The Acquisition of Political Knowledge and Electoral Accountability in a Developing Democracy: Evidence From Brazil

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Over the last decade, the scholarship on democratization largely has shifted focus away from the causes of regime transition to hone in on the question of what conditions will best allow newly-established democratic regimes to deepen and endure. Among scholars examining elections and public opinion trends in Latin America, many have reached the conclusion that the long-term prospects of the region’s democratic regimes ultimately will ride on the extent to which political accountability can be strengthened. For these scholars, democracy in developing countries can only be expected to prosper over the long term if government officials can be better held responsible for their actions than has been the case in the period immediately following the third wave of democratic transitions. One argument heard with ever-increasing frequency is that free, open and competitive elections, by themselves, cannot either guarantee the basic protections of democratic citizenship or adequately prevent abuses of power by state actors (O’Donnell 1999; Lagos 2001; Smulovitz 2001).

As Latin America’s once-fledgling democracies now enter into their second and third decades of existence, recent elections in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela have seen high levels of support for candidates whose campaigns rested not on clearly-articulated ideologies or realistic policy proposals but instead on clientelism, patronage, demagoguery, and populism (Mainwaring and Scully 1995). While such strategies have proved effective in putting together winning campaigns, the political leaders selected by these types of elections have run into deep problems governing. Poor leadership has played a major role in weakening the health of the region’s democracies by undermining support for democracy in mass politics. Evidence drawn from public opinion surveys in a broad cross-section of new democracies repeatedly has shown that individual appraisals about the way democracy works in practice, particularly with respect to the prevalence of corruption by public officials, are closely linked to perceptions of regime legitimacy, the willingness to take actions necessary to defend the democratic rules of the game, and the preference of democracy over other forms of governance (Diamond

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2 In April 2002, the Journal of Democracy, devoted a section to this issue. The articles by Diamond and Schedler are particularly insightful.
Recent survey data measuring support for democracy in Latin America closely mirror the region’s lagging performance indicators in economic and social policy performance: in well over half of the countries that make up the region, only a minority of citizens today believe that democracy is preferable to other kinds of government, and in all but three countries (Honduras, Costa Rica, and Uruguay) a majority of individuals indicate that they are unsatisfied with how democracy is currently working (Lagos 1996; Lagos 2001). Even more disconcerting is the fact that in over three-quarters of the countries in the region the percentage of citizens preferring democracy to any other kind of government has declined in the last decade (Economist 2002, 29).

The central question I ask in this essay is the following: what factors influence the extent to which citizens in Latin American and other emerging democracies are acquiring the basic political knowledge that is necessary for elections in these countries to produce responsible political leadership. I offer an answer to this question by analyzing a combination of survey data and field interviews obtained during fourteen months of field research in three mid-sized Brazilian state capital cities. The paper pursues two main lines of inquiry. First, I examine the theoretical relationship between levels of political knowledge and democratic accountability. What roles do everyday citizens play in assuring that elections will hold politicians accountable? How should we assess the extent to which citizens in developing country settings are prepared to use elections in ways that are consistent with conventional theories of electoral accountability? Second, I provide an empirical overview of the state of political knowledge both across and within Brazil’s largest urban centers. Where there are variances in the acquisition of political knowledge across different urban settings, I offer an explanation of what underlying socioeconomic and sociocultural factors are most responsible for shaping whether or not citizens are prepared to hold politicians accountable through elections.

**Political Knowledge, Elections, and Democratic Accountability**

Democratic theorists have long held that “the key characteristic of a democracy is the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals” (Dahl...
The central problem facing all democratic regimes is how to extract such continuing responsiveness. How can elected officials be held accountable such that they do not use their positions to pursue their own ends or abuse their authority? To protect citizens from mistreatment by the state and garner support for the regime, democratic societies typically use several institutional mechanisms to check the power of government by subjecting public officials to the threat of sanctions; obliging power to be exercised in transparent ways, and forcing the state to periodically justify its actions in elections (Schedler 1999, 14). Most of the world’s successful democracies have adopted several types of these strategies simultaneously, including constitutionally limiting the scope of governmental activity, dividing the powers of the state among various agents, creating independent oversight agencies, and guaranteeing enumerated civil and political liberties. Other limits on state power notwithstanding, it is the holding of periodic, competitive elections that constitutes the most-widely accepted feature of modern democracy, so much so that one of the leading theorists of democratic transitions considers a regime to be a consolidated democracy solely based on its having held contested elections in which the losing side abandoned its claim to power until the next scheduled election (Huntington 1991).

The idea that holding elections can ensure democratic accountability is based on a simple premise: where citizens are active, alert, and informed, elected government officials can be expected to campaign and perform in ways that reflect the fact that they will have to defend their performance in front of voters in the near future. Citizens empowered with the franchise, it is presumed, will use their ballots to select only those representatives who are most strongly committed to advancing their constituents’ interests. Similarly, electorates in open, competitive democracies have the capability to strip power from public officials for irresponsible behaviors or abuses of authority, which is supposed to dissuade elected officials from malfeasance.

The two dominant schools of thought on reasoned voter choice—prospective and retrospective voting theories—thus both assume that individuals can use elections best protect their interests and hold politicians accountable only to the extent that they obtain and apply the information necessary to pass informed judgment on candidates and incumbents. In the words of James Madison, “[k]nowledge must forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives.” Democratic theorists thus have expected much of voters: “The democratic citizen is expected to be well informed about public affairs. He is expected to know what the issues are, what their history is, what the relevant facts are, what alternatives are proposed, what the party stands for, [and] what the likely consequences are” (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954, 308). The obvious question such theories provoke is whether citizens in developing, emerging democracies can realistically

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be expected to gather and apply the information that they would need to perform their fundamental role in holding government accountable.

Even in the industrial democracies with the highest standards of living, empirical inquiries into the political sophistication of electorates consistently have raised serious doubts about the ability of most voters to obtain and retain extensive political information (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954; Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960; Converse 1964; Delli Carpini 1999; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Reflecting on the state of political knowledge in the United States at mid-century, Joseph Schumpeter lamented that, “The typical citizen drops down to a lower level of mental performance as soon as he enters the political field. He argues and analyzes in a way which he would readily recognize as infantile within the sphere of his real interests” (1942, 262). Systematic reviews of public opinion surveys administered during the five decades that have elapsed since Schumpeter’s gloomy assessment suggest that despite improved access to higher education and increased media consumption, the “average” first world citizen has remained consistently and “woefully uninformed about political institutions and processes, substantive policies and socioeconomic conditions, and important political actors such as elected officials and political parties” (Delli Carpini 1999, 6). As a consequence, few puzzles in the academic writings on electoral behavior have attracted more scholarship than the “paradox” of democracy surviving in societies where most “individual voters . . . seem unable to satisfy the requirements for a democratic system” (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954, 312). The key question for researchers attempting to resolve this paradox has been how much information is actually necessary for voters to hold politicians accountable.

While there is little doubt that public discourse and policymaking would benefit from unfailingly highly-informed voters, a second generation of North American scholarship on the relationship between the acquisition of political knowledge and electoral accountability has argued that most moderately-informed individuals are able to make reasonably effective voting decisions by employing various forms of low-information rationality in voting—that is, selecting candidates by using a combination of informational shortcuts and making the most of the very limited political information voters typically possess (Fiorina 1981; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Popkin 1994). A number of scholars suggest that such political behaviors are completely rational. Where voters believe they are successfully protecting their basic interests despite relying on an abbreviated and blurry picture of political life, most individuals should see no reason to invest more time following politics when the alternative is to devote their time and resources to life’s other pleasures and tasks (Downs 1957; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Popkin 1994).

How much political knowledge is necessary for voters in emerging democracies to hold elected officials accountable at the ballot box? How should the informational capabilities of voters in developing settings be assessed? The demands on these electorate’s time and resources are as intense, if not more so, as is the case with first-world electorates. It is simply unlikely that the typical citizen found in low-income, emerging democracies will be in a position to put more than minimal effort into his society’s civic life given the prevalence of unmet basic survival needs, low educational opportunities, and limited previous
experience with democratic citizenship. Nor, if the rational-choice scholarship on political sophistication is correct in its assumptions, would it be rational for these voters to invest any more time into political involvement than is necessary to protect their most basic interests.

Emerging democracies, by their transitional nature, may also lack a coherent political party system or ideologically-centered politics in general, which limits the applicability of the more complex conceptualizations of voter knowledge of the type that have typically been applied to assess political sophistication in studies of the electorates in the advanced industrial democracies (Gordon and Segura 1997; Luskin 1987). In developing countries where large swings in social and economic policy, recurring economic crises, and personality-centered parties often are the norm, it makes little sense to evaluate the political knowledge of voters in terms of their issue consistency or the ability to correctly place political parties by their policy preferences. In short, in emerging democracies, less complex measures of sophistication—such as the ability of everyday citizens to identify key political actors and the extent to which they gather basic political news and voting information—may serve as the best available measures of the degree to which voters are becoming informed about political life in their community. At a minimum, such indicators can allow for a distinction between citizens who are potentially capable of holding elected officials accountable though democratic elections and those who are not.

**The State of Political Knowledge among Urban Brazilians**

Several features make Brazil a promising case in which to investigate the acquisition of political knowledge in recently-established, developing country settings. In democracies with deeply institutionalized party systems, the most important informational shortcut used by voters to quickly and painlessly evaluate and anticipate political performance is partisanship (Downs 1957; Mainwaring and Scully 1995). In much of Latin America however, inchoate party systems deny citizens the ability to rely on affective orientations toward parties as a substitute for garnering policy-specific information about the performance of elected officials and the programs of candidates (Mainwaring and Scully 1995). Brazil in particular is a well-documented case in which the institutionalization of political parties has been deeply problematic. As numerous scholars have shown, a major source of the difficulties for the Brazil’s party system lies in its rare open-list proportional representation method of selecting legislative representatives. In-party competition leads to the proliferation of parties, rampant party switching among elected officials, and weak partisan attachments throughout the country’s electorate (Ames 2001; Mainwaring 1999). Moreover, Brazil, like many recently-established democracies, also has experienced serious problems with corruption, clientelism, patronage, rent-seeking, and the abuse of public power since the end of its 1964-1985 bureaucratic authoritarian regime, suggesting that the implementation of free and fair elections in the country has not automatically led to enhanced democracy (Hagopian 1996; Weyland 1996; Weyland 1998). Indeed, the rate of support among Brazilians for democracy over other
regime types ranks consistently among the lowest of any nation in Latin America despite the relative prosperity of the country when compared to its regional neighbors (Lagos 2001; Economist 2001).

While the Brazilian case offers a compelling lens through which to examine the acquisition of political knowledge in an electorate who faces many of the challenges typical of developing country settings, the impressive variety of the Brazil’s subnational political settings also offers a somewhat unique opportunity to investigate how levels of political sophistication may vary under a variety of distinct political-cultural and socio-economic environments. Scholars have long noted strong inter-regional differences in patterns of elite and mass political behavior in the country (Ames 2001; Schwartzman 1970; Selcher 1998; Stepan 2000). Such regional variations are especially marked when one examines local level politics. Since redemocratization in the 1980s, a large number of Brazil’s municipalities have instituted wide-ranging political and policy reforms aiming to enhance the quality and scope of citizen participation in government (Figueiredo and Lamounier 1996; Soares and Caccia-Bava 1998; Spink 2000). In other localities, however, the nature of the Brazilian transition to democracy appears only to have further solidied the hold of traditional political elites, facilitating clientelist practices and thwarting the emergence of political and social reform (Hagopian 1996; Samuels 2000; Souza 1997). Put another way, in some subnational settings, political leaders in Brazil appear to be operating in ways that suggest that they believe that their performance will matter greatly in whether or not they will continue to hold onto power through the next set of elections, while in other communities leaders continue to operate as though their policy performance and commitments to the common good are simply not relevant to how individuals will cast their ballots. What is especially intriguing about these different political outcomes is that Brazilian municipal governments share a federally-imposed, and thus essentially identical, set of electoral system and set of government structures across different regions and states.

To date surprisingly little scholarly work has been done on the state of political knowledge in the Brazilian electorate. The last study to systematically compare the political sophistication of urban voters across different country regions was Kurt von Mettenheim’s *The Brazilian Voter* (1995; see also 1990). Von Mettenheim was primarily concerned with how the then-unfolding democratic transition would shape the country’s post-transitional political party system, and the 1982 survey data on which his analyses of voter behaviors and attitudes were based are now over two decades old. The data source for the most in-depth study of political attitudes and behaviors carried out since the Brazilian democratic transition is the 1989-1993 series of nationally-representative surveys administered by José Álvaro Moisés for his pathbreaking *Os Brasileiros e a Democracia* (1995). Unfortunately, Moisés’s surveys did not include a battery of substantive political knowledge questions, nor are his samples sufficiently large to allow for inter-community comparisons within Brazil’s largest cities (1993a).

Fortunately, we are now in a position to update and extend previous studies of the acquisition of political knowledge in urban Brazil with high-quality survey data obtained from an exceptionally large sample of individuals living in Brazil’s largest urban centers. In April 1996 (six months before local
elections), the national census agency (IBGE—Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística) added a one-time battery of items on political behavior to its Monthly Employment Survey (PME—Pesquisa Mensual de Emprego), which IBGE uses to track employment and income trends in seven of Brazil’s largest metropolitan areas. The supplemental questionnaire asked individuals about their patterns of participation in civic associations, types of non-electoral political participation, sources of general political news and voting information, as well as questions to determine their basic knowledge of central political figures and parties. Because voting is mandatory in Brazil, the PME’s data are highly representative of the included cities’ pools of eligible voters, although the sample does not include individuals less than 18 years of age. In Brazil sixteen- and 17-year olds may vote, but are excluded from the mandatory suffrage requirement that applies to most individuals. Because of the quality of its sample selection, sample size, and in-home administration, the resultant survey data is the best available regarding political and civic activity in urban Brazil.

**Political Knowledge and its Acquisition in Three Brazilian Cities.** In order better understand the dynamics of how citizens in Brazil obtain the information that they would need to follow governmental activities and sanction their elected officials, the remainder of this paper will examine variations in levels of political knowledge and its acquisition in Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre, and Salvador. These municipal case studies are meant to constitute a cross-section of urban Brazil. By selecting these particular mid-sized state capital cities from the handful of municipalities included in the PME, I have attempted to maximize variation on socioeconomic and social capital variables. In a 1996 report on human development indicators in the country, a joint United Nations and Brazilian Census Institute (IBGE) team proposed a conceptual division of Brazil into three distinct regions grouped by their profound socioeconomic differences. Rio Grande do Sul, the state of which Porto Alegre is the capital, ranked by the researchers as the state with the highest standard of living in Brazil (a country map is provided in Appendix A) with respect to indicators of per capita income, longevity, and education. Minas Gerais, home to Belo Horizonte, ranked as the ninth state out of 27, and was categorized in the report as belonging to the second tier of Brazilian states. Bahia, the state of which Salvador is the capital, was placed in the poorest group of states in Brazil as was the case with all states in the Northeast (PNUD 1998). In all other respects, the municipal case studies included in this study are virtually identical, including sharing uniform party, electoral, and governance systems.

**TABLE 1**

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6 In April of 1996, the PME was administered in Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre, Recife, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, and São Paulo. Curitiba has since been added to the PME’s sampling universe.
As Table 1 indicates, despite the uniformity of their macropolitical institutions, the three case study cities vary considerably in the degree to which their citizens are prepared to use elections to hold elected officials accountable, as operationalized by the capability of each city’s residents to identify major political actors and the quality of information used to follow politics and vote. Regarding the ability to identify major political actors, the PME includes a battery of questions asking respondents to spontaneously name up to three political parties, the president of Brazil, their state’s governor, and their city’s mayor. To ascertain the quality of informational sources used by urban Brazilians to follow political events and obtain voting information, the survey asked respondents to identify their most influential sources for each of these types of information.

If the ability to identify the three political figures and three political parties is combined into a single, six-point additive index (one point for each correct answer), the city averages are 4.15 for Salvador, 4.61 for Belo Horizonte, and 4.90 for Porto Alegre. Given the cities’ distributions of educational, economic, and social capital resources, it is at first glance surprising that Salvadorans exhibit higher levels of accuracy in identifying political figures than is the case with the residents of Belo Horizonte. Disaggregating the data by office sheds some light on this anomaly. While Salvadorans were over ten percent less likely than other respondents to correctly identify Fernando Henrique Cardoso as Brazil’s president, they were the most likely to correctly name their mayor (only 13 percent could not accurately identify their mayor in comparison to 28 percent in Belo Horizonte and 22 percent in Porto Alegre). The higher identification rates for subnational executives in Salvador undoubtedly reflect the powerful influence in the city’s politics exercised by the traditional political forces that dominate political life in the state of Bahia (Setzler 2002, Chapter 4).

Being a minimally-informed democratic citizen is not just about what an individual knows; it also involves being at least mildly alert to the political happenings of his community and seeking out adequate information for voting purposes. As Robert Putnam has argued, active democratic citizenship requires that voters get “equipped to participate in civic deliberations” and show some general level of “interest in community affairs” (1993, 92). Much academic thinking on the relationship between media consumption and democratic citizenship has concluded that it is at least as important for voters to regularly seek out

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7 At the time the PME was administered, Antônio Carlos Magalhães’s allies and the major local media outlets he controlled in Salvador were working hard to sabotage the reform efforts of the city’s leftist mayor, Lídice da Mata (1992-1996). By the end of her term, she had the lowest approval ratings of any large capital city mayor in the country. As a consequence of the massive quantities of Magalhães-directed patronage devoted to the city in 1995 and 1996, Salvadorans were also more likely to remember the name of the state’s governor than was the case in Belo Horizonte. While I considered dropping the mayoral identification item from the study’s political sophistication index, I ultimately elected to retain it because factor analysis showed that the respondents’ ability to answer this question corresponded as highly to a single common factor (knowledge of the city’s core political actors) as did an individual’s ability to name the president, their governor, and up to three political parties. Using principle components analysis, all four items load on a single common factor, with loadings ranging from .720 (party knowledge) to .807 (know president’s name).
political information from reliable media sources as it is for them to retain specific bits of information over long periods of time. Research on political cynicism and media priming, for example, find that even though most voters are passive and inattentive consumers of the political information they hear or see in the media, learning what elites have to say primes voters to form their basic positions and attitudes about politicians, issues, and policies (Hetherington 2001; Iyengar 1990). In short, while individuals often may not remember why they have developed the political preferences they have, systematic media consumers are still in a better position than others to reach informed opinions upon which to hold politicians accountable in elections.

The PME also asks a battery of questions that allows for a measurement of the quality of the sources used by individuals in the three case study cities to obtain basic political knowledge. In Table 1, I have coded respondents’ use of political information into two categories: use of the media to follow general political events and use of media resources specifically for voting purposes. I also measure the quality of media consumption by dividing the types of media used by respondents in printed and broadcast forms of information acquisition. The highest quality information for both voting and general political news purposes in Brazil is found in the printed media (newspapers and magazines), while lower-quality information can be obtained from the broadcast media (television and radio). Political scientists studying the relevance of political culture to the deepening of democratic practices have often used just rates of print media consumption to assess an individual’s capacity and desire to be fully engaged in his community’s political life, however the broadcast media consumption offers a second although inferior form of such engagement (Almond and Verba 1963; Putnam 1993, 92-93). Taking into account whether or not an individual gets general political and/or voting information from the media, and whether or not that person uses the print media to obtain this information provides four additional indicators of the acquisition of political knowledge for the additive index (additional details on the scaling are listed in note c of Table 1.).

The political preparedness of voters to exercise electoral accountability can thus be represented by a ten-point additive index of political sophistication that combines one’s knowledge of political figures with measures of media consumption. 8 On the ten-point index, the gaps between the cities are broader than was the case when comparing the cities just in terms of their populations’ ability to identify political actors. The distribution of political knowledge across the three cities is shown in Figure 1.

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8 For an overview and methodological defense of the use of additive indexes to measure political knowledge, see Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996, Appendix 2). Overall, the ten-point additive index scales well: Cronbach’s standardized alpha = .75. The eight variables used in the index commonly load on a single factor, with the factor loadings ranging from .481 (follow politics in the general media) to .720 (know governor’s name). The mean individual score on the index for the residents of all three cities is 6.54, with a standard deviation of 2.70. Skewness = -.686. Ideally, the index would include additional substantive questions that were more difficult, and thus more discriminating; however, the PME did not ask other questions related to voter knowledge.
FIGURE 1

The data in Table 1 and Figure 1 provide two important insights. First, and quite encouragingly, the measurements of basic political sophistication suggest that a majority of Brazilians in the study cities seek out and retain at least some of the basic knowledge that would be a prerequisite to effectively evaluate the performance of their elected officials. Across the case study cities, the great majority of individuals—well over four-fifths of those surveyed—indicate that they use the media to follow daily events, with over one-third of the respondents indicating that they obtain their news from the print media. Similarly, over half of those surveyed say that they use some form of media source to gain information for the purposes of voting. The second major finding that can be drawn from Figure 1 is that there are substantial differences in sophistication levels across the three urban settings, with Porto Alegre’s residents having significantly higher aggregate measures than the residents of either Belo Horizonte or Salvador. The remainder of this paper will tackle the question of what factors may account for these varying levels. We will proceed first with an examination of how differences in resources and political leadership between cities may correspond to city-regionally aggregated differences in political sophistication, and then shift to multivariate analyses using individual-centered models of sophistication.

HYPOTHEZING THE DETERMINANTS OF THE ACQUISITION OF POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE IN EMERGING DEMOCRACIES

The scholarship on Brazil has long pointed to inter-regional differences in political culture to explain variances in both governmental performance and prevailing patterns of elite and mass political behavior (Schwartzman 1970; Selcher 1998). Indeed, the selection of the municipal case studies for this study was largely driven by a desire to represent what are widely recognized to be the three most politically important regions of the country. While one must clearly pay attention to specific historical and cultural contexts in both describing and explaining political phenomenon, a key goal when trying to generalize from the Brazilian case in order to speak to the challenges faced by other emerging democracies in Latin America and beyond is to identify what specific characteristics about the country’s different regions are responsible for the long-observed inter-regional differences in political and economic behaviors. As Przeworski and Teune have noted, “the role of comparative research in the process of theory-building and theory-testing consists of replacing proper names of social systems by the relevant variables” (1970, 30 as cited in Gordon and Segura 1997, 136). With respect to variations in levels of political knowledge and its acquisition across the different urban settings, the literature on political sophistication and democratization suggests that three factors should be of particular importance in explaining variations in the acquisition of political knowledge.

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9 The three variables discussed here is not an exhaustive list of potential influences of political sophistication. Researchers have found that both gender and the macro-institutional choices of a given
**Socio-economic explanations of the acquisition of political knowledge.** The economic standing and educational attainment of individuals have long been cited as key determinants of political participation and civic engagement (Beck and Jenning 1982; Putnam 1995b; Verba and Nie 1972). Regarding the relationship between income, education, and levels of political sophistication among individuals in developed country settings, researchers have found that wealthier individuals tend to have more opportunities to be exposed to political information, and such individuals are more likely to see the acquisition of political information as relevant to advancing their personal interests. Similarly, educational attainment is widely regarded as one of the best available proxies for assessing the cognitive capabilities of individuals (Gordon and Segura 1997, 129-30).

Many scholars looking at the Brazilian case have argued that poverty is the most important influence in whether or not voters will use electoral opportunities in a manner consistent with theories of electoral accountability. As Desposato observes, it is Brazil’s desperately poor—who are unable to meet even the most basic of needs—who are the most likely of voters to see significant value in the private goods that are most often offered in elections by Brazil’s clientelist politicians (Desposato 2001, 28-35; See also Geddes 1994, 40-41 and Filho 1994). In communities where stark poverty remains the norm, the recipients of the private goods offered by candidates are often not in a position to risk losing even the smallest of assured benefits for the potentially more beneficial but uncertain benefits that might be obtained through collective politics (Filho 1994, 231). The relationship between levels of voter sophistication and the prevalence of clientelism in these types of communities is straightforward: poor voters who intend to exchange their votes for private goods such as a small amount of cash, food basket, or block party have few incentives to obtain even the most basic of political information because it is irrelevant to their selection calculus, which instead is based on selecting the candidates who are exchanging the best private goods. Middle-class voters are not, of course, immune from the temptations of clientelist politicians in developing settings; however buying their votes is much more expensive and generally unsustainable over time because better-heeled voters whose basic needs are already met tend to demand patronage jobs rather than the inexpensive subsistence goods more readily available to candidates (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984; Stokes 2000). In a position to rationally forgo immediate, personal goods in favor of collective action, well-heeled voters are thus more likely to select politicians on political system shape individual levels of political knowledge. In this study, however, these other factors are held constant.

10 Numerous studies have pointed to persistent poverty as a central factor in the staying power of clientelism and its correspondent patrimonial networks linking voters and politicians alike to traditional practices and structures; see especially Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984 and O’Donnell 1996. For a counter argument that community leadership can, under rare circumstances, lead even the poorest voters to reject clientelist overtures through by engaging in collective political strategies, see Robert Gay 1994.
ideological, partisan, and issue-related grounds, all of which depend on the acquisition of basic political knowledge.

Although the literature on clientelism in emerging democracies has primarily emphasized economic variables, educational attainment should also be a key determinant of how elections function in different Brazilians urban settings. Unable to follow political events or reliably predict whether or not a given politician will carry through on his policy promises, poorly-educated voters in Brazil often either turn to community leaders for guidance on voting matters (Gay 1994) or trade their votes for private goods whose delivery before election day requires no larger comprehension of public affairs as would be the case with evaluating policies aimed at the general public’s welfare (Desposato 2001, 33-35; Geddes 1994, 40-41). Both practices—allowing community leaders to broker neighborhood votes en masse or exchanging one’s vote directly for smaller private goods—can be expected to make the acquisition of even basic political knowledge unnecessary. By contrast, better-educated voters are not only in a superior position to comprehend and evaluate policy-orientated electoral campaigns, but they are also better prepared to follow up on the future behaviors of elected officials to make sure that policy promises were kept (Desposato 2000, 28-35). One should thus expect an individual’s level of education to be correlated his or her support of candidates promising public rather than private goods because only the latter requires that voters seek out political information to cast their ballots.

**TABLE 2**

Brazil is a country marked by severe regional differences in socio-economic opportunities, and thus the country provides an suitable research environment in which to examine the relationship between political sophistication and socio-economic conditions I have just outlined. Table 2 highlights the profound disparities between the study cities with respect to poverty rates, work earnings, and educational attainment. The data are largely self-explanatory; however, one point should be emphasized. Porto Alegre shows significantly higher socioeconomic measures than Belo Horizonte, which in turns shows superior measures to Salvador on each socio-economic indicator; thus, the measures of socio-economic conditions uniformly correspond to the cities’ ordering with respect to their aggregate measures of political sophistication.

**Social Capital and the Acquisition of Political Knowledge.** In recent years, a tremendous amount of scholarship has investigated how participation in civic associations might be linked to political participation, social trust, interest in public affairs, and democratic practices in subnational politics. Work on the United States by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1993), for example, finds that civic skills developed through participation in community organizations are associated with both enhanced political interest and participation rates. While these authors emphasize the political skills that associational activity can
generate, civic organizations may also influence the acquisition of political knowledge by increasing participants’ concerns for the larger community beyond their immediate person, family, or neighborhood. It is in this sense that Robert Putnam argues that participation in civic groups leads individuals to broaden their “sense of self, developing the ‘I’ into the ‘we’…” (Putnam 1995a, 66). Although conceptually distinct from civic associationalism, social trust can be thus expected to be closely linked with an interest in holding politicians accountable in elections because “networks of civic engagement foster sturdy norms of generalized reciprocity,” which in turn, “facilitate coordination and communication, amplify reputations and thus allow dilemmas of collective action to be resolved” (Putnam 1995a, 66).

**TABLE 3**

Urban Brazil provides ample opportunity to more closely examine the relationship between the acquisition of political knowledge and variances in both civic associationalism and trust. Table 3 uses survey data from the PME to examine community rates of participation in civic organizations and levels of social trust across the three study cities. Regarding organizational participation, the PME asked respondents whether or not they belong to several different types of organizations, which have been grouped here into a single dichotomous indicator. It should be noted that while the cities’ rates of civic associationalism differ significantly, they did not vary so dramatically on all types of group membership. A separate analysis of the respondents (not shown in the table) reveals that while union membership is significantly higher in Porto Alegre than in Salvador and Belo Horizonte, there is almost no difference between the latter cities (22, 16, and 16 percent, respectively). Moreover, the cities exhibit unique patterns of organizational activity. For instance, almost ten percent of Porto Alegre belongs to a sport or cultural association, while less than one percent of Salvadorans does. Table 4 also reports three measures of social trust based on whether citizens believe that social organizations or various government agencies “best protect” their interests. Once again, the cities are distributed on a continuum on which Salvador is on the low end and Porto Alegre on the high.

**Variances in Regional Political Culture and Mobilization Patterns.** In conducting the field research for the larger project from which this paper is derived, I interviewed forty current and former city council members in Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre and Salvador. A great number of the politicians with whom I spoke pointed to differences in political cultures as the primary source of varying inter-regional patterns of local governance and political participation. Asked to give their impressions of political life in each of the case studies, a surprising number of politicians from all three cities suggested that Porto Alegre’s gaúchos are “culturally superior” to the citizens of other parts of Brazil. These interviewees saw the Brazilian South’s contemporary social and political attributes as the direct product of extensive European immigration in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Similarly, many politicians claimed that
Bahian communities (and for that matter the Northeast as a whole) collectively lack the political cultural foundations necessary for the development of active citizenship. In explaining the electoral success of the left-leaning Workers’ Party in Porto Alegre when compared to the party’s electoral struggles in Salvador, a leftist Salvadoran city councilor launched into a twenty-minute lecture on how African-descendent Bahians have passed along deferential political behaviors from one generation to the next while today’s Porto Alegre’s gaúchos have “inherited” their political activism from Germans and Italian immigrants arriving at the beginning of the century.

On its face, one should be extremely skeptical about explanations for inter-regional differences in political behaviors that rest on notions of region-specific, historically-fixed cultural characteristics rather than contemporary differences in economic, educational, and social capital resources. I show elsewhere (Setzler forthcoming 2002, Chapters 3 and 4) that prior to the 1964-85 military regime, political life in the three study cities—Porto Alegre included—differed more with respect to their type of anti-democratic local politics than in the degree to which anti-democratic practices flourished in municipal politics. While scholars of local politics in Brazil have often observed that political life in the state of Rio Grande do Sul and its capital, Porto Alegre, exhibit distinct patterns, the most in-depth of the many studies recently completed on the process of democratization in Porto Alegre dates progressive political change from the early 1980s and the emergence the Workers Party (Abers 2000).

**TABLE 4**

Do Brazilian communities vary in their patterns of political knowledge acquisition because of differences in their citizens’ commitments to democracy? Table 4 tackles this question using data taken from two polls administered by Sao Paulo’s Datafolha polling agency. The data suggest that there are no statistically significant differences among residents of the three cities with respect to their citizenries’ support for democracy as a form of government, at least when presented in abstract terms.11 The

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11 These data will surely be surprising to students of Brazilian municipal politics in light of Porto Alegre’s reputation for progressive politics. The figures are, nevertheless, consistent with what other surveys on Porto Alegre’s population have uncovered. Researchers at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) have carefully tracked political opinion in Porto Alegre for nearly three decades, and their findings bring pause to any claim that the gaúcho capital’s underlying political culture has no linkages to either its own past or that of urban Brazil as a whole. Six years after the adoption of the 1988 Constitution and halfway through the second Workers’ Party administration, 54 percent of the respondents to a 1996 UFRGS survey believed that “times had been better during the military regime”; 65 percent agreed with the statement that “in Brazil, it’s not worth the hassle to change laws because they aren’t obeyed”; 48 percent indicated that “democracy is still threatened” in the country; and 71 percent believed that “people don’t know how to choose candidates” when asked whether or not everyday citizens “know how to vote” (Baquero and de Castro 1996, 22-33). A decade into the new constitutional regime, a 1998 survey by the same researchers found that 40 percent of city residents “would not vote if doing so was not legally mandatory,” and only 29 percent believed that “democracy exists in Brazil.” (The 1998 figures are calculated from survey data obtained from Marcello Baquero at the Núcleo de Pesquisa e Documentação...
combined 51 percent of respondents in the case study cities who believe “democracy is always the best form of government” is virtually identical to the countrywide average reported in recent Latino-Barómetro surveys (Lagos 2001, 139). In all three cities only a small minority of individuals believes that a dictatorship is ever justified, although considerable numbers of residents in each city indicate they see no difference between democratic and authoritarian regimes. It is noteworthy that Salvadorans are both the least likely to believe that a dictatorship is necessary “under certain circumstances” and the most likely to believe that democracy is “always best”; however, neither measure is statistically distinguishable from respondents for Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte. Presented with the more concrete question of choosing between a mayor “who gets lots of things done, but steals a little” or one who “is honest, but gets less done,” only one in five of the survey’s respondents say that they would prefer having an administratively efficient crook as their mayor, and there are no statistical differences between these cities on this question. In short, inter-city variances in the acquisition of political knowledge do not reflect underlying divergences in their populations’ support for democracy.

Does this mean that we should expect to find no differences between the residents of the three cities if we compare their levels of political sophistication but control for individual variations in socioeconomic and social capital resources? Despite the problems I list with the historical political-cultural explanation, the answer to this question is not immediately obvious. If one looks to the outcomes of post-transitional local elections, the three cities have taken distinct paths of political development since the democratic transition began in Brazil in the early 1980s, especially when one compares the consolidation of traditional elites in Salvador to the electoral successes of reformist mayors in Belo Horizonte and Porto Alegre. In the two decades following the reintroduction of direct local elections, Porto Alegre’s Workers’ Party-led governments have become a model of progressive, effective urban policymaking, and have made the political mobilization of the city’s poorest neighborhoods their top priority. Since first winning power in 1992, Belo Horizonte’s left-leaning administrations have modeled social policy closely on the experiences of Porto Alegre’s with considerable success, although the city

da Política Rio-Grandense (NUPERGS), which is housed in the Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas at UFRGS. The time-series data collected by the UFRGS team during the democratic transition can be placed in perspective (both with respect to the rest of Brazil and its Latin American neighbors) by a review of Os Brasileiros e a Democracia (1995), José Álvaro Moisés’s fascinating, survey-driven review of change and continuity in Brazilian political culture in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

12 The party official in charge of coordinating the PT’s local electoral strategy for the 2000 municipal elections in Porto Alegre told me that despite that fact that the PT originally had its strongest base of support among intellectuals and union workers, since first winning the mayor’s office in 1988 the party continuously has placed a high priority on organizing and mobilizing working-class neighborhoods in order to displace the clientelist politicians who have long represented these neighborhoods. The official indicated that the party was inclined to expand its base in the poorer, peripheral parts of the city even where such actions would cost it votes in better off regions of the city. Several of the PT’s city councilors confirmed that the party’s mobilization had been highly successful in mobilizing moderately poor communities, although the councilors also cautioned that the party’s ideological message still was experiencing obstacles penetrating the very poorest of the city’s neighborhoods.
leadership’s efforts to organize and mobilize poorer voters has been much less intense than in Porto Alegre. In stark contrast to the other cities, the traditional political forces that have consolidated power in Salvador continue to operate as though their failure to address the city’s deep social policy problems will have no impact at all on their future political careers.\textsuperscript{13} Thus, a third hypothesis worthy of closer examination is that the differences in the makeup of each community’s post-transitional dominant political elite have led to different incentives for individuals across the three communities to acquire political knowledge and hold politicians accountable in elections.

**THE DETERMINANTS OF POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE AND ITS ACQUISITION: CITY REGIONAL-LEVEL DATA AND EVIDENCE**

To this point, what limited evidence that can be drawn from a simple comparison of the three study sites has been supportive the hypothesized relationships between a community’s socio-economic conditions, its social capital resources, and aggregate measures of political sophistication. Nevertheless, an $n$ of three obviously cannot allow us to draw anything in the way of a definitive set of conclusions about the determinants of political knowledge acquisition. The question remains of whether it is the distinctiveness of the cities *per se* that accounts for variations in both political sophistication and the variables associated with the acquisition of political knowledge. Is there something about Porto Alegre that makes the political consciousness of its citizenry uniquely robust in a way that simply could never be the case in Salvador?

**Assessing City-regional Patterns of Political Knowledge and its Acquisition.** One way to see if it is city-specific qualities—i.e., the different patterns of party development and political mobilization following the transition to democracy—that are most responsible for inter-city variations in the acquisition of political knowledge is to examine the distributions of political sophistication across different micro-communities within and between the three cities. If city-specific characteristics determine the degree to which individuals seek out and retain basic political information, we would expect to find highly-similar distributions of sophistication across the cities’ various micro-communities. In other words, if the acquisition of political knowledge in a community is a function of its unique historical trajectory or the singular qualities of its political leadership, there should be only mild variances between the affluent and poor regions of Porto Alegre when compared to the differences between Porto Alegre as a whole and regions in Salvador or Belo Horizonte.

Conversely, if more generalizable social factors—i.e., income, education, and social capital—are the most influential determinants of the acquisition of political knowledge, one would expect to find that the differences between micro-communities within each city would vary more than sophistication levels

\textsuperscript{13} For details on post-military regime political life, electoral outcomes, and social policy performance in the three case study cities, see Setzler (2002 forthcoming, Chapter 4).
between the cities. If generalizable factors are more influential determinants than city-specific qualities, we should expect that the inhabitants of Porto Alegre’s impoverished vilas will have political knowledge levels that are quite similar to those seen in Salvador’s favelas while being quite distinct from what would be found in either city’s best-situated neighborhoods.

Ideally, one would empirically investigate the dynamics of political sophistication in sub-city environments by examining narrowly-measured, neighborhood-specific influences on individual levels of political sophistication. Unfortunately, as is the case in most other developing settings, the massive amounts of quantitative survey data necessary to conduct a multi-city examination of neighborhood-level political patterns do not exist in Brazil. The good news is that a somewhat satisfactory proxy for neighborhood-level data is available. In designing the sampling procedures for the PME, the field offices of the national census agency (IBGE) coordinated with municipal administrative planning agencies in the three study cities to establish sample sizes and selection guidelines that would permit municipal planners to later use representative census agency data aggregated at the city-regional level. As a consequence, all three case study cities regularly use regionally-aggregated census data for planning purposes and to track trends in local employment patterns. They can do this because the PME has exceptionally large sample sizes: in the three cities, over 17,000 individuals responded to April 1996 PME. To regionally plot the survey data, I used coding charts obtained from the Salvador, Belo Horizonte, and Porto Alegre city planning offices. In all, the three cities have 42 regions, which are mapped in Appendices B, C, and D.

While the PME data permits an intriguing (and unprecedented) view of geographically-aggregated sub-city political and social behaviors, it is important to emphasize that administrative regions in the three cities are all quite large, and thus not directly comparable to neighborhood-level units of analysis. The regions vary substantially in population size—ranging from approximately 30,000 inhabitants in Porto Alegre’s Cristal region to over 225,000 in Belo Horizonte’s Centro. It also is important keep in mind that the aggregated measures of political sophistication, educational attainment, and civic associational behaviors are each calculated from survey data and thus subject to minor sampling error. Keeping these limitations in mind, it is still the case that the PME’s city-regional level data offer

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14 The national office of IBGE in Rio de Janeiro indicated that this was the case with all cities where the PME is administered (the study cities as well as Recife, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo); however, I only verified the representativeness of sub-city regional data for the municipalities considered in this study by consulting with the cities’ respective planning agencies.

15 Three regions have population sizes so small that a single administering of the PME provides an insufficient number of cases to be used reliably for statistical purposes. For all analyses using PME data, Porto Alegre’s Extremo Sul was combined with neighboring Restinga and Nordeste combined with Lomba. In Salvador, the barely-populated Ilhas region was not included in the PME and its basic characteristics are quite different than its closest geographical regional neighbors. For these reasons, the Ilhas region was not included in my study. In the handful of cases in which regions were combined with others, the criteria for combination were similar socioeconomic patterns and geographical proximity.

16 This is the case with most studies similar to this one. A similar methodology is employed by Robert Putnam in *Bowling Alone* (2000, especially chapters 16 to 21), where Putnam presents a series of
the best-available proxy to assess neighborhood-level influences on individual levels of political knowledge.

**FIGURE 2 and FIGURE 3**

**City-regional Social Resources and Voter Knowledge: Bivariate Analyses.** Figures 2, 3, and 4, provide ample and very clear evidence that income, education, and social capital play a key role in shaping intra-city and inter-regional variations in how well Brazilian voters are prepared to use elections to hold politicians accountable. Figures 2 and 3 examine regional variations in poverty and secondary education rates, respectively. The correlation between the regional socioeconomic measures and each region’s Political Sophistication Index Score (details on how regional scores were calculated are listed in the notes of Figure 2) is very high (r = .83 for rates of secondary education, and r = .87 for poverty rates). Both charts demonstrate that the influence of the socioeconomic indicators on political sophistication is quite similar across the cities. Contrary to what my interviewees suggested, extremely poor regions in Porto Alegre have nearly-identical aggregate levels of voter sophistication as similarly-situated regions in Belo Horizonte and Salvador.

Setting the general patterns aside for a minute, it is also evident that there are some mild but still detectable differences between the cities that should be addressed. Close inspection of the data plot in Figure 2 reveals a tight fit between the three cities’ regions and the regression line, suggesting that there is little variance among the cities in the relationship between regional poverty and voter knowledge. By comparison, in Figure 3 the fit between the regression line and the regional data points is looser. Salvador’s regions collectively cluster above the regression line while Porto Alegre’s group below it, suggesting that similar regional levels of secondary education in the two cities correspond to somewhat higher levels of political sophistication in Porto Alegre. One possible explanation for the discrepancy is that the quality of schools in Salvador may be lower than in either of the other two case-study cities. In her 1997 examination of educational opportunity in Salvador, Celina Souza found that “local councilors were the main actors for appointing teachers and moving them from one school to another.” According to state government documents reported by Souza, approximately 20 percent of Salvador’s teachers in the early 1990s were politically appointed, and another quarter were appointed by school principals who in most cases held their positions “because of internal clientelism” (143, 158-59).

**FIGURE 4**

bivariate analyses contrasting data collected by various state agencies with census and polling data drawn from samples. In many cases, Putnam’s state-level sample sizes are much smaller than those used in this study.
Figure 4 plots the association between the regions’ Social Capital Index scores and regional measures of the sophistication index. The social capital index combines measures of trust of government officials, trust of social actors, and civic-associational participation into a single index, which is described in Figure 4’s notes. The association with political sophistication is somewhat weaker than with the socioeconomic variables (r = .66), but still quite strong overall. Close inspection of the data points again suggests small but systematic differences between the residents of Porto Alegre and Salvador. Porto Alegre’s city regions appear to cluster at the top half of the regression line, while Salvador’s regions group slightly below. Despite the similar linear relationship, the differences between the cities are quite significant: Porto Alegre’s regions have sophistication scores that are uniformly about ten percent higher than what the regression line would predict on the basis of their social capital index scores, while Salvador’s are five percent lower.

Two conclusions are in order at this point. First, taken together the three city-regional-level bivariate analyses strongly support my hypotheses that the city-regional distribution of political sophistication in urban Brazilian settings mostly reflects underlying socioeconomic and social capital factors. That is, affluent, high social capital regions in Salvador tend to have distributions of political knowledge that mirror those that are found in similarly-situated regions in Belo Horizonte and Porto Alegre, while the reverse is true of Salvador’s poorly-endowed regions. In general terms, we can conclude that access to basic educational and economic resources exerts a strong, positive influence on regionally-aggregated levels of political knowledge and its acquisition.

Second, despite the general pattern, there is also some evidence that city-specific influences shape the acquisition of political knowledge in urban Brazil although these factors appear to play a secondary role to the distribution of socioeconomic and social capital resources. Thus, while regionally-aggregated measures of educational attainment, civic association, and trust all appear to exert approximately the same level of influence on regional measures of sophistication (that is, a one unit increase in any of these resources corresponds to approximately the same regional gains in sophistication in each of the cities), Salvador’s residents appear to start off with slightly lower levels of sophistication, while Porto Alegre’s start off with higher rates.

**THE DETERMINANTS OF POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE AND ITS ACQUISITION: INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL DATA AND EVIDENCE**

The regional-level data analyses, while compelling, leave two interesting questions unanswered. First, while the data demonstrate that regional differences in poverty rates, educational opportunity and social capital are associated with community-level measures of sophistication, the bivariate analyses cannot tell us whether it is education, income, social capital, or some combination of the three that is the most important predictor of voter knowledge and its acquisition.
To answer this question, we must introduce a set of controls that allows for an assessment of each independent variable’s isolated influence on the democratic preparedness of citizens. To do this with any reliability, we need more than the 39 regional cases for which there is complete PME data. Because we are also interested in determining what causes individuals to obtain and retain the information they would need to hold politicians accountable, the best way to isolate the relative influences of income, education, and social capital variables on the acquisition of political knowledge is to use multivariate statistical models incorporating the individual-level data collected in the PME.

The fact that the regionally-aggregated measures of socioeconomic resources are each highly correlated to regionally-aggregated measures of voter knowledge and its acquisition points to a second question that cannot be answered by the bivariate analyses: is an individual’s acquisition of basic political knowledge shaped by the characteristics of other voters found in his neighborhood, independent of his own personal access to social resources? Most of the local politicians with whom I spoke described their respective city’s patterns of vote buying, ideological politics, and partisan mobilization as neighborhood, rather than individual, phenomena. Indeed, any brief conversation with a city councilor readily produced lists of “neighborhood politicians” and “ideological politicians” as well as “ideological” neighborhoods and those regions of the city where voters were well known to cast their ballots according to their “necessity.”

It is consistent with the hypotheses I have outlined to expect that there would be some linkage between an individual’s calculations about the need to acquire political knowledge and the characteristics of his neighbors. Recall that I have suggested that participation in civic associations and higher levels of social trust should be linked to an increased propensity for individuals to work together to overcome the collective action problems related to political mobilization. In communities where the great majority of one’s neighbors are engaged in private transactions through which their votes are brokered in exchange for private goods, there is little incentive for any single individual to cast his votes for ideological candidates. Why should he bear the cost (collecting political information and forgoing clientelistic goods) of voting for reformist candidates when he doubts any of his neighbors will do the same? The same calculus applies to the voter living in a community where neighborhood leaders are delivering blocks of votes in exchange for access to public works projects and other patronage.

City-regional characteristics might also be expected to influence a voter’s ability to acquire basic political information by influencing what kinds of political candidates are most likely to concentrate their mobilization activities in his neighborhood. If an individual’s neighbors are not in the habit of acquiring information to vote, it is improbable that many candidates running policy-centered campaigns will spend their limited time and resources trying to attract votes in that individual’s neighborhood. Because all local elections in Brazil are conducted in city-wide districts, it is instead clientelistic politicians seeking to buy or trade votes who are most likely to be attracted to low-resource communities where the density of poorly-prepared voters is highest. In contrast, well-off neighborhoods, where basic needs are met and most public services are already provided, should be most likely to attract the ideological candidates
because they know that these neighborhoods will have the highest concentration of highly-sophisticated voters.

**Variable Measurement for OLS Models of Knowledge and its Acquisition.** Before proceeding to several ordinary linear regression models that will test the several hypotheses I have just laid out, it will be useful to first clarify the measurement of the variables that will be used in the regression models:

*Political Sophistication Index Score.* The models’ dependent variable (*Political Sophistication*) is the ten-point additive index of voter knowledge and its acquisition that was discussed at the beginning of this paper. Recall that the index is a composite measure of an individual’s knowledge of major political figures (three points) and political parties (three points) together with the quality of the media resources (general or print) used to follow general politics (two points) and to vote (two points).

*City Dummy Variables.* The first two independent variables listed in the models are dummy variables for the study cities. These variables will allow for a comparison of the acquisition of political knowledge for the residents of Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte vis-à-vis Salvadorans, once controlling for other factors.

*Social Capital Factors.* The models include three measures of social capital: civic associationalism (*Civic Org*), trust of government actors (*Trust Gov*), and trust of social actors (*Trust Soc Actors*). PME respondents’ levels of civic associational activity are coded from zero to six, depending on how many types of civic organizations they said they “belong to.” The other two social capital variables are dichotomous. Individuals are coded as trusting government if they identified Brazil’s president, courts, or politicians as one of the two actors that “best protect” their interests (with the other options being various social actors or “none of these actors”). Respondents are coded as trusting social actors if they identified any of the five different social groups listed in the PME items as one of the two actors who “best protect” their interests.

*Socioeconomic Factors.* The two socioeconomic factors in the models are monthly income earned from wages (*Income*) and educational attainment (*Education*). Respondents with no monthly employment income are coded zero. All other respondents’ monthly employment incomes are broken down into Brazilian “minimum wages,” ranging from anything greater than zero to a maximum of 20. At

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17 The PME asked respondents if they belonged to (1) church or cult groups, (2) class associations (e.g. national lawyers association), (3) sports clubs, (4) neighborhood associations, (5) unions, or (6) “other” types of associations.

18 The social groups listed in the PME question included: (1) unions, (2) professional associations, (3) neighborhood associations, (4) churches, and (5) cults.

19 Approximately forty percent of the respondents listed no income because the questionnaire limited its inquiries to income earned from employment.
the time the PME was administered, each “minimum” wage corresponded to approximately 100 US dollars.20

Education is a measure of educational attainment that breaks down years of schooling into seven levels: no schooling=0; some primary school=1; finished primary school=2; some elementary school=3; finished elementary school=4; some secondary school=5; finished secondary school=6; some college or more=7.

**Regional Poverty Rate.** The final variable in the models is a measure of regional poverty rates (Regional Poverty), which is included to test the hypothesis that the characteristics of an individual’s neighbors may have an independent effect on his decision to acquire basic political knowledge. In assigning measurements of macrocontextual factors to individual-level data, I follow the lead of Gordon and Segura (1997), who use a similar strategy in their study of political sophistication in 12 Western European democracies where the authors examine how different party and electoral systems influence individual-levels of political knowledge after controlling for individual socioeconomic characteristics. The regional poverty indicator ranges from zero to 100, and represents the percentage of residents in each PME respondent’s home city region who earned less than two-hundred dollars a month at the time of the survey.21

In choosing to add the measure of regional poverty to the models, I presume that poverty rates are the most influential of regional factors on sophistication because the rate of poverty near a given voters’ home constitutes the most visible cue of how his neighbors will likely use their votes. Similarly, for reformist and traditional politicians alike, a region’s poverty rate should be the most quickly discernable sign of whether or not an area is likely to yield many votes for a given kind of candidate.

**TABLE 5**

**Individual Factors and Political Knowledge: Multivariate Analyses**

Table 5 lists results from two ordinary least squares regression models. Model 1 investigates the influence of individual levels of social capital and socioeconomic resources on the degree to which individuals acquire and retain basic political knowledge, setting aside for a moment the role contextual variables may play. The R² statistic confirms that the model fits the data quite well. The model’s five

20 Because of their past experiences with hyperinflation, Brazilian salaries are typically paid in a set number of “minimum salaries” which can then be adjusted easily through indexing. Although researchers often use minimum wages to compare salaries over time, it is not advisable to do so, since the fluctuations on the purchasing power of a minimum wage is highly volatile.

21 For each region, I used the PME to calculate the percentage of 18-65 year old individuals who either had a job or who were looking for one and earned less than two Brazilian minimum wages monthly. Respondents who had no salary but indicated that they were not looking for a job (e.g., students or retired persons) were dropped from this analysis.
variables collectively account for over a quarter of the variance in an individual’s political sophistication index score.

Of the five factors, education is far and away the most influential predictor, as is indicated by its standardized coefficient. Each increase in educational attainment (recall its 7-point scale) predicts an average gain of approximately 6.5 percent in political knowledge (.65 units on the ten-point sophistication index). Despite the many funding difficulties and other obstacles that Brazil’s educational system faces, formal education still contributes greatly to the creation of an active democratic citizenship, much as it does in first world settings where research has found that formal education is a highly powerful predictor of political knowledge levels in both the United States (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, 188-94) and Western Europe (Gordon and Segura 1997). The empirical evidence thus largely confirms an observation made at mid-century by Anísio Teixeira, one of Brazil’s greatest educators: “There will only be democracy in Brazil the day that the machine that prepares people for democracy—the public school—is assembled in Brazil.”

Model 1 also confirms the expectation that income and the social capital variables are strong predictors of the extent to which citizens are acquiring basic political knowledge. What is most remarkable about the income variable—given how prominently it has figured into the literature on clientelism in developing settings—is how meager its contribution is to the overall explanation of differences in political knowledge once controlling for the other types of social resources. The data are highly supportive of the academic scholarship pointing to the potential contribution of civic associationalism and trust to stronger democratic citizenship skills; the model predicts that respondents, on average, gain a 4.2 percent increase in their knowledge score for each additional type of civic association in which they participate, and trusting government or social actors corresponds to a predicted sophistication gain of 3.5 percent for each type of trust.

Model 2 investigates the influence of the same set of individual-level independent variables but also introduces the city dummies and the regional poverty indicator. The improvement of the model’s overall fit compared to Model 1 is modest, but statistically significant. Inclusion of the macrolevel factors is interesting on a number of levels. First, looking at the unstandardized coefficients of city dummy variables reveals that, once regional poverty rates and individual differences have been taken into account, the differences in political sophistication among the residents of the three cities is reduced considerably. Once controlling for social resource factors, there is no statistically significant difference between Belo Horizonte’s residents and Salvadorans. Recall Table 1’s comparison of the mean sophistication levels in the cites with no controls; before holding regional poverty rates and socioeconomic and social capital factors constant, Salvadorans’ average index scores were nearly 20 percent lower than those for Porto Alegre, Once these other differences are taken into account, the gap

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between the cities’ average sophistication score drops to less than two percent. In other words, the model appears to capture the factors that are most important in explaining differences between the cities’ differing levels of political knowledge.

A second point that warrants some elaboration is the effect of regional poverty rates on individual patterns of acquiring and retaining political knowledge. The coefficients for the regional poverty indicator provide solid support for the hypothesis that sub-city community factors are an important component to understanding the dynamics of how political knowledge is acquired in Brazil’s still-young democracy. Even with the limitations imposed by relying on regional rather than neighborhood-level survey data, the high standardized coefficient for the regional poverty variable suggests that it is a more powerful predictor of an individual’s acquisition of basic political knowledge than any of the social capital factors or individual levels of income. Net of all other factors, Model 2 predicts a 14 percent difference in the knowledge index score of an individual who lives in the region with highest rate of poverty (Salvador’s Subúrbio-Ferroviário, where 81 percent of the region’s residents live in poverty) and an individual living in the region with the lowest poverty rate (19 percent of the residents in Porto Alegre’s Centro live in poverty). In short, the argument that voters make political-behavioral decisions based on inferences about their neighbors finds strong support in Model 2.

TABLE 6

One remaining question is whether the variables identified in Model 2 shape political knowledge and its acquisition in the same way across the different local settings. Table 6 answers this question by presenting separate regression models for each of the cities. The results I already have highlighted largely hold for each of the cities. The most interesting differences among the city-specific models are the coefficients for trust of political actors in Salvador and regional poverty in Porto Alegre. As I show elsewhere (Setzler forthcoming 2000, Chapter 4), Salvadorans are the most likely of the three cities’ populations to engage in clientelism, and the data in Table 6 suggest that as a consequence their levels of trust for politicians is less related to political knowledge than is the case in the other two cities. The regional poverty rates in Porto Alegre have a significantly smaller influence on the knowledge index than the other cities (the unstandardized coefficient for Porto Alegre is approximately one-third less than the average for the other two cities), which is consistent with the efforts of the Workers’ Party to mobilize the city’s poorest regions.

CONCLUSIONS

In modern democracies, elections are understood to be the key source of governmental accountability. This understanding is largely based on the assumption that elections ensure that public officials will rationally pursue the common good rather than their own ends out of the fear that alert
voters will quickly punish politicians who abuse power or the public’s interest. The difficulty with such an assumption is that by and large voters simply are not very vigilant consumers of political knowledge. In rooted democracies with institutionalized party systems that are dominated by parties that are ideologically coherent, consistent, and stable, poorly-informed voters are able to protect their interests by relying on their party identification as an ideological shortcut. By contrast, in many recently-established democracies with weak party systems, such as is the case in Brazil and much of Latin America, political parties provide much less useful information for voters seeking to easily and quickly pass informed judgment on candidates for public office. Under such conditions, do most voters still attempt to gather the basic information that they would need to evaluate their elected officials and candidates?

This paper has offered an answer to this question by analyzing the acquisition of political knowledge in three mid-sized Brazilian state capital cities. My analysis confirms the generally-held supposition among scholars and local politicians that there are systematic and deep variances in the acquisition of political knowledge among Brazil’s economically, socially, and ethnically diverse regions. Nevertheless, the major finding to be drawn from the data presented here is that the variances between Brazil’s different country regions can be largely explained by generalizable factors that transcend specific political-cultural contexts. Once variations in educational attainment, income, rates of participation in civic associations, levels of trust, and city-regional poverty rates are taken into account, the differences in aggregate measures of political knowledge and its acquisition between the residents of Salvador, Belo Horizonte, and Porto Alegre all but disappear.

A second major finding of this paper is that political knowledge has a distinct neighborhood and city-regional dynamic in Brazil’s largest cities. Not only do voters in Porto Alegre’s poorest city regions acquire political knowledge at rates that closely parallel those found in similarly-situated neighborhoods in Belo Horizonte and Salvador, but in all three cities large-n multivariate analysis reveals that individual patterns of political sophistication are decisively influenced by city-regional poverty rates. Consistent with the growing body of research on political trust and associational participation, the data clearly show that the extent to which an individual can be expected to seek out the political information necessary to exercise electoral accountability is at least in part a function of his perceptions about whether his neighbors are likely to do the same.

What urban Brazilians know about politics matters considerably because their acquisition of political knowledge directly shapes their ability to become engaged democratic citizens in a society where the abuse of political power (a impunidade dos políticos), institutionalized corruption, and tremendous social inequity have only been sporadically challenged by Brazilian society as a whole. The data presented here unfortunately confirm a pattern which is found in emerging democracies all over the world, namely those individuals who would most benefit from radical political change are more often than not the least prepared to demand responsible and more responsive government through the electoral process. The question that remains unanswered from this paper—and a topic worthy of future research—is how
differences in the acquisition of political knowledge shape actual voting behaviors and political participation. This paper has nevertheless has laid the foundation for a line inquiry that examines how political knowledge may shape political behavior and electoral accountability by showing that urban Brazilians differ dramatically and systematically with respect to their ability use elections to curb abuses of political authority.23

WORKS CITED

23 This question is addressed at length in Chapter 6 of my forthcoming Democratizing Urban Brazil.


TABLE 1. Political Knowledge and the Source of Political and Electoral Information: Salvador, Belo Horizonte, and Porto Alegre

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party Knowledge a</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can identify how many parties</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can name at least one party</td>
<td>67.3%</td>
<td>82.9%</td>
<td>88.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can name at least one party</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
<td>78.7%</td>
<td>82.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can name three parties</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
<td>71.9%</td>
<td>69.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Politician Knowledge b</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can identify how many politicians</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can name president?</td>
<td>75.7%</td>
<td>86.1%</td>
<td>87.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can name governor?</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
<td>84.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can name mayor?</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>72.4%</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of Political Knowledge</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use how many sources (average)c</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>2.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow politics in the media d</td>
<td>84.0%</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow politics in print media e</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the media to vote</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the print media to vote</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10-point Political Knowledge Index</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>7.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** All figures calculated using survey data from the PME (IBGE 1997).

**Notes:**
- a Survey respondents were asked if they could identify the national president, their city’s mayor, and their state’s governor.
- b Respondents were asked to identify by name any three political parties.
- c A respondent who uses the print media to follow political events and to obtain voting information is coded 4; uses one print source and one general media source=3; uses print media for general news or voting, but no media for other category=2; uses general media for news and voting=2; uses general media for news or voting, but no media for the other category=1; does not use general or print media for either category=0.
- d Respondents were asked to identify up to two of the following as the sources “most used to get informed about general political events”: conversation, television, radio, newspapers, magazines, or none of these. Media refers here to television, radio, newspapers, or magazines. Print media denotes newspapers or magazines.
- e Respondents were asked to identify up to two of the following as their “principal sources of information used to decide how to vote”: friends or relatives, boss or patron, church or religious group, union or civic organization, newspapers or magazines, television, radio, or none of the above. Media refers to newspapers, magazines, radio or television, while print media includes only newspapers and magazines.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Salvador</th>
<th>Belo Horizonte</th>
<th>Porto Alegre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income and Income Distribution</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live below the poverty line(^a)</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Household income (1995-00 average, US$)(^b)</td>
<td>1896</td>
<td>2844</td>
<td>3924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Attainment and Literacy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are adult illiterates (%)(^c)</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed less than four years of formal education (%)(^d)</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed less than 11 years of formal schooling (%)(^e)</td>
<td>87.6</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>75.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** a, b, d, e: UNDP (2001, np); c: (IBGE 2000).

**Notes:** The UNDP figures were calculated from 1995 and 1999 versions of the IBGE’s Annual National Household Survey (PNAD); the reported figures are an average of the two different years.

\(^a\)Poverty as defined by the United Nations Development Program.

\(^c\)Illiteracy figures are for individuals aged 15 and over.

\(^d\) and \(^e\)Educational attainment figures are for individuals aged 25 and over.
TABLE 3. Participation in Civic Organizations and Social Trust: Salvador, Belo Horizonte, and Porto Alegre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage of City Residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salvador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Associational Activity</strong>&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belong to a civic organization</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belong to more than one type of civic organization</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trust</strong>&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe government actors “best defend” interests</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe civic organizations “best defend” interests</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe neither organizations nor politicians defend interests</td>
<td>56.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N 6,465 7,166 4,012

Source: All figures calculated using survey data from the PME (IBGE 1997).

Notes: All differences between means are statistically significant at .001 or less.

<sup>a</sup>The survey asked respondents if they belonged to church or cult groups, class associations (e.g. national lawyers association), sports clubs, neighborhood associations, unions, or “other” types of associations.

<sup>b</sup>Respondents were asked to identify up to two of the following as “best protecting” their interests: politicians, the president, and judges (grouped here as “political actors”); unions, professional associations, neighborhood associations, churches, and cults (collectively labeled here as “civic organizations”); or “none of these.” Respondents could make two selections; the columns total to over 100 percent because some respondents identified a political actor and a civic organization as best protecting their interests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Residents Who Agree</th>
<th>3-city average</th>
<th>Salvador</th>
<th>Belo Horizonte</th>
<th>Porto Alegre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democracy is always the best form of government(^a)</td>
<td>60.9()</td>
<td>62.3()</td>
<td>60.7()</td>
<td>60.1()</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1305)</td>
<td>(369)</td>
<td>(445)</td>
<td>(491)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes a dictatorship needed(^b)</td>
<td>18.5()</td>
<td>18.2()</td>
<td>19.1()</td>
<td>22.4()</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1305)</td>
<td>(369)</td>
<td>(445)</td>
<td>(491)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer mayor who gets things done over one who is honest(^c)</td>
<td>20.7()</td>
<td>19.8()</td>
<td>21.7()</td>
<td>21.5()</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1,243)</td>
<td>(420)</td>
<td>(413)</td>
<td>(410)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** All data calculated by the author from surveys administered by the Datafolha polling agency in Brazil’s nine largest state capital cities. Items a and b: pooled data from surveys administered September 5, 1994 and March 21-23, 1995; item c: from a survey administered June 20-22, 1995. All raw data files were obtained from CESOP at the University of Campinas.

**Notes:** Because of sampling problems in the original survey data, the respondents have been reweighted by the author using measures of educational attainment calculated from the PME-April 1996 survey. None of the differences between the cities on any of the questions were statistically significant at \(p < .05\).

\(^a\)Respondents were asked with which of the following three statements they most agreed: “[1] A democracy is always better than any other form of government”; [2] “under certain circumstances, a dictatorship is better than a democratic regime”; or [3] “it makes no difference whether there is a democracy or a dictatorship.” Here, “democracy is always better…”

\(^b\)Respondents responding to the previous question, but here indicating “under certain circumstances a dictatorship is better…”

\(^c\)Respondents were asked the following question: “Would you prefer a mayor who does a lot, but steals a little, or would you prefer that he be completely honest even if he did less?” Here, “does a lot, but steals a little.”
### TABLE 5. Social Capital, Socioeconomic, and Regional Poverty Rate Indicators on Political Sophistication (OLS Regression)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Porto Alegre</td>
<td>.198** (.072)</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.047 (.057)</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belo Horizonte</td>
<td>.047 (.057)</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.047 (.047)</td>
<td>.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Capital</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic org</td>
<td>.421*** (.031)</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>.353*** (.030)</td>
<td>.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust gov</td>
<td>.371*** (.049)</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.354*** (.048)</td>
<td>.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust soc actors</td>
<td>.281*** (.037)</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.242*** (.037)</td>
<td>.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.647*** (.010)</td>
<td>.453</td>
<td>.617*** (.010)</td>
<td>.432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.047*** (.003)</td>
<td>.101</td>
<td>.040*** (.003)</td>
<td>.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Poverty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.022*** (.002)</td>
<td>-.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.93*** (.037)</td>
<td>3.47***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adjusted R²</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td></td>
<td>.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>1409.5***</td>
<td></td>
<td>974.0***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>17,193</td>
<td></td>
<td>17,193</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: All figures calculated using survey data from the PME (IBGE 1997).

Note: Standard errors for the coefficients are noted in parentheses. **indicates significance at .01 level; ***at .001.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Salvador</th>
<th>Belo Horizonte</th>
<th>Porto Alegre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B/(SE)</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>B/(SE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Capital</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic org.</td>
<td>.539*** (.058)</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>.273*** (.049)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust gov</td>
<td>.187* (.079)</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.493*** (.081)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust soc actors</td>
<td>.324*** (.063)</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.119* (.058)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socioeconomics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.639*** (.017)</td>
<td>.435</td>
<td>.647*** (.016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.039*** (.006)</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td>.048*** (.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regional Poverty</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.024*** (.003)</td>
<td>-.101</td>
<td>-.028*** (.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>5.061*** (.190)</td>
<td>5.296***</td>
<td>5.433***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

adjusted R²  | .28             | .30            | .30          |
F             | 419.5***        | 489.9***       | 271.3***     |
N             | 6370            | 6827           | 3878         |

*Source: All figures calculated using survey data from the PME (IBGE 1997).*

*Note: Standard errors for the coefficients are noted in parentheses. **indicates significance at .01 level; ***at .001.*
FIGURE 1. The Distribution of City Residents by Their Political Sophistication Index Score

Source: All figures calculated using survey data from the PME (IBGE 1997).

Note: The Regional Political Sophistication Index listed on the X-axis was calculated using aggregated responses to questions contained in the PME. Each region’s survey respondents were assigned a political sophistication score calculated using the ten-point index described in Table 1.
FIGURE 2. City Regional Political Sophistication Index Scores By Rate of Extreme Poverty: Salvador, Belo Horizonte, and Porto Alegre

Source: All figures calculated using survey data from the PME (IBGE 1997).

Notes: The Regional Political Sophistication Index listed on the X-axis was calculated using aggregated responses to questions contained in the PME. Each region’s survey respondents were assigned a political sophistication score calculated using the ten-point index described in Table 1. The region with the highest aggregated political sophistication score, Cristal in Porto Alegre, was assigned a score of 1. All other regional scores are based on their respondents’ average political sophistication index score as a percentage of Cristal’s average.

The Y-axis lists the percentage of each region’s respondents aged 18 to 65 who either have a job or who are actively looking for one and whose income is less than two minimum salaries a month (or the annual equivalent of $US 1,697 at the time of the survey).
FIGURE 3. City Regional Political Sophistication Index Scores By Rate of Secondary Education: Salvador, Belo Horizonte, and Porto Alegre

Source: All figures calculated using survey data from the PME (IBGE 1997).

Notes: The Regional Political Sophistication Index listed on the X-axis was calculated as noted in Figure 2. The Y-axis lists the percentage of a region’s PME respondents who completed at least some secondary schooling by age 25.
FIGURE 4. City Regional Political Sophistication Index Scores By Social Capital Index Scores (Salvador, Belo Horizonte, and Porto Alegre)

$ r = .66$

Source: All figures calculated using survey data from the PME (IBGE 1997).

Notes: The Regional Political Sophistication Index listed on the X-axis was calculated as noted in Figure 2. The Regional Social Capital Score listed on the Y-axis was constructed in a similar fashion to the sophistication index. For each region, I calculated the percentage of survey respondents belonging to one or more types of civic organization (see the notes for Table 2 for specific survey question details) and the percentage of survey residents “trusting” either a civic or political actor (these question details are also in the notes of Table 2). The region with the highest average of these two measures—Porto Alegre’s Cristal region—was assigned a score of 1, with all other regions receiving an index score based on their average as a percentage of Cristal’s base score.
APPENDIX A. Map of Brazil: States and Major Urban Areas

Note: States where the case study sites are located are lightened.
APPENDIX B. Map of Salvador and its Regions by Income Level

Key: Regional Income Index

- .750-1.00
- .501-.749
- .251-.500
- 0.00-.250

Note: Regional income provided by the Salvador Planning Secretariat. Income for each region was calculated as a percent of the highest regional income (Pituba).
APPENDIX C. Map of Belo Horizonte and its Regions by Income Level

18. Barreiro
19. Centro Sul
20. Leste
21. Nordeste
22. Noroeste
23. Norte
24. Oeste
25. Pampulha
26. Venda Nova

Key: Regional Income Index

- .750-1.00
- .501-.749
- .251-.500
- 0.00-.250

Note: Regional income provided by the Belo Horizonte Planning Secretariat. Income for each region was calculated as a percent of the highest regional income (Pituba, Salvador).
APPENDIX D. Map of Porto Alegre and its Regions by Income Level

Key: Regional Income Index

- .750-1.00
- .501-.749
- .251-.500
- 0.00-.250

Note: Regional income calculated from data provided by the Porto Alegre Planning Secretariat. Income for each region was calculated as a percent of the highest regional income (Pituba, Salvador).