

Radiating Truthiness: Authenticity performances in politics in Brazil and the United States

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Abstract

Political authenticity is connected to higher levels of political trust from electorates and can influence political outcomes but is often overlooked for being deemed vague as a concept. When considered, discussions of how authenticity appears and changes in politics typically remain at the theoretical level and are rarely comparative. This article develops an original framework to identify and compare how authenticity is performed in political discourses over time, across settings, and by politicians. To demonstrate the usefulness of the framework, this article investigates authenticity performances in 21,496 political texts of electoral debates, interviews, campaigns, and official speeches for presidents and presidential candidates in Brazil and the United States (US) since 1988. The findings indicate that authenticity is generally performed with greater frequency by presidents and presidential candidates in Brazil than in the US, though authenticity performances are not more prevalent during election years in either country.

Keywords: authenticity, performance, text analysis, populism, Brazil, United States

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1 Introduction

Political authenticity, as the perceived degree to which politicians appear to remain true to themselves (Luebke and Engelmann 2022), is connected to higher levels of political trust from electorates (Stiers et al. 2021; Valgarosson et al. 2021) and is essential for a candidate's success (Alexander 2010; Fordahl 2018). Perceptions of authenticity inform electorates about how politicians might act in contexts where the public is absent, giving them a compelling reason to choose certain politicians (Jones 2016). Yet, authenticity is frequently overlooked as a determinant factor for electoral behavior for being deemed vague and contradictory as a concept (Varga 2013). When considered, discussions of how, when, and where authenticity appears and changes in politics usually remain at the theoretical level and are rarely comparative. This article develops an original framework to identify and compare how authenticity has been performed in politics over time, across settings, and by politicians.

Politicians perform authenticity discursively by making self-references to their origins, using narratives of consistency, alluding to civic traditions, disclosing personal details, and using

‘vulgarism’ (Fordahl 2018; Luebke 2021; Alexander 2010). Building on these insights, this article develops the authenticity performance framework that focuses on theorized pathways by which shared discursive displays in political discourses work to produce authenticity perceptions. Authenticity performances are divided into two categories, about the self or about belonging. The former derive plausibility from the political performers themselves and include claims of truth telling, accusations that others are lying, accounts of taking responsibility for one’s actions, and pointing fingers at others’ mistakes. The latter derive plausibility from the shared cultural knowledge connecting politicians and audiences. These performances include references to politicians’ origins, allusions to common sense, assertions of territorial knowledge, and use of vulgarism.

To demonstrate the usefulness of the framework, this article investigates authenticity performances in 21,496 political texts of electoral debates, interviews, campaigns, and official speeches for presidents and presidential candidates in Brazil and the United States (US) since 1988. Authenticity performances are identified using a purpose-built dictionary of terms that automates the coding of the displays associated with each performance theorized by the framework. The two cases, Brazil and the US, are federal presidential democracies in which presidents formally and informally shape the public policy agenda (Morgenstern et al. 2013; Pereira, Power, and Rennó 2008) and where significant attention has been paid to the role of authenticity in politics recently (see Fordahl 2018; Kohl et al. 2021). Though Brazil’s extremely fragmented multiparty system stands in sharp contrast to the US two party system (Mainwaring 1991, 1999; Baker, Ames, and Rennó 2020). Likewise, racialized nation building processes in Brazil and the US led to heterogenous populations and cultures, but different types of socioeconomic inequalities (Marx 1998). Considering the similarities and differences, comparisons between the two countries are careful and contextualized to provide useful insights.

The findings indicate that authenticity is generally performed with greater frequency by presidents and presidential candidates in Brazil than in the US, though authenticity performances are not more prevalent during election years in either country. Brazil’s party fragmentation and weak partisanship provide incentives for presidents and candidates to display autonomous behavior that might include performing authenticity more often and in more diverse forms across settings, in comparison to the US where presidents and candidates are typically more constrained by their parties. In both countries debates have recently become the setting in which authenticity is performed most frequently by presidents and candidates, whereas interviews are the setting in which authenticity is performed least frequently. Debates are large scale media events that produce ‘sticky’ sound and visual bites charged with imagery that circulate more than ever in democracies. Relatedly, social media platforms give presidents and candidates diverse outlets to interact directly with audiences, bypassing journalists in interviews. Moreover, presidential candidates in the US perform authenticity more frequently to attract national attention and secure party nominations while, in Brazil, authenticity not performed at significantly different frequencies by elected presidents or presidential candidates. In both countries, presidents learn from successful campaigns and adapt to focus on performing only the authenticities that work best for them.

This article lays down the foundations for comparative research on authenticity in politi-

cal discourses. Conceptually, this article provides the first framework for identifying and comparing diverse performances of authenticity in politics. Empirically, besides the sizeable datasets of political texts for presidents and presidential candidates, this article provides the first comparative overview of how, where, and when authenticity has been performed by presidents and candidates in Brazil and the US since 1988. In what follows, this article is organized in four sections. The theoretical section discusses the literature on authenticity and performance in politics as well as presents the authenticity performances framework. The methodological section examines the comparison between Brazil and the US and describes the data gathering process and operationalization of the framework. The analytical section provides a visual and descriptive review of the findings. The article concludes by discussing the implications of using the authenticity performances framework and providing directions for further research.

2 Theory

2.1 Performing authenticity in politics

To be elected or remain in power, politicians must convince electorates that they will represent them in office. Democracy entails an institutional arrangement in which few individuals ‘acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote’ (Ricci 1970). Electoral rules and social heterogeneity influence politicians’ behaviors (Neto and Cox 1997; Grofman 2004; Samuels and Shugart 2010). Electoral systems with multiple parties and where the head of government is directly elected can, for example, be more conducive to autonomous behavior by politicians that diverse from their parties (Mainwaring and Shugart 1997). Though politicians can also act autonomously in two-party or proportional representation systems (Riker 1982), particularly in cases where parties become organized around a single politician (Garzia, Ferreira da Silva, and De Angelis 2022). This means politicians’ behavior varies beyond the electoral systems and institutional environment they are inserted (Siavelis and Morgenstern 2008; Grofman 2004) and the public policy positions they hold (Nai, Maier, and Vranić 2021; Grofman 2004). Politicians employ several material and discursive strategies to attract and maintain electoral support. These strategies range from producing television commercials and directing regional investments to making campaign promises and bonding with electorates. Many of these strategies can be contradictory and do not have direct policy implications but, nonetheless, matter for electoral outcomes.

Political discourses are fundamental to establish a connection between politicians and electorates, yet we know little about how politicians relate to electorates when speaking to them (see Lobo and Curtice 2014). Political scientists regularly investigate how argumentative logics and issue framings persuade, and not, electorates for specific public policy issues (see Schmidt 2001, 2002; Leruth and Taylor-Gooby 2019). Since political arguments are complex and heterogeneous, other factors typically determine which arguments persuade public opinion for various policy issues rather than the arguments employed (Blumenau and Lauderdale 2022). Beyond basic demographic characteristics as age, gender and race, political scientists have largely sidelined, for instance, how perceptions of politicians’ personalities matter for political opinions, engagement, and electoral decisions (Greenstein 1992; Hib-

bing, Ritchie, and Anderson 2011; Valgarosson et al. 2021). Even when political scientists look at perceptions of politicians’ personas, they usually do so for a single politician over time or focus exclusively on politicians’ competencies (see Catellani and Bertolotti 2015; Cwalina and Falkowski 2016). The personification of political parties and the increased attention audiences pay to the private lives of politicians, changed politicians’ relationship to electorates by making the political construction and perceptions of personality essential to electoral outcomes (Catellani and Bertolotti 2015; Seifert 2012; McAllister 2007).

Being perceived as authentic helps politicians build political trust by demonstrating to electorates that they are in touch with ordinary people and their struggles (Valgarosson et al. 2021; Stiers et al. 2021). Taylor (1992) argues that authenticity is a modern ideal related to being in touch with one’s ‘original’ inner self. Contemporary societies value this to achieve self-fulfillment (Taylor 1992). The modern ideal of authenticity also generates a widespread fear of the ‘replica’, the inauthentic (Varga 2013). Authenticity, albeit frequently sidelined for being contradictory and vague as a philosophical concept, shapes how we relate to ourselves, our goals, and others (Varga 2013; Taylor 1992). In politics, authenticity concerns appearing coherent with individual or societal values to radiate truthiness outwards (Valgarosson et al. 2021; Fordahl 2018; Alexander, Giesen, and Mast 2006). Hence, political authenticity is understood as the perceived degree to which politicians appear as being and remaining true to themselves (Luebke and Engelmann 2022)¹. Perceptions of authenticity inform electorates about how politicians might act in contexts where the public is absent and unable to influence decisions, giving them a compelling reason to choose certain politicians (Jones 2016). This does not mean authenticity is static or constant in politics. Rather, authenticity is an unstable and malleable performance that demands constant contortion and repetition (Fordahl 2018). Authenticity, therefore, is an integral part of a successful performance and is constantly performed in politics.

Performances are the projections of a situation when one appears before others, ‘however passive their role may seem to be, will themselves effectively project a definition of the situation by virtue of their response to the individual’ (Goffman 1956, 3). Performances allow to theorize that an audience’s interpretation hinges on factors beyond discursive content or a specific interpretation of message meaning, such as how things are said (Alexander, Giesen, and Mast 2006; Alexander 2011). Performances place agency both with electorates, watching and evaluating politicians, and with political performers ‘doing’ politics (Alexander, Giesen, and Mast 2006, 35; Van Dijk et al. 1997). This means script changes can be theorized to be intentional individual innovations or unintentional chattering by political performers, while political accomplishments reflect positive evaluations from electorates. Other factors like electoral rules, gender, race, economic crises, and cultural changes, become collective background representations to be explored in discursive politics and provide context for audiences’ interpretations (Alexander, Giesen, and Mast 2006, 46; Alexander 2011). Background representations shape politicians’ performances and audiences’ perceptions of authenticity. Incumbents’ competence levels, for example, are perceived differently

¹I refrain from discussing the sources, and ethics, of authenticity (see Taylor 1992) or how the ideal of authenticity relates to aesthetics, autonomy, and capitalism (see Varga 2013). Authenticity, for the purposes of this piece, is an important modern individual ideal that is evoked, searched, and performed in politics.

by electorates in comparison to non-elected candidates; something politicians are aware of, help construct, and perform when doing politics (see Cwalina and Falkowski 2016). Alternatively, belonging to a minority can influence how politicians perform to ‘authentically’ belong in society (see Alexander 2010). Moreover, gender expectations constrain performances and audience perceptions of authenticity in politics (Goren 2018), compelling women politicians to perform politics in different ways than men by disclosing extra personal details, using distinctive types of anecdotes, and justifying choices with concrete reasoning (Wood 1994; Christine Banwart and McKinney 2005; Blankenship and Robson 1995; Franceschet, Piscopo, and Thomas 2016).

2.2 Authenticity performances, a framework

Politicians perform authenticity discursively to connect with audiences by making self-references to origins, using narratives of consistency, telling remarkable stories, alluding to civic tradition, disclosing personal details, and using ‘vulgarism’, among others (Fordahl 2018; Luebke 2021; Alexander 2010; Seifert 2012). Authenticity in politics is mediated by intermediary channels (e.g. the news) and perceived by audiences (Luebke 2021). Capturing how authenticity is mediated or perceived by certain audiences is not possible looking only at texts of political discourses ². Besides, politicians’ ability to ‘fuse’ performances of authenticity and radiate truthiness outwards is ultimately bound by audiences’ interpretations (Alexander, Giesen, and Mast 2006). However, by shifting our understanding of authenticity beyond a measure of performative success (see Alexander, Giesen, and Mast 2006, 55) to a performance itself, even if this performance does not radiate truthiness, we can develop a framework that allows us to identify and compare authenticity performances.

Different politicians perform authenticity in specific ways, but these performances normally share discursive patterns. The framework of authenticity performances focuses on mechanisms and displays. Mechanisms refer to theorized pathways by which a discursive display could produce authenticity perceptions. Displays refer to the shared discursive elements connecting similar performances. While the theoretical literature on authenticity (see Luebke 2021; Alexander, Giesen, and Mast 2006) and case studies for diverse politicians (see Alexander 2010; Fordahl 2018) mention performances of authenticity, these are usually attached to a single politician or detached from actual politicians. By regrouping these dispersed manifestations according to their mechanisms, we can analytically identify patterns in the discursive displays associated with them. When politicians’ recount stories about their origins, for example, they habitually signal that they will recount a story about their origins by saying ‘when I was little’ or ‘growing up’. The displays provided by the framework allow to systematically identify and compare these authenticity performances in politics.

Authenticity performances can be broadly divided in two categories: about the self and about belonging. These categories relate to the plausibility of a certain performance. Authenticity performances about the self derive plausibility for performance from expectations about

²Authenticity perceptions also involve visual and auditive elements connected to how politicians look like, dress, and talk. When politicians use the ‘peoples’ language to appear authentic, for instance, it often involves speaking with a certain type of accent or using regional expressions. These performances of authenticity are not grasped by a framework designed to look for authenticity in political texts as this one.

the political performer himself/herself or their opponent. In their most basic form, these performances include stating to be telling the truth, to be authentic, or claiming that others are lying, are inauthentic. When performing truth telling politicians might mention how they ‘are being honest’, while when performing lie accusations they might say others are ‘being untruthful’. These performances can make politicians appear truthful regarding their beliefs or more sincere vis-a-vis others. Authenticity performances about the self can also appear as claims of consistency or by pointing fingers at others. When performing consistency, a politician might mention to audiences how they can ‘check and see’ for themselves that they have delivered previously. Taking responsibility for one’s previous actions along with their positive or negative outcomes might illustrate to audiences how a politician is consistent with promises. Alternatively, when pointing fingers at others, politicians can mention how ‘they were left to deal with’ a certain scenario from previous politicians. By pointing fingers at others’ errors, politicians contend that others’ lack of accountability based on previous actions.

Authenticity performances about belonging derive plausibility for performance based on the cultural connections shared between audiences and political performers. These performances are essential to connect politicians to ordinary individuals that know the ‘real’ issues people in their country face. Authenticity performances about belonging include, for example, allusions to the politician’s origins to demonstrate their cultural connection to the nation. Origin performances include references to their own beginnings, how they were raised, and civic traditions. Politicians can also establish they authentically belong with allusions to shared common sense by stating that ‘everyone knows’, which implies they reason like the rest of the population. Additionally, politicians can allude to ‘have been in’ many places to show their knowledge of the territory to demonstrate that they understand the regional differences within the nations. Finally, politicians can perform vulgarism to express that they ‘say what they think’. As an authenticity performance, vulgarism includes references to speaking without filters, as they see fit, and anti-politically correct discourses. Employing vulgar, politically incorrect, language can make politician appears less strategic and more genuine (Rosenblum, Schroeder, and Gino 2020; Conway, Repke, and Houck 2017; Conway et al. 2009)³. Table 1, below, summarizes each authenticity performance, their category, displays, and mechanism.

³Anti-politically correct discourses employ politically incorrect language and/or denounces political correctness. In fact, denouncing a ‘PC politician’ engrains an allusion to someone that expresses its views in calculated ways to avoid judgment (Hughes 2011; Weigel 2016). Politically incorrect expressions coded in dictionary and displayed in table 1, below, were selected from a 1992 dictionary of politically correct language. This assumes that most of the terms coded have minimally been agreed upon as not PC (see Beard and Cerf 1993).

Table 1: Authenticity Performances, Categories, Mechanisms, and Displays

Authenticity Performance	Displays	Mechanism	Category
Truth Telling	Mentions truthfulness, sincerity, and/or honesty when describing oneself by stating, for example, that 'the truth is' or that they are 'not lying'	Politician appears to be telling the truth regarding their beliefs or facts	Self
Lie Accusations	Mentions dishonesty, untruthfulness, and/or insincerity when used to describe others by stating, for example, that someone 'is/are liars' or that something is 'not the truth'	Politician appears more sincere vis-a-vis others	Self
Consistency	Mentions career consistency, responsibility, and/or accountability for individual by stating, for example, that they 'take responsibility' or 'keep their word'	Politician appears consistent regarding pledges	Self
Finger Pointing	Mentions lack of accountability, inconsistency and/or blame others for mistakes by stating, for example, that opponent 'is inconsistent' and that their wrong choices 'costed us'	Politician appears not accountable for previous undesirable outcomes	Self
Origins	Alludes to birthplace, origins, and roots to describe background, values, and/or tell their story by saying, for example, this how politician 'was raised' or how this is part of their 'family tradition'	Politician seems culturally connected to the nation	Belong
Common Sense	Alludes to common sense, reason, and/or logic to describe choices or preferences by saying, for example, how they are 'stating the obvious' or that 'everybody knows'	Politician seems to make choices consistent with what others in society would do	Belong
Territory	Alludes to sub-portions of the territory known and/or visited by saying, for example, how they have 'come all the way from' or 'have been to' a certain place	Politician seems territorially connected to sub-regions, regions, or nation	Belong
Vulgarism	Alludes to saying what they really think, talking without filters and/or employs anti-politically incorrect language by saying, for example, how they are just 'saying what everyone thinks' or are 'not politically correct'	Politician seems to be saying what they think without thinking about the consequences	Belong

Authenticity performances are projected by politicians with diverse roles (e.g. candidates versus elected officials), across different the settings where politics gets done (e.g. debate or official speech), and at different times (e.g. before/after an election). These background representations specific to politics provide expectations about authenticity performances in politics and guide patterns to be investigated in political discourse. Around elections, for instance, political discourses can become more instrumental, less improvised, and more directed towards the medium voter for frontrunners (Di Tella et al. 2023), while candidates at the margins are more willing to employ riskier discursive such as strategies as directing negative attacks to opponents (Haynes and Rhine 1998). Likewise, the various venues where the dialogue between the public and a politician occurs generate expectations about how and where authenticity performances occur. Official speeches and campaign rallies are scripted by politician’s staff and usually read to the public by politicians, in comparison to interviews and debates where language might be simpler, appear more natural, and focus on private themes [see @schlesinger2008; Wang and Liu (2018); Bull and Mayer (1993)]. How performances of authenticity change over time, across settings, and by politicians provide a helpful pathway to identify and compare authenticity in politics.

3 Methodology

3.1 Case selection: Brazil and the US

The role of authenticity in politics caught the public’s attention after the elections of Trump, in the US, and Bolsonaro, in Brazil (see Fordahl 2018; Kohl et al. 2021). However, authenticity has long been central to presidential elections in both countries. In the US, Ronald Reagan’s unusually colloquial speech patterns and folksy storytelling helped him come across as familiar, trustworthy, and authentic to electorates (Seifert 2012). Barack Obama often alluded to his origins and civic traditions to connect with audiences and generate a sense of authenticity (Alexander 2010). Donald Trump’s authenticity perceptions were built through iconic brags with political conventions, willingness to engage in controversial topics, and vulgar representations of American traditions from his “straight shooter dealmaker” persona (Fordahl 2018). In Brazil, Fernando Collor’s persistent usage of religious metaphors made him appear trustworthy to electorates for upholding shared religious and moral principles (Tavares 1998). Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Lula)’s perceived authenticity often revolved around his ability to construct himself as a regular working-class man by constantly re-counting his personal story using the “people’s” language (French 2022). Jair Bolsonaro’s usage of vulgar, direct, and contradictory comments on moral issues, helped him appear as a simple and authentic “family man” to electorates (Feres Júnior and Gagliardi 2021; Carlo and Kamradt 2018). These accounts above focuses on specific authenticities performed by a single politician in selective samples of political discourses. Without a framework to identify and compare authenticity systematically we do not know, for instance, whether Trump or Bolsonaro performed authenticity more frequently or in significantly different ways than other presidents in Brazil and the US.

Brazil and the US experienced racialized nation building processes that led to heterogenous demographic compositions and cultural influences, but different types of socioeconomic in-

equalities (Marx 1998). Both countries held the world’s largest enslaved populations until slavery was abolished in each country respectively. Brazil and the US later became settler states for hundreds of thousands of European migrants throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Nevertheless, previous comparative studies on race often relied on misguided narratives of racial democracy and integration that masked how, and the extent to which, race and racism was historically dealt with and prevails in Brazil in comparison to the US (Silva 2020). Additionally, there were considerable differences in the travel subsidies and assimilation incentives offered to migrant groups in these two countries (Ulyses Balderas and Greenwood 2010). While there are geographical, historical, and cultural similarities between Brazil and the US, each country’s unique geo-political and economic history led to important societal differences that have implications for discourses. Therefore, each country should be understood as a configuration, formed by the aggregation of parts that make sense in their context (Ragin 1987). This means, in practice, comparisons between the two countries must be careful and contextualized to avoid misled associations and provide useful insights.

Although Brazil and the US have different electoral systems, both countries are federal presidential democracies where presidents are the primary players formally, and informally, shaping the public policy agenda (Morgenstern et al. 2013; Pereira, Power, and Rennó 2008). Brazil’s extremely fragmented multiparty electoral system gives politicians strong autonomy, contributes to weak political parties, and incentivizes autonomous behavior from politicians (Mainwaring 1991, 1999; Baker, Ames, and Rennó 2020). Politicians in Brazil are less susceptible to broad pressure to conform and represent interests of parties in comparison to the US electoral system with two major parties. Moreover, the US has been a democratic innovator and has been a relatively stable democracy for over two centuries (Markoff 1999), whereas democracy came back to Brazil in 1985 after decades of a military dictatorship. The Brazilian constitution of 1988 implementing what is referred to as a “coalitional presidentialist” political system (Couto, Soares, and Livramento 2021). This provides interesting contrast since, in Brazil, presidents are relatively autonomous from their parties to act but must form broad party coalitions to govern while, in the US, presidents are more accountable to their parties but do not have to form a coalition to govern.

The late-1980s marked a turn in democratic politics where the spread and diversification of mass media revealed unprecedented levels of information about politicians’ private lives changing their image, presentation, and perceptions (Seifert 2012). For the first time, politicians were able to reach and interact with the masses regularly in direct and immediate ways, making political communications resemble a state of permanent campaigning (Blumler and Kavanagh 1999; Voltmer 2004). In the US, Ronald Reagan’s presidential terms introduced the “primetime presidency” where television gradually became a means of governing and personality perceptions as important as political program (Denton 1988). In Brazil, Fernando Collor’s sudden rise in the 1989 election, the first direct presidential election after the end of the military dictatorship, is attributed to his ability to communicate well on television during his campaign, rather than party affiliation, political capital, or policy program (Gibson 1992). Even as audience perceptions about politicians’ personality increasingly important since the late-1980s in Brazil and the US, scholars have paid relatively little attention to how authenticity appears and changes in these two countries.

3.2 Data and Operationalization

Text data for discourses of presidents and runoff presidential candidates in official speeches, campaigns, debates, and interviews were gathered from 1988 to 2021 for Brazil and the US. Runoff presidential candidates, in the case of the US, represent the democratic and republican nominees in a presidential election ⁴. In the case of Brazil, runoff presidential candidates represent the candidates that compete in the second round of presidential election ⁵. Restricting the sample to presidents and runoff presidential candidates helps to avoid that relatively small samples of texts for less relevant presidential candidates skew the subsequent findings. The year of 1988 was chosen to be the cutoff date since it was an election year in the US and the year in which the current Brazilian constitution entered into force. This choice reflects the fact that covering the same period for both countries facilitate comparisons.

Settings represent the various venues where the dialogue between the public and a politician occurs (Seifert 2012). Official speeches, as a setting, include text data for all speeches elected presidents delivered while in office. The debates setting includes text for debates after party nominations in the US and second round debates in Brazil ⁶. The campaigns setting includes text from campaign rallies and campaign commercials up to two years before the respective election presidents and runoff presidential candidates participated in. The interviews setting includes text for interviews provided to traditional news media outlets (i.e. television, newspapers, and magazines) for the period of two years around (i.e. prior and after) election years for runoff presidential candidates. For elected presidents, interviews were gathered two years before, during the time they held office, and two years after they left office ⁷. Beyond accounting for different settings, this approach allows to compare presidents and presidential candidates around elections, as candidates, and in office (for winners). Table 2, below, lists the politicians for each country and the number of text observations by setting. In total, 21496 political texts were gathered for Brazil and the US ⁸.

⁴Data on vice-presidents (e.g. Biden or Temer when vice-president), other influential third-party candidates (e.g. Ross Perot in 1992; Marina Silva in 2010 and 2014), or candidates not nominated (e.g. Bernie Sanders in 2016) were not gathered for consistency. Gathering data for presidents and runoff candidates also renders the number of politicians for both cases comparable with 13 politicians in the case of the US and 11 for Brazil.

⁵When election was decided in the first round in Brazil, texts for the two leading candidates in the first round were selected.

⁶There are a few exceptions to this in Brazil when elections decided in the first round (e.g. 1994) or candidates were unable to participate in runoff debates (e.g. Bolsonaro in 2018). In these cases, the participation of the two most voted candidates in the first-round debates were gathered. Since there can be multiple politicians in a debate, the text of each debate was separated by politicians for analysis.

⁷Lula has been present in all elections in Brazil from 1989 to 2006. Therefore, data for him was consistently gathered from 1988 to 2012 and from 2018 onwards. This also helps explain why Brazil has a slightly smaller number of politicians in sample in comparison to the US.

⁸Please refer to Tables 3 and 4 in Appendix for a more detailed breakdown of observations by setting, politicians, and election cycles for Brazil and the US.

Country	Politicians	Setting	Observations
US	Bush, Dukakis, Clinton, Dole,	Speeches	12866
	W. Bush, Gore, Kerry, McCain,	Campaign	1545
	Obama, Romney, H. Clinton, Trump,	Debates	24
	and Biden	Interviews	829
		Speeches	5782
Brazil	Collor, Lula, Franco, Cardoso,	Campaign	175
	Serra, Alckmin, Rouseff, Neves,	Debates	258
	Temer, Haddad, and Bolsonaro	Interviews	17

Table 2: Text Data for Brazil and the US

Texts for the US were scraped from The American Presidency Project repository (TAPP). The repository contains the most complete data on American presidents and presidential candidates available. Collecting data for Brazil, instead, was more challenging due to lack of one central repository. For official speeches, Silva-Muller and Sposito (2023) dataset containing all official speeches for Brazilian presidents since 1985 was used. Text for debates, interviews, and campaigns for Brazil were scraped from subtitles automatically generated for YouTube videos. The number of videos available for later election cycles, especially after the 2000s, is considerably larger than earlier ones. Additionally, some election cycles in Brazil were shorter due to a candidate winning in the first round, limiting the number of texts available for these election cycles. For these reasons, the number of observations in the text datasets for the US is greater than for Brazil ⁹. After collection, texts were cleaned by removing punctuations and accents.

Authenticity performances were operationalized using a purpose-built dictionary of terms that automates the coding of each performance in framework (see Codebook in Appendix). The dictionary of terms was inductively developed listening to samples of randomly selected speeches, campaigns, interviews, and debates from the datasets. To enable comparisons, the dictionary has similar definitions in Portuguese and English in relation to the words and expressions searched for. The number of words included in the dictionary for each performance is similar for both languages. The dictionary of terms is designed to reduce the possibility of overlaps, even as some authenticity performances might share similar displays ¹⁰. Directionality in the text is important to identify authenticity performances that talk about themselves or others, thus, no stop words are removed from texts. This means the dictionary of terms includes combinations of pronouns/determiners and verbs/nouns to avoid false-positive matches of authenticity performances.

Since the frequencies of authenticity performances can reflect the quantity of texts collected

⁹All the text scrapping, cleaning, and analysis was done using R software. For all the data, scripts, and additional replication materials please contact the author for access to the authenticity performances repository available on GitHub.

¹⁰There are no overlaps in dictionary of terms for different authenticity performances. However, the same sentence could be coded as multiple authenticity performances if different words or expressions related multiple performances are matched at different parts of the sentence.

for a certain case, year, setting, or politician, the frequencies of authenticity performances are normalized by the total number of words in the texts they appear in. Normalization facilitates comparisons between Brazil and the US even as the number of observations within and between the two cases differs. In practice, normalization account for differences in observations for different years, between settings, or for disparities among presidents who held multiple mandates and candidates who appeared in a single election cycle. In the analysis, the normalized scores represent the proportion of words associated to one or more authenticity performances in relation to the total of words in a year, by setting per year, or by politician per year. The scores were multiplied by one thousand to facilitate interpretation, they represent the normalized proportion per 1,000 words.

The focus of the forthcoming analysis section is descriptive and based on the how projections of authenticity change according to a politicians’ role, setting, and time. That is, how, where, and when authenticity is performed in Brazil and the US. Nevertheless, the analysis employs fixed-effects regression models to explore the relationship between authenticity performances and politicians’ roles . The models are indexed by year, as events that take place for each case in a certain year can affect authenticity performances. Additionally, as politicians interact, imitate, and respond to one another at any given year, they can influence when and how authenticity is performed. Fixed effects models help to control for year specific and other unseen unit-unvarying characteristics (Allison 2009). The dependent variables for models are the total frequency of authenticity performances or the diversity scores for authenticity performances. Diversity scores are calculated using the Herfindahl–Hirschman index of concentration where scores closer to 0 represent a variety of authenticity performances occurring at similar rates and scores closer to 1 represent concentrated performances around a single type of authenticity (see Rhoades 1993) ¹¹. The independent variables reflect the politicians’ roles as “candidates” (i.e. presidential candidates not elected or presidents before being elected a first time), “in office” (i.e. elected presidents during time they held office and incumbents in elections), and “after office” (i.e. elected presidents after they leave office) . Since politicians’ behaviors can be affected by their party, ideology, and other institutional constraints, we control for politicians’ political party ¹².

3.3. Limitations

There are five main limitations with the theoretical and methodological approach in this article. First, the literature on authenticity, personality, and politics covers predominantly democracies where electorates vote politicians, rather than parties , and focuses on recognized politicians at the national level. As the authenticity performances framework builds upon this literature to identify mechanisms and displays, the framework is better suited to investigate

¹¹The Herfindahl–Hirschman index (HHI) can be used to measure concentration or diversity in a variety of contexts ranging from income to market monopolies. The score is calculated by adding the squared scores of each authenticity performances.

¹²For Brazil, politicians were divided into the Workers Party (PT), the Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira (PSDB), and other parties since most politicians in the sample belong to PT or PSDB. The “other parties” category includes politicians from additional parties (e.g. Temer) and/or that changed parties during their presidency (e.g. Itamar Franco and Jair Bolsonaro). For the US, Democratic and Republican parties were coded.

and compare authenticity performances at the national level in democratic contexts where electorates vote for politicians, as Brazil and the US. Furthermore, the authenticities in the framework are operationalized using a dictionary of terms constructed by listening to randomly selected samples of audio and textual data collected for Brazil and the US, thus, the dictionary of terms is appropriate to capture authenticity performances in these countries. Adapting the framework to other presidential democracies, for example, requires updating to the dictionary of terms that operationalizes authenticity performances.

Second, the operationalization of the framework does not grasp with the reception of authenticity performances. For this reason, randomly selected samples of authenticity performances matched in texts using the dictionary of terms were selected throughout the process to verify how they related to the performances in the framework. The operationalization was found effective in matching the theorized authenticity performances, but other more ambiguous performances of authenticity were missed. This means the operationalization remains on the side of caution when it comes to identifying and classifying authenticity performances by escaping instances where interpretation is necessary and beyond what is theorized in the framework.

Third, the framework and operationalization assume that authenticity performances identified are typically desirable and/or not hurtful. The framework conceptualizes authenticity as a performance; hence, politicians must constantly learn, adapt, and repeat performances to be deemed authentic. Even though diverse audiences might react differently to performances, by placing agency with both politicians and audiences the framework assumes that politicians adjust performances of authenticity according to where, when, and to whom they speak. This means broadly undesirable authenticity performances might not be repeated as various audiences and politicians interact over time and across settings.

Fourth, the text data gathered miss social media settings where politics increasingly gets done (e.g. WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook). Social media, as a setting, can be conducive to authenticity performances as they help display the routines and habits of politicians directly to audiences (Luebke and Engelmann 2022). Audiences following politicians online can also perceive them as more authentic (Luebke and Engelmann 2022). However, as political texts for this article are collected since 1988 before social media was present or relevant in politics, social media settings are not included in the data collected. This choice prioritizes having a comparable dataset over time.

Finally, this article develops a broad framework that includes diverse authenticity performances. The specific relationships between certain types of authenticity performances and politicians' ideologies, as the relationship between populism and vulgarism, are beyond the scope of this article. Although populist repertoire can include patterns of communication as plain-speaking and displays of "bad manners" (Moffitt and Tormey 2014; Brubaker 2020), these are not exclusively to populists' politicians. Besides the association between vulgarism, anti-PC, and the populist (thin)ideology is often peripheral to theory, unclear conceptually, and based on selective examples for a small sample of politicians, across different contexts, and with a variety of ideological commitments (see Mudde 2004, 2007). With these limitations in mind, the findings in the subsequent analysis section are careful when discussing the relationship between the frequencies of authenticity performances and political outcomes.

Additional sources are used to confirm and help explain the patterns found. Despite of all these limitations, the authenticity performances framework offers an original pathway to systematically identify and compare authenticity in politics.

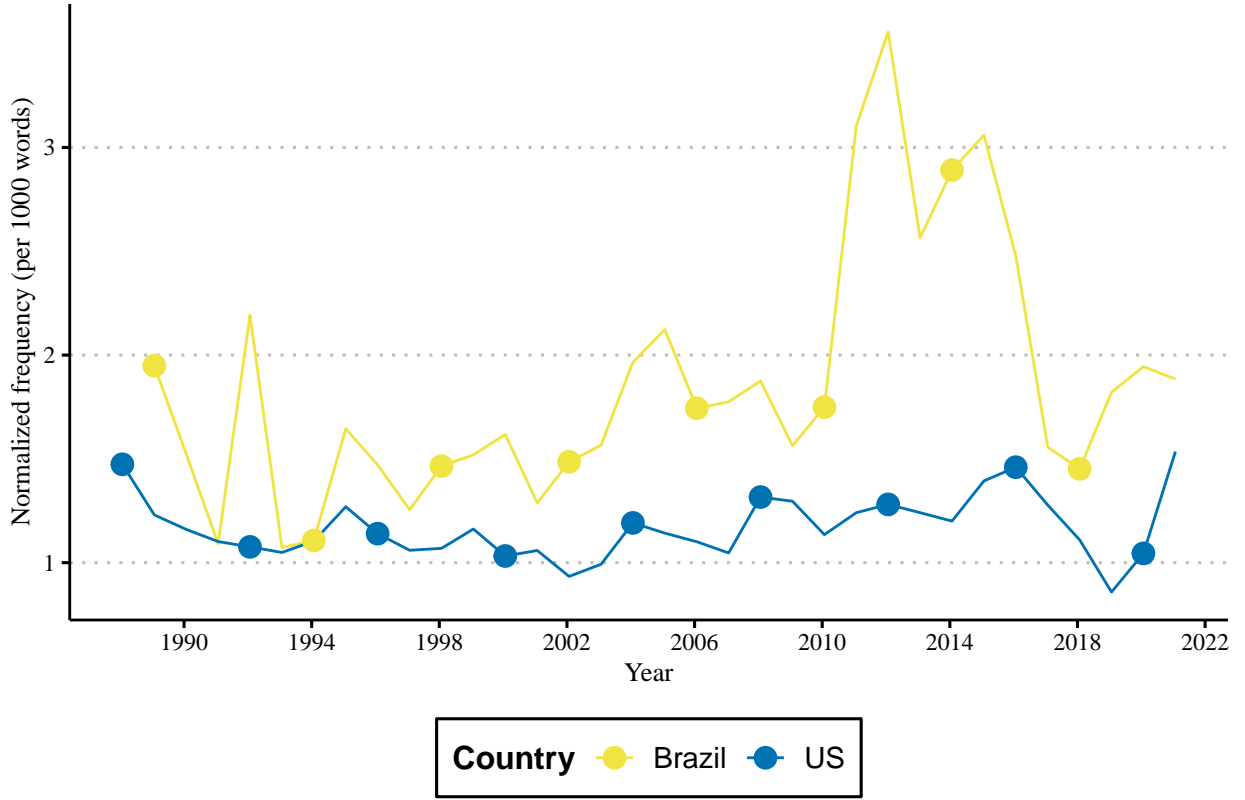
4 Analysis: How authenticity is performed in Brazil and the United States?

4.1 Authenticity Performances and Time

Even though appearing authentic to electorates influences election outcomes (Stiers et al. 2021; Valgarosson et al. 2021), there is no systematic increase in the total frequency of authenticity performances by presidents and candidates in election years in Brazil or the US over time (Figure 1 below). While there is no correlation between election years and authenticity performances by presidents and candidates in Brazil, election years correlate with a decrease in authenticity performances by presidents and candidates in the US ¹³. This suggests that certain presidential candidates in the US (e.g. incumbents) are more careful towards when authenticity is performed close to elections as political discourses become more instrumental and less improvised (see Di Tella et al. 2023; Mayhew 2008; Haynes and Rhine 1998).

¹³The linear regression in Table 6 in Appendix shows that the relationship between election years and the total of authenticity performances in the US is negative and statistically significant.

Figure 1: Authenticity Performances Over Time in Brazil and the US



Dots mark election years in respective country.

Authenticity has been performed with greater frequency by presidents and presidential candidates in Brazil than in the US. Brazil's party fragmentation and weak partisanship provide incentives for presidents and candidates to display autonomous behavior (Mainwaring 1991, 1999; Baker, Ames, and Rennó 2020) that might include performing authenticity more frequently, in comparison to the US where presidents and candidates are constrained by their parties. When parties are relevant for candidate nomination and campaign financing, as is the US, they are more effective in constraining personalistic behavior (Bøggild and Pedersen 2018). With many weak parties, presidents and candidates in Brazil rely less on party to be elected and are freer to talk about themselves rather than the party or policies (see Bøggild and Pedersen 2018). Moreover, candidates' perceived personality is more important for electoral decisions in countries where party identification is weaker (Nai, Maier, and Vranić 2021), making authenticity performances generally more important to presidents and candidates in Brazil than in the US.

Authenticity performances peaked in Brazil from 2011 and 2016 when Dilma Rousseff was president ¹⁴. Rousseff habitually referred to "motherhood" and "women's empathy" in political discourse while, at the same time, reinforcing her managerial experience, decision-making

¹⁴The linear regression in Table 7 in Appendix shows that the relationship between the frequencies of authenticity performances and years when Rousseff was president is positive and statistically significant.

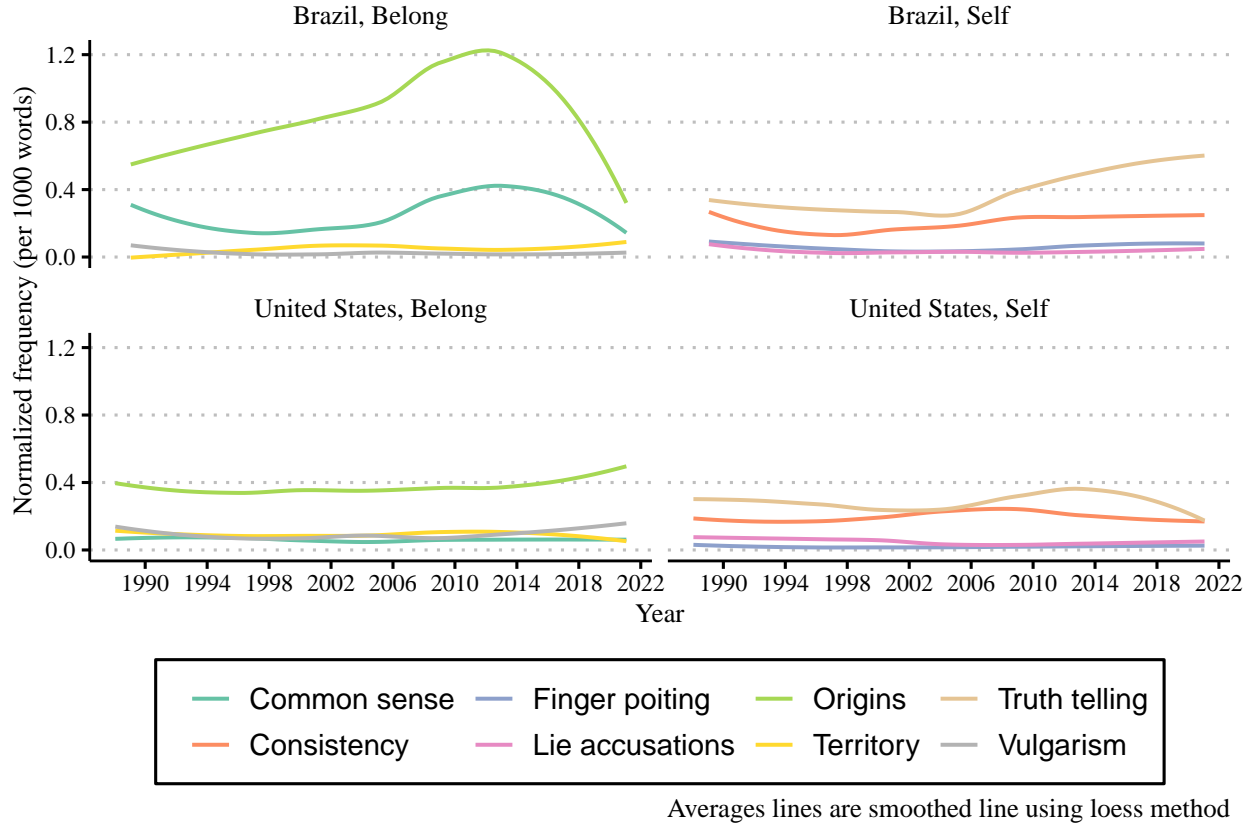
ability, and objectivity (Pires 2011; Mendonça and Ogando 2013)¹⁵. Rousseff’s ability to strategically balance feminine and masculine stereotypes in discourse were vital in the 2010 elections (Pires 2011; Mendonça and Ogando 2013). As president, Rousseff arguably performed authenticity more frequently to connect with audiences and to justify her public policy choices to overcome the negative gender stereotypes associated with her presidency (see Dos Santos and Jalalazai 2021). Although the small number of women politicians in the data (i.e. Rousseff and Hillary Clinton) does not allow us to infer how gender and authenticity performances broadly correlate, authenticity performances could be an important aspect helping women walk the thin line between being liked and appearing competent in politics (see Schneider et al. 2010). Women’s distinct communication style in politics (see Wood 1994; Christine Banwart and McKinney 2005; Blankenship and Robson 1995; Franceschet, Piscopo, and Thomas 2016) might include how, when, and where woman politicians perform authenticity.

Allusions to origins and claims of truth-telling are the two most regularly performed authenticities by presidents and presidential candidates in Brazil and the US over time (Figure 2 below). Whereas origins is an authenticity performance about belonging and truth-telling is an authenticity performance about the self, both authenticities promote oneself instead of focusing on others. Unsurprisingly, presidents and presidential candidates speak mostly about themselves when doing politics. Authenticity performances that focus on others, such as lie-accusations and finger-pointing, are performed infrequently on average in both countries¹⁶. Although there is mixed evidence on the effect diverse types of negative campaigning have for electoral outcomes (see Fridkin and Kenney 2011), character-based attacks as lie accusations and finger pointing are riskier for all candidates (Nai, Tresch, and Maier 2022; Haynes and Rhine 1998). Besides subtracting time from self-promoting efforts, negative character-based attacks give the opportunity for political opponents to take the center stage and counterattack (see Carraro et al. 2012).

¹⁵In her first speech to the Senate as president, Rousseff declared: “It is with this courage that I will govern Brazil. Being a woman does not only mean courage, it also means affection; affection that I give to my daughter and grandson, affection I give to my mom when we hug, affection that follows and blesses me. It is with this immense affection that I want to take care of my people ...” (Rousseff - 01/01/2011). This excerpt was also coded as an authenticity performance of origins as Rousseff references to her background values as a woman and with allusions to her to mom, daughter, and grandson.

¹⁶For more information see Table 8 in Appendix on the average proportion of each authenticity performance in Brazil and the US.

Figure 2: Authenticity Performances by Category Over Time in Brazil and the US



Authenticity performances about belonging were performed with greater frequency in Brazil by presidents and presidential candidates, especially in the forms of origins and common sense, during the period in which the Workers Party (PT) were in office (2002-2016). This trend began to change in the mid-2010s and by 2019, the first year of the Bolsonaro administration, we see a reversal of this pattern where authenticity performances about the self, especially in the form of truth telling, surpass authenticity performances about belonging. The mid-2010s in Brazil were marked by recurrent corruption scandals in politics that arguably made discourses associated with the PT governments less attractive to audiences and, in turn, presidents and presidential candidates favored authenticity performances about the self. For example, Bolsonaro’s claims of about the real and harsh “truth” in discourse, in opposition to the “lies” and “manipulation” of previous governments, were central to help him portray the quintessential anti-PT candidate who would not betray the electorates’ confidence (see Rennó 2020) ¹⁷.

The frequencies of authenticity performances about the self and about belonging by pres-

¹⁷Bolsonaro regularly alluded to the real, harsh, and powerful “truth” in discourse. When speaking at the United Nations general assembly, for instance, Bolsonaro stated: “With humility and confidence on the freeing power of the truth, you can be sure to count with the new Brazil that I present here ladies and gentlemen...” (Bolsonaro – 24/09/2019). This excerpt was coded as an authenticity performance of truth telling.

idents and presidential candidates remained relatively stable over time in the US. Nevertheless, from the mid-2010s onwards there is a slight increase in authenticity performances about belonging, in the forms of origins and vulgarism, and an overall decrease in performances about the self, in the forms of truth telling and consistency. The change in favor of authenticity performances that focus on shared cultural connections between presidents and presidential candidates and audiences, arguably, reflects a response to American electorates that feel unrepresented by politicians they perceive to be disconnected with the opinions of ordinary citizens (see Bøggild 2020). Trump’s remarkable ability to culturally connect with the “ordinary citizen” and “forgotten man” in political discourses was decisive to the 2018 elections [see Berezin (2017); fordahl2018] ¹⁸. While Biden’s capacity to relate to the people by talking directly to them when recounting stories about his hometown and their shared values, a trick taken directly from trump’s playbook, were vital in the 2020 elections (Hart 2022) ¹⁹.

4.2 Authenticity Performances and Settings

In Brazil and the US debates have recently become the setting in which authenticity is performed most frequently by presidents and presidential candidates, whereas interviews are the setting in which authenticity is performed least frequently (Figure 3 below). In the US, authenticity performances by presidents and candidates occurred most frequently in campaign settings until the mid-2000s, but steadily decrease over time ²⁰. Conversely, in the case of Brazil, authenticity performances by presidents and candidates in campaigns, debates, and speeches generally increased until the mid-2010s. However, from the mid-2010s onwards we see a sharp decline in authenticity performances across these settings in Brazil. In both countries, however, debates recently became the setting in which authenticity is performed most frequently by presidents and candidates. As large-scale media events that requires candidates to answer quick to sometimes unpredictable questions, debates are an important sources of “sticky” sound and video bites charged with imagery that circulate in diverse media platforms to epitomize political cycles across democracies making it conducive to authenticity performances (Foley 2012; Coleman 2000). Relatedly, interviews in both countries became the setting where authenticity is performed least frequently by presidents and candidates. The spread of social media gave presidents and presidential candidates alternative outlets to interact directly with audiences, bypassing journalists and their filters in interviews, while performing authenticity directly to wider portions of the electorate (Luebke and Engelmann 2022; Alexander 2011). This suggests that, as the importance of social

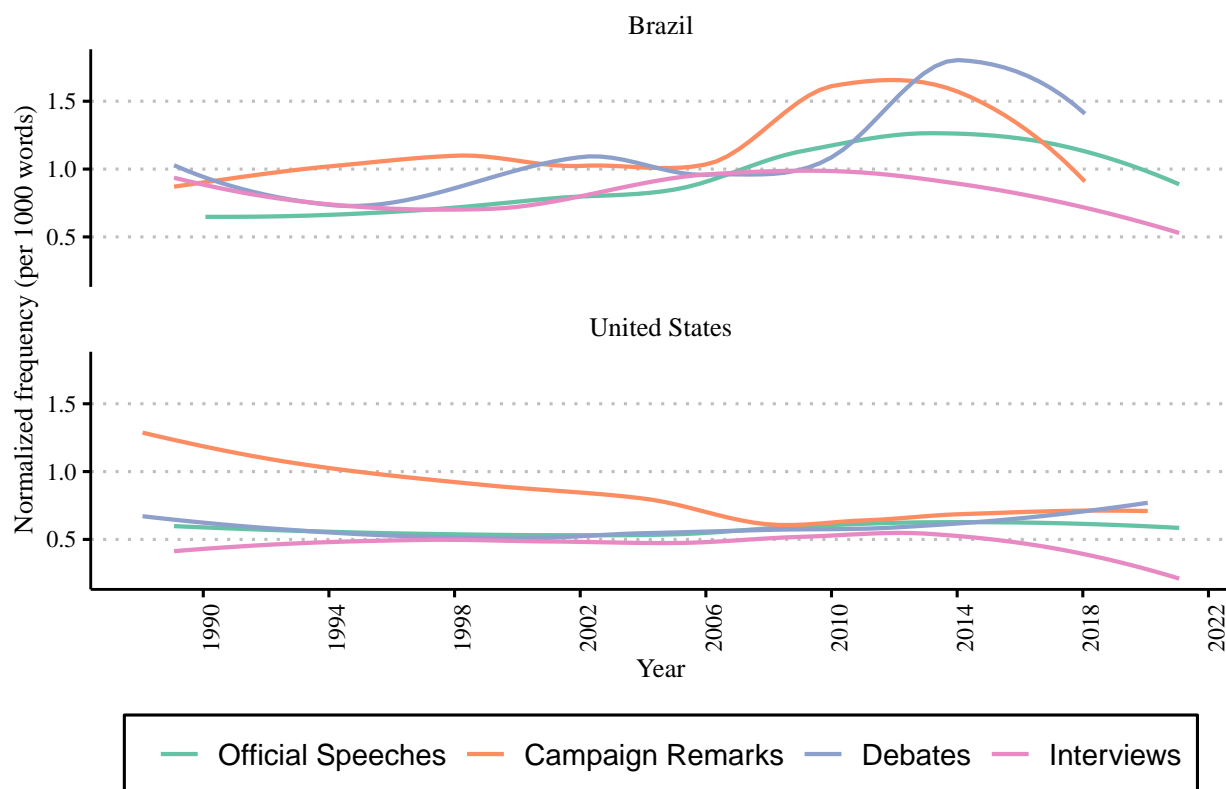
¹⁸Trump often referred to a lost version of a better “America” he grew up in as, for example, when he stated: “When I was growing up, I always used to see the signs, and it was always stamped on the product: Made in the U.S.A. You don’t see it anymore. We’re going to go back to made in the U.S.A...” (Trump – 30/09/2027). This excerpt was coded as an authenticity performance of origins.

¹⁹Biden’s allusions to his origins and hometown in discourse are countless, for example, he stated: “The truth is, Scranton isn’t my home because of the memories it gave me; it’s my home because of the values it gave me. So, when I ran for President, I came back to Scranton. I came back to Scranton. And I started here in Scranton...” (Biden – 20/10/2021). In the excerpt above we see authenticity performances of origins, territory, and truth telling.

²⁰The fixed-effects model in Table 9 in Appendix shows additional details about the correlations between authenticity performances, category, and setting in Brazil and the US.

media in for politics increases, traditional political settings might concentrate discussions about issues and policies while character-based politics, as authenticity performances, happen overwhelmingly in social media settings conducive to these performances (see Luebke and Engelmann 2022).

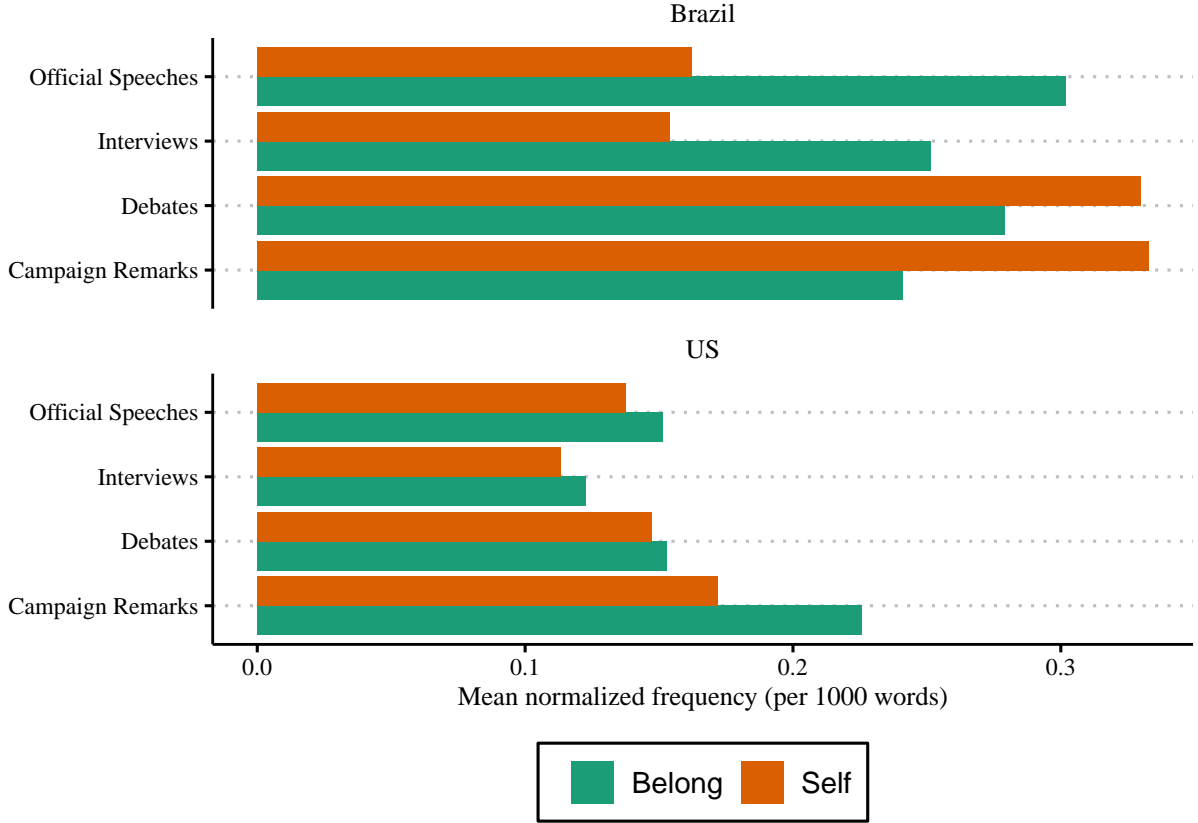
Figure 3: Authenticity Performances by Setting Over Time in Brazil and the US



Curves in the plot are smoothed using loess method.

Authenticity is performed in more diverse ways across settings by presidents and presidential candidates in Brazil than in the US (Figure 4 below). In the US, authenticity performances about belonging appear more frequently on average across all settings, especially in campaigns. In Brazil, authenticity performances about belonging appear more frequently on average in official speeches and interviews, while authenticity performances about the self appear more frequently on average in debates and campaigns. Presidents and presidential candidates in the US are, arguably, more consistent in the authenticities they perform independent of the setting they speak at in comparison to Brazil where setting affects which authenticities are performed. Nonetheless, this suggests that authenticity performances about the self and belong are performed frequently across settings whether presidents and candidates are reading from a piece of paper or answering to questions on the spot.

Figure 4: Authenticity Performances by Category across Settings in Brazil and the US



4.3 Authenticity Performances and Politicians' Roles

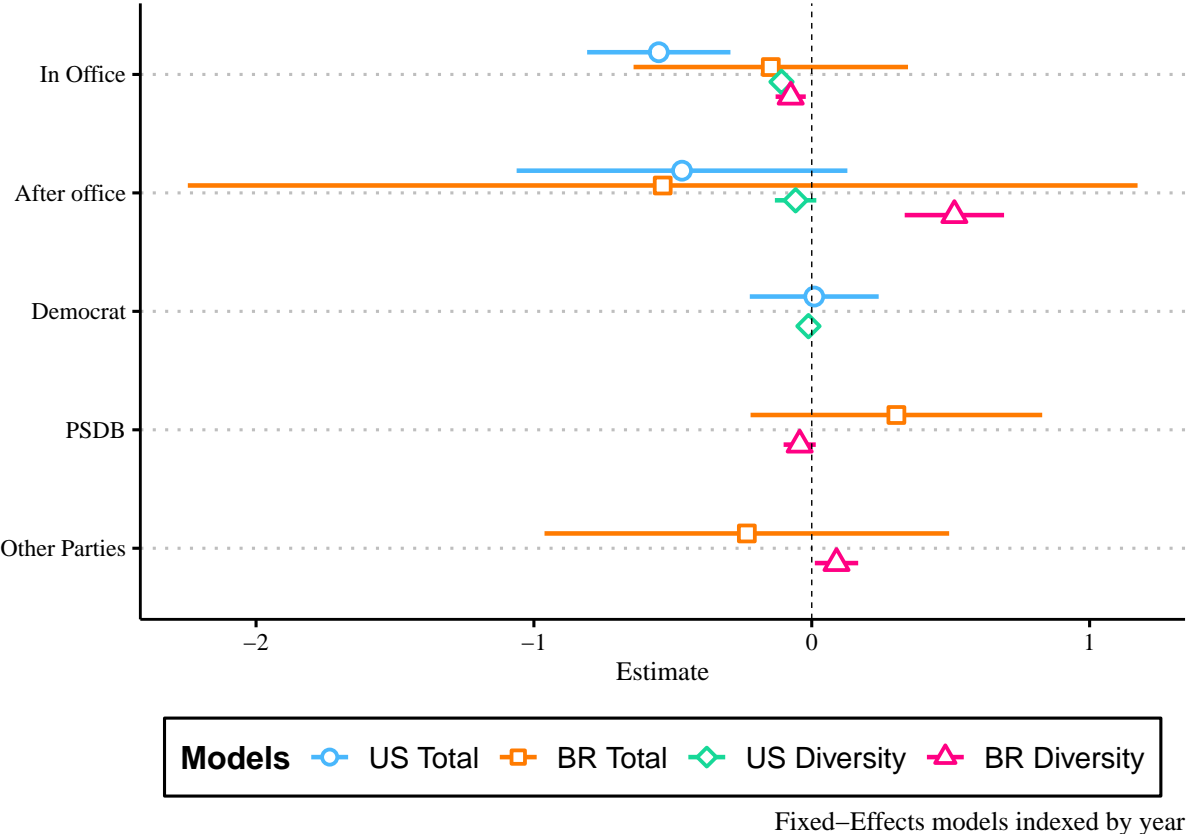
The relationship between politicians' roles and the normalized total for authenticity performances or the diversity scores for authenticity performances in illustrate in Figure 5, below. The x-axis represents the estimated coefficients by the fixed-effects models and the y-axis represents the independent variable, politicians' roles, and the control variable, political party. The lines in the figure represent the standard errors generated by each of the models. In practice, lines that do not touch dotted vertical line symbolize a statistically significant relationship ²¹. The models about the total frequencies of authenticity performances (US Total and BR Total) suggest that presidents in the US perform authenticity less frequently when in office in comparison to candidates, the reference category. First-time presidential candidates in the US likely perform authenticity more frequently to attract national attention and secure party nominations ²². Once in office, presidents perform authenticity significantly less in the US. This helps explain why there is a negative relationship between authenticity performances and election years in the US (section 4.1 above), incumbent presidents perform authenticity generally less. In Brazil, although authenticity performances by presidents and candidates are more frequent and diverse across settings (sections 4.1. and

²¹For more information on coefficients and standard errors in model please see Table 10 in Appendix.

²²When running from re-election from office, incumbents are coded as being in office.

4.2 above), authenticity is not performed significantly less frequently by elected presidents. In both counties, however, politicians’ roles have limited explanatory power regarding the variations in the total of authenticity performances. Considering the models employ time fixed effects, this suggests that presidents and presidential candidates are generally coherent in the how often they perform authenticity as they campaign, take office, or after leaving office in Brazil and the US.

Figure 5: Fixed-Effects Models for Authenticity Performances by Politicians’ Roles



Presidents are less diverse in the ways in which they perform authenticity. The models about the diversity of authenticity performances (US Diversity and BR Diversity) illustrate the relationship between performing authenticity performances in concentrated (i.e. one authenticity performance predominates) and diverse (i.e. multiple authenticity performances) and politicians’ roles. In both Brazil and the US, presidential candidates tend to perform multiple authenticities rather than concentrate performances around a single authenticity. Presidents likely learn from which authenticity performances “stick” when campaigning and, once in office, adapt to perform authenticities that work best for them. In the US, Clinton, W. Bush, and Obama used different language, for example, in their second campaign in comparison to their first campaign (Leuprecht and Skillicorn 2016). These presidents improved their campaign discourses by focusing on the influential language patterns that worked best

their first campaign (Leuprecht and Skillicorn 2016)²³. In Brazil, Lula’s discourses also evolved considerably, for instance, from the first time he was a presidential candidate in the 1989 election to the first time he was elected in the 2002 election (see Barros 2022). Lula adapted his discourse by changing how he described himself, spoke to (and about) his political opponents, and the topics raised in discourse (Barros 2022).

5 Conclusion

This article develops an original framework to identify and compare how authenticity is performed in political discourses over time, across settings, and by politicians. To demonstrate the usefulness of the framework, this article investigates authenticity performances in 21,496 political texts of electoral debates, interviews, campaigns, and official speeches for presidents and presidential candidates in Brazil and the United States (US) since 1988. The findings indicate that authenticity is generally performed with greater frequency by presidents and presidential candidates in Brazil than in the US, though authenticity performances are not more prevalent during election years in either country. Brazil’s party fragmentation and weak partisanship provide incentives for presidents and candidates to display autonomous behavior that might include performing authenticity more often and in more diverse forms across settings, in comparison to the US where presidents and candidates are typically more constrained by their parties. In both countries debates have recently become the setting in which authenticity is performed most frequently by presidents and candidates, whereas interviews are the setting in which authenticity is performed least frequently. Debates are large scale media events that produce “sticky” sound and visual bites charged with imagery that circulate more than ever in democracies. Relatedly, social media platforms give presidents and candidates diverse outlets to interact directly with audiences, bypassing journalists in interviews. Moreover, presidential candidates in the US perform authenticity more frequently to attract national attention and secure party nominations while, in Brazil, authenticity not performed at significantly different frequencies by elected presidents or presidential candidates. In both countries, presidents learn from successful campaigns and adapt to focus on performing only the authenticities that work best for them.

This article lays down the foundations for comparative research on authenticity in political discourses. Conceptually, this article provides the first framework for identifying and comparing diverse performances of authenticity in politics. Empirically, besides the sizeable datasets of political texts for presidents and presidential candidates, this article provides the first comparative overview of how, where, and when authenticity has been performed by presidents and candidates in Brazil and the US since 1988. Future research should move beyond the frequency and forms in which authenticities are performed, to consider how, when, and where each of these authenticity performances help to build electoral trust from electorates (see Weinberg 2023). Likewise, future research should investigate authenticity performances in different types of political systems, such as electoral autocracies. This could be especially

²³Please refer to Table 11 in Appendix for the same model as above but interacting politician’s role and the category of performances as well as controlling for setting. Since the direction and significance of the coefficients remained similar, the simpler model was preferred .

pertinent to understand how certain autocratic politicians discursively collect support from large portions of populations even when they might not be democratically accountable to them. Additionally, since authenticity is one of many forms of collecting and maintaining support when “doing politics”, future research should investigate how authenticity performances interact, affect, and change electorates perception of public policies. Lastly, it is important to expand this research on how social media settings mediate performances of authenticity to broad audiences considering gender and ethno-racial stereotypes (see Welp and Ruth 2017). Given the importance authenticity perceptions have for political outcomes, understanding the role of authenticity in politics could be essential to grasp with why elected politicians frequently do not appear representative of their own electorates.

It is an enormous challenge for political scientists to understand when, why, and how political discourses matter for political outcomes in democracies. We have long known, for example, that the diffusion of mass media has not made electorates better informed about politics or about politicians’ governing programs (see Denton 1988). Still, political scientists continuously engage with the meaning related to what politicians say to explain electoral outcomes. A misplaced engagement with the logic of why electorates and politicians behave as they do contribute to furthering political polarization by passing on the blame for “undesirable” political outcomes to a lumped together group of “old, rural, or uneducated” electorates. This is especially true for a significant portion of the populism literature that focus on materialist explanations (i.e. economically left behind) for electoral behavior (see Schäfer 2022), while frequently disregarding other important aspects of “doing politics” as authenticity. Authenticity performances, as a framework, offers an alternative to understand what certain political discourses are, how they change over time, and why they might matter for political outcomes.

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Appendix

Election Cycle	Politicians	Setting	Observations
1988-1990	Bush - Dukakis	Campaign	4
1988-1990	Bush - Dukakis	Debates	4
1988-1990	Bush - Dukakis	Interviews	28
1988-1990	Bush - Dukakis	Speeches	1117
1991-1994	Clinton - Bush	Campaign	6
1991-1994	Clinton - Bush	Debates	9
1991-1994	Clinton - Bush	Interviews	115
1991-1994	Clinton - Bush	Speeches	1831
1995-1998	Clinton - Dole	Campaign	84
1995-1998	Clinton - Dole	Debates	4
1995-1998	Clinton - Dole	Interviews	68
1995-1998	Clinton - Dole	Speeches	1724
1999-2002	W. Bush - Gore	Campaign	23
1999-2002	W. Bush - Gore	Debates	6
1999-2002	W. Bush - Gore	Interviews	97
1999-2002	W. Bush - Gore	Speeches	1935
2003-2006	W. Bush - Kerry	Campaign	90
2003-2006	W. Bush - Kerry	Debates	6
2003-2006	W. Bush - Kerry	Interviews	80
2003-2006	W. Bush - Kerry	Speeches	1411
2007-2010	Obama - McCain	Campaign	487
2007-2010	Obama - McCain	Debates	6
2007-2010	Obama - McCain	Interviews	214
2007-2010	Obama - McCain	Speeches	1515
2011-2014	Obama - Romney	Campaign	412
2011-2014	Obama - Romney	Debates	6
2011-2014	Obama - Romney	Interviews	90
2011-2014	Obama - Romney	Speeches	1049
2015-2018	Trump - H. Clinton	Campaign	203
2015-2018	Trump - H. Clinton	Debates	6
2015-2018	Trump - H. Clinton	Interviews	130
2015-2018	Trump - H. Clinton	Speeches	1261
2018-2021	Biden - Trump	Campaign	236
2018-2021	Biden - Trump	Debates	4
2018-2021	Biden - Trump	Interviews	7
2018-2021	Biden - Trump	Speeches	1023

Table 3: Text data by election and politicians cycle in the US

Election Cycle	Politicians	Setting	Observations
1988-1992	Collor - Lula	Campaign	10
1988-1992	Collor - Lula	Debates	4
1988-1992	Collor - Lula	Interviews	11
1988-1992	Collor - Lula	Speeches	387
1993-1996	Cardoso - Lula	Campaign	9
1993-1996	Cardoso - Lula	Debates	2
1993-1996	Cardoso - Lula	Interviews	14
1993-1996	Cardoso - Lula	Speeches	463
1997-2000	Cardoso - Lula	Campaign	6
1997-2000	Cardoso - Lula	Interviews	6
1997-2000	Cardoso - Lula	Speeches	690
2001-2004	Lula - Serra	Campaign	9
2001-2004	Lula - Serra	Debates	2
2001-2004	Lula - Serra	Interviews	6
2001-2004	Lula - Serra	Speeches	819
2005-2008	Lula - Alckmin	Campaign	14
2005-2008	Lula - Alckmin	Debates	4
2005-2008	Lula - Alckmin	Interviews	9
2005-2008	Lula - Alckmin	Speeches	991
2009-2012	Rousseff - Serra	Campaign	26
2009-2012	Rousseff - Serra	Debates	6
2009-2012	Rousseff - Serra	Interviews	37
2009-2012	Rousseff - Serra	Speeches	982
2013-2016	Rousseff - Neves	Campaign	50
2013-2016	Rousseff - Neves	Debates	6
2013-2016	Rousseff - Neves	Interviews	49
2013-2016	Rousseff - Neves	Speeches	677
2017-2021	Bolsonaro - Haddad	Campaign	51
2017-2021	Bolsonaro - Haddad	Debates	5
2017-2021	Bolsonaro - Haddad	Interviews	126
2017-2021	Bolsonaro - Haddad	Speeches	773

Table 4: Text data by election and politicians cycle in Brazil

Table 5: Authenticity Performances Codebook

Authenticity Performance	Lexicon English	Lexicon Portuguese
Truth Telling	am telling the truth, are telling the truth, is telling the truth, the truth is, this is the truth, not lying, not lies, no lies, not telling you lies, is honest, am honest, is being honest, are being honest, are honest, honesty, is sincere, are sincere, am sincere, is being sincere, are being sincere, is true, are true, not a liar, bottom of my heart, I swear, I reassure, we reassure, I assure, we assure, be assured, is truthful, are truthful, am truthful, is being truthful, are being truthful, I know that, is evident, are evident, I am sure, trust me, am frank, are frank, is frank, being frank, is upfront, are upfront, am upfront, being upfront, will come clean, am coming clean, are coming clean, is straightforward, are straightforward, being straightforward, believe me, I am certain, no bullshit, not bullshitting	a verdade e, esta e a verdade, digo a verdade, dizemos a verdade, pura verdade, nao e mentira, nao estou mentindo, e honesto, sou honesto, somos honesto, sendo honesto, a honestidade, ser sincero, e sincero, com sinceridade, e verdade, sao verdadeiras, nao sou mentiroso, nao minto, fundo do meu coracao, sou verdadeiro, somos verdadeiros, tenho certeza, certeza absoluta, confia em mim, confie em mim, pode confiar, sou franco, somos francos, fraqueza, falando a verdade, falo a verdade, falamos a verdade, acredite em mim, pode acreditar, podem acreditar, eu tenho certeza, isso e a verdade, somos honestos, com honestidade, toda a sinceridade, com sinceridade, toda sinceridade, sou confiavel, somos confiaveis, as coisas sao assim, a realidade das coisas, juro por deus, com certeza, digo com precisao, veracidade, premissa, afirmo para voces, isso e como aconteceu, falar umas verdades

Table 5: Authenticity Performances Codebook (*continued*)

Authenticity Performance	Lexicon English	Lexicon Portuguese
Lie accusations	not truth, not the truth, not true, aren't true, isn't true, being untruthful, is lying, are lying, is a liar, are liars, is dishonest, are dishonest, being dishonest, is fake, are fake, being fake, is corrupt, are corrupt, full of lies, not sincere, not being sincere, isn't sincere, aren't sincere, not honest, not being honest, is cheating, is a cheater, are cheaters, are cheating, are tricking, is tricking, be deceived, is deceiving, are deceiving, are a hypocrite, is a hypocrite, are being a hypocrite, is being a hypocrite, is crooked, are crooked, is misleading, are misleading, has double-standards, are sneaky, is sneaky, has two faces, two-faced, has double faces, double-faced, you are wrong, not correct, fooled by, do not believe, is misrepresenting, they misrepresent, is misrepresent, are misrepresent, pretends that, pretends to, is pretending, are pretending, keep pretending, breach your trust, breach of trust, is false, are false, being false, is misinforming, are misinforming, being misinformed, pretended, cut the crap, full of crap	nao e verdade, nao e verdadeiro, e mentiroso, esta mentindo, sao mentiroso, e mentira, de mentira, tudo mentira, e desonesto, mentiram, mentiu, um desonesto, esse desonesto, de desonesto, sao desonesto, e falso, sao falsos, sao corruptos, e corrupto, de corrupto, todos corrupto, nao sao sincero, nao e sincero, nao sao honestos, nao e honesto, sao trapaceiros, e trapaceiro, eles trapaceiam, trapaceou, e enganar, ser enganado, vao enganar, sendo enganados, e hipocrita, e enganador, e enganacao, duas caras, enganado por, nao acredite, eles finge, ele finge, e fingimento, ela finge, quebrou a sua confianca , quebra de confianca, e falso, sao falsos, falsidade, e ficcao, historia para boi dormir, historinha para boi dormir, e calunia, sao calunias, difamacao, difamar, uma inverdade, sao inverdades, e inverdade, isso e invencao, essas sao invencoes, isso e uma lenda, essas sao ledas, tenta iludir, tentando iludir, uma farsa, tramoia, mal intencionado, mas intencoes, falta de informacao, esta mal-informado, estao mal-informados

Table 5: Authenticity Performances Codebook (*continued*)

Authenticity Performance	Lexicon English	Lexicon Portuguese
Consistency	<p>we delivered, I delivered, check and see, I keep my word, we keep our word, I kept my word, we kept our word, I keep my promise, I kept my promise, we keep our promise, as promised, we kept our promise, am responsible, I take responsibility, we take responsibility, we assume responsibility, we are accountable, we are responsible, our duty, my duty, give my word, giving my word, own up my, owning up my, accept responsibility, accept the blame, recognize my mistakes, admit I was wrong, I made mistakes, I guarantee, we guarantee, I can guarantee, we can guarantee, I promise, we promise, we can prove, I can prove, we proved, I proved, am reliable, rely on me, rely on us, be reassured, you can hold me accountable, you can hold us accountable, see with your own eyes, vote of confidence, our mission, my mission, my commitment, our commitment, during our government, during my government, while I was in charge</p>	<p>nos entregamos, eu entreguei, veja com seus proprios olhos, cumprio minhas palavras, cumprimos nossas palavra, cumpri minha palavra, cumprio minhas promessas, nossas promessa, um compromisso, meu compromisso, tenho um compromisso com, eu sou responsavel, eu assumo a responsabilidade, nos somos responsaveis, nos assumimos a responsabilidade, nosso dever, meu dever, dou minha palavra, faco uma promessa, fazer uma promessa, aceitar a responsabilidade, aceito a responsabilidade, aceitamos a responsabilidade, aceitar a culpa, meus erros, que errei, eu errei, eu garanto, eu posso garantir, eu prometo, podemos provar, posso provar, provaremos, eu provei, voto de confianca, encarrego pessoalmente, encarreguei pessoalmente, estou comprometido, meu comprometimento, comprometimento com, o comprometimento, fazer o possivel, minha supervisao, minha missao, nossa missao, no meu governo, no nosso governo, durante nosso governo, eu era encarregado, eu era o encarregado, fomos encarregados de</p>

Table 5: Authenticity Performances Codebook (*continued*)

Authenticity Performance	Lexicon English	Lexicon Portuguese
Finger Pointing	are inconsistent, is inconsistent, being inconsistent, are irresponsible, is irresponsible, being irresponsible, their fault, not my fault, not our fault, they left us with, they are responsible, are not responsible, aren't responsible, is not responsible, isn't responsible, costed us, false promises, lack accountability, lacking accountability, not kept their word, not kept his word, not kept her word, not kept promises, not kept the, not kept his, not kept her, not kept their, not keep their word, not keep his word, not keep her word, not keep the, didn't keep the, didn't keep her, didn't keep his, hasn't kept his, hasn't kept her, not recognize, he made mistakes, she made mistakes, they made mistakes, not our mistake, not my mistake, not take responsibility, not my responsibility, not accountable, him accountable, them accountable, her accountable, blame them, blame him, blame his, blame her, their blame, break promises, broken promises, has betrayed, they betrayed, betraying, will betray, has tricked, has lied, not deliver, didn't deliver, hasn't deliver, failed your obligations, failed in your obligations, failed his obligations, failed her obligations, failed in his duty, failed in her duty, failed his duty, failed her duty, failed your duties, stabbed in the back	e inconsistente, sao inconsistente, e irresponsavel, sao irresponsaveis, culpa deles, a culpa nao e minha, nao e minha culpa, eles nos deixaram, sao responsaveis, e responsavel, nos custou, falsas promessas, falta de prestacao de contas, falharam, falhou, nao cumpriu, nao cumpriram, nao reconheceu, nao reconheceram, errou, erraram, nao se responsabiliza, nao me responsabilizo, culpa e sua, sua culpa, quebrar promessas, promessas quebradas, quebra de promessas, fala uma coisa e faz outra, fala uma coisa aqui e faz outra, falsas promessas, sao trapaceiros, cometeu erros, cometeram erros, nao reconhece, nao reconheceu, assumiu a responsabilidade, promete uma coisa, promete o mundo, traiu a confianca, traiu a sua confianca, quebra de confianca, quebraram sua confianca, e falcatrua, foi falcatrua, cheio de falcatrua, houve fraude, houveram fraudes, fraudulento, uma negociata, facada nas costas, faltou com respeito, nao faz o que promete, nao fez o que promete, promessas em vao, palavras em vao, falta de comprometimento, falta de compromisso, houveram desvio, houve desvio, a culpa e do, cheio de promessas, a conta nao fecha, nao terminaram

Table 5: Authenticity Performances Codebook (*continued*)

Authenticity Performance	Lexicon English	Lexicon Portuguese
Origins	I was born, I come from, we come from, I grew up, growing up in, my parents, my mom, my mother, my father, my dad, my family, raised me, I was raised, we were raised, we grew up, my background, being surrounded by, being exposed to, my siblings, going to school in, our local church, Sunday mass, Saturday mass, family tradition, tradition in my house, in our house, growing up, back in the day, my grandparents, in my town, in my state, in my region, our community, in my community, our town, our state, my hometown, our hometown, my home state, our home state, back home, our house, my house, our neighbourhood, in my district, I lived in, we lived in, we used to play, I used to play, I was thought	Eu nasci, Eu vim de, eu venho de, viemos de, cresci, nos crescemos, meus pais, minha mae, minha mae, minha familia, fui criado, fomos criados, minhas origens, meus irmaos, meu irmao, minha irma, tradicao familiar, tradicao em casa, crescendo, antigamente, meu avo, minha avo, meus avos, na minha cidade, no meu estado, na minha regio, nossa comunidade, na minha comunidade, nossa cidade, nosso estado, cidade natal, estado de origem, minha casa, nossa casa, la em casa, nosso bairro, no meu bairro, eu morava, viviamos, na minha terra, de onde eu venho, missa de domingo, missa toda semana, brincava, eram outros tempos, fui educado, moravamos, eu morei, nos moramos, de onde venho, eram tempos diferentes
Common Sense	is common sense, are common sense, everyone knows, it is undeniable, stating the obvious, say the obvious, everyone agrees, we all know, common wisdom, the people know, popular knowledge, from experience, it is my experience, sound judgment, practical solution, practical choice, practical answer, pragmatic solution, pragmatic answer, pragmatic choice, realistic answer, let me tell you about, is obvious, are obvious, obvious answer, obvious solution, as we all learned, we have all learned that, do not need to tell you that, the reality is, there is no logic, it does not make sense, it doesn't make sense, we know it does not work, no one disagrees that, no person disagrees, there is not a person, there is not a human being, there is not a family, there is not an American, there is no single citizen, there is not one single person, there is not one single human being, there is not one single family, there is not one single American, there is not one single citizen, there is not one single person, there is not one human being, there is not one family, there is not one American	senso comum, bom senso, todos sabem, afirmando o obvio, todos concordam, todos sabemos, sabemos todos, todos nos sabemos, sabedoria popular, por experiencia, e minha experiencia, sou pratico, tem que ser pratico, devemos ser pratico, sendo pratico, sou pragmatico, tem que ser pragmatico, devemos ser pragmatico, sendo pragmatico, sou realista, sendo realista, sejamos realista, realisticamente falando, e obvio, como todos nos aprendemos, como sabemos, nao preciso te dizer, o povo sabe, agente aprendeu, nos aprendemos, nos sabemos, nao tem logica, como aprendemos, nao faz sentido, nao fazem sentido, estamos cansados de saber, sabemos que nao funciona, ninguem discorda que, nao tem uma pessoa, nao existe uma pessoa, nao ha uma pessoa, nao existe um ser humano, nao tem um ser humano, nao ha um ser humano, nao tem uma familia, nao existe uma familia, nao ha uma familia, nao tem um brasileiro, nao ha um Brasileiro, nao existe um brasileiro, nao tem uma brasileira, nao ha uma Brasileira, nao existe uma brasileira

Table 5: Authenticity Performances Codebook (*continued*)

Authenticity Performance	Lexicon English	Lexicon Portuguese
Vulgarism	politically correct, political correctness, PC, plain speaking, speaking my mind, speak my mind, say what I think, saying what I think, not going to pretend, not pretend, speak what you think, not what you want to hear, not butter up, not beat around the bush, cut to the chase, just being real, saying what everyone thinks, say what everyone is thinking, speaking plainly, colored people, negro, retarded, nigger, third world, oriental people, crippled people, is crippled, culturally deprived, drug addict, junkie, drunk, fat people, fat person, fat population, handicapped, homosexual faggot, deviant, perverted, illegals, illegal immigrants, illegal alien, Jew, non-white, prostitutes, promiscuous, stupid, tribe, underdeveloped	politicamente correto, falar francamente, falando francamente, falar o que penso, falo o que penso, falando o que penso, dizer o que penso, papas na lingua, nao vou fingir, nao estou aqui para agradar, falar o que voce pensa, o que voce quer ouvir, nao adulterar, nao rodeio, nao dou rodeio, direto ao ponto, dizer o que todos pensam, dizendo o que penso, dizendo o que todos pensam, dizer o que todos estao pensando, nao vou amaciar, nao da para amaciar, gordos, retardado, retardada, veado, populacao preta, os pretos, as pretas, terceiro mundo, viciado em drogas, bebado, drogado, sem cultura, pervertidos, promiscuo, imbecil, estupido, aleijado, defeituoso, incapacitado, invalido, mongoloide, deficiente mental, deficiencia mental, o incapacitado, a incapacitada, travesti, homossexualismo
Territory	have been to, have visited, came all the way to, back from, will visit, saw first-hand, see first-hand, we visited, I visited, we visited, traveled to, traveling to, spend a few days in, spent some time in, spent time in, met great people in, we were hosted, I was hosted, our time in, my time in, our visit, spent a lot of time in, were many times in, got to know the whole country, got to know all the states	estive em, visitei, voltou de, voltei de, voltando de, voltamos de, estive em, estivemos em, visitara, visitarei, vi em primeira mao, ver em primeira mao, visitamos, viajei para, passei alguns dias em, passei algum tempo em, passei um tempo, conheci otimas pessoas, conhecemos otimas pessoas em, fomos hospedados, minha passagem, nossa passagem, nossa visita, fui muitas vezes para, estive muitas vezes em, passei muito tempo em, meu tempo em, estive por todo o Brasil, de norte a sul do pais, conheco todo o pais, conheci todo o pais, conheci todo o Brasil, conheco todo o Brasil

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	value
Election Year	−0.043 (0.124)
United States	−0.688*** (0.108)
Constant	1.870*** (0.083)
Observations	67
R ²	0.390
Adjusted R ²	0.371
Residual Std. Error	0.441 (df = 64)
F Statistic	20.471*** (df = 2; 64)
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 6: Authenticity Performances and Election Years in Brazil and the US

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	value
cycleCardoso (1995-2002)	−0.415 (0.299)
cycleCollor/Franco (1989-1994)	−0.394 (0.313)
cycleLula (2003-2010)	−0.088 (0.299)
cycleRousseff/Temer (2011-2018)	0.699** (0.299)
Constant	1.883*** (0.255)
Observations	33
R ²	0.534
Adjusted R ²	0.467
Residual Std. Error	0.442 (df = 28)
F Statistic	8.019*** (df = 4; 28)
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 7: Authenticity Performances by year in Brazil - Linear Model

Authenticity Performance	Average US	Average Brazil
Truth Telling	0.33	0.35
Lie Accusations	0.04	0.03
Consistency	0.19	0.20
Finger Pointing	0.02	0.06
Origins	0.34	0.85
Common Sense	0.06	0.25
Territorial	0.10	0.05
Anti-PC	0.09	0.03

Table 8: Average Normalized Proportion of Authenticity Performances in Brazil and the US (per 1000 words)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Total Frequency	
	Brazil (1)	US (2)
SettingCampaign Remarks	−0.204 (0.203)	0.288*** (0.073)
SettingDebates	−0.034 (0.214)	−0.017 (0.105)
SettingInterviews	−0.216* (0.125)	−0.116* (0.065)
categorySelf	−0.559*** (0.118)	−0.055 (0.065)
SettingCampaign Remarks:categorySelf	0.926*** (0.263)	−0.160 (0.101)
SettingDebates:categorySelf	0.761*** (0.278)	0.033 (0.140)
SettingInterviews:categorySelf	0.169 (0.172)	0.017 (0.092)
Observations	150	194
R ²	0.298	0.222
Adjusted R ²	0.050	0.019
F Statistic	6.681*** (df = 7; 110)	6.244*** (df = 7; 153)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 9: Authenticity Performances by Category and Setting in Brazil and the US - Fixed-Effects by Year

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Total Normalized Frequency		Diversity Score	
	US	Brazil	US	Brazil
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
statusIn Office	−0.551*** (0.132)	−0.147 (0.252)	−0.109*** (0.016)	−0.076*** (0.028)
statusAfter office	−0.467 (0.304)	−0.536 (0.872)	−0.058 (0.038)	0.513*** (0.091)
partyDemocratic	0.009 (0.118)		−0.012 (0.015)	
partyPSDB		0.305 (0.268)		−0.043 (0.029)
partyOther		−0.234 (0.372)		0.089** (0.040)
Observations	139	113	139	110
R ²	0.147	0.038	0.315	0.391
Adjusted R ²	−0.154	−0.418	0.073	0.090
F Statistic	5.866*** (df = 3; 102)	0.749 (df = 4; 76)	15.639*** (df = 3; 102)	11.693*** (df = 4; 73)
<i>Note:</i>			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table 10: Authenticity Performances by Setting, Category, Status, and Party in Brazil and the US - Fixed-Effects by Year

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Total Normalized Frequency		Diversity Score	
	US	Brazil	US	Brazil
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
statusIn office	−0.311*** (0.084)	0.183 (0.172)	−0.095*** (0.015)	−0.063*** (0.023)
statusAfter office	−0.263 (0.176)	0.392 (0.573)	−0.042 (0.031)	0.507*** (0.075)
categorySelf	−0.227*** (0.077)	0.026 (0.139)	−0.000 (0.014)	0.000 (0.019)
settingspeeches	−0.067 (0.073)	−0.139 (0.208)	−0.033** (0.013)	−0.018 (0.027)
settingdebates	−0.234*** (0.081)	0.034 (0.189)	−0.033** (0.014)	−0.001 (0.025)
settinginterviews	−0.242*** (0.069)	−0.343** (0.169)	−0.038*** (0.012)	0.029 (0.022)
partyDemocratic	0.007 (0.054)		−0.012 (0.010)	
partyPSDB		0.150 (0.135)		−0.043** (0.019)
partyOther		−0.167 (0.192)		0.101*** (0.026)
statusIn office:categorySelf	0.142 (0.096)	−0.535*** (0.194)	0.000 (0.017)	−0.000 (0.026)
statusAfter office:categorySelf	0.107 (0.202)	−1.202 (0.735)	0.000 (0.036)	0.000 (0.096)
Observations	278	226	278	220
R ²	0.185	0.129	0.349	0.416
Adjusted R ²	0.039	−0.071	0.232	0.278
F Statistic	5.911*** (df = 9; 235)	2.706*** (df = 10; 183)	13.968*** (df = 9; 235)	12.625*** (df = 10; 177)

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 11: Authenticity Performances by Status, Setting, and Category, in Brazil and the US - Fixed-Effects by Year