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Preaching to the Choir: **The Effect of Debates on Voter Intentions in a Multiparty Presidential System**

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Introduction

Since the first election in Brazil after re-democratization, presidential debates have been central to the spectacle of elections. The first official debates occurred in 1989 and they have been staged in every election since and are seen by candidates and their marketing crews as significant campaign events. In fact, some argue that the close-fought dispute between Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Fernando Collor de Mello in 1989 was only decided in favor of Collor after the final debate and the biased editing of *Jornal Nacional*, Globo's primetime news coverage, the day before Election Day (Miguel, 2001; Gomes, 2006). Yet despite presidential debates' centrality to campaigns, there have been no empirical studies up to now showing their effect on vote choice in the competitive electoral environments of multiparty presidential systems.

We take a first step in this direction by examining the Brazilian presidential debates of 2014. They took place during the 2014 election, in which Dilma Rousseff of the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers' Party) won a relatively narrow second-round victory – by 3% - over Aécio Neves of the *Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira* (Brazilian Social Democracy Party). This election in particular had numerous presidential debates during the first and second rounds, and they were generally marked by tension, aggressiveness, and belligerence. It was an election with significant electoral volatility and one in which the leading candidates alternated positions during the race (Renno and Ames 2015). As a result, these are especially interesting elections to investigate the role of debates in affecting vote choice.

In fact, the impact of debates potentially increases when long-term attachments to politics, such as ideology and partisanship, are weaker. Short-term campaign events, including debates, could gain relevance under such conditions (Greene XXX). As a consequence, campaigns are important for understanding vote choice in young democracies, especially those with multiple parties and loose ideological positions (both at the elite and mass levels).

In particular, multiparty presidential elections are complex when ballotage rules are in place. The existence of two electoral rounds (in which all candidates participate in the first round and the top two contenders compete in a second-round runoff), allows for a unique comparative approach on the effect of debates, as the number of debaters invariably decreases to 2 in the second round. We therefore compare first-round

debates, with multiple parties, to second-round debates, which more closely resemble elections in two-party systems.

In addition to comparing the debates in the two rounds of the election, this paper investigates whether the debates have a direct effect or an indirect effect on vote choice through post-debate interpersonal interactions. Baker, Ames and Renno (2006) have shown how interpersonal discussion and social networks are decisive in Brazilian elections. As a result, one must consider the indirect effects of debates through interpersonal discussion. We also build a profile of who watches debates in Brazil, who talks about debates, and who hears comments about what happened in the debates.

The first section of the paper discusses the literature on debates' effects on vote choice. Studies have shown that debates are a key component of U.S. electoral campaigns, but the conclusions about the extent of their effects on vote choice have been mixed. In the second section, we outline our hypotheses. The third section introduces our methods and the fourth section our results. We show that less than a third of the electorate watch or talk about debates in Brazil and that doing so can actually make one *less* likely to change one's vote. Just like more traditional democracies, debates in Brazil serve to reinforce attentive voters' long-term inclinations instead of convincing them to vote for other candidates. We then conclude the paper with suggestions for future research.

Presidential Debates

Do debates matter? Who are influenced by debates and how do they affect voters? Debates, as with many phenomena in the social world, do not have homogenous effects, and the profile of who watches presidential debates conditions their effects.

Debates can draw many viewers, but not all of them come with an open mind. In fact, many viewers will have already picked a side or have solid preferences, which means that few will change their vote intentions because of a debate. Early studies in the U.S. revealed, on average, modest effects on vote intention (Lang and Lang, 1961; Abramowitz, 1978; Sigelman and Sigelman, 1984) and the early literature on voting behavior concluded that most voters selected their candidate based on sociological characteristics and/or partisan identification well before campaigns even began.

Kenski and Stround (2005) show that debate audiences tend to be older, more educated, more interested in politics, wealthier, and more partisan than the public at large. Hillygus and Jackman (2003) argue that partisan voters rarely change their minds because of debates, and that the debates have less influence on sophisticated voters and Republicans (Fridkin et al., 2007); they might, however, affect independent voters who are highly interested but undecided, or who view debates regularly and have conflicting opinions (McKinney and Carlin, 2004). As a result, the influence of electoral debates is not uniform, as it affects citizens differently depending on their characteristics.

This implies that campaigns have only "minimal effects" on voters' attitudes and behaviors (Bernard, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Campbell et al. 1960). If anything, debates reinforce prior beliefs, making changes in opinion highly unlikely. Benoit and Hansen (2004), for instance, point out that people are more likely to assimilate information that reinforces their preferences than to alter their voting preferences.

Other researchers, however, have claimed that debates matter, but that they depend on a variety of indirect factors, such as the political context of the campaign, the extent of media coverage, and voters´ individual characteristics (McKinney and Carlin, 2004; Schrott and Lanoue, 2008). Holbrook (1999), for instance, finds that debates enhance knowledge, but that they are conditioned by the political context. Specifically, earlier debates promote more knowledge than subsequent debates, and people are inclined to learn more about unknown candidates than incumbents, who are already more well-known.

Using an experiment with viewers and listeners, however, Druckman (2003) revealed that television images have meaningful impacts on learning content and perceptions of candidates' personalities, which affect overall evaluations about whom to vote for. Pfau (2003), for instance, contends that televised debates are the only political events capable of attracting the attention of a disinterested and un-attentive public. Debates can provide indirect effects on viewers' votes based on subtle non-verbal messages that are not detected by most studies. These types of messages have to do with candidates' personal traits, such as enthusiasm, sympathy, and trustworthiness, which are transmitted to the public during specific discussions on issues. Results indicate that nonverbal mechanisms can be persuasive and significantly affect voters' perceptions of candidates (Pfau and Kang, 1991).

Another indirect effect relates to media coverage. More specifically, media coverage after debates can also affect vote choice through different forums of communication. Several studies have found that the media spend a considerable amount of time and energy discussing candidate performances (Fridkin et al., 2007). By doing so, the effects of presidential debates extend beyond the event itself (McKinney and Carlin, 2004). Accordingly, Pfau et al. (2002) argue that the new media (debate commentary on entertainment talk shows and satirical political programs) have more influence on vote intentions than the traditional media (newspapers and evening television news). This is a 21st-century version of the classical two-step model of information flows, in which opinion leaders influence vote choice by mediating the effect of raw political information.

In short, Benoit, Hansen and Verser (2003) conduct a meta-analysis of 25 studies on debates. They find that debates do influence perceptions of candidates' personalities, but not opinions about candidates' competence. More importantly, they also find that debates indeed affect viewers' votes directly.

Yet the U.S. is not experiencing a normal political moment. In fact, partisan animus is at a high point. Yet recent research has concluded that this has less to do with ideological differences than with social identity and ingroup-outgroup bias. This type of dynamic produces both positive feelings for a group with which one identifies and negative feelings for those with whom one does not. (Mason, 2015; Iyengar et al., 2012; Iyengar and Westwood, 2015)

Brazil, like the U.S., has also been living through a contentious political moment. The bad-tempered debates of Rousseff and Neves in 2014 were followed two years later by the impeachment of the eventual victor, Rousseff. The resulting crisis has also involved countless strikes, standoffs between the executive, judicial, and legislative branches, and increased tensions throughout society at large. Yet a look at the data shows that this polarization does not penetrate far into society, and that the polarization that does exist has little to do with ideology. If fact, the polarization in Brazil seems to resemble the social identity-based polarization in the U.S. (Freire et al., 2017; Borges and Vidigal, 2018; Freire, Lloyd, and Turgeon, 2018)

A look at the 2014 Brazilian Electoral Panel Study (BEPS) seems to support this view, as voters evaluate their own candidates more positively in debates than opposing candidates. Of those who supported Rousseff before the debate, for instance, 74% thought she performed best in the first debate of the first round. Yet for that same

debate, 51% of Aécio Neves' supporters thought he had performed best in the debate, while 66% of Marina Silva's supporters backed her as the winner. One might suspect that, as a result, the presidential debates were important for reinforcing previous political positions, but this hypothesis has yet to be tested rigorously and empirically.

Hypotheses

In accordance with our theory, we develop four hypotheses. First, we make a descriptive argument: those who watch the debates were not a representative cross-section of the Brazilian population. We believe that, in general, they were older, more educated, wealthier, more interested in politics, and more partisan. This potential selection bias must be taken into account when attempting to make causal inferences about the effects of debates on vote intentions.

Second, we expect that presidential debates will only affect the opinions of a certain subset of the audience of debates. We do not believe the debates will affect those who had already decided on a candidate—if anything, the debates could make those who have already chosen *less* likely to change their minds. We also do not expect debates to affect the opinion of as many older people, people who have partisan identities, people who are interested in politics, and people who are knowledgeable about politics, as these people will be more likely to have already made up their minds before watching the debates.

Third, the Brazilian case also allows us compare the effects of debates in two distinct rounds of the election. First, we look at debates when more than two candidates participate, which occurs in the first round. Second, we look at debates that occur before the runoff between the top two contenders. We expect that debates will have an effect in the first round, but less of an effect in the second round, when opinions are more crystallized and there are fewer candidates to choose from. The presence, in the first round, of several candidates increases the likelihood for volatility and changes in vote intentions, as voters are still uncertain about the several distinct electoral options available.

Given the characteristics of those who self-select to watch the debates, we argue that debates in the first round should strengthen prior predispositions; in other words, candidates will be preaching to the choir. These debates should have a negative effect on viewers' propensities to switch candidates. In the second-round runoff election,

debates should have no effects, as the likelihood for changes decreases. In short, each debate should have limited, but different, effects on vote switching.

Lastly, we believe that *indirect* contact with the debates will have an additional effect on opinions. This indirect contact includes talking about the debates and hearing commentary about them. We believe that this reaction to and interpretation of presidential debates can have a result that is independent from the direct effect of simply watching the debates. Furthermore, talking about debates indicates a more active role in disseminating the information acquired in the debates, whereas hearing comments implies a more passive role. We argue that, following the general trend of being exposed directly to the debate, the indirect effect will also be one of reinforcing prior predispositions, as voters will be selective in what they disseminate and the information they acquire.

This hypothesis is built on the Columbia School's arguments that there should be a two-step-flow of communication in presidential debates (Katz, 1957; Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955; Lazarsfeld et al., 1944). That is, citizens communicate with and influence acquaintances' preferences based on the information that they extract from the debates. Interpersonal relations extend debates' power of discussion, which potentially initiates a chain reaction.

Research Design and Methods

To test these hypotheses, we used data from the 2014 Brazilian Electoral Panel Study (BEPS), a panel study conducted before and after the 2014 general elections in Brazil in seven waves. The BEPS included questions on whether the respondent watched three different presidential debates, as well as whether she or he talked about them with others or heard someone commenting about them. It also included a host of other questions, including some on demographic characteristics, socioeconomic conditions, interest in politics, candidate preferences, and political knowledge.

To test our first hypothesis, we looked at who watched each of the three main debates. The first debate was held on the TV Bandeirantes (Band) network on August 21, 2014, while the second was held on Record TV on September 28, 2014, and the third was held on Globo on October 2, 2014, three days before the first round of the election. Seven candidates from different coalitions participated in these debates. The number of undecided voters at the beginning of the first round of the 2014 elections,

according to Datafolha, a prestigious polling firm in Brazil, was 54% in July 2014. As such, the level of competition and the number of voters uncertain about their vote open significant space for campaign events, such as debates, to affect vote choice, one way or another.

Several debates were also held between the date of the first round of the election and the date of the second round of the election (October 26, 2014), and the BEPS asked respondents whether they had watched any of the debates held before the second round. This setting, however, is completely different from that of the first round, in which the number of undecided voters ranged during the electoral period around 30%, subsiding only at the end of the race. The second round, however, starts with only 6% of the electorate undecided, which continues up until the election. Competition between the top two candidates is fierce, with at times only small margins separating them during the campaign. Still, undecided voters are not the most likely to watch the debates or hear about them, so debates should play a smaller role. This scenario more clearly resembles that of majority electoral systems, in which voters' long-term commitments to politics and political groups are decisive and campaign events play a secondary role.

We should therefore expect debates to have a more significant effect in the first round, where the opportunities for campaign events to alter vote choices is greater. To test our hypotheses about the effect of debates, our dependent variable was whether the respondent had changed their preferred candidate over the relevant time period. Those who supported the same candidate before and after the debate in question were coded as 0; those who switched candidates over this time period were coded as 1.[1]

We estimated two types of models to measure this effect: a logistic model and a regression difference-in-differences model (regression-DD). Regression-DD models are more rigorous ways to control for selection problems over time while also maintaining the ability to add relevant covariates (Angrist and Pischke 2008). Difference-in-difference models use statistical controls to create a natural experiment in which four groups of objects are compared: one group that receives a treatment; one that, over the same time period, does not; one that receives the same treatment before the treatment is given to the treated group; and one that does not receive the treatment before the treatment is administered to the treated group. The great benefit of this

[1] We did not include "don't know" and "no response" as valid responses, coding them as missing values.

strategy is avoiding endogeneity while comparing heterogeneous units of analysis (Bertrand et al. 2004). As Lechner (2010, 168) explains:

> The idea of this empirical strategy is that if the two treated and the two nontreated groups are subject to the same time trends, and if the treatment has had no effect in the pre-treatment period, then an estimate of the "effect" of the treatment in a period in which it is known to have none, can be used to remove the effect of confounding factors to which a comparison of post-treatment outcomes of treated and nontreated may be subject to. This is to say that we use the mean changes of the outcome variables for the nontreated over time and add them to the mean level of the outcome variable for the treated prior to treatment to obtain the mean outcome the treated would have experienced if they had not been subjected to the treatment.

In this case, we ran a regression-DD with robust standard errors (Huber, 1967; White, 1980), with the dependent variable of changing one's vote and the key independent variable (the "treatment") being that of having watched a debate. Since there were no subjects who watched a debate before the first debate, we were not able to estimate a regression-DD model for the Band debate. As a result, we estimated a logistic model with the same dependent and independent variables for the first debate.

A regression-DD uses a linear probability model as a base, which is not always the ideal situation for a binary dependent variable. As Lechner (2010) points out, however, the oft-cited problems with linear probability models do not hinder the interpretation of regression-DD models in this case because we are primarily interested in the average treatment effect (Puhani 2008). Furthermore, performing a difference-in-difference analysis on a logit model can violate the common trend assumption (Lechner 2010), and using generalized robust standard errors can go a ways to reduce problems with overestimating standard errors (Bertrand et al. 2004). As a result, we opted to use a linear probability model for our difference-in-differences regression.

To test the hypothesis about the differences between debates in the first and second rounds of the election, we run separate regressions for the different debates in each round. In this way, we can test, in the first round, if the timing of the debate, closer to the Election Day, have a distinct effect from early debates. We also test if debates in the first round are more influential in vote choice than in the second round.

To measure our last hypothesis, we used the same dependent variables over the same time period, but with different treatment variables: whether the respondent had talked to someone else about the debates or heard comments about the debates. We used the same covariates as before.[2] This was done in order to isolate the indirect effects of the debates while also controlling for the direct effects. As before, we only used a logistic model for the first debate, and a linear probability model for our regression-DD for the other three models.

Results

15.5% of the sample watched the Band debate, 14.3% watched the Record debate, 36.8% the Globo debate, and 29.3% a debate during the second round. As a result, in the first round, the last debate attracted the attention of a broader audience, whereas the early debates mobilized fewer voters. The second-round debates also received significant media attention.

We constructed logit models for each of these debates, with watching each debate being the dependent variable. Our independent variables were sex, age, education, income, religion (Catholic or non-Catholic), race (white or non-white), partisan identification (identified with a specific party or not), interest in politics (none, a little, some, or a lot),[2] and knowledge of politics (with those who correctly answered at least 4 out of 5 political knowledge questions being coded as 1 and those who answered less coded as 0).

On the whole, as one can see in Table 1, being male made one more likely to watch the debates, as did holding a partisan identification and being knowledgeable about politics. Other variables that were sometimes relevant were education, wealth, and religion. In short, the characteristics of the audience make it less likely to be persuaded by watching the debates, especially because of its strong partisan identification. This result resembles that of older democracies, such as the U.S., which allows us to expect debates in Brazil to have minimal effects on vote choice as well.

A potential exception here is the last debate of the first round at Globo Television, which attracted a broader audience (nearly 40% of the population). This

[2] We had to remove the political interest variable, however, as it caused collinearity problems in our model. We also included having watched the debate as a control variable, but it had no effect on our figures, so we opted to exclude it from our final results.

audience was also less likely to have a partisan identification. Hence, it is also interesting to verify if this debate, as it was close to Election Day and had a broader, more diverse audience, also had a distinct effect on short-term changes in vote intentions.

Table 1: Profile of TV Debate Audiences

	Model 1: Band Debate	**Model 2: Record Debate**	**Model 3: Globo Debate**	**Model 4: 2nd-round debates**
Variable	**Odds ratio (z-value)**	**Odds ratio (z-value)**	**Odds ratio (z-value)**	**Odds ratio (z-value)**
Woman	0.5(-2.78***)	0.57(-1.81*)	1.05 (0.15)	0.89(-0.76)
Age	1.2 (1.78)	0.99(-0.62)	0.99(-0.99)	1.06(0.90)
Education	1.05 (0.90)	1.11 (1.49)	1.27 (3.22***)	1.08(2.31**)
Income	1.2 (1.96*)	1.19 (1.38)	0.92(-0.72)	1.01(0.22)
Catholic	0.48 (-2.96***)	0.78 (-0.81)	1.31(0.86)	0.97(-0.19)
White	0.66 (-1.59)	0.67(-1.2)	1.6(1.59)	1.23(1.35)
Party ID	3.05(4.37***)	2.27(2.55***)	1.05(0.15)	1.79(3.28***)
Interest	1.02 (0.21)	1.01(0.11)	1.13(1.09)	1.08(1.34)
Knowledge	1.27 (2.44**)	1.07(0.11)	3.96(2.04**)	1.19(2.63***)
N	573	386	233	980

p-values:*<10 **<.05 *<.01**

The measurement of the direct effects—that is, the effect of watching the debate on one's likelihood of changing preferred candidate—is shown below in Table 2. For the Band debate, it was not possible to obtain a difference-in-differences estimator, so we left it out of our main analysis. We did, however, run a logit model, the results of which are in Appendix A. Watching the Band Debate had no effect on changes in vote intention.

For the other three debates, the main variable of interest is the diff-in-diffs estimator, as it is able to systematically compare differences between control and treatment groups over time—the individual component terms (watching the debate and the time of treatment) are relevant only insofar as they relate to this interactive term.

Table 2: Direct Effects

	Model 1: Record Debate	**Model 2: Globo Debate**	**Model 3: 2nd round debates**
Variable	**Coefficient (t-value)**	**Coefficient (t-value)**	**Coefficient (t-value)**
Watched debate	0.16(3.19***)	0.20(4.86***)	0.02(1.20)
Time of treatment	0.10(8.28***)	0.09(6.87***)	0.02(3.54***)
Diff-in-diffs estimator (watched x time)	***-0.14(-2.53**)***	***-0.18(-3.97***)***	***0.003(0.17)***
Woman	-0.02(-2.09**)	-0.20(-2.01**)	0.02(3.85***)
Age	-0.002(-4.17***)	-0.001(-4.13***)	0.000(1.79*)
Education	0.003(1.06)	0.002(0.99)	-0.001(-0.98)
Income	0.01(3.13***)	0.01(3.14***)	0.000(0.13)
Catholic	0.01(0.50)	0.005(0.49)	-0.001(-0.21)
White	-0.01(-1.13)	-0.01(-1.09)	-0.005(-0.96)

Party ID	-0.01(-0.64)	-0.007(-0.63)	-0.002(-0.36)
Knowledge	0.002(0.44)	0.002(0.46)	-0.003(-1.64)
N	7605		

p-values:*<10 **<.05 *<.01**

As Table 2 shows, the first-round debates have more of an effect than the second-round debates on vote choice, with the coefficient for the diff-in-diffs estimator for both the Record and Globo debates having significant values. However, this value is negative, which suggests that those who watched the debate became *less* likely to switch candidates. Of the covariates, age, sex, and income have consistent effects across the Record and Globo debates: females, the elderly, and the wealthier are more likely to switch candidates. However, the effect of income disappears in the second round, while the effect of age and sex switches directions.

Our results can also be seen in Figures 1 and 2 below, where those who do not watch the debates become more likely to change candidates over time, and those who do become less likely. This is shown by the fact that the lines representing the respondents who did watch the debates (red) and those who did not (blue) move in different directions while their shaded areas, which represent their 95% confidence intervals, are almost completely separate from one another. Hence, even though the Globo debate attracted a broader audience, it did not alter significantly the likelihood of vote shifts. Figure 3 shows, however, that for the second round, there is no significant difference between those who watched and those who did not watch debates in regards to their likelihood of changing candidates.

Figure 1:

Likelihood of Changing Vote Intentions, Watching Record Debate

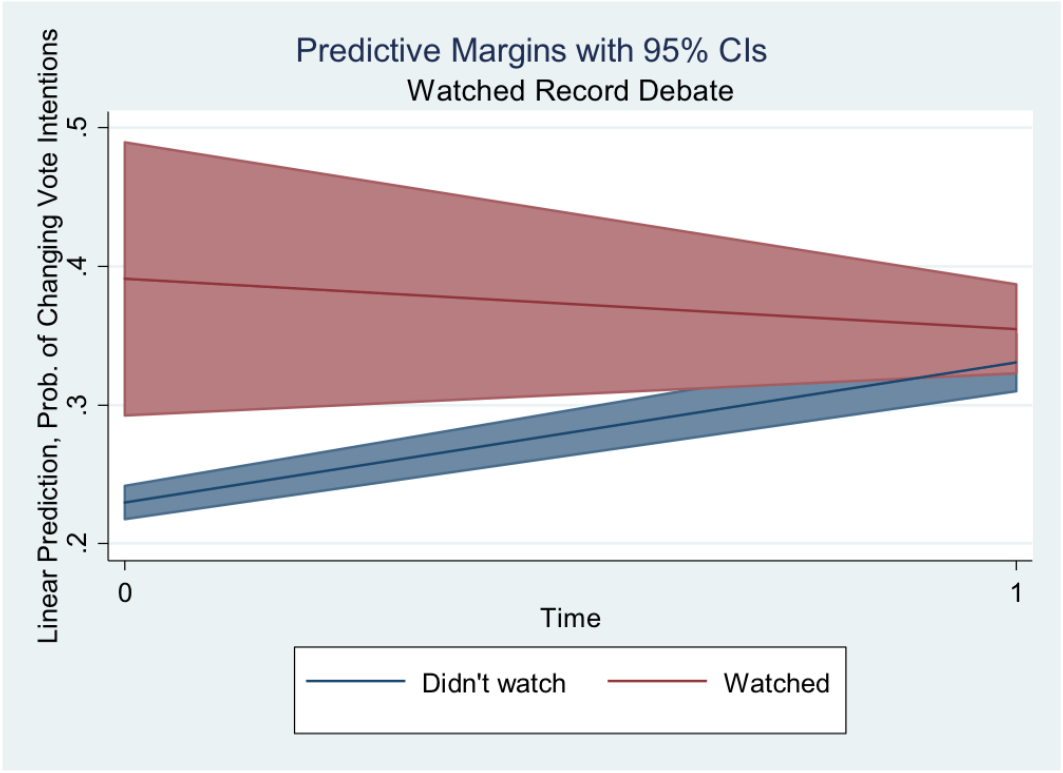


Figure 2:
Likelihood of Changing Vote Intentions, Watching Globo Debate

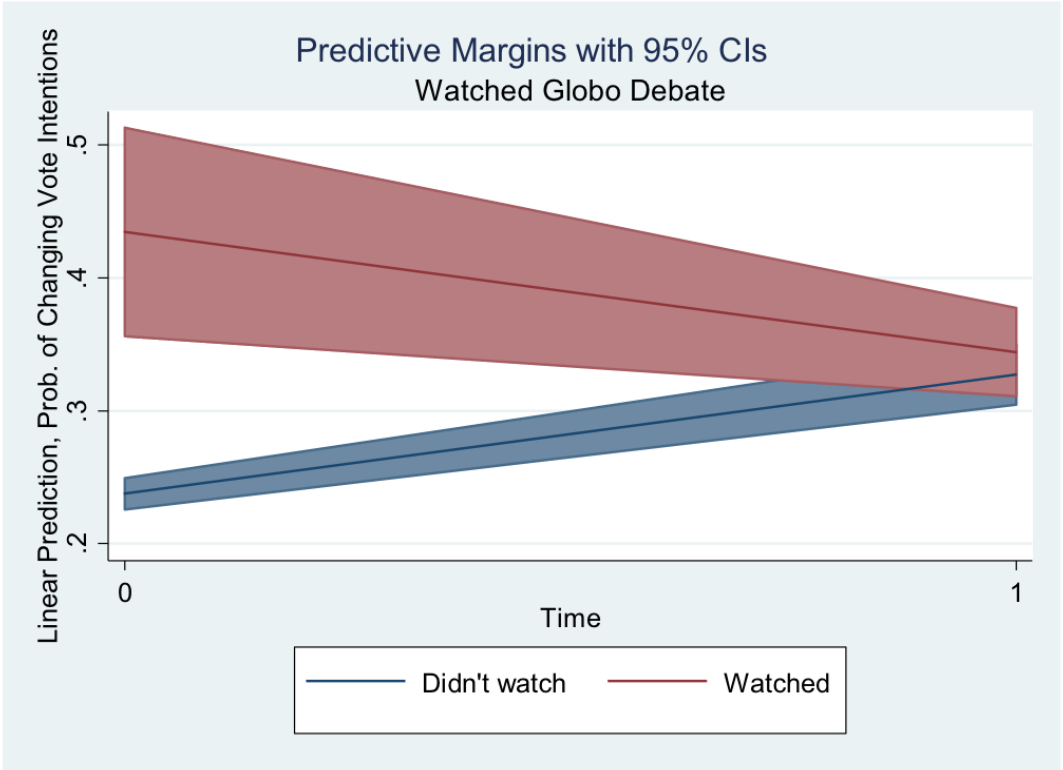
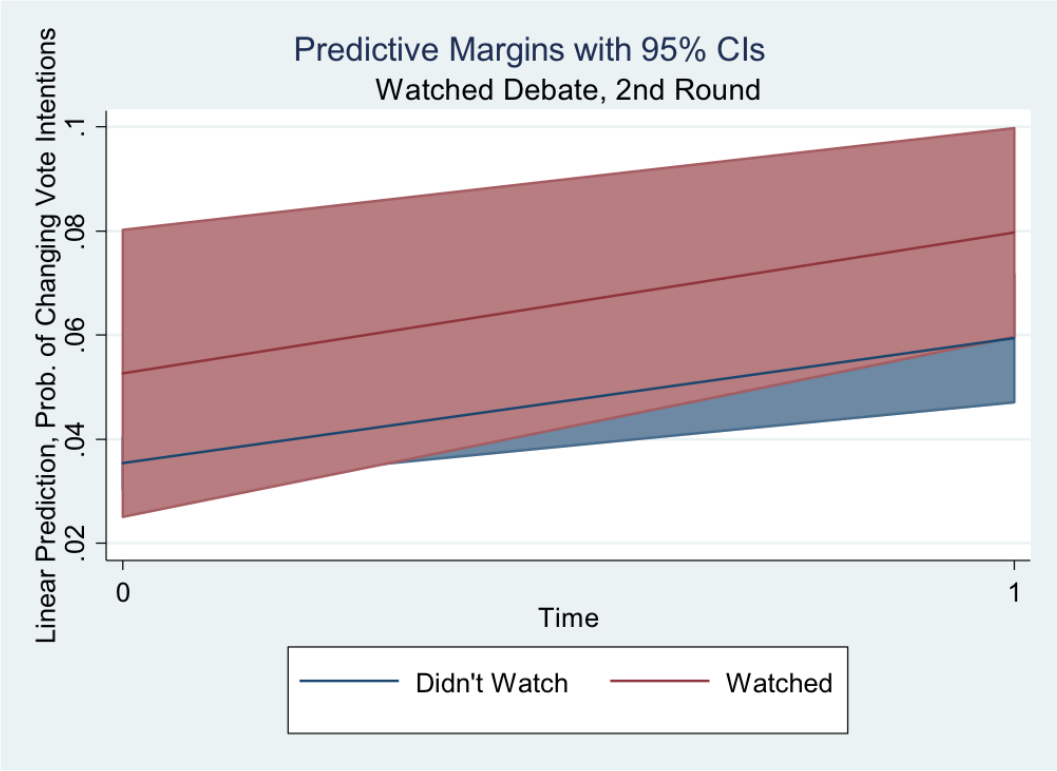


Figure 3:
Likelihood of Changing Vote Intentions, Watching 2nd Round Debates



Fewer people seem to have discussed or heard about the debates than watched them. About 7% of respondents talked about the Band debate with someone else, while 2.9% did so for the Record debate, andl 10.6% for the Globo debate. As for hearing comments about the debates, the figures were 15.1%, 9.2%, and 17.3%, respectively. We also constructed a general variable to measure who watched, talked about or heard commentary about any debate at any time of the campaign. A simple cross-tab between those who watched debates and those who heard comments about them revealed that only 3.4% of respondents heard comments about debates but not watched any of them. Likewise, only 1.1% of all respondents talked about debates without watching them. In short, only a tiny minority of the population was exposed only indirectly to the debate through political conversation. As a result, the audience that is exposed directly to debates is practically identical to that which was exposed indirectly to them.[3]

[3] The profiles of those who talked about debates and those who heard comments about them were very similar to the profile of those who watched debates. We ran a logit regression and our analyses are available by request.

As with Table 2, we estimated regression-DD models for the Record, Globo, and second-round debates. We show our results in Table 4. The difference-in-differences estimator is bolded and italicized once again.

As we can see from Table 4, the results are quite interesting. Taking a more active role in talking about the debates did not seem to have much of an effect at all, as the difference-in-differences estimator is not significant at .05 for any of the debates (although it gets close for the Record debate). Sex, age, and income follow the same pattern as they do for watching the debates.

Table 4: Indirect Effects, Talking about Debates

	Model 1: Record Debate	**Model 2: Globo Debate**	**Model 3: 2nd round debates**
Variable	**Coefficient (t-value)**	**Coefficient (t-value)**	**Coefficient (t-value)**
Talked about debate	0.16(2.08**)	0.1(1.46)	0.03(1.17)
Time	0.11(9.37***)	0.09(7.35***)	0.03(4.58***)
Diff-in-diffs estimator (time x talked)	***-0.16(-1.92*)***	***-0.08(-1.12)***	***-0.03(-0.80)***
Woman	-0.02(-2.14**)	-0.20(-2.16**)	0.02(3.83***)
Age	-0.001(-4.07***)	-0.001(-4.01***)	0.000(1.85*)
Education	0.003(1.15)	0.003(1.13)	-0.001(-0.94)
Income	0.01(3.17***)	0.01(3.21***)	0.000 (0.14)
Catholic	0.004(0.46)	0.004(0.40)	-0.001(-0.21)
White	-0.01(-1.14)	-0.01(-1.19)	-0.005(-0.92)
Party ID	-0.01(-0.53)	-0.01(-0.47)	-0.001(-0.27)
Knowledge	0.002(0.51)	0.002(0.50)	-0.003(-1.58)

N	7605

p-values: *<10 **<.05 *<.01**

Figures 4, 5, and 6 show this result as well. As one can see, the paths of those who did and did not talk about the debates do not have clearly different slopes as they did in Figures 1 and 2. Furthermore, the shaded areas representing their 95% confidence intervals are indistinguishable from one another.

Figure 4:
Likelihood of Changing Vote Intentions, Talking about Record Debate

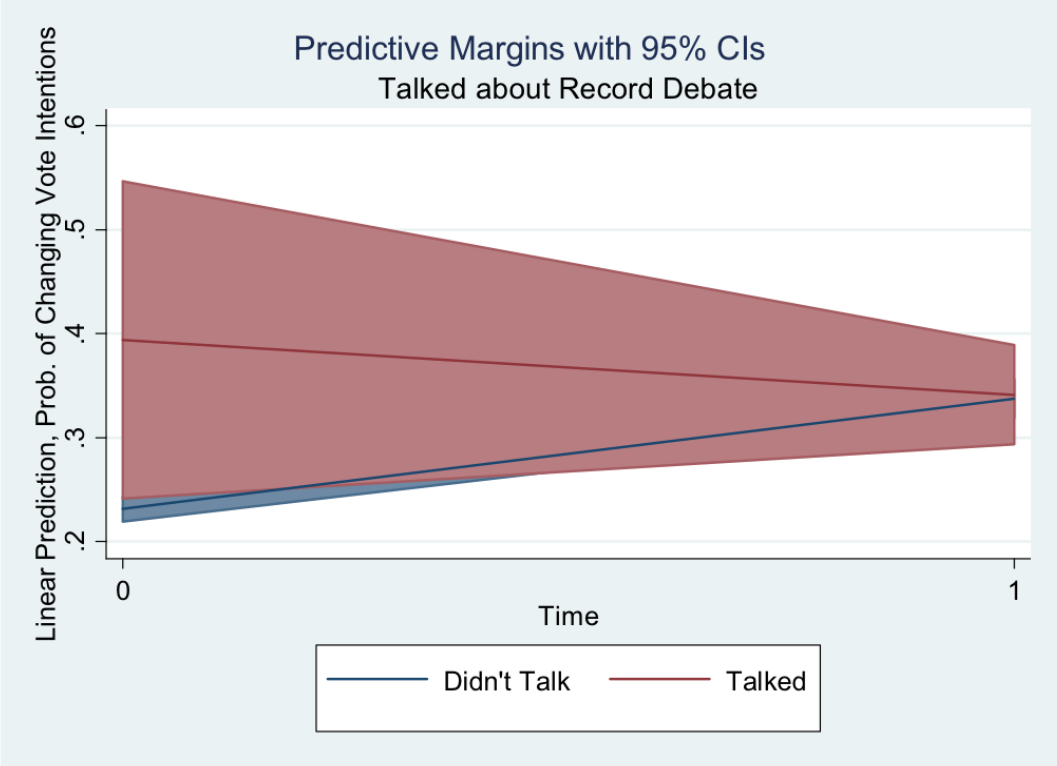


Figure 5:
Likelihood of Changing Vote Intentions, Talking about Globo Debate

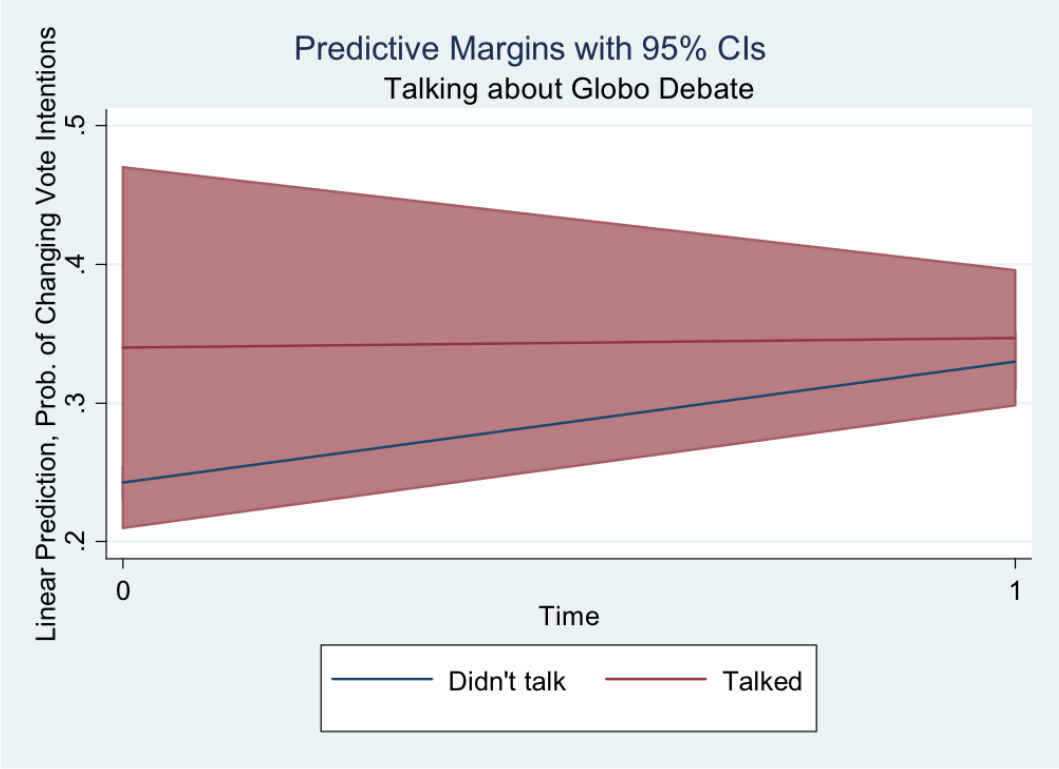
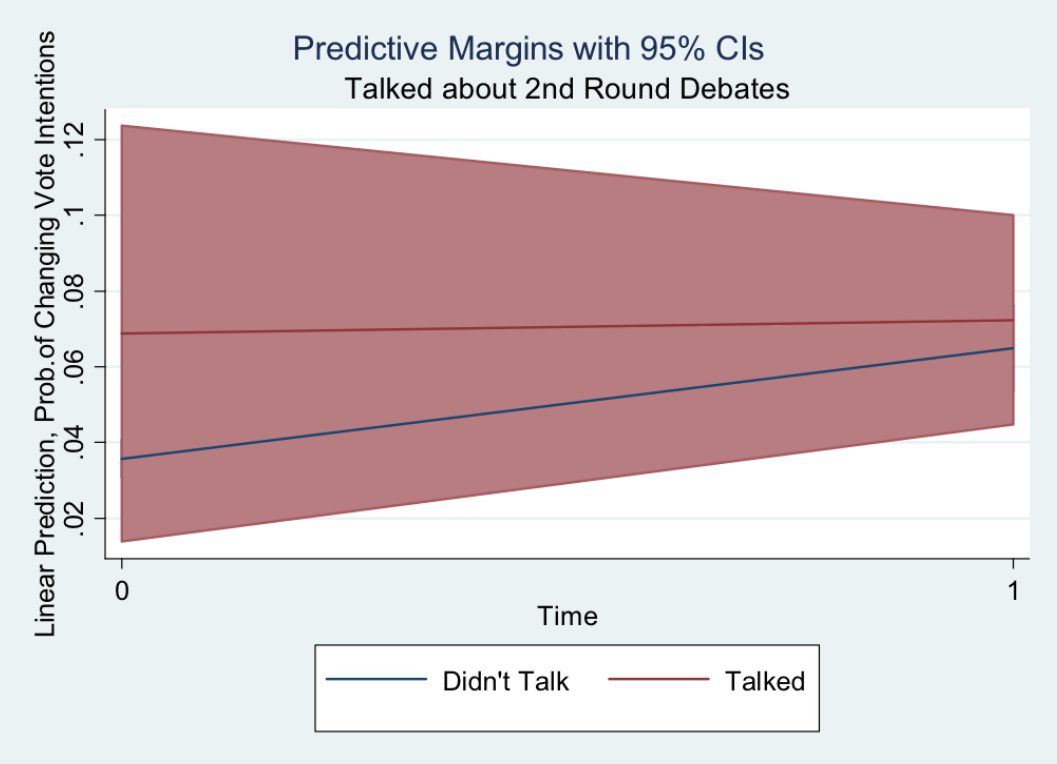


Figure 6:
Likelihood of Changing Vote Intentions, Talking about 2nd Round Debates



Hearing comments about the debates, however, does seem to have a negative effect on the first-round debates. Those who heard comments seem to have been quite selective in how they interpreted these comments, leading to lower probabilities of switching one's vote choice. In other words, comments seemed to only reinforce respondents' prior preferences.

Table 5: Indirect Effects, Heard Comments about Debates

	Model 1: Record Debate	**Model 2: Globo Debate**	**Model 3: 2nd round debates**
Variable	**Coefficient (t-value)**	**Coefficient (t-value)**	**Coefficient (t-value)**
Heard comments	0.19(3.59***)	0.16(3.69***)	0.01(0.80)
Time of treatment	0.11(9.48***)	0.09(7.66***)	0.03(4.49***)
Diff-in-diffs estimator (Heard x time)	***-0.19(-3.34***)***	***-0.16(-3.22***)***	***-0.01(-0.32)***
Woman	-0.02(-2.18**)	-0.23(-2.21**)	0.02(3.80***)
Age	-0.001(-4.0***)	-0.001(-3.89***)	0.000(1.88*)
Education	0.003(1.14)	0.003(1.16)	-0.001(-0.91)
Income	0.01(3.15***)	0.01(3.19***)	0.000 (0.14)
Catholic	0.004(0.47)	0.004(0.44)	-0.001(-0.21)
White	-0.005(-1.14)	-0.01(-1.20)	-0.004(-0.93)
Party ID	-0.01(-0.60)	-0.01(-0.54)	-0.002(-0.28)
Knowledge	0.002(0.55)	0.002(0.51)	-0.003(-1.56)
N	7605		

p-values: *<10 **<.05 *<.01**

Figures 7 and 8 reinforce this finding; the lines for those who heard and those who did not hear comments once again go in different directions while the confidence intervals rarely overlap. Figure 9, however, shows once again that second-round debates are less distinct, with no perceptible differences evident in terms of either slope or confidence intervals.

Figure 7:
Likelihood of Changing Vote Intentions, Hearing Comments about Record Debate

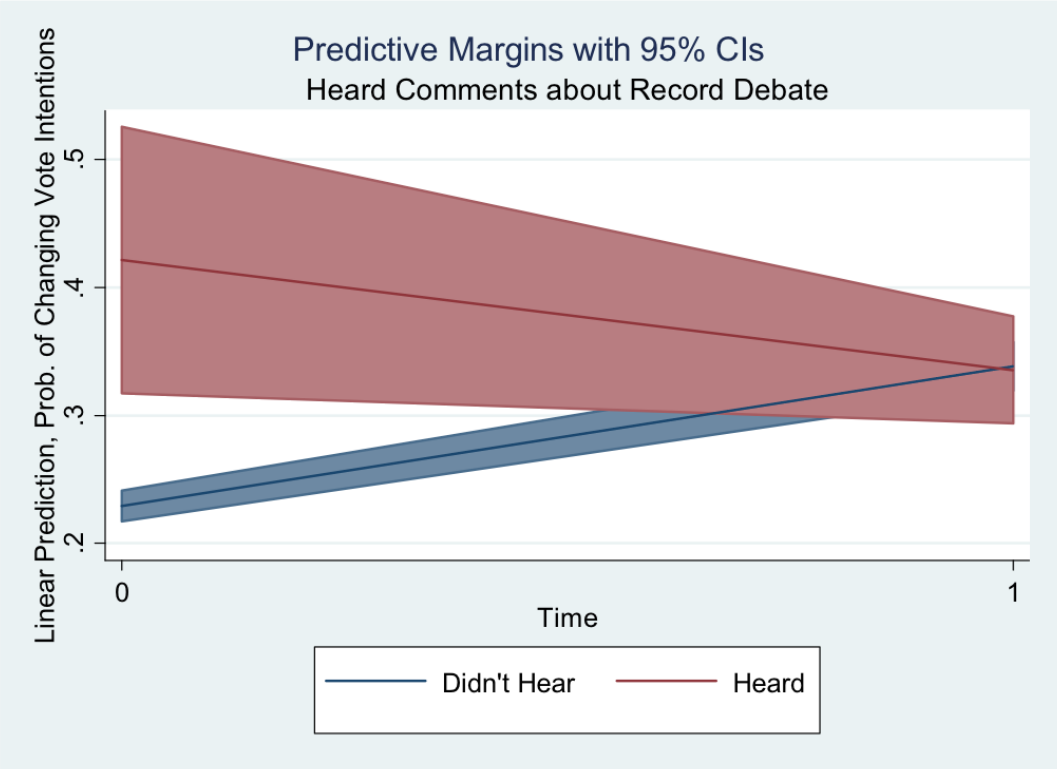


Figure 8:
Likelihood of Changing Vote Intentions, Hearing Comments about Globo Debate

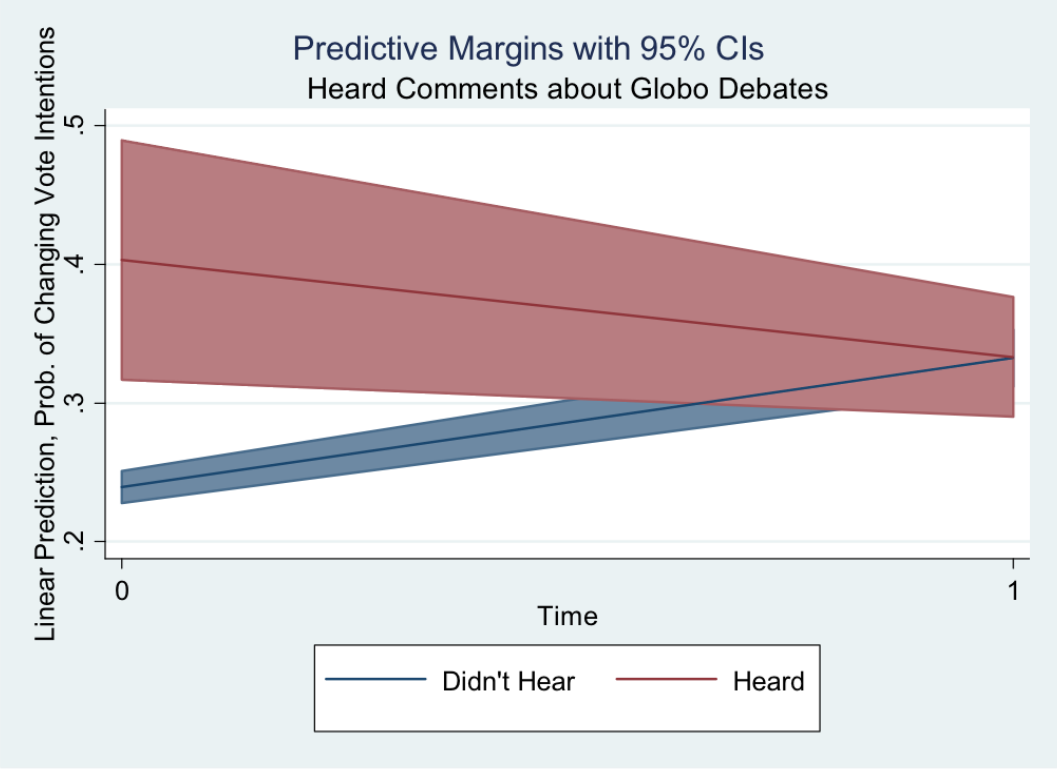
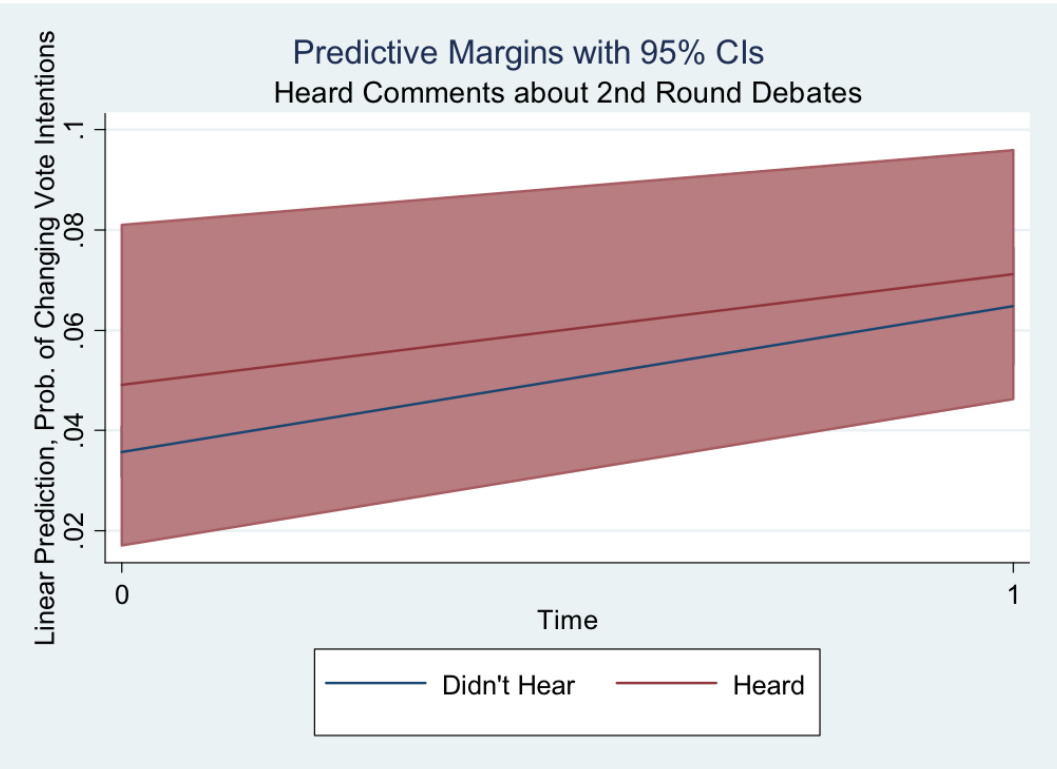


Figure 9:
Likelihood of Changing Vote Intentions, Hearing Comments about 2nd Round Debates



Discussion

Presidential debates have generated much discussion and commentary in Brazil since they were introduced in 1989, yet without having generated much academic research. We have looked to help remedy this. First, we looked at who watched the debates. Second, we looked at the debates' direct effect on vote choice, with an emphasis on the timing of the debate and a contrast between first-round debates and second-round debates. Lastly, we looked at debates' indirect effects on vote choice through exposure to commentary and communication with other people.

As the literature suggested, being male, partisan, and knowledgeable indeed made one more likely to watch the debates; however, this audience profile is also less likely to change their mind about whom to vote for. As a result, it turns out that debates rarely seem to change voters' minds, either directly or indirectly; in fact, those who watch them or hear comments about first-round debates are *less* likely to change their votes. Debates in Brazil therefore tend to reinforce prior convictions when multiple candidates compete, having little to no effect on the two-person race of the second round.

We should keep in mind, however, that the results of this study come from only one election; as such, it is essential to keep investigating the direct and indirect effects of electoral debates on vote choice in Latin America. As a result, we propose looking at social networks to further analyze debates' indirect effects on vote choice. Facebook and Twitter have become hives of information about debates, and this information could very well influence vote choice, particularly for those voters who are still undecided, but are motivated to seek information. How many of these voters exist, however, is still an open question.

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Appendix A: Other Models

Below, we include our logit models on the first debate, for which it was not possible to run a difference-in-differences regression because of the structure of our data. As one can see, holding party identification made changing one's vote less likely, and more education made it more likely, while the debates had no effect, either directly or indirectly.

Table 5: Logit Models, Band Debate

	Model 1: Watched Debate	**Model 2: Talked about Debate**	**Model 3: Heard Comments about Debate**
Variable	**Odds ratio (z-value)**	**Odds ratio (z-value)**	**Odds ratio (z-value)**
Talked about debate		*1.64(1.22)*	
Heard comments about debate			*1.12(0.43)*
Watched debate	*0.83(-0.74)*	0.75(-1.09)	0.83(-0.74*)*
Woman	0.89(-0.63)	0.90(-0.58)	0.89(-0.62)
Age	0.93(-0.39)	0.92(-0.45)	0.93(-0.38)
Education	1.07(2.06**)	1.07(1.99**)	1.07(1.99**)
Income	1.06(0.74)	1.05(0.68)	1.06(0.72)
Catholic	0.90(-0.57)	0.91(-0.50)	0.90(-0.53)
White	0.78(-1.32)	0.79(-1.30)	0.79(-1.31)
Party ID	0.59(-2.54**)	0.59(-2.54**)	0.59(-2.57**)
Interest	0.99(-0.20)	0.98(-0.27)	0.99(-0.21)
Knowledge	0.72(-0.89)	0.72(-0.89)	0.72(-0.88)
N	548		

p-values:*<10 **<.05 *<.01**