

O Eleitor Juizforano e o Contexto Social

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Resumo

No presente artigo descreve-se uma série de estudos que se levaram a cabo em Juiz de Fora, Brasil, entre abril de 2002 e novembro de 2008, visando entender o papel do contexto social no comportamento político dos cidadãos e cidadãs. Após a abordagem das características dos estudos, explora-se a influência da educação medida no nível do bairro nas decisões de voto do eleitor juizforano. Entre 1998 e 2008 houve uma tendência forte dos bairros com mais instrução apoiar o candidato petista, porém em 2006 e em menor medida em 2002 reverteu-se a associação entre o voto petista e a educação no nível de bairro. Descobre-se também que nos bairros onde os residentes têm menor educação formal a influência política das associações de bairro e das igrejas é maior.

Palavras-chave: comportamento eleitoral brasileiro; contexto social; bairros

The Juiz de Fora's voter and social context

Abstract

This article describes a series of studies that were carried out in Juiz de Fora, Brazil, between April of 2002 and November of 2008, which aimed to understand the role of social context in citizens' political behavior. After describing the characteristics of the studies, the paper explores the influence of education measured at the neighborhood level on the Juiz de Fora voter's electoral choices. Between 1998 and 2008 there was a strong tendency for neighborhoods with higher education to support the candidate from the Workers' Party, although in 2006 and to a lesser extent in 2002 the association between vote for the Workers' Party and neighborhood-level education was reversed. It is also discovered that in the neighborhoods where residents have lower formal education, the political influence of neighborhood associations and churches is stronger.

Key-words: Brazilian electoral behavior; social context; neighborhoods

Between 2002 and 2008, a group of researchers from the United States and Brazil conducted a series of studies in Juiz de Fora (Minas Gerais), Brazil. The aim of these studies, broadly speaking, was to understand how social context influences the ways citizens learn about and interact with the political system in Brazil. The researchers chose to focus on Juiz de Fora and the city of Caxias do Sul (Rio Grande do Sul), Brazil, in order to examine processes of social influence in greater depth than would have been possible with a standard national survey. Results from these studies have been published in a number of places (Ames et al. 2008; Ames et al. Forthcoming; Ames & Smith 2010; Baker et al. 2006; Rennó 2006; Rennó & Ames 2010),

and other papers are under development (Smith 2010, 2011).

The purpose of this research note is twofold. First, I describe these two studies, focusing in particular on the research within Juiz de Fora. Second, I discuss some of the most important theoretical background and premises of the studies, and provide preliminary evidence testing some hypotheses. I find that the social context is very important for understanding political behaviors and choices; not only does neighborhood social status affect voting, but it is also associated with the kinds of political messages citizens receive from civic associations and churches in their neighborhoods.

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TWO STUDIES, TWO CITIES, 22 NEIGHBORHOODS IN JUIZ DE FORA

The first of the two projects is the Two-City Panel Study, which was conducted by Professors Barry Ames of the University of Pittsburgh, Andy Baker, now of the University of Colorado, and Lúcio Rennó, who is now a professor at the University of Brasília. The first wave of interviews was conducted in April 2002, prior to the start of the presidential election campaign of that year; the second in August 2002, in the midst of the campaign and at the beginning of the period of the *Horário Gratuito de Propaganda Eleitoral*; and the third in October of that year, between the first and second rounds of the presidential election. The fourth wave of the study occurred in May of 2004, before the beginning of the local election campaigns of that year. The fifth and sixth waves then took place during August and October of 2006, at the beginning and end of the presidential election campaign of that year. The first three waves, in March/April, August, and October, 2002, were conducted under the a grant from the National Science Foundation to Professors Ames and Baker, while May 2004 and July and October 2006 waves funded by Professor Ames' own research budget. The study interviewed 6,970 people, split evenly between Juiz de Fora and Caxias do Sul, over the course of six waves. However, because of sample attrition and replacement only 1,401 people were interviewed in all six waves.

The cities of Juiz de Fora and Caxias do Sul were chosen because in many respects they are quite similar – they have similarly-sized populations and both are relatively prosperous industrial poles within their regions – yet at the same time they present important political differences. Parties tend to be relatively weakly organized in Juiz de Fora, and voters strongly supported Lula in both 2002 and 2006. Caxias do Sul features much higher levels of party organization, with the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* representing the left and the PMDB organizing a right-of-center bloc. Voters in Caxias do Sul largely voted against Lula in both 2002 and 2006.

The second project is the Networks and Neighborhoods in Local Brazilian Politics (NNLBP) Study, which I conducted only in Juiz

de Fora in October-November 2008, during and after the local election campaign. The NNLBP study was supported by a National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant, with research assistance provided by the Center for Social Research at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF). In total, UFJF students interviewed 1,089 randomly selected residents of 22 neighborhoods in the period immediately following the second round local election.

In addition, during the campaign I interviewed neighborhood association presidents in 19 of the 22 neighborhoods, as well as local activists and politicians, and I attended rallies and campaign meetings. In the remaining three neighborhoods, citizens believed that a neighborhood association existed, but it appeared to be largely inactive, and despite many repeated attempts I was unable to contact anyone identified as a member of the neighborhood association leadership. I was able to conduct interviews with community leaders in the three neighborhoods for which local leaders and residents agreed that there was no neighborhood association.

In both studies, questionnaires were designed to explore many aspects of social context, in addition to how citizens understand, feel about, and choose to interact with the political world. Interviews included a series of questions about how citizens discuss politics within their own social networks. In addition, in the NNLBP Study I asked about ties to local politicians and activists, churches, neighborhood leaders, and other associations.

Table 1 describes the 22 neighborhoods that were randomly selected in Juiz de Fora, providing basic data from the 2000 Census regarding population, literacy, infrastructure, and income in those neighborhoods. It also provides information on the average number of years of education completed in these neighborhoods, derived from the Two-City Panel Study. Finally, the table also provides crime rates. These are calculated as the number of occurrences reported by the Polícia Civil in the year in question, divided by the estimated population of the neighborhood.

Table 1. Description of the neighborhoods from the Juiz de Fora sample in the two studies

	Population	Years of Education	Crime Rate (%) 2007	Literacy Rate	Average Income	% with Indoor Plumbing and on Water Supply
Alto dos Passos	4.712	11,10	1,21	97,9	1.818	100,0
Bairru/ Manuel Honório	4.461	10,34	0,25	97,4	1.667	96,4
Benfica	18.111	7,29	0,36	90,7	602	98,2
Bonfim	2.742	6,36	0,36	94,2	754	99,1
Centro	21.426	10,77	1,77	98,5	2.057	99,9
Costa Carvalho	7.525	8,05	0,17	93,3	649	99,4
Dom Bosco	4.477	7,48	0,65	90,3	561	96,9
Fábrica	4.405	9,58	0,20	97,1	1.124	99,8
Francisco Bernardino	8.354	8,75	0,23	92,3	570	97,9
Industrial	3.107	8,38	0,13	95,6	691	99,3
Linhares	10.755	5,96	0,19	90,9	466	88,1
Morro da Glória	3.328	9,84	0,42	97,1	1.408	99,8
NS Lourdes	7.104	8,24	0,15	95,0	706	98,1
Poco Rico	3.336	9,34	1,20	96,7	975	98,6
Progresso	16.986	7,46	0,16	93,0	536	98,6
Santa Luzia	13.732	7,30	0,17	93,3	622	96,6
Santa Rita de Cassia	5.448	6,59	0,42	89,2	357	98,0
Santa Terezinha	9.483	8,57	0,17	94,2	898	99,0
Santo Antonio	8.628	6,77	0,15	89,5	446	92,0
São Benedito	14.407	6,62	0,06	89,8	450	97,2
São Mateus	18.134	10,69	0,41	97,3	1.948	98,8
Vitorino Braga	4.263	7,80	0,54	95,6	826	98,4

Sources: Years of education: Two City Panel Study. Crime rates: incidences (from the Civil Police) / population. Population, income, literacy and indoor plumbing: IBGE 2000.

SOCIAL CONTEXT IN JUIZ DE FORA: THEORY AND EVIDENCE

The premise of both studies is that political behavior cannot be understood by treating each citizen as an isolated, independent individual

responding in a rational fashion to stimuli from the media or to broad societal factors. Instead, we argue that citizens talk with each other, learn from each other, and even react to subtle non-verbal cues from those in their social environment. While these insights may seem commonsensical,

they violate many of the standard assumptions of much research on both Brazilian and American political behavior, research often based on large national-level surveys. While research has shown the importance of networks for the political behavior of elites, policymakers, and activists in Brazil (Candler 2000; Frank 2001; Keck & Hochstetler 2007; Leeds 1965; Lemos & de Oliveira 2004; Sugiyama 2008), scholars have for the most part ignored the social embeddedness of the political behavior of ordinary citizens in Brazil.

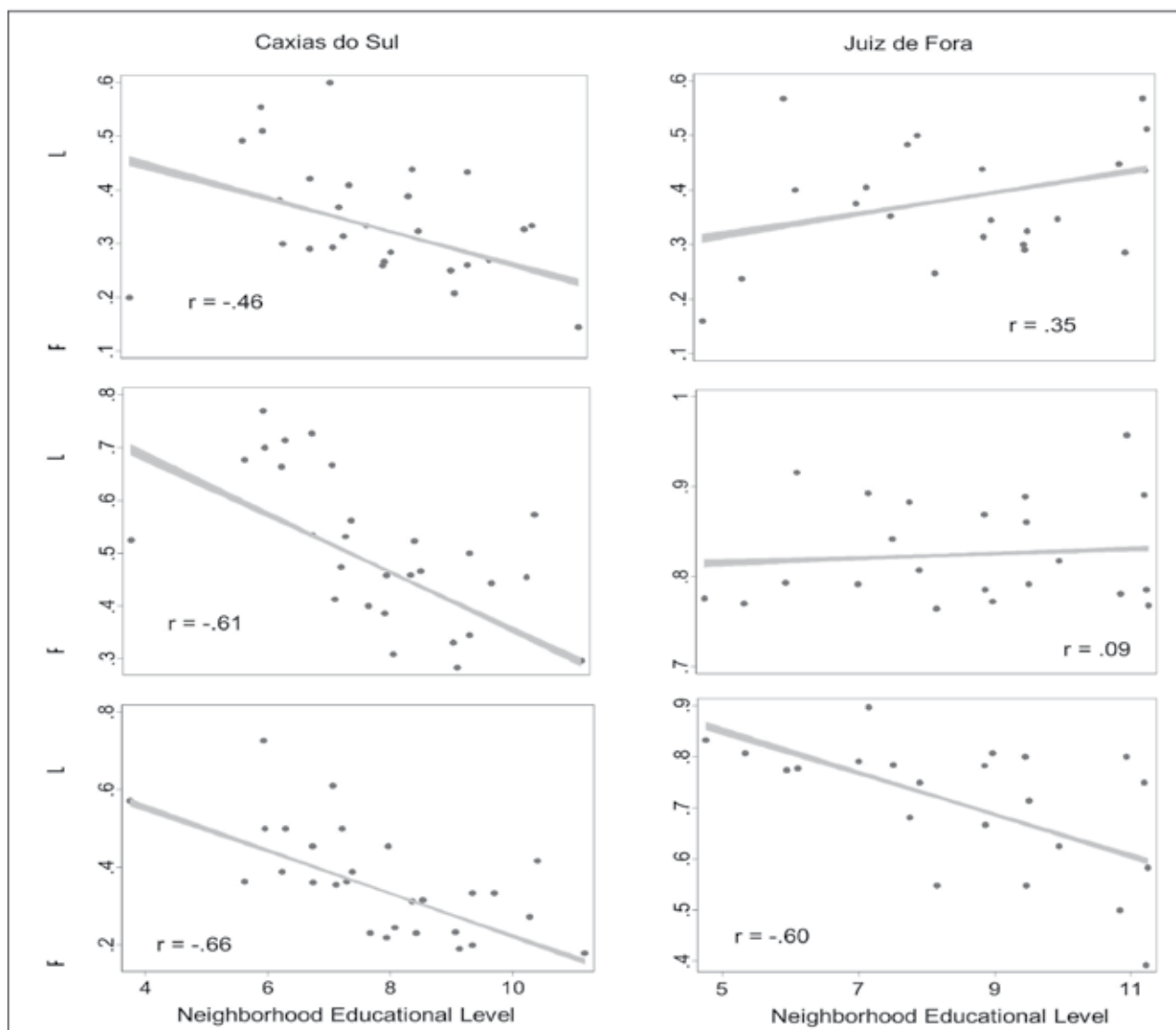
In this research note, I focus on how the social status of the neighborhood in which one lives, and in particular the educational level of the residents, affects vote choices. Individuals' levels of education have long been shown to be important in Brazil, affecting party identification (Kinzo 2005; Samuels 2004, 2006), political sophistication and ideological thinking (Ames & Smith 2010; Castro 1994; Singer 1999), and many political and social attitudes (Almeida 2007). This research note argues, however, that the educational level of others within the immediate social environment, and particularly the neighborhood, has a separate impact on how citizens choose to interact with the political system. To the extent that political information travels through the neighborhood grapevine, higher status neighbors will be more likely to transmit information from sources such as print media and the internet, rather than from television, the radio, and local politicians. In addition, citizens with higher education are more likely to convey information about and intolerance of corruption scandals (Almeida 2007; Hunter & Power 2007).

I also examine the extent to which Juiz de Forans receive political messages from neighborhood associations, churches, and politicians whom they know. These intermediaries channel political information to citizens, helping them make decisions and become engaged with the political process (Berelson et al. 1954; Downs 1957; Huckfeldt et al. 1993; Lazarsfeld et al. 1948). Moreover, I examine the extent to which such connections are associated with neighborhood social status. In particular, I suspect that they may be more prominent in neighborhoods with lower educational levels.

JUIZ DE FORAN NEIGHBORHOODS AND VOTING

A number of scholars have shown that while support for both the PT and Lula was historically strongest in wealthier and more developed areas and in the south and southeast, his 2006 support was concentrated in lower-income and less developed areas (Hunter & Power 2007; Nicolau & Peixoto 2007; Zucco 2008). Moreover, this trend apparently continued with support for the candidate Dilma Rousseff in 2010. In Figure 1, I explore whether the same pattern was observed even across neighborhoods within Juiz de Fora and Caxias do Sul. The figure shows that in Juiz de Fora, neighborhood education was strongly positively associated with the percentage of the first round vote for Lula in 1998, but that the association was strongly negative by 2006. Caxias do Sul, however, presented the same negative pattern in all three election years.

Figure 1: Support for Lula at the neighborhood level



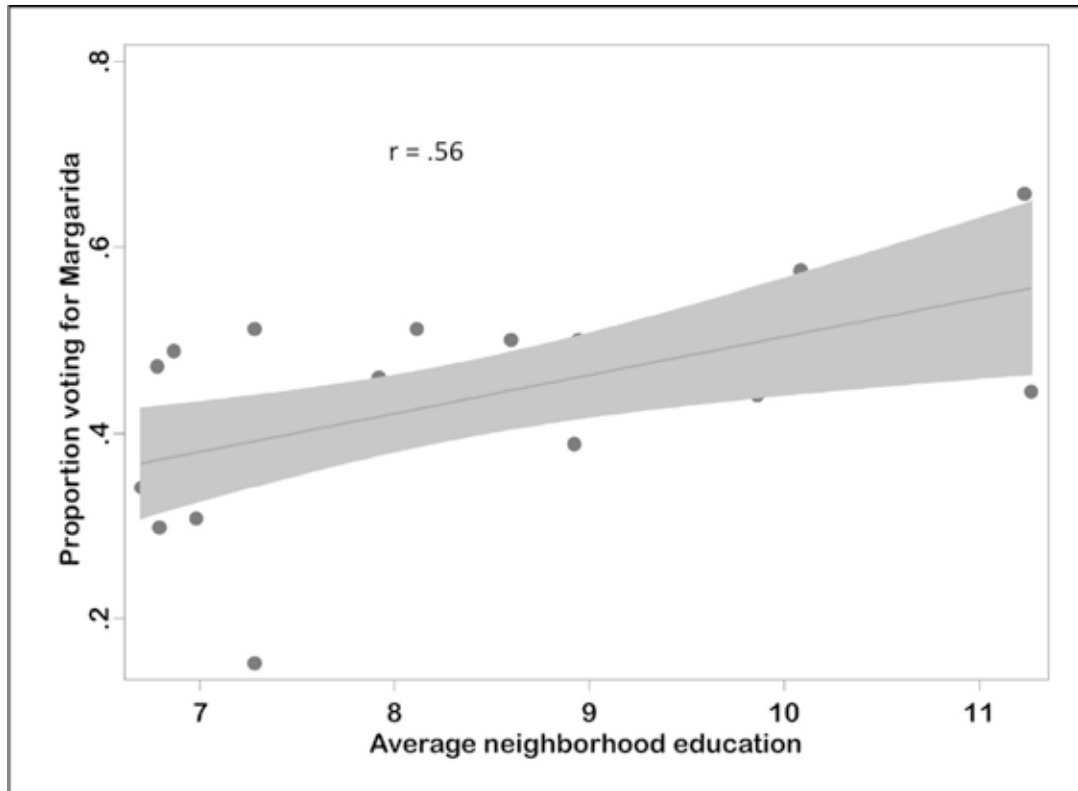
Note: All correlation coefficients are statistically significant at $p < .05$. Source: Two City Panel Study

Was this pattern repeated in the local mayoral elections of 2008 in Juiz de Fora?

The 2008 mayoral election in this city is an interesting one to study because it involved a female *petista* and a male *tucano* going to the second round, in an interesting parallel to the 2010 election. Did neighborhoods with lower educational levels tend to support the *petista* candidate, Margarida Salomão, in Juiz de Fora in 2008? Figure 2 shows that this was emphatically not the case. Instead, support for Margarida in the first round of 2008 was closer

to resembling the pattern found for Lula in 1998, with the neighborhoods with highest education also having the highest levels of support for Margarida. Of course, the elections surrounding Margarida may have been a special case, due in large part to the candidate's homosexuality, and to the fact that tolerance for homosexuality is strongly related to education. Nonetheless, the figure does provide preliminary evidence that patterns found at the national level do not necessarily extend to candidates within the same party at lower levels of government.

Figure 2: Support for Margarida at the neighborhood level



Source: Networks and Neighborhoods in Local Brazilian Politics

A. Neighborhoods and access to intermediaries of political information

Another aspect of social context is contact with “intermediaries” of political information. Civic associations, churches, and local politicians may, at least under some circumstances, help citizens learn about the political system and provide them with guides to orient their votes. In the NNBLP study, respondents were asked about their exposure to and discussions of politics with

these three categories of intermediaries. In Table 1, I examine the percentage of Juiz de Forans that have various types of contact with their neighborhood association. The table reveals that only about half of residents are aware of the neighborhood association in those areas that have such a group, and that only about one in ten had talked with the association president about the elections. Even smaller percentages had received some type of help from the association.

Table 2. Contact with Neighborhood Associations

	Percentage of all interviewees	Percentage in neighborhoods with associations
Aware that association exists	49.2	55.2
Knows association president	29.8	32.4
Knows association president's name	28.3	31.5
Voted in association election	18.3	19.8
Talked with president about municipal elections	9.5	10.4
Has participated in an association activity	8.5	9.1
Has received aid from association	2.6	2.9

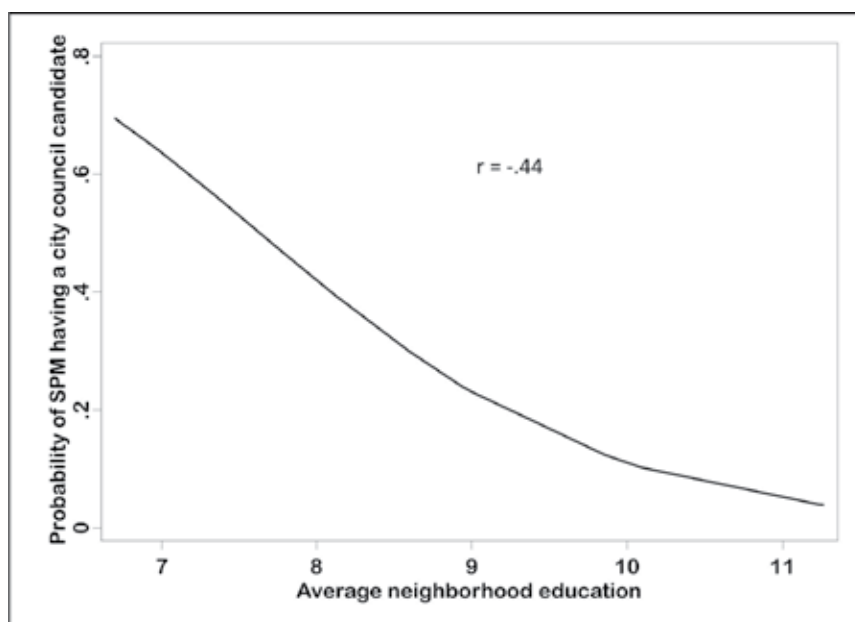
Note: Three out of 22 neighborhoods were counted as not having associations.

Source: Networks and Neighborhoods in Local Brazilian Politics.

One of the most prominent ways in which neighborhood associations can get involved in local elections is by the association president running for office. Interviews with association leaders revealed that in many cases association presidency served as springboard for running for office. In five of the 22 neighborhoods studied, the neighborhood association president himself or herself was a candidate for city council; in another four neighborhoods some member of the current or former neighborhood association leadership was running. The correlation between neighborhood education and a measure of whether a current or former leader of the association was a candidate for city council is

-.44. Figure 3 shows that this relationship is very strong and statistically significant. Moreover, in all but one of the associations where no insider was running, the president identified a city council candidate whom he or she "supported." In all but three cases the president reported that he or she had at least to some extent campaigned for that candidate. These results provide strong reason to believe that neighborhood association presidents could be an important source of information and appeals for mobilization during the election campaign.

Figure 3: Neighborhood education and political participation of neighborhood association leaders



Note: Predicted probability is based on a bivariate logistic regression. The effect is statistically significant at the level $p < .000$.

Source: Networks and Neighborhoods in Local Brazilian Politics

As Figure 3 suggests, another type of intermediary to which many citizens may have access is people who are running for office, in particular city council candidates, because there are so many of them. The NNLBP study also examined the extent to which Juiz de Forans knew candidates who were running for city council, as well as *cabos eleitorais*. The first two lines of Table 2 reveals that a very high percentage of citizens knew personally either a candidate or a *cabo eleitoral*. However, the study also asked respondents whether any candidate or

cabo eleitoral had asked them for their vote, and a smaller percentage reported this kind of contact, as revealed in the third and fourth sections of the table. This suggests that in many cases social ties to politicians may be incidental to other life activities. I further explored the relationship between contact with politicians and *cabos* and neighborhood education. After taking into account personal levels of education, which promote social contacts with politicians, I find that neighborhood education is again negatively associated with knowing a candidate. However, here the relationship is very small and hardly statistically significant.

they received the following questions: “O(a) sr(a) sabe qual candidato a **vereador** (o pastor/o padre/o pai ou mãe de santo) apoiou? (Quem?)” and “O(a) sr(a) sabe qual candidato a **prefeito** (o pastor/o padre/o pai ou mãe de santo) apoiou? (Quem?)”. The results, which are presented in Table 3, reveal that a high percentage of citizens, and especially evangelicals, had heard about “voting conscientiously,” but smaller percentages said that they had heard people talk about the candidates, and that the proportion knowing whom their priest or pastor supported was even smaller. Was exposure to political information in church associated with neighborhood education?

Table 3. Contact with politicians and cabos eleitorais

	Percentage
Knows someone who is a candidate for vereador	75.6
Knows someone who is a cabo eleitoral	55.5
Talked with a politician who asked for vote	41.4
1-2 politicians	16.5
3-4 politicians	11.3
5 or more politicians	13.7
Talked with a cabo eleitoral who asked for vote	39.3
1-2 cabos	15.1
3-4 cabos	9.0
5 or more cabos	15.2

Source: Networks and Neighborhoods in Local Brazilian Politics

A third potential intermediary of political information is religious congregations. The NNLBP study also asked citizens whether they had heard any discussion of politics in church. First, the survey asked, “Nos últimos meses, o(a) sr(a) já ouviu alguma pessoa na igreja falar que deve votar ou que deve ter consciência no voto?” Second, respondents were asked, “Nos últimos meses, o(a) sr(a) já ouviu alguma pessoa na igreja falar sobre os candidatos?” And finally,

In Figure 4, I examine the relationship between the level of education in the neighborhood and the proportion of citizens who say that they heard messages about “conscientious voting” in church. The figure reveals that there was a pronounced tendency for respondents from lower socioeconomic status neighborhoods to receive political messages in church. The reasons for this remain for future research.

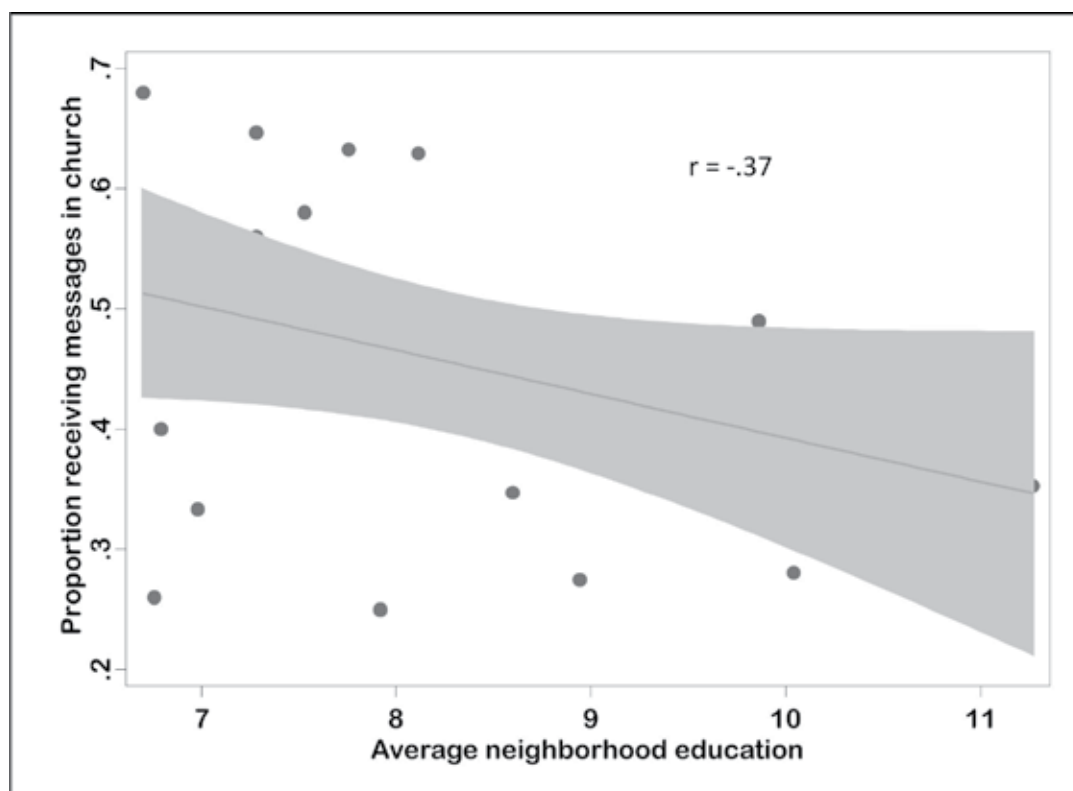
Table 4. Contact with and political exposure in church, among those who ever attend church

	Catholic	Evangelical	Other
Heard about "voting conscientiously" in church	49.4	63.5	35.6
Heard people in church talk about candidates	24.0	38.8	16.6
Knows who priest/pastor supports for city council	3.1	22.7	10.9
Knows who priest/pastor supports for mayor	3.8	28.8	15.9

Note: "Other" includes all respondents who are neither Catholic nor evangelical.

Source: Networks and Neighborhoods in Local Brazilian Politics

Figure 4: Neighborhood education and messages about "conscientious voting" in church



Source: Networks and Neighborhoods in Local Brazilian Politics

CONCLUSION

This research note provides an overview and some preliminary findings from two studies conducted in part in Juiz de Fora between 2002 and 2008. These two studies provide a gold mine of data that has barely been exploited. Nonetheless, the evidence presented here demonstrates the importance of social context for understanding how citizens in Juiz de Fora relate to the political world. In recent presidential elections, the

vote for the *petista* has been concentrated in poorer neighborhoods. However, in the 2008 local election, the vote for the *petista* was concentrated in higher status neighborhoods. Moreover, I found evidence that citizens have high levels of exposure to intermediaries of political information, in particular politicians, churches, and neighborhood associations; and that exposure to these intermediaries is higher in neighborhoods with lower educational levels.

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