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**Eje Temático 5: Estudios Legislativos y
Poderes Ejecutivos**

**O Papel Esquecido do Poder Legislativo na
Trajetória das Políticas de Transferência de Renda
no Brasil**

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(working paper – please do not circulate)

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Abstract

This paper explains how the Brazilian Congress shaped the trajectory of non-contributory conditional cash transfer programs (CCTs) in this country. I build an alternative model for understanding how CCTs are made, accounting for the influence of the Legislative power in the process. The model acknowledges the institutional relationship between powers in a presidential system and uses statistical analysis to understand legislative behavior within the lower house. It describes the incentives that drive policy preferences of congress members and the strategic choices they follow to achieve their policy goals. It focuses on the 20-years trajectory of the Bolsa Família Program, the most relevant case of CCT worldwide. I classified 405 bills of 778 legislators sent to the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies between May 2000 and December 2020 based on their intended changes to policy design. I show that the proportion of poor voters in constituencies greatly influences the behavior of representatives regarding income redistribution. This trend is especially evident among right-wing parties. When representatives come from poor states, it is four times more probable that they will support a bill that expands policy coverage or spending than their peers elected in rich states. Therefore, this study concludes that support in Congress for the CCTs stems from a coalition between left parties and the right-wing representatives elected in constituencies that concentrate most poor voters. In sum, this paper offers an original

approach for studying Income Policies in Latin America using an argument that generally apply to the context of new democracies.

Keywords: Legislative Power; Social Policy; Poverty; Brazil

1 Introduction

Since 2003 elected officials of the Brazilian House of Representatives (*Câmara dos Deputados*) presented, debated, and voted on over 770 bills about Conditional Cash Transfer policies (CCTs). During this time, the Congress approved five major reforms for the *Bolsa Família* Program, reviewed 45 presidential decrees, and voted on the annual budget of this social policy every year. Moreover, legislators frequently exercised their oversight duty by submitting 252 information requests and calling 90 public hearings regarding the Program - 26 investigation hearings among them. Such legislative activism led to substantive changes in policy design and in the increase of cash transfer spending as well as coverage in Brazil¹.

Despite of these facts, studies about non-contributory social assistance in Latin America give little attention to the role that the Legislative branch plays in crafting and sustaining the long-standing implementation of CCTs. The problem lies on the fact that most authors overuse the Executive Branch as source of data to inform their theories about recent policy development (Fenwick, 2009, 2017; Fiszbein and Schady, 2009; Hunter and Sugiyama, 2009; Soares and Cunha, 2014). Consequently, researchers overlook the influence that congress members' activism can produce on the outcomes of social policy design. Therefore, this study aims at filling this gap by building a comprehensive model of CCTs policy-making, in which the congress takes the center stage. Most importantly, it takes into account the idiosyncrasies of Legislative institutions in presidential systems to formulate an explanation for parliamentary behavior toward social policies that can be used in the context of other new democracies.

¹These findings are based on the data collected for this study.

In sum, I address one question: how do congress members contribute to the designing of Cash Transfer policies as we know them today?

To answer this question, this paper focuses on investigating the Brazilian case of CCT: the *Bolsa Família* Program (PBF), which is the biggest social assistance policy in coverage and spending in Latin America and the second oldest income policy in the region (Barrientos, 2013). The time scope of the study covers twenty years of policy implementation from May 2000 to December 2020 including six legislative terms and five presidencies with great change in power. It is also the result of the first systematic data collection about the law-making of social assistance policies in Brazil, stored in a dataset called The Legislative Production of Social Assistance Database (LPSA).

2 The argument

This paper suggests an alternative explanation to the current theories about the diffusion and expansion of CCTs in Latin American countries. Namely, it proposes that policy growth was made possible because of the action of an interparty left-right advocacy coalition that supported it throughout several presidential terms. More specifically, representatives advocated an inclusive model of social policy by drafting bills, amending presidential decrees, and setting the agenda with the aim of enhancing progressive taxation, increasing the values of social benefits, and adding particular outsider social groups² to its target public.

² Outsiders are workers, and their family dependents, that are allocated outside the formal urban labor market. They also include unemployed workers that were previously occupied by informal jobs and most workers of the rural sector. Because they are not allocated in the formal labor market, they are often not allowed to contribute to social insurance. Therefore, outsiders are unprotected and underserved by the Welfare State because they spend most of their working lives ineligible for receiving social benefits and health-care services in most developing countries as well. At the end of the 1990's, outsiders represented between 30 and 60% of the working population of Latin American countries (Portes, 2003: p. 56—59).

The main hypothesis is that this interparty advocacy coalition was formed by the convergence of interests between representatives from left-wing parties and part of those of right-wing parties. In the former case, only the representatives were elected on constituencies that concentrate low-income voters – namely in districts in the Northeast and North regions. To calculate the concentration of such voters, the statistical model uses the CadÚnico³ coverage rate, which is the proportion of poor people enrolled to receive social benefits over the total number of voters in each of the 5.565 municipalities in the years of general elections. Thus, the statistical model suggests that CCTs' legislative behavior is explained by the interaction between the representatives' party ideology and the coverage rate of poor voters in her constituency.

However, representatives have different motivations to pursue similar policy goals. Statistical modeling shows that, when it comes to left-wing representatives, there is an (expected) association between party ideology and support for bills that aim at increasing social benefits. In other words, the probability of support grows significantly as the party's ideology of a given representative approaches the left side of the political spectrum. In particular, when comparing representatives from the same left party, the probability of support remains somewhat constant as the poverty rate varies in their constituencies. The conclusion is clear: members of left-wing parties have a relatively homogeneous behavior toward social policies, regardless of the level of poverty in their districts.

The same does not happen to representatives from right-wing parties. If left-wing ideology is associated with supporting a more inclusive design for CCTs, the inverse of this relationship is also true: when taking only party ideology into account, representatives from right-wing parties have, on average, lower probability of supporting policy expansion. The intriguing question seems to be that there is a variable intervening in the causal relationship between ideology and support for inclusive bills (i.e. more spending and greater public).

³ CadÚnico is the policy tool of the Brazilian federal government to evaluate a citizen's eligibility to non-contributory social benefits. To be enrolled at CadÚnico, a household *per capita* income of a given citizen must be less than the national poverty line (half of the minimum wage). Thus, it constitutes an excellent *proxy* of the distribution of household poverty in Brazil.

This shows the weight of poor voters ballots in the districts. The models show that the probability of support of a representative to bills that e.g. increase policy spending grows significantly as the proportion of poor voters in her constituency increases. In general, this association is statistically independent of party's ideology. However, the behavior change is far more notable among members of right-wing parties. The calculated cut-off line indicates that, *ceteris paribus*, a given right-wing representative decides to support inclusive bills when at least 14% of the voters in her constituency are poor.

Comparing pairs, a right-wing representative elected in the poorest constituencies (last quartile of poverty rate's distribution) can be up to four times more likely to support policy expansion than her peer who was elected in one of the richest constituencies in the country (first quartile of the same distribution). In conclusion, one can say that the right-wing's behavior toward social policies is heterogeneous.

3 Hypotheses

What explains the content of bills about CCTs that representatives submit to the lower House? Evidence indicates that the behavior of Brazilian legislators is associated with some key characteristics that can be traced to their individual qualities (Cheibub, Figueiredo, and Limongi, 2009; Diniz, 2005; Figueiredo and Limongi, 2002; Amorim Neto and Santos, 2003; Zucco and Lauderdale, 2011). These are, foremost, their party affiliation, the coalition to which they belong (i.e. majority or opposition), their district of origin, experience in Congress, voters' preferences, and the territorial distribution of their votes. All of those are well-documented variables that induce a representative's position-taking about public policy issues.

Thus, it is reasonable to say that these individual characteristics can work as predictors of legislators' behavior considering five assumptions. First, the ideology of a representative, measured by the ideology of her party, influences her vote preferences (Cox, 1987; Cox and McCubbins, 1993). Not only that, party ideology is a structural element of Brazilian electoral

competition and legislative work, from which differences of opinion between parties on issues of public policy can be clearly observed (Santos, 2008; Zucco, 2009a).

Second, the connection of a representative with her electoral districts generates incentives for behaving in a distributive manner, that is, to allocate more public resources in districts that are strategic for assuring a winning margin of votes for reelection (Cox, 2010; Martin, 2011; Mayhew, 1974; Stokes *et. al.*, 2013). In Brazil, due to the institutional capacities of the Executive Power in coordinating collective action, this type of behavior is associated with a party belonging to the President's coalition (Meireles, 2019).

Third, representatives affiliated with parties that belong to the President's coalition tend to cooperate with the Executive (Figueiredo and Limongi, 1999; Freitas, 2013; Palermo, 2000). This is because Presidents manage to coordinate the diffuse interests of congressmembers and form a majority to support their agenda by using their agenda-setting capabilities, distributing pork-barrel resources, and nominating party members to cabinet positions (Neto, 2006; Raile, Pereira, and Power, 2010).

Fourth, agents seek to reduce uncertainty about the consequences of their decisions regarding the policy outcomes and the reaction of the attentive public (Arnold, 1990; Krehbiel, 2006; Weible, Heikkila, and Sabatier, 2012). Thus, due to the problem of information asymmetry, representatives guide their voting decisions by following the position of key figures in the decision-making process, such as the leader appointed to report the bill to the committee, a colleague with notable experience in the subject, the congressional counselors, and, most importantly, their party leadership and the leader of the majority (Almeida, 2015; Almeida and Santos, 2011; Santos and Canello, 2016).

Finally, representative's support for a given bill varies across the content and terms of the proposition under discussion (Arnold, 1990). For example, two agents who defend opposing positions on a particular policy issue may be on the same side when deliberation is about another issue within the same bill. Therefore, it can be said that each dimension of public policy design works as an organizing element of the deliberative conflict (Schneider and Ingram, 1997). This is particularly the case with well-established policies. As a policy

consolidates, the nature of the conflict between policy-makers changes: it is no longer between those who are in favor and those who are against, but the conflict evolves to a more complex model of dispute guided by content changes that affect specific aspects of policy's institutions (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010; Pierson, 2000b). This paradigm shift is caused by policy feedback effects (Pierson, 2000a) produced by its implementation, which return to Congress as incentives to defend the consolidated position of the groups privileged by the current policy. Therefore, the shifting of the *status quo* caused by a policy approval at the starting point of its trajectory modifies the terms of the public debate in later deliberations (Pierson, 2006).

Therefore, the hypotheses demonstrated here take into account two main characteristics of representatives. They are: (1) their party ideology and (2) the level of poverty in their constituencies. The argument suggests that the effect of party ideology on the representative's behavior is conditioned by the level of poverty in her constituency. In other words, there is an interaction between ideology and poverty. The direction, magnitude, and theoretical meaning of the effect of these variables are independent for each of the dimensions of the policy design, indicating the parliamentary preference for one of the two CCT models in dispute.

The first hypothesis states that:

H_1 : Representatives affiliated with **left** parties tend to support bills that make the design of Conditional Cash Transfers more **inclusive** regardless of the level of poverty in their constituencies.

There are some reasons to expect that left-wing representatives tend to support an inclusive model of CCT. In advanced democracies, left-wing parties traditionally support more universalist and generous social policies because of their historical ties to the organizations of the working-class movement (Esping-Andersen, 1985; Przeworski and Sprague, 1986a). In Latin America, leftist governments' policies are also associated with the expansion of income transfers (Castañeda and Morales, 2008; Huber and Steohens, 2012; Weyland, Madrid, and Hunter, 2010). Finally, the support of egalitarian ideals, solidarity, the promotion of social justice, and the fight against poverty are values widely identified with ideologies on the left spectrum (Baldwin, 1990). Therefore, it is

reasonable to believe that such representatives tend to support policy reforms that are compatible with these values, despite the electoral gains they could have by its implementation in their constituencies. In conclusion, the behavior of leftist party members is expected to be quite homogeneous across electoral districts (i.e. the states), *ceteris paribus*.

On the other hand, representatives of right-wing parties would tend to show heterogeneous behavior in Congress when it comes to CCTs. Despite the importance of party ideology as a predictor of parliamentary support for a given bill, this paper argues that right-wing support is conditioned by the level of poverty of the electoral districts. Therefore, a further hypothesis states that:

H_2 : The behavior of representatives affiliated with **right-wing parties** depends on the level of **poverty** of their constituencies.

It is well documented that right-wing parties in Brazil guide their behavior based on their ideological beliefs and the opposition to left-wing competitors (Samuels and Zucco, 2014, 2018). In advanced democracies, the legislative work of liberal and conservative parties strongly emphasizes ideas of reducing the role of the State in market regulation (Hibbs, 1977; Huber and Stephens, 2001; Kerstenetzky, 2012; Pierson, 1994; Rodrik, 1997). In Brazil, right-wing parties also tend to support the so-called “neoliberal” agenda (Mainwaring, Meneguello, and Power, 2000), which includes fiscal austerity, control of inflation, opening national markets to global production chains, focusing economic development on a country’s comparative advantages, and limiting the scope of the Welfare State (Campello, 2015; Kerstenetzky, 2014; Quadros and Madeira, 2018; Tarouco and Madeira, 2013). Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that right-wing parties tend to support a restrictive model of CCT (Garay, 2016) because their beliefs are guided by meritocratic values of social justice and a market-oriented understanding of public policy.

Therefore, the heterogeneous behavior of right-wing representatives regarding the expansion of income transfer policies to the poor is not a consequence of a reduced effect of party ideology over their policy preferences,

but the consequence of introducing an intervening factor to this causal relationship, namely: **the democratization of a highly unequal society**. The universalization of suffrage in a society where income inequality is very high shifts the median voter's income below the average national income. In other words, the increase in political participation in Latin American democracies through the enfranchisement of outsiders and new electoral rules aiming at enhancing voting turnout changed the median voter's profile to a poorer voter who lacks proper access to social services and welfare policies. In this scenario, the theory of Meltzer and Richard (1981) applies. The authors point out that, as the difference between the average income and the income of the median voter increases, the redistributive pressure on the electorate also increases. Then, it is reasonable to assume that new democracies established in highly unequal societies, like in most Latin American countries, tend to generate stronger internal redistributive pressures than in democracies with lower income inequality.

In addition, several other characteristics of the Brazilian political system contribute to increasing such redistributive pressure. There is evidence that the proportional electoral system favors the strengthening of political forces linked to the interests of the working class and, consequently, the consolidation of redistributive policies (Iversen and Soskice, 2006). Furthermore, the extension of suffrage to the illiterate, the adoption of electronic voting machines (with a user-friendly interface for illiterate people), and settling the elections on Sundays increased turnout rates and valid votes, especially among the poorest (Limongi, Cheibub, and Figueiredo, 2015; Nicolau, 2002). Also, the party system's consolidation during democracy and the alternation of power between the main center-left and center-right parties helped to create a competitive and free electoral environment (Araújo and Flores, 2019; Nicolau, 2017). Finally, the social pact promoted by the 1988 Constitution as well as its subsequent reforms ensured the expansion of social rights for historically marginalized populations, institutionalizing the demand for public policies aimed at reducing inequalities (Arretche, 2015; Carvalho, 2002; Melo, 2005; Souza, 2013).

As Arretche (2018, p. 19) argues, the sum of these factors created a context in which “conservative and left-wing parties tend to converge to meet the demands of this electorate”. Then, this paper suggests an improved version

of the author's hypothesis. For this reason, H_2 is divided into two sub-hypotheses:

$H_{2.1}$: Representatives affiliated with **right-wing** parties elected by relatively **poorer constituencies** tend to support bills that make the design of Bolsa Família **more inclusive**.

Otherwise:

$H_{2.2}$: Representatives affiliated with **right-wing** parties elected by relatively **richer constituencies** tend to support bills that make the design of Bolsa Família **more restrictive**.

This is because, when the constituency of a right-wing representative is very poor, the contingent of voters potentially benefiting from income transfers becomes so large that the marginal gain of pursuing a pragmatic strategy of supporting its expansion outweighs the gain of following a strategy of supporting the ideological rhetoric of its political field. In other words, given the primary interest in seeking reelection, these representatives tend to choose the first course of action over the second indicating that a pragmatic approach to the issue prevails.

On the other hand, when this contingent is relatively low, the marginal gain in choosing the pragmatic strategy does not tend to overcome the gain in following the ideological strategy. In this case, a given representative would choose the second strategy, in order to please her party allies and constituents, who do not demand income transfer policies so much. Thus, the left-right dichotomy would once again be the primary predictor of legislative behavior without any intervening factor. If H_1 and H_2 are confirmed in the hypothesis test, the logical conclusion is that the approximation between left and right in Congress would occur due to a convergence of interests between two groups: (1) representatives of left-wing parties and (2) representatives of right-wing parties, who have a substantial part of their voters as potential targets of income transfers. Consequently, the advocacy coalition in Congress for the expansion of CCTs is composed of these two fractions: the left and part of the right.

4 Data

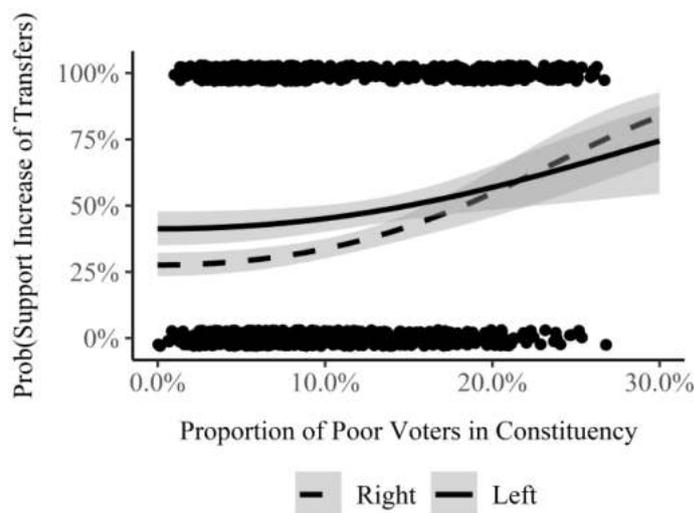
I conducted the first systematic data collection of all bills about the *Bolsa Família* Program analyzed by the House of Representatives between May 2000 and December 2020 regardless of how far they got in the decision-making process. Case selection was based on two objective criteria: (1) the bill or request has been submitted to the House of Representatives and (2) the bill or request concerns the *Bolsa Família* Program. The data have been coded in a way that makes it possible to track back all relevant information concerning the evolution of each bill during the entire legislative process. Such information involves: who submitted them, what is its current status, through which committees it went by, who reported it, if it got amended, and what is the result of its deliberation. Finally, I classified them according to their main issue and policy objectives. In the subset of bills submitted by congress members, I also classified them according to the political affiliations of their authors: their political parties, the electoral districts where they come from, and the coalitions to which they belong (i.e. majority or opposition). The goal was to search for correlations between the content of congress members' proposals and the political motivations that they have. The primary data used in this study is part of the "Legislative Production of Social Assistance Database" (LPSA). Sources are the official public records of the Brazilian Congress.

5 Results

Figure 1 shows the probability of legislative support for bills that aim to increase public spending with income transfers versus the proportion of poor voters in representatives' constituencies. The figure shows the probability curves of two logistic regressions converted to the percentage scale. The solid line represents the probability of support from representatives affiliated with left-wing parties and the dashed line the probability of those linked to right-

wing parties. Therefore, the figure graphically represents the statistical effect of an interaction between the variables party ideology⁴ and the level of poverty in the constituencies as suggested by hypotheses H_1 and H_2 . In other words, the model tests the hypothesis that the probability of supporting an inclusive social policy in each of the two groups varies according to the proportion of poor voters in the constituencies. The gray area around each curve symbolizes the confidence interval of the model coefficients, this time at 90%.

Figure 1 – The interaction effect between party ideology and the proportion of poor voters in constituencies on the probability of a given representative supporting bills that increase policy spending, 2004-2020, Brazil



Legend: Party ideology uses scores of Power and Zucco (2012) scale. Weighted values by the number of bill submissions per author per year.

Source: the Legislative Production of Social Assistance Database (LPSA)

⁴ In this example, party ideology is a categorical variable with two values: left and right. Values were calculated by dividing the perceptions of party ideology of the Zucco and Power (2012) scale.

First, it is notable that the effect of poor voters' concentration on the probability of support appears to be independent between the two party groups. In other words, one can say that the probability of support for bills that increase public spending with CCTs grows as the proportion of poor voters in the representatives' constituencies increases – regardless of whether a given representative belongs to a left or right-wing party. Not only that, the effect of poverty rates on legislative behavior proved to be significant at a level of 99% of confidence in three out of four models tested in this research⁵. At least one of the two coverage rates tested or its interaction with the variable party ideology proved to be significant at this level. This result is quite robust and indicates that the distributive hypothesis of Meltzer and Richard (1981) is correct: representatives guide their actions toward CCT law-making based on the redistributive preferences of their voters. Furthermore, this result confirms another hypothesis established by the Public Policy literature, namely, that the implementation of a policy makes its political support endogenous – an effect called policy feedback (Kingdon, 2014; Pierson, 2000a).

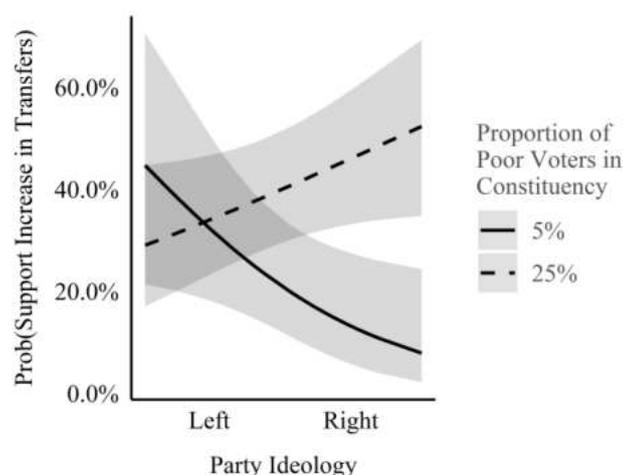
Then, it is observed that the difference between the two party groups is statistically significant up to 14% of poverty rate in constituencies. In other words, the probability of support of representatives who have up to 14% of their voters registered as poor is different depending on the ideology of the party to which they belong⁶. Notably, considering only this cut, representatives linked to left-wing parties are more likely to support bills aiming an increase in policy spending than their peers from right-wing parties. However, from this value onward, the difference between the groups is no longer perceptible. Thus, as the rate grows above the 14% cut, the probability of support from right-wing representatives grows fast leading them to behave as their left-wing peers. Thus, the redistributive preferences of the right converge with those of the left. This result confirms the hypothesis H_2 .

⁵ See appended table.

⁶ This statement is also true considering a confidence level of 95%. However, the cut becomes 9% in the coverage rate. The difference in the statistical significance of the graph in the figure 1 and the regression table is due to the fact that the former uses party ideology as a categorical variable while the latter use it as a continuous variable.

The interactive effect between party ideology and poverty rate becomes even more evident when comparing probability curves based on reference values. Figure 2 compares the probability of support for bills that increase spending on CCTs given the ideology of the parties among legislators with the richest constituencies (5% poverty rate) and poorest (25%). Imagine the following comparison: the researcher selects four federal representatives, two from the left and two from the right. Then, one representative from the left and one from the right has 5% of poor voters in their constituencies. Meanwhile, the other two representatives have constituencies with 25% of poor voters. How does the model predict the behavior of each one based on these values?

Figure 2 – Interaction effect of party ideology and the proportion of poor voters in constituencies on the probability of legislative support for bills that increase policy spending, comparison between reference values, 2004-2020, Brazil



Legend: curves indicate the coefficient values of the logistic regressions scaled in percentage values for the estimated reference values of the independent variable. The grey area represents the confidence interval by 95%. Party ideology uses scores of Power and Zucco (2012) scale. Weighted values by the number of bill submissions per author per year.

Source: the Legislative Production of Social Assistance Database (LPSA)

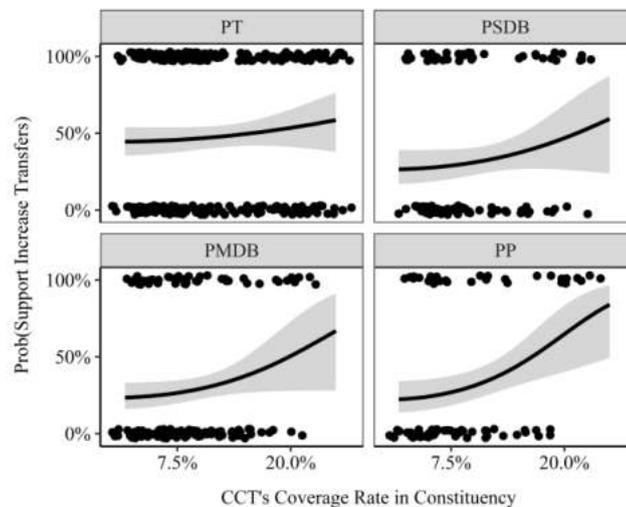
The model is able to predict that the behavior of the two right-wing representatives is different. Not only that, the right-wing representative with the poorest constituencies (dashed line) would likely support the approval of a legislative bill that aims to increase policy spending. Otherwise, her party colleague with a richer constituency (solid line) will likely reject the same proposal. This result confirms the hypotheses $H_{2.1}$ and $H_{2.2}$. Indeed, the redistributive preferences of the right depend on the redistributive pressure of its constituents. In turn, the model is not able to capture the difference in the probability of support of the two left-wing representatives at 95% of confidence. This result confirms hypothesis H_1 , namely that representatives affiliated with left-wing parties tend to support income redistribution regardless of the poverty rate of their constituencies.

However, these results focus on the individual behavior of representatives, leaving party organization in the background. One can then ask whether political parties in fact exert any influence on the individual actions of congress members, as predicted by the theory. To answer this question, it is necessary to compare both the probability of support of representatives from the same party and that of representatives from different parties. So, figure 3 compares the probability curves between the four most representative parties of the sample given the proportion of poor voters in the constituencies of their members. They are: the Workers Party (PT, left-wing), the Party of Brazilian Social-Democracy (PSDB, center), the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB, center-right), and the Progressive Party (PP, right-wing).

One can conclude first that the shape of the curves differs from party to party, even taking into account the confidence interval of the coefficients. The most notable difference is between the PT and the PP, located more apart in the ideology spectrum. In the case of the left-wing party, the curve remains practically “flattened” at all levels of coverage, which indicates a trend towards homogeneous behavior among the party’s representatives. In other words, there is no statistically significant difference in the probability of support from PT representatives for whatever proportion of poor voters in their constituencies.

In the PP, the behavioral difference between representatives elected in the richest districts and those elected in the poorest is considerable and statistically significant. Notably, the model predicts that, from approximately

Figure 3 – CCT coverage rate at the constituency of representatives and their probability of supporting bills that increase policy spending, comparing four selected parties, 2004-2020, Brazil



Legend: curves indicate the coefficient values of the logistic regressions scaled in percentage values. The grey area represents the confidence interval by 95%. Party ideology uses scores of Power and Zucco (2012) scale. Weighted values by the number of bill submissions per author per year.

Source: the Legislative Production of Social Assistance Database (LPSA)

15% of poverty rate, a PP representative tends to support a bill that increases spending. This tendency also exists among the PMDB and PSDB coreligionists, but with less intensity. The confidence intervals are slightly larger and the curves are less similar in shape to the one of PP. In summary, as one moves from the left to the right, the probability curve becomes more and more similar to the shape of a link function suggesting that the difference in intraparty behavior depends on the proportion of poor voters in the constituencies.

The second conclusion that can be drawn from figure 3 is that the curves of the parties have different intercepts, that is, the predicted probability for each party is different at the hypothetical level of 0% coverage rate. The interpretation of the intercept is very important in this case because it denotes the existence of differences in interparty behavior that are independent from the causal effect of poverty rate. It is worth mentioning that only the PT (the only left party) has an intercept with a value close to 50% of probability. This result indicates that the party tends to support bills increasing policy spending. Furthermore, it suggests that the poverty rate is not associated with the decision of their representatives to support these measures. That is not the case of the parties located right to the center: PSDB, PMDB, and PP intercepts are low and similar. In none of the three cases is the value greater than the 25% mark. These results confirm the argument that legislative behavior differs between left and right-wing parties.

6 Conclusion

In summary, the results presented in this paper as well as the models described in the table in the appendix gather robust evidence that the effect of the representatives' party ideology on their redistributive preferences varies according to the proportion of poor voters in their constituencies. They prove that modeling the interaction between these two variables produces the results predicted by the theory at a satisfactory level of statistical significance. Thus, the paper confirms the hypothesis H_1 because the behavior of legislators of left-wing parties is relatively homogeneous if compared to the right. Not only that, the probability of support increases among representatives located to the left of the ideology scale. In the intra-party comparison, left-wing parties have intercepts with higher values than right-wing parties, indicating that the probability of support is already high before deliberating about a given bill.

Finally, there is enough evidence to confirm the hypotheses $H_{2,1}$ and $H_{2,2}$. The statistical models reveal that the behavior of representatives from right-wing parties is strongly affected by the redistributive pressure of their

constituents. Notably, the higher the proportion of poor voters in the electorate, the greater the likelihood of a representative to support a bill aiming to increase spending with income redistribution. This trend intensifies when the poverty rate exceeds 14%: then, the behavior of right-wing representatives can no longer be distinguished from the left. Moreover, the 14% threshold shows that a marginal increase in poverty is less important than the difference between extreme values. Given that the level of socio-economic development in Brazil is very unequal, this trend reveals the existence of geographic clusters of political behavior. Thus, the difference between right-wing representatives reflects the different behavior of two groups: legislators elected by the richest states in the South and Southeast and legislators elected by the poorest states in the North and Northeast regions.

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