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Democratic Talk in Church: Religion and Political Socialization in the Context of Urban Inequality

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Summary. — In new and developing democracies, levels of education are often low and many citizens lack experience with democratic processes. How do citizens in such political systems learn about elections and develop participatory orientations? Civil society organizations can promote political socialization, yet often fail to reach those lowest in resources. This article proposes that churches constitute an often overlooked instance of civil society, one that is highly inclusive and provides frequent opportunities for interaction. Such socialization can be especially important in low-income and low-education neighborhoods, where access to media and political information through everyday social networks is more limited. A case study of a municipal election campaign in a single Brazilian city reveals that exposure to political information in church is common, especially in evangelical churches and in low-education neighborhoods. Even more frequent than partisan discussion is promotion of non-partisan civic norms encouraging citizens to cast informed votes based on non-clientelistic criteria. Those exposed to civic and partisan messages know significantly more about the local campaign and are more likely to turn out. Messages encouraging a "conscientious vote" boost knowledge most strongly in low-education neighborhoods, helping to equalize political information across the urban environment. This suggests that development professionals take churches seriously as sites of civic education.

Key words — Brazil, religion, voting behavior, civic education, political behavior, local politics

1. INTRODUCTION

Four decades since the beginning of the third wave of democratization, transfer of executive power through elections and constitutional procedures may have become, in Linz and Stepan's famous phrase, the "only game in town" in many Latin American polities (Linz & Stepan, 1996). Still, links between elites and citizens remain unconsolidated. Weyland pointed to this phenomenon in Brazil when he noted the "growing sustainability" of its "low quality democracy" (Weyland, 2005, p. 90). Clientelism remains common, party and ideological identification low and transient, and support for democracy among the masses weak and volatile (Almeida, 2007; González-Ocantos, Kiewiet de Jonge, Meléndez, Osorio, & Nickerson, 2012; Veiga, 2007). While militaries that formerly dominated executive offices in the region appear comfortable in their barracks, development of robust democracies requires an ongoing process in which citizens forge deeper and more programmatic linkages with their political systems.

Scholars argue that the institutions of civil society are critical not only for democratic transitions but also for the development of higher quality democracies (Linz & Stepan, 1996). Through participation in organized groups, citizens discover the interests and values of their neighbors, learn the participatory and community-oriented attitudes and behaviors necessary in a democracy, address community problems, and develop the social capital that enables further political action. During elections, civil society groups can channel information and mobilize participation. However, many civil society organizations become less democratic and inclusive as they become more organized and politically effective (Gugerty & Kremer, 2008; Lavalle, Acharya, & Houtzager, 2005). And participation in organized groups may be on the decline in many places in the world (Norris, 2002; Putnam, 1995).

Churches offer an important and often overlooked instance of civil society, one that is highly inclusive and provides frequent opportunities for interaction. Studies of churches and democratic politics have tended to emphasize their impacts on vote choice and ideology. However, churches can also affect non-partisan political orientations by advocating general democratic norms such as the importance of participation and of an informed vote choice. This form of political socialization is especially important for educationally disadvantaged citizens and those living in low-education neighborhoods, who may lack access to school-based civic education. In secular and formally democratic states, this advocacy simultaneously legitimizes the state and churches' own social positions, while contributing to ongoing improvement in the quality of democracy.

This paper begins by developing a theory of churches and democratic socialization in the context of inequality. The empirical analysis develops a case study of a municipal election in one Brazilian city. It begins by examining the political messages diffused in Catholic and evangelical churches. [1] The most common types of political messages are not related to partisan politics, but rather promote civic norms related to turnout and casting an informed vote. While evangelicals are more likely to receive such messages than Catholics, multivariate analysis indicates this is primarily related to differences in frequency of church attendance, rather than other denomina-

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tional differences. Using matching to address threats to inference, the analysis then demonstrates that such messages affect political learning and participation. Exposure to *both* messages promoting civic norms and partisan discussions of politics in church are associated with higher levels of knowledge about the election and higher turnout. Moreover, receiving civic messages is most strongly associated with political knowledge among citizens with low levels of education and living in low-education neighborhoods.

2. DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIZATION IN CHURCHES

In the first major empirical case study of a democratic polity in the modern era, Tocqueville noted the "great political consequences that flowed from" the high levels of religiosity in the United States in the early 19th century. Churches, Tocqueville argued, sustained democracy. Contemporary social science has picked up this theme. In their seminal study on political participation and equality in the U.S., Verba, Schlozman, and Brady argued that "in many ways, ... churches function in a manner similar to voluntary associations" as sources of political socialization—so much so that they "partially compensate for" other weak civic institutions and "play a role in bringing into politics those who might not otherwise be involved" (1995, p. 385).

Church-based political socialization is not limited to religious communities in the United States. Across the developing world, scholars of politics and international development find that religious communities have supported democratization and development in favor of the poor (Bauwens & Lemaître, 2014; Bruneau, 1980; Kyamusugulwa & Hilhorst, 2015; Mersland, D'Espallier, & Supphellen, 2013; Noland, 2005; Potter, Amaral, & Woodberry, 2014; Toft, Philpott, & Shah, 2011; Wydick, Karp Hayes, & Hilliker Kempf, 2011). In a 1980 special edition of this journal devoted to the interaction between religion and development, Wilber and Jameson noted that the participation of religious institutions can improve the outcomes of development projects, "[s]ince...contact between people and their religious institutions is generally quite dispersed throughout the entire society" 1980, p. 476). Intriguingly, though, one recent study finds that social capital built in church can also *harm* development outcomes by inhibiting local, interpersonal mechanisms for accountability (van Bastelaer & Leathers, 2006). A recent review article argues forcefully that understanding the role of churches in democracy and development requires taking into account the "heterogeneous, dynamic, and contested nature of religion" (Deneulin & Rakodi, 2011).

In democracies, churches can convey two types of political messages. First, congregants and clergy can talk about political contests, including electoral campaigns and policy issues (Djupe & Gilbert, 2006, 2009). Sometimes discussion is fairly neutral; for instance, church leaders might inform members about who candidates in a campaign are. More often, individuals' candidate and policy preferences shape the conversation, though congregants can also disagree with each other. Second, churches can engage in "democratic talk," influencing civic norms about citizens' roles and the political system. For instance, clergy or congregants might discuss democracy and participation, or they might advocate tolerance and respect for civil disagreement (Djupe, 2015; Djupe & Calfano, 2012; Neiheisel, Djupe, & Sokhey, 2009). Congregations can also reinforce national identity and patriotism, in ways ranging from flying the national flag to explicit discussion of national and patriotic ideas. Crucially, the views churches promote in this second bundle tend to be ones shared by large majorities of citizens and elites.

There are many channels through which citizens learn such norms and attitudes in democracies. Perhaps the most obvious is public education (Ehman, 1980; Niemi & Junn, 1998; Torney-Purta, 2002). In middle- and low-income democracies, however, access to education remains uneven. Various groups try to fill this gap. Across the developing world, NGOs and grassroots civic groups run programs teaching civic norms and basic facts about the political system (Bratton, Alderfer, Bowser, & Temba, 1999; Finkel, Sabatini, & Bevis, 2000; Finkel & Smith, 2011). States also get involved. For instance, participatory policymaking forums in Brazil and other developing countries have been seen as another tool for creating democrats (Abers, 2000; Moehler, 2008; Wampler & Avritzer, 2004).

This paper argues that congregants and clergy also voluntarily take on civic education roles. Why would they do so? One answer relates to ideology and theology. As citizens themselves, church members and leaders are often highly civically engaged. They may not see clear boundaries between political commitment to democracy and theological commitment to their understanding of divine will for human affairs. Within the Roman Catholic Church, guidance from the Church hierarchy might encourage this role, as the Church came to advocate democracy in the developing world in the 1960s and 1970s (Levine, 2012; Toft *et al.*, 2011).

Group interests could also induce church leaders to adopt neutral, pro-democracy roles. In secular, religiously competitive states—that is, states that are legally neutral with respect to religion and where multiple religious groups vie for members—religious leaders will be attracted to non-controversial public stances. Aligning the church with consensual views can help attract and keep people in the pews. It can also help maintain the goodwill of state actors who might affect church growth. Even in highly secular states, congregations interact with states in diverse ways, particularly at the local level: from obtaining contracts for social service provision, to seeking planning approval for new construction projects (Gaskill, 2002; Lavalle *et al.*, 2005). Friendly allies can smooth many of these processes.

Both clergy and congregants initiate democratic talk. Churches constitute a major site of community outside the spheres of home and work; sometimes politics pops up naturally in conversation. Church members also deliberately recruit each other into civic activities (Djupe & Gilbert, 2006; Patterson, 2005b; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Finally, political theology holding that churches should provide guidance on earthly activities can also encourage clergy to provide political guidance within church walls (Toft *et al.*, 2011).

Democratic talk in church may be especially influential. Social contact is frequent, and members share a social identity. People who have been persuaded can in turn become opinion leaders, more rapidly converting the entire group (Wald, Owen, & Hill, 1988). Further, political discussion in church is embedded within a broader set of moral and scriptural teachings that contextualize messages and make them salient. Messages from clergy may be particularly influential due to respect for clergy as ethical authorities (Bean, 2014; Condra, Isaqzadeh, & Linardi, 2017; Djupe & Calfano, 2014).

Church-based political socialization strongly impacts lower education citizens and ones in lower education neighborhoods. Not only are low-education citizens less likely to have received school-based civic education, but they have lower access to

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political conversation and many media sources in the social environment (Smith, 2016). Moreover, adults with low educational levels may lack the resources and background knowledge to make sense of information they receive. In their churches, though, citizens find informants of similar backgrounds, who "speak their language" and contextualize new information in a framework related to daily life. Political conversation closes gaps in political knowledge between low- and high-education neighborhoods over the course of election campaigns in Brazil (Smith, 2016). Churches are a particularly important site of this type of interpersonal political socialization.

Zaller (1992) famously observed that opinion change requires both *receiving* and *accepting* a political message—both exposure/awareness and persuasion. Contingent on awareness, he maintained, citizens most readily accept messages non-controversially endorsed by a broad spectrum of social actors—for instance, civic and regime-related norms. However, the first link in the chain, awareness/exposure, is weaker among low-education citizens and ones in low-education neighborhoods. When churches reinforce that first link, the second link follows.

(a) *The Brazilian case*

Church impacts on democratic socialization vary from country to country (Almond & Verba, 1989; McDonough, Shin, & Moisés, 1998; Verba, Nie, & Kim, 1978). Church discussions of politics are likely to be both common and influential in Brazil. First, levels of church attendance are high. In 2008, the Latin American Public Opinion Project found that 66% of Brazilians reported attending church at least once a month, and that 43% of them attended church once a week or more often.[2] These high rates of church attendance are related to the very rapid growth of evangelical Protestantism since the 1970s. Not only do evangelicals tend to attend church more frequently than non-evangelicals, but there is also a renewed religious fervor among charismatic Catholics—members of churches that have adopted Pentecostal styles of worship in response to Pentecostalism's growth in the region (Boas & Smith, 2015; Chesnut, 2009; Garrard-Burnett, 2009). Furthermore, Brazilians have high rates of political discussion in general (Baker, Ames, & Renno, 2006). Before and after mass or service, at social activities, luncheons, study groups, classes in life and occupational skills, or volunteer activities, Catholics and evangelicals talk. These activities provide many opportunities to discuss the stuff of daily life including, during an election campaign, salient political events.

Furthermore, these conversations are likely to address nonpartisan political orientations. Since redemocratization in the 1980s, the Brazilian state has sought to promote civic norms and build citizenship among historically excluded groups, using both mediated information campaigns and public policies promoted in the language of "citizenship" (Barros, Bernardes, & Macedo, 2015; Morrison, 2010; Sugiyama & Hunter, 2013). In the context of elections, formal and informal citizenship education has focused on the concept of a *voto consciente*, or a conscientious vote.[3] Conscientious voting involves, first, showing up to the polls and following voting procedures. In the context of electronic voting and very high multipartism, this requires typing correctly one's chosen candidates' electoral codes (up to five digits in legislative races) on a computer touch screen—not always a straightforward task in a country where literacy is still far from universal. But it also entails making informed, policy-oriented, non-clientelistic, and non-personalistic choices.

The notion of conscientious voting has become pervasive in Brazilian political culture for three reasons. First, careful consideration of all candidates in a legislative district is next to impossible in the context of extreme multipartism, weak mass and elite party affiliation, and large (high magnitude) legislative districts (Almeida, 2007; Rennó, 2006). Second, voting is obligatory for citizens between the ages of 18 and 70, so most nonetheless typically go to the polls. Third, many intellectual and policy elites recognize the adverse political effects of personalism and clientelism, which historically determine the outcomes of legislative races, and to a lesser extent executive ones.

Discussions of "conscientious voting" are widespread in both mass and elite discourse. High schoolers commonly complete projects on the topic; in 2017, as this article was being revised, there was a thriving ecosystem of websites for students to share ideas (and, yes, text) for "conscientious voting" essays, a common topic in university admissions exams.[4] In the city of Juiz de Fora, where the data in the present study were collected, a volunteer group known as the Citizenship Committee at the Catholic Cathedral visited area high schools during the 2008 campaign to encourage newly enfranchised high schoolers to vote conscientiously (author's field notes).[5] And on television, both the federal agency for Electoral Justice and the Supreme Electoral Tribunal issued nationwide advertisements.[6] These ads featured pregnant women discussing the need to make vote choices that protect future generations; they described voting procedures and advocated learning about the election. The women further told viewers that "I never sell my vote."[7]

Evangelical and Catholic churches constitute yet another site of socialization. Embedded within Brazilian political culture themselves, members and clergy intuitively adopt the language of citizenship, rights, and, in the context of elections, conscientious voting. Exposure is more likely in evangelical than in Catholic congregations, in part simply as a function of differing rates of church attendance (Gaskill, 2002). When political discussion does happen in Catholic parishes, it is more likely to focus on conscientious voting than to involve partisan messages, at least ones from church leaders. Because Catholic parishes tend to be large and socially diverse, many political topics are potentially conflictual (Putnam & Campbell, 2012). In addition, though the Catholic Church has played important political roles in recent history—notably first supporting and then struggling against the military regime instated in 1964—the Church has in recent years generally frowned on clergy involvement in politics (Gill, 1998; Hagopian, 2008, 2009; Oro, 2006).

How do civic and partisan messages in church affect citizens' engagement with election campaigns? Both forms of discussion are expected to increase turnout propensity and campaign knowledge. A large body of literature shows that voting is fundamentally a social process, highly dependent on mobilization (Bello & Rolfe, 2014; McClurg, 2006; Nickerson, 2008). Moreover, not only can exposure to political discussion in church increase congregants' stock of campaign information, but recipients may also pay more attention to information from other sources.

The foregoing discussion leads to several hypotheses.

H1. Discussions of conscientious voting will be more prevalent than discussions of candidates.

H2. All political discussions will be more prevalent in evangelical than in Catholic churches.

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H3. Citizens who hear messages regarding conscientious voting and regarding candidates in church will know more about politics and be more likely to vote.

H4. The impact of messages on political knowledge will be strongest in low-education neighborhoods and among low-education citizens.

3. THE CASE AND STUDY DESIGN

Clergy and congregant influence is assessed using a case study of the 2008 local election campaign in Juiz de Fora, Brazil. Juiz de Fora is a city of a little over half a million residents about three hours by car inland from Rio de Janeiro, in the populous state of Minas Gerais. This industrial city is relatively well-off by Brazilian standards, but is typical of Brazilian cities in important ways. Of particular interest, residents resemble the Brazilian population at large in religious persuasion. In the sample, 69.9% identify as Catholic, 17.4% as evangelical, 5.9% as adherents of other religions, and 6.9% as having no religion (percentages weighted by age, sex, and neighborhood; see Table A1 in the Supplementary Materials).[8] In the 2010 Census, across the country as a whole, 64.4% identify as Catholic, 22.2% as evangelical, 5.2% as having another religion, and 8.2% as having no religion. Though there were somewhat more Catholics in this sample in 2008 than in Brazil in 2010, the percentage Catholic was steadily climbing and the percentage evangelical steadily falling in Brazil throughout the decade; 73.9% had identified as Catholic and 15.4% as evangelical in the 2000 census.

City council and first-round mayoral elections were held on October 5, 2008. Since no mayoral candidate took a majority, the race went to a second-round runoff election on October 26. The mayoral race featured six candidates; the two who went to the runoff were from the leftist Workers' Party (PT) and the center-right Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB). The PT's candidate, Margarida Salomão, is a lesbian linguistics professor and former rector of the Federal University of Juiz de Fora. Her rival, Custódio Mattos, was a former mayor and the choice of most of the local political establishment. Though Margarida took first place in the first round, Custódio managed to turn his campaign around and won with a comfortable margin three weeks later.[9] Among the factors widely credited with pushing Custódio to the top was the activism of evangelical churches, stimulated in no small measure by Margarida's homosexuality (Miranda, 2008a, 2008b). The Council of Pastors of Juiz de Fora issued a letter to member churches supporting Custódio in part because he was "married and had children," and would not "damage the Christian family" (Miranda, 2008a). Member pastors were instructed to discuss the mayoral elections with parishioners. Catholic churches, meanwhile, took no public position on the mayoral race, though a group of Catholics had approved a list of candidates for city council.

This study interviewed 1,089 Juiz de Fora residents in November, following the second-round elections, asking them about their religious behavior and experiences as part of a larger questionnaire focusing on mechanisms of social influence. Respondents were clustered within 22 randomly sampled neighborhoods, with approximately 50 respondents per neighborhood. Interviews were conducted by students at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora. Thus, this paper examines three aspects of context: the church, the neighborhood, and respondents' personal discussion practices. The research design involving a local case study focusing on varying aspects of context follows a distinguished tradition in American political behavior dating to the seminal research of Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948), Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954), Huckfeldt, Plutzer, and Sprague (1993), Huckfeldt and Sprague (1995).

Is it reasonable to study determinants of turnout in a compulsory voting country? On the one hand, turnout is far from universal in Brazil, typically hovering around 80%–85% in a given election, and fines are relatively minor. Scholars have found that the same individual-level traits long known to shape voting in voluntary countries—for instance, socioeconomic status and resources—are associated with voting in compulsory countries in general, and Brazil in particular (Castro, 2007; Maldonado, 2011; Power, 2009; Singh, 2011). It is plausible that social processes are associated with turnout in Brazil, despite compulsory voting. On the other hand, recent work shows that compulsory voting does dampen the effects of demographics and mobilization on turnout (Carlin & Love, 2015). Thus, Brazil constitutes a difficult case for assessing the impact of church-based political socialization on turnout.

4. MEASURES AND METHODS

The first section of the Supplementary Information presents a coding appendix. Religious denomination is measured using answers to a question that asked simply, "What is your religion?" Responses are reduced to four categories: Catholic, evangelical/Protestant, other religion, and no religion. The "Other" category includes Spiritists, practitioners of Umbanda or Candomblé, shamanists, Jews, Muslims, and Buddhists; while this is a heterogeneous group, the proportion of the sample in each category is so small enough that they must be grouped for the purposes of analysis. Church attendance is measured on a five-point scale recoded to run from zero to one, from "never" to "more than once a week." The questionnaire then asked respondents about a range of experiences in church. First came the question, "In recent months, have you heard anyone in the church say that you should vote conscientiously?" This was followed by, "In recent months, have you heard anyone in church talk about the candidates?"

The dependent variables include two measures of political knowledge and one of turnout. First is a count of the number of mayoral candidates the respondent was able to identify, from zero to six. Second is a three-value variable measuring whether the respondent could identify the parties of Margarida and of Custódio, respectively, and coded to run from zero to one. Turnout is a binary variable measuring whether the respondent reported voting in *both* the first and second round mayoral elections.[10]

Church-based socialization processes may be associated with personal and neighborhood education. Education is one of the strongest determinants of political knowledge; there is also a well-documented, strong association between education and voting in other contexts, and some evidence of such a link even in the compulsory voting context of Brazil (Castro, 2007; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Kerbauy, 2004). At the same time, the impact of church-based socialization is expected to be strongest among those from low-education neighborhoods, and with low educational backgrounds. Education is coded on a fifteen-point scale ranging from no formal education to graduate school completed, and is converted to a zero-to-one scale. Neighborhood education is the mean of this vari-

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able for all respondents in each of the twenty-two neighborhoods sampled. Values run from 0.447 to 0.751. Nine of the neighborhoods have values below 0.5; six have values over 0.6.

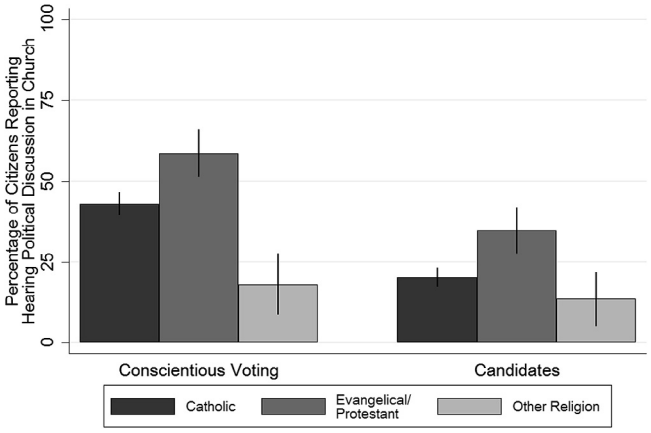
The models include a number of additional variables. The amount of church-based discussion respondents perceive may be affected not only by actual practices in their churches, but also by respondents' interest in politics, their media consumption practices, and their general sociability. Moreover, these variables also affect political knowledge and turnout. Interest in local politics is on a four-point scale, recoded to run from zero to one. Media attention is an index from zero to one, based on the mean of the number of days per week the respondent accesses news from television, radio, the Internet, and newspapers. Political discussion is an index based on two items about frequency of discussing political matters. The analysis also controls for gender; women may be more attuned to messages from church leaders, but less knowledgeable about politics (Djupe, Sokhey, & Gilbert, 2007; Fraile & Gomez, 2015).

Finally, the models of knowledge and turnout control for age. Older people may have acquired more political information over time, but may be less able to remember new information; they will also be less likely to vote after they age out of compulsory voting laws at seventy years of age (Converse, 1969; Lau & Redlawsk, 2006). Age is coded in groups to capture non-linear effects.

Estimations of the effect of church-based political messages on political knowledge and turnout may be affected by the fact that those who hear about politics in church are different from those who do not. First, of course, citizens select into churches. Second, churchgoers may select into discussions of politics within a church. And finally, political interest may be associated not only with exposure to political discussion, but also with memory of it. For each of the two key independent variables, coarsened exact matching (CEM) is employed to develop treatment and control groups that are balanced on observed covariates (see the Supplementary Information for a discussion of CEM, as well as balance statistics for each of the two matching analyses) (Blackwell, Iacus, King, & Porro, 2009; Iacus, King, & Porro, 2009). Respondents are matched on religious affiliation, frequency of church attendance, political interest, frequency of political discussion, media attention, education, and neighborhood education. Once pre-existing differences between the treatment and control in the distributions on the other covariates affecting the treatment are eliminated, one can be more confident that any remaining differences between the treatment and control groups on the dependent variables are due to the treatment (Angrist & Pischke, 2009). Because the two treatment variables are imbalanced in somewhat different ways, the region of common support is different for each treatment variable. In other words, the models based on matched data are estimated on slightly different samples.

5. ANALYSIS

Who hears political talk in church? Figure 1 examines the extent to which respondents in each religious group report being encouraged to vote conscientiously and hearing discussion of the candidates. Before turning to this figure, though, note that evangelicals attend church much more often than do Catholics or members of other religions. Three in five evangelicals (59.0%) report attending more than once a week, as opposed to 10.3% of Catholics and 17.3% of adherents of other religions (see Table A3 in the Supplementary Information for



Note: Percentages are weighted by neighborhood population, sex, and age. N=1,089. Lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 1. *Exposure to political messages in church, by religious affiliation.*

the full distribution of church attendance by religious affiliation). These differences should affect rates of political exposure. Indeed, almost three-fifths (58.6%) of evangelicals report hearing exhortations to "vote conscientiously" in church, in contrast with 43.0% of Catholics and 18.2% of adherents to other religious groups. Discussion of candidates is much less frequent than is discussion of conscientious voting. About one-third (34.8%) of evangelicals have heard discussion of political candidates in church, while 20.4% of Catholics and 13.5% of those in other religious groups report such discussion. Across all groups, nearly everyone who hears discussion of candidates also receives a conscientious voting message. Only 4.5% of all respondents report candidate-oriented but not civic messages in church, while 25.1% report civic but not candidate-oriented messages, and 16.8% report both. [11]

Thus, there is preliminary evidence of major differences between Catholics and evangelicals in the extent and ways politics is discussed in church. Table 1 presents multivariate models assessing the effect of religious affiliation on exposure to discussion, while controlling for church attendance, personal and neighborhood social status, political interest, media attention, and general political discussion. Those who never attend church are excluded, since it should be impossible to hear political discussion in church if one never attends. The baseline religious category consists of church attenders who identify as neither Catholic nor evangelical.

Not surprisingly, church attendance is a strong determinant of hearing political discussion in church. Controlling for attendance, differences between Catholics and Protestants are not statistically significant. Respondents from neighborhoods with higher educational levels are less likely to hear discussions of conscientious voting, but *personal* education is not associated with exposure to political discussion. There is also evidence that personal political engagement leads citizens to self-select into political discussions in church. Political interest is positively associated with conscientious voting messages, but not candidate discussion. Media attention is very strongly related to self-reported exposure to both types of discussion; citizens who are attuned to political information in the media are also more attuned to political discussions in church. However, neither gender nor frequency of participating in political conversations more generally are associated with awareness of either type of message.

Do respondents accurately report church-based discussions? Interviewers asked respondents to name their churches, mak-

Table 1. *Determinants of exposure to political discussion in church (hierarchical logistic regression models)*

	Conscientious voting	Candidates
Evangelical/protestant	0.934*	0.938
	(0.380)	*(0.768)*
Catholic	0.769**	0.392
	(0.264)	*(0.679)*
Frequency of church attendance	2.045***	0.935
	(0.377)	*(0.601)*
Education	0.264	0.570
	(0.352)	*(0.457)*
Political interest	0.703^	0.155
	(0.408)	*(0.496)*
Media attention	1.380**	1.765*
	(0.427)	*(0.822)*
Frequency of political conversation	−0.146	0.454
	(0.276)	*(0.363)*
Female	0.170	−0.060
	(0.228)	*(0.271)*
Neighborhood-level education	−3.279**	−1.363
	(1.229)	*(1.348)*
Constant	−1.203	−2.693*
	(0.827)	*(1.159)*
N	872	872

Notes: Second-level unit is the neighborhood. Coefficients are significant at: ^$p < 0.10$; *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$. Models are estimated on respondents who attend church. Baseline category is church attendees who identify as neither Catholic nor evangelical.

ing it possible to identify twenty Catholic parishes (but no evangelical congregations) with sizable numbers of respondents. [12] Re-running the analysis in the ten highest and ten lowest discussion parishes reveals that similar factors lead respondents to report discussion in both types of parishes: church attendance, education, media attention, and general political conversation (see the Supplementary Information). These findings suggest that self-reported exposure to democratic talk in church is likely to be accurate in both high- and low-discussion churches, though the frequency of exposure varies a great deal across congregations.

The analysis now turns to the impacts of church-based socialization. Figure 2 presents the bivariate association between discussions of politics and candidate knowledge and turnout. Hearing discussion of candidates alone is associated with knowing the name of only about 0.03 more candidates; hearing only conscientious voting messages is associated with knowing the name of about 0.09 more candidates. The impact of the two together is greater than the sum of the parts: hearing *both* civic messages and discussion of politics in church is associated with knowing the names of 0.46 more candidates. Similarly, conscientious voting messages are associated with just a 0.03 rise on the zero to one scale in knowledge of the two key parties, and discussion of candidates with about a 0.07 rise. Both together are associated with about a 0.11 rise. Meanwhile, conscientious voting messages are not associated with turnout, but church-based discussions of politics are associated with voting in 0.10 more elections.

These bivariate associations might be spurious, since Table 1 indicates exposure to political discussion in church is associated with personal characteristics that also determine knowledge and turnout. Hierarchical multivariate models are developed to assess the impact of each type of church discussion, as well as their interaction (see Table A5 in the Supplementary Information). The *combination* of civic- and candidate-oriented discussion boosts knowledge, but only candidate-oriented messages boost turnout; the latter effect occurs only among those who attend church weekly or more often. Impacts do not vary by religious affiliation.

Table 2 presents multivariate results using matching to develop balanced treatment and control groups for each measure of political exposure. In these models, those whose churches both encourage conscientious voting and discuss the candidates know more candidate names and are better able to identify the parties of the two principal mayoral contenders than those whose churches have not done so. Once again, though, only discussion of the candidates is associated with turnout. After controlling for church-based discussions of politics, evangelicals may know somewhat fewer candidate names than adherents of other groups, though they are equally likely to vote. [13] As the negative effect of evangelicalism does not appear in the results not using matching, however, this finding should be treated with caution. In addition, the frequency of church attendance does not affect either knowledge or turnout,

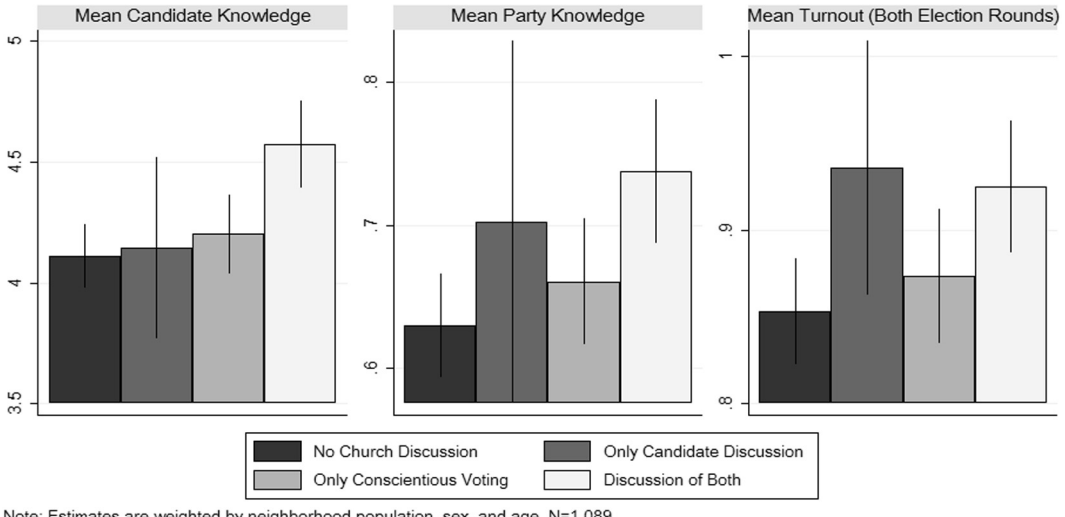


Figure 2. *Bivariate association between church discussions and political engagement.*

once evangelicalism and exposure to political messages are controlled.

Apart from religious variables, political knowledge is also strongly positively associated with political conversation, and more weakly with media attention.[14] Women and those over the age of 70 also score somewhat lower on some measures of political knowledge. Finally, age is the only significant determinant of turnout, apart from church based messages, and is very strongly associated with the probability of turnout.

Table 1 shows that residents of low-education neighborhoods are much more likely to be exposed to democratic talk in church. Both discussion of conscientious voting and candidates may be more impactful in low-education neighborhoods, where other sources of information are lacking. Likewise, those with lower educational levels may benefit more from civic discussion. A final set of analyses examines how democratic talk intersects with personal and neighborhood education in affecting what respondents know about the local campaign. The Supplementary Information presents full multilevel models showing that the effect of conscientious voting discussion varies substantially across the range of both personal and neighborhood education. While the variation is greater across the range of personal education, even in pooled models neighborhood education significantly modifies the impact of conscientious voting messages on political knowledge. However, the impact of candidate discussion on political knowledge does *not* vary significantly by personal or neighborhood education.

Figure 3 plots the coefficients for conscientious voting message in models of candidate and party knowledge, across the range of the two modifying variables. Discussion of conscientious voting improves political knowledge for respondents with up to a value of 0.55 on the zero to one scale, equating to an eighth grade education. Likewise, they affect political knowledge in neighborhoods with mean education up to about 0.53; exactly half of the neighborhoods in the sample fall below this cut-off point. In other words, church-based messages encouraging civic norms related to voting matter for precisely those least likely to have received such messages in school.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Can discussions of politics in church help members engage with their political system? These results suggest that the answer is yes. Churches constitute an important instance of civil society. They provide opportunities for citizens to gather on a regular basis, to discuss public issues, and to develop relationships that enable them to solve community problems. In both advanced and developing democracies, they can orient citizens' vote choices, teaching them about politics and stimulating them to go to the polls. Churches may thus promote ongoing democratization in countries that have consolidated institutions of electoral democracy, but where citizens' linkages with their political system remain fragile.

Recent studies have shown that religious affiliation and church attendance in Latin America are associated with candidate preferences, issue attitudes, and participation (Boas, in press; Boas & Smith, 2015; Bohn, 2004, 2007; Nishimura,

Table 2. *Determinants of campaign engagement, matching on exposure to political discussion in church (hierarchical logistical regression models)*

	Determinants of candidate knowledge		Determinants of party knowledge		Determinants of turnout in two elections	
Conscientious voting discussion	0.335**		0.050**		−0.239	
	(0.115)		*(0.018)*		*(0.278)*	
Candidate discussion		0.415**		0.061^		0.675^
		(0.144)		*(0.035)*		*(0.391)*
Evangelical/protestant	0.008	0.003	−0.186***	−0.181*	−0.342	−0.170
	(0.170)	*(0.210)*	*(0.047)*	*(0.078)*	*(0.581)*	*(0.796)*
Frequency of church attendance	0.316	0.054	0.076	0.050	0.582	1.368
	(0.267)	*(0.387)*	*(0.078)*	*(0.094)*	*(0.832)*	*(1.331)*
Education	0.276	0.393	0.407***	0.411***	1.022	2.080^
	(0.411)	*(0.316)*	*(0.087)*	*(0.108)*	*(0.672)*	*(1.188)*
Neighborhood education	−1.171	−0.303	−0.139	0.094	0.402	−2.556
	(1.065)	*(1.091)*	*(0.197)*	*(0.188)*	*(2.163)*	*(2.744)*
Interest	0.068	0.007	0.109*	0.038	0.309	−0.544
	(0.198)	*(0.179)*	*(0.045)*	*(0.055)*	*(0.472)*	*(0.766)*
Freq. of political conversation	0.745**	0.959***	0.285***	0.283***	0.860	1.112
	(0.278)	*(0.280)*	*(0.042)*	*(0.064)*	*(0.564)*	*(0.756)*
Media attention	0.946**	0.629	0.093	0.004	−1.057	−0.340
	(0.288)	*(0.476)*	*(0.097)*	*(0.116)*	*(1.338)*	*(1.893)*
Female	−0.090	0.050	−0.123***	−0.157**	−0.538	−0.291
	(0.157)	*(0.162)*	*(0.028)*	*(0.049)*	*(0.382)*	*(0.359)*
Age 16–25	0.923***	0.986***	0.006	0.059	−0.044	−0.813
	(0.221)	*(0.210)*	*(0.048)*	*(0.048)*	*(0.555)*	*(0.767)*
Age 26–40	0.157	0.411	0.007	0.088	−0.212	−0.579
	(0.227)	*(0.271)*	*(0.043)*	*(0.054)*	*(0.444)*	*(0.602)*
Age 70 and over	−0.747***	−0.454*	−0.032	0.017	−2.205***	−1.933***
	(0.206)	*(0.219)*	*(0.042)*	*(0.067)*	*(0.472)*	*(0.581)*
Constant	3.411***	2.946***	0.265**	0.196	1.86	1.67
	(0.566)	*(0.677)*	*(0.096)*	*(0.128)*	*(1.218)*	*(1.459)*
Number of observations	*584*	*475*	*586*	*476*	*586*	*476*

Notes: Results from hierarchical models of political knowledge and hierarchical logistical regression model of turnout. Analysis utilizes coarsened exact matching for the measures of political exposure in church. Second-level unit of analysis is the neighborhood. Coefficients are significant at: $^{\wedge}p < 0.10$; $^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{***}p < 0.001$.

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2004; Patterson, 2005a). Such studies, though, do not explain the mechanisms by which religious groups affect members' political views and behaviors. Perhaps they affect political dispositions by changing fundamental values, which then impact political attitudes. Or perhaps the route to political change is more direct and social. Clergy might persuade parishioners to vote for particular candidates, or churches might develop distinctive political cultures through interactions among members. The time is ripe for an in-depth examination of *how* religious affiliation and context affect electoral attitudes and behavior. This study indicates that the mechanism is surely, at least in part, social.

These results represent findings in one medium-sized city in one country. To what extent do they generalize to Brazil or to other new democracies? A mayoral election featuring a gay, female university professor might sound rather *sui generis*. Still, the electoral mobilization of religious groups on the basis, in part, of issues related to sexuality has become increasingly common in Brazil. Both the 2010 and 2014 presidential election campaigns were marked by Catholic and Protestant mobilization related to homosexuality and abortion; the eventual winner of both elections, Dilma Rousseff, is a female, twice-divorced former guerrilla fighter. And politicians' sexuality has been prominent in other mayoral elections as well. For instance, the 2008 mayoral elections in São Paulo featured a great deal of controversy surrounding the sexual orientation of Gilberto Kassab, the eventual victor. There is every reason to believe that dynamics within both Catholic and evangelical churches in this particular case are typical of those elsewhere in Brazil over the past decade.

There is also reason to expect many of the mechanisms discovered here to hold outside of Brazil. Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism are growing tremendously in many areas of the developing world, from Central America to sub-Saharan Africa and southeast Asia (Freston, 2004). Levels of religious attendance and devotion are high among evangelicals and Pentecostals across the Global South, making their congregations potentially potent sources of political socialization. In many of these countries, evangelical and Pentecostal leaders have gotten involved in conservative politics related to sexual morality (Freston, 2004). And in the Catholic Church, a hierarchy formally supportive of democracy as a regime type could also encourage parish priests to talk with their flocks about democratic participation, though the Church has become more circumspect in recent decades. In democratic countries with robust religious competition, religious leaders of all stripes will likely perceive advantages to publicly supporting political norms on which broad social consensus exists.

Still, Catholic, Pentecostal, and evangelical preachers have not become evangelists of the Gospel of Conscientious Voting throughout the developing world; Brazil is probably unusual in this respect. In the Brazilian context, the factors discussed above interact with a political culture that places a high value on mobilization and civic education of the masses. As laity and clergy bring their democratic convictions into the pews with them, congregations have had the human and ideological resources to become compelling sites of democratic talk and civic socialization. In their study of turnout across Latin America, Carlin and Love find that religious minorities vote at lower rates than do Catholics (2015). The results of this study suggest that groups seeking to mobilize democratic participation would be wise to focus efforts on evangelical and Pentecostal congregations.

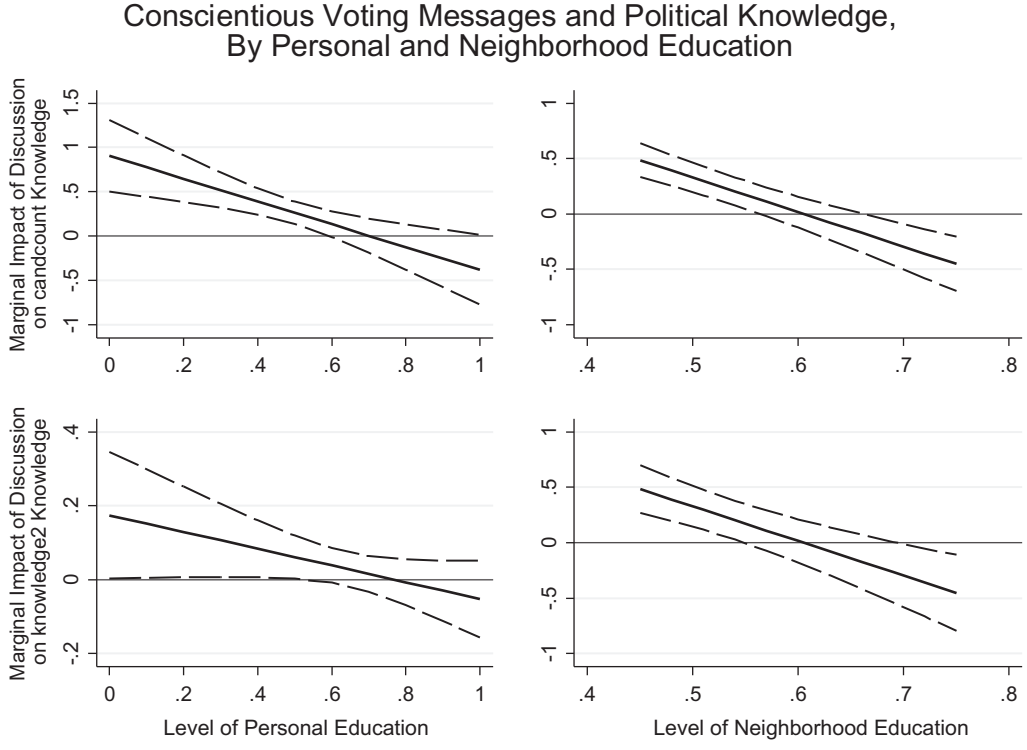

Figure 3. *The impact of conscientious voting messages on political knowledge, by personal and neighborhood education.*

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In the newer, unequal, middle-income democracies of Huntington's "third wave," mechanisms of democratic socialization continue to develop, as public education haltingly improves. If the democratic edifice requires supportive orientations among citizens, we might say that civic education programs, public education campaigns, and participatory forums constitute a multilayered scaffolding for the construction of democratic citizenship, and democracy itself. Churches contribute to this supportive matrix, and apparently bolster the edifice the most in the areas where it may be weakest, among citizens lowest in education. At the same time, though, church-based mobilization likely contributes not just to noncontroversial civic norms, but also to increasing polarization between religious and secular forces. Future work should explore more fully overall effect on political culture of this tension between participatory and deliberative democracy.

NOTES

1. The word "evangelical" is used to refer to almost all non-Catholic Christian groups in Brazil, with the exception of Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Brazilians tend to use the term "*évangelico*" to refer to those Americans call both "Mainline" and "evangelical" Protestants, as well as Pentecostals.

2. Data are available for online consultation at www.americasbarometer.org.

3. *Voto consciente* literally translates as "alert vote" or "aware vote." However, the connotation in Portuguese is closer to that of "conscientious vote" in English.

4. See, for instance, http://capaciteredacao.forum-livre.com/t51-a-importancia-do-voto-consciente, https://educacao.uol.com.br/bancoderedacoes/redacao/construindo-o-futuro.jhtm, and http://guiadoestudante.abril.com.br/blog/redacao-para-o-enem-e-vestibular/analise-de-redacao-a-importancia-do-voto-consciente/.

5. Voting is voluntary for 16- and 17-year-olds.

6. For examples of this ad campaign and similar ads, see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jkSNhwhXcAo&feature=related and http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=voto+consciente&aq=f.

7. Recent work shows that clientelism often targets partisans. However, discourse in Brazil frames clientelistic voting as opposed to voting based on ideology, policy, or performance. Though this survey does not have a good measure of clientelism, knowing *someone else* who traded their vote is unassociated with exposure to political discussion in church.

8. Juiz de Fora has a relatively high concentration of spiritism, at 5.5%.

9. Brazilians customarily refer to most politicians by their first names. Margarida Salomão, in particular, branded herself simply as "Margarida," which means "Daisy" in Portuguese; she adopted a daisy as her campaign symbol.

10. Table A3 in the Supplementary Information presents the bivariate effect of the independent variables on four different measures of turnout: binary indicators for first-round and second-round voting individually, a binary indicator for voting in both elections, and the ordinal measure used in the original version of the paper. The same pattern of effects holds up regardless of the measure used. I am unaware of a theoretical reason to expect differences in the effect of church-based political discussion between first- and second-round voting.

11. 71% of respondents from congregations I identified as Pentecostal and 73% from ones identified as non-denominational report discussion of conscientious voting, compared to 51% of those in other evangelical congregations.

12. These twenty parishes each have a minimum of 16 congregants. Though the data from the open text field are messy, no evangelical congregation can be clearly identified as having more than three respondents.

13. Controlling for Catholicism results in very inflated coefficients and standard errors for the two religious affiliation dummies in some versions of these models because of the small numbers of respondents in the non-evangelical, non-Catholic baseline after pruning from CEM. For simplicity of presentation, the "Catholic" dummy is removed from all the models using CEM.

14. Matching eliminates covariance between the treatment variables and the observed covariates. Inclusion of those covariates, then, is a conservative strategy that would account for any residual covariance between those variables and the treatment. As Table A7 (see the Supplementary Information) shows, removing the covariates has little impact on the estimated treatment effects.

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APPENDIX A. SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2017.05.032.