01$.

** $p < .05$.

*** $p < .01$.

political parties are the product of complex historical processes that escape experimental manipulation. The PT is distinct in many ways apart from its strong party brand. Below I take up possible objections to the argument and findings presented here.

In Brazil, individual parties are competitive at the local level in only a subset of municipalities. If the PT is more likely to run for local office in resource-poor municipalities, the null effect of the PSDB may be explained by a self-selection of the party into wealthier municipal governments. But in fact both the PT and the PSDB run for office in municipalities with similar-sized budget levels (as shown in fig. 2). What is more, differences in negative reverse coattails identified earlier hold when I control flexibly for the local per capita budget, per capita gross domestic product, a human development index, and the size of the municipality (see the appendix).

Another confounding factor could be the nature of electoral coalitions. In Brazil, parties run in electoral coalitions in both local and national elections. This means that some municipalities are controlled by mayors whose parties are members of PT's and PSDB's presidential coalitions. Presumably, these mayors will work to aid their parties' coalitions at the national level. To isolate the effect of local copartisans on their presidential tickets from possible coalitional dynamics—that might work differently for each party—the analysis reported in appendix A examines whether the PT/PSDB effects are robust to restricting the sample to cases in which its main competitor was from a noncoalition partner. Excluding these observations from the analysis results in a larger penalty for the PT. Coefficient estimates for the PSDB remain small and indistinguishable from zero.

This point, however, raises an additional issue: I show that local incumbency and local performance have a statistically significant effect for the PT but not for the PSDB. But the difference between “significant” and “not significant” is not itself statistically significant (Gelman and Stern 2006).¹⁸ Since the party samples are not independent, I cannot test whether the reported effects of incumbency for each party are statistically different from each other. In appendix A, I report results for a slightly different RD estimand: the effect of mayor-president alignment on presidential vote shares for the president's party. This model includes an interaction term to separate elections in which the PSDB controlled the presidency (1995–2002) from those in which the PT won (2003–16). The president's ticket does worse in cities controlled by copartisans, but only when the PT controls the national government. This difference is significant at the .003 level.

18. I thank an anonymous reviewers for raising this issue.

Another concern has to do with the specific mechanism behind the uncovered effects. I argued that local performance is the key factor driving voters to sanction the PT, but other mechanisms are certainly possible. Fiscal resources may not affect the performance of mayors but their capacity to target voters with particularistic benefits. Yet if this were the case, it would not explain why the PT, but not the PSDB, suffers a penalty when it lacks fiscal resources. In the survey experiment, voters governed by a PT mayor were more likely to use the performance of the mayor when evaluating the party during national elections than those governed by a PSDB mayor. Another mechanism to the one favored in this article could be a reversion to the mean in ideological voting, such as that identified by Erikson et al. (2015) for the United States.¹⁹ These authors argue that centrist voters strike an ideological balance between presidential and gubernatorial offices by voting for opposite parties in state and national elections. Although the PT is distinctly leftist, ideological differences are more muted in local settings (e.g., local taxes represent a small share of the budget). Also, this argument cannot explain the variation identified in this article on the basis of the availability of local resources or the performance of incumbents.

Another question is: How does this study compare to previous studies of the electoral performance of Brazilian mayors? Avelino et al. (2012) and Novaes (2017) show that copartisan mayors in Brazil help their parties win in state and national legislative elections.²⁰ The other relevant study is Klačnja and Titunik (2017). These authors find an incumbency disadvantage for the PSDB when the party has a lame-duck mayor but no disadvantage when the mayor is not under term limits and can run for reelection (140). The PT shows a smaller—although significant—incumbency disadvantage when the sitting mayor can run for reelection but not when he or she is a lame duck.

These findings are seemingly at odds with mine, which implies that voters will consider the performance of a retiring mayor when evaluating his or her copartisans, but only when the party has a strong brand. One possibility is that legislative and mayoral races follow patterns different from presidential and gubernatorial contests. Party brands may be more important during national and statewide races where media outlets play a larger role. By contrast, clientelistic machines may be more relevant in local elections, and these machines are controlled by mayors, not their parties (Novaes 2017). Indeed,

19. Turnout differentials between elections are an unlikely explanation in Brazil, where voting is compulsory.

20. Novaes shows that mayors have helped their copartisans win votes ever since a 2008 Supreme Court ruling that increased the costs of switching parties.

the effect of copartisan incumbency on gubernatorial tickets follows patterns similar to the one I have uncovered.²¹ That Brazilian mayors who belong to strong and weak parties similarly help their parties' congressional candidates also suggests that political machines may be more relevant in these elections.

Recently, the PT has been buffeted by crises: Has its brand weakened or been tarnished? My survey was carried out as former president Lula da Silva was being convicted of corruption and money laundering, and a year and a half later his successor, president Dilma Rousseff, was ousted from power after a contentious impeachment process. We would expect that, as voters across the country are exposed to high-impact information about the party in office, territorial differences in voters' perceptions of the party dissipate. Indeed, the appendix shows that the upstream negative effects of PT mayors on their presidential tickets were largest during the 2002 election, before the PT won the presidency for the first time. These effects became smaller over time, as voters across the country were familiarized with the party's record in office. But even on the eve of PT's major political crisis, voters in my survey still rank the PT as more disciplined, coherent, and programmatic than the PSDB and PSB, and they react—mildly but consistently—to the performance and partisanship treatments. Hence, it appears that voters still perceive the PT as having a strong brand and that they use this brand to evaluate the party's candidates.

CONCLUSION

This article shows that the conventional wisdom that local incumbents help their parties' presidential tickets is not universally true. I show that for well-organized, disciplined parties, mayors can be more of a burden than an asset. How widespread is this conventional wisdom? Ames (1994) cites examples from Colombia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, and Venezuela that suggest that local incumbents help their parties by lending their patronage networks. Benton (2003) suggests that a similar logic affects Argentina, where governors and mayors control strong local machines. This view is also well extended among politicians.

The multiparty nature of the Brazilian system allowed me to disentangle the effect of individual parties. This exercise revealed that strong labels can be a blessing or a curse for parties. While the literature typically focuses on the positive effects of party brands, particularly when they allow local and national politicians to coordinate around shared goals, strong labels also have negative externalities. Parties with strong brand names suffer a large penalty in municipalities

headed by a copartisan mayor, especially in places where the local government has fewer fiscal resources or where voters are dissatisfied with the local provision of public goods. By contrast, presidential tickets of parties with weak brands are unaffected by their co-partisan-held local governments or their performance.

Recent attempts to estimate the effect of partisan linkages between incumbents and candidates have focused on the role of electoral mobilization. In India, for instance, Nellis (2016) shows that incumbents who belong to internally divided parties decline to mobilize their electoral machines to help copartisan candidates from opposing factions. Instead I provide causal evidence qualifying the role of partisan organizations. Strong parties may be more efficient in mobilizing support for their copartisan members, but strong parties also depend on team efforts to maintain their reputations. The fact that voters perceive these parties as collective entities means parties can profit from associating themselves with popular politicians, but they must also pay a price when their members fall out of grace with public opinion. These findings are relevant for a broad set of cases, particularly in countries where incumbency is a disadvantage at the local level. Since the last wave of decentralization around the world, local governments have been significant providers of public goods; the idea of party labels as a "running tally" also has a long tradition in the discipline.

The Brazilian experience broadens our understanding in additional ways. Studies of elections in developing countries often emphasize clientelistic networks and the distributive strategies of parties (e.g., Stokes et al. 2013). Against the view that distributive targeting dominates elections, I show that party labels play a key role. Controlling the local patronage machinery may offer parties an advantage. But local officials can also contribute to the party's electoral success by changing public perceptions about the party. That is, partisan cues may complement or even displace territorial efforts by local officials, especially in national races dominated by media outlets.

My analysis also has implications for our understanding of party building in developing countries. Levitsky et al. (2016) argue that to succeed over time, parties must develop a party brand and build a territorial organization that facilitates the capture of subnational offices. Controlling local-level governments is supposed to give an advantage to national parties in several ways. Holland (2016) argues that experience in local government helps parties—especially those with extreme ideologies—develop a reputation for democratic governance. Using insights and data from Mexico, Lucardi (2016) argues that controlling local governments improves the chances of opposition parties to compete at the national level. This article shows that local incumbency can, however, cut both ways.

21. Results available on request.

Where local governments have scarce fiscal resources and weak bureaucracies, party leaders may face a trade-off between expanding the organization at the local level and securing votes in national elections.

My findings are also relevant to questions of party-system nationalization, defined as the degree to which parties garner similar levels of support across districts. Critically, the nationalization of the party system entails a “mutual dependence [among copartisans] in the never-ending campaign for reelection” (Filippov et al. 2004, 192). Yet in Brazil, it is this mutual dependence that produces dissimilar outcomes across municipalities. More generally, in countries where local parties typically underperform in office, national-level candidates may prefer to separate local and national elections or to distance themselves from the party’s local branches; national parties may also withdraw from competition at the local level.

This article provides new insights into the debate over the PT’s electoral performance. Students of Brazilian politics have noted that Lula and the PT derived electoral support from distinct geographic bases—Lula in the northeast, the PT in the south and southeast. They attribute this divergence to Lula’s success in appealing to poorer and less educated voters.²² This article offers another, complementary, source of disconnect between PT’s national and local electoral coalitions.

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22. Samuels and Zucco (2014a) suggest a different answer: “*Lulismo* is an embryonic form of *Petismo*, but creating partisans is harder than generating support for a charismatic politician—and the PT has, thus far, only been able to convince some Lula supporters to become *Petistas*” (16).

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