

## Chapter 1

### Toward a Theory of Campaigns and Voters in Developing Democracies

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When Argentina's 2015 presidential election went to a runoff, the incumbent party's Daniel Scioli and the opposition's Mauricio Macri faced off in a live, televised debate. The organizers delineated four specific topics to discuss: economic and human development, education, security and human rights, and strengthening democracy. But neither candidate said much about any of these issues. Macri refused to take specific positions on major issues like how he would address inflation, what he would do about the exchange rate, and whether he would renegotiate Argentina's outstanding debts. Just as he did on the stump, he spoke of optimism, hope, teamwork, and change. Scioli depicted the prospect of a Macri administration as a return to the economic policies of the 1990s, associated in the minds of Argentines with unemployment, inequality, and corruption. He portrayed himself as the protector of average Argentines and Macri as the harbinger of economic hardship. But Scioli too failed to articulate concrete policy proposals.

Argentine elections epitomize a more general gulf between the ideal model of democracy and how democracy works in the developing world. Political scientists often assume that voters choose the candidate who promises the policies they prefer. But it was hard to know what policies either candidate was offering Argentines in 2015. While free and fair elections are a necessary condition for democracy, they are insufficient for bringing about meaningful political representation. The outcomes of elections affect who wins and who loses in politics: whether governments financially support the poor, regulate utility prices for the middle class, benefit the

rich by subsidizing companies, and protect the civil and political rights of certain groups. When Dahl (1961) long ago asked, *Who Governs?*, he underscored just how important electoral choices really are. But if election outcomes are so consequential, then a crucial question is what determines those outcomes. Why do people vote the way they do? Do campaigns and media sway their choices? What do their voting decisions demand of elected representatives?

Political scientists have been studying these questions for decades, and the jury is still far from a unanimous verdict. For some, vote choice is mostly a group-based affair, with individual voters by and large voting along social cleavage lines (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944): Catholics versus Protestants, rich versus poor, white versus black. Others argue instead that voters are swayed by a combination of psychological attachments, assessments of individual candidates, and attitudes toward the political issues of the day (Campbell et al. 1960). In a more rationalistic vein, still other scholars posit that rational voters care mainly about political issues and strategically choose the candidate whose policy proposals most appeal (Cox 1997; Downs 1957). And another, related camp posits that voters retain representatives who perform well and replace those who disappoint (Achen and Bartels 2016; Fiorina 1981; Key 1966).

The overwhelming majority of scholarship on voting focuses on one fairly unusual democracy, the United States. Much of the rest deals with other advanced democracies in Western Europe, contexts that are similar to the U.S. in important ways. The electoral context in developing democracies, however, is significantly different. In these democracies, civil society is often weak, poverty and inequality high, political parties ephemeral and attachments to them weak, corruption rampant, and clientelism widespread (or, at least, perceived to be so). In many of these contexts, the memory of repressive authoritarian regimes is still raw, and the

reverberations of the global economic turn toward free markets widely felt. It is far from obvious that voters in South Africa and Chile make their voting decisions the same way Americans and Germans do.

The scholarly bias on this topic toward advanced democracies is no accident. For decades, few developing countries even held elections, let alone free and fair ones. Public opinion data from the developing world was all but nonexistent. Even today, despite an unprecedented wealth of cross-national survey projects like the Afrobarometer and AmericasBarometer, academic surveys centered around elections are rare.<sup>1</sup> In Latin America, regular election studies are available only for Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and Peru—less than a quarter of the region’s 18 major democracies. Even more rare are panel election surveys—the kind used by the pioneering scholars of voting behavior in the U.S. —that encompass an election cycle and allow us to better identify the causal determinants of vote choice. Although more and more scholars are using what data is available to study vote choice in these contexts (e.g., Carlin, Singer, and Zechmeister 2015a; Domínguez et al. 2015; Nadeau et al. 2017), this research is still in its infancy. If the jury is still out on what drives voter behavior in advanced democracies, it is only just being selected on the question of vote choice in the developing world.

With some notable exceptions, developing democracies seem to be consolidating. Elections have become “the only game in town” in many countries, and some in Latin America have held nearly ten executive elections since the onset of the third wave of democratization in the late 1970s. As scholars, we cannot hope to understand how politics in these consolidating democracies unfolds without understanding how voters determine who governs. And we cannot

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<sup>1</sup> Of the 44 countries included in the most recent round of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) – a respected consortium of election surveys – only 15 are not members of the OECD. Those 15 represent less than one-fifth of the world’s developing electoral democracies.

assume that what we think we know about voters in advanced democracies applies universally to developing ones. Rather, we should take our assumptions and expectations to data. Like the classics of voting behavior in the U.S., we ought to build theories and test them using new data and cutting-edge methods.

This volume aspires to do just that. We argue that, at their most basic level, voting decisions in developing democracies generally follow logics that are similar to those in advanced democracies. That is, voters base their choices on some combination of group affiliation, issue positions, valence consideration, and campaign persuasion. Citizens who identify strongly with social groups that ally clearly with one side of the political spectrum are likely to vote for its slate of candidates. Those who have strongly-held positions on the issues of the day will choose representatives who share their views. Voters fed up with the state of the economy will opt for political change. And some might be swayed by campaigns that spotlight the desirable personal qualities of their candidates.

Where developing democracies differ from advanced ones, we argue, is not in the behavioral logic underlying these considerations. Rather, the differences we see across contexts affects how that logic plays out (see also Carlin, Singer, and Zechmeister 2015b). Specifically, we argue that context affects the relative weight that citizens assign to different considerations within this logic. Where few social identity groups are politically salient and partisan attachments are sparse, voters may place more weight on issue voting. Where issues are largely absent from political discourse, valence considerations and campaign effects may play a larger role in determining outcomes.

The chapters in this volume each test some piece of this argument empirically with regard to national elections. But one of the biggest empirical challenges in studying electoral behavior is

attributing cause and effect. Imagine that a scholar uses a standard cross-sectional survey to find an association between voters' approval of the president and identifying with the president's party. Should she infer that voters identify with the party they think performs well in office (see Achen 1992; Fiorina 1981)? Or should she infer that party identification is a perceptual screen that biases performance evaluations (see Bartels 2002; Campbell et al. 1960; Gerber and Huber 2010)? Since the single-shot survey measures all relevant variables in a single interview, it offers no conclusive way of adjudicating among these alternative causal interpretations. This challenge has motivated scholars to turn to panel surveys (e.g., Lewis-Beck, Nadeau, and Elias 2008). Panel data traces the attitudes and preferences of the same individuals over time. By establishing temporal priority across different attitudes, panel data thus offers a compelling way of drawing causal inferences (Bartels 2006).

Unfortunately, panel electoral surveys are rare in developing democracies. In Latin America, academic panel electoral surveys have only been fielded in Brazil and Mexico (Ames et al. 2010, 2016; Lawson 2001, 2007). If we want to reap the inferential benefits of analyzing panel survey data, we necessarily have to limit ourselves to a very small set of cases. The contributions to this volume rely primarily on a panel survey from Argentina conducted there around the 2015 general election (Lupu et al. 2015). The 2015 Argentine Panel Election Study (APES) is both the first academic panel survey and the first academic election study ever conducted in Argentina. Where possible, that analysis is complemented by examinations of Brazil and Mexico.

Although focusing on Argentina means limiting the generality of the data, Argentina turns out to be a useful case in which to study voter behavior in developing democracies. By any standard metric, Argentina is a consolidated democracy. Since 1983, it has held peaceful and

regular democratic elections, and there is no serious risk of authoritarian reversal. But Argentina also exemplifies some of the political patterns that distinguish developing from advanced democracies. A historically stable two-party system organized has given way to fluidity, with multiple parties that arouse weak attachments and have little programmatic reputation (Calvo and Escolar 2005; Leiras 2006; Lupu 2015). Argentina has also been a prominent case in studies of patronage and vote-buying (Calvo and Murillo 2004; Oliveros 2016; Scherlis 2013; Stokes et al. 2013; Szwarcberg 2015, Weitz-Shapiro 2014; Zarazaga 2014), common features of electoral politics in developing democracies. These features make it an ideal setting to test our expectations regarding voting behavior in developing democracies. Someday, we may have data from panel election surveys fielded in a large number of elections across many developing democracies; in the meantime, Argentina – and its comparison with Brazil and Mexico – is a reasonable place to start.

### **Toward a Theory of Voter Behavior in Developing Democracies**

How do citizens make voting decisions?<sup>2</sup> We posit a hierarchy of voter considerations that builds upon the familiar “funnel of causality” of the classic study of U.S. vote choice, *The American Voter* (Campbell et al. 1960; see also Carlin, Singer, and Zechmeister 2015b; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; Miller and Shanks 1996). Like many scholars before us, we argue that citizens with strongly held attachments to politically salient identity groups are likely to have very stable voting intentions (Achen and Bartels 2016). Where it is clear that one side of the political divide

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<sup>2</sup> Our theoretical framework focuses on the voting decision and sets aside the important question of who turns out to vote in the first place (see, e.g., Carlin and Love 2015; Fornos, Power, and Garand 2004; Kasara and Suryanarayan 2015; Kuenzi and Lambright 2007). Although the two decisions may be related, it makes analytical sense to distinguish them. Moreover, our analysis focuses largely on Argentina, where voting is compulsory and usually high (around 80% for presidential elections).

represents the interests of Catholics, those who strongly identify as Catholics will be likely to support it. Similarly, voters with strong attachments to political parties will reliably support its candidates and lists. Such voters are the least likely to be swayed by the policy issues of the day, the candidates' campaign strategies, or the particular performance of the incumbent. They rarely assimilate new information that is inconsistent with their strongly-held beliefs (Campbell et al. 1960; Zaller 1992). In fact, they are likely to base their issue positions on those of their party, rather than the reverse (Lenz 2012). And they will give their party the benefit of the doubt, even on the rare occasion that they admit it performed poorly (Kayser and Wlezien 2011; Lupu 2016b; van der Brug, Franklin, and Tóka 2008). These reliable “core voters” are also unlikely to sell their votes for clientelistic benefits (Dixit and Londregan 1996; Stokes 2005). They are the backbone of the “frozen” cleavage-based party systems of Western Europe (Lipset and Rokkan 1967).

For voters who hold weak group attachments—or whose strong group attachments do not map easily onto specific political options—policy positions may be a more important consideration in determining vote choice.<sup>3</sup> These voters have particular policy preferences, and they choose the candidate whose platform best approximates those preferences. In many contexts, the most salient policy issues tend to be economic: the extent to which government should redistribute wealth, what kinds of strategies it ought to pursue in promoting growth and development, or how it should regulate commerce. In others, social and moral issues come to the fore: how the government should reduce crime, how it deals with security threats, how it protects

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<sup>3</sup> Positional issue voting may also be a mechanism underlying the relationship between group identities and vote choice (see Lupu, this volume). For instance, class identities may determine vote choice because poor voters benefit from the redistributive policies of certain parties. This particular relationship has recently been widely studied in Latin America following the widespread adoption of conditional cash transfer programs (De la O 2013, 2015; Zucco 2008, 2013).

the environment, or its regulation of abortion, marriage, or religious practices. Issue voters choose the candidate closest to them on the issue(s) they care about most (Downs 1957; Enelow and Hinich 1984), or the one that leans in their direction (Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989).

This basis for vote choice —what Achen and Bartels (2016) call the “folk theory” of democracy—has normatively appealing characteristics. If all voters choose the candidate closest to them on some policy dimension, and candidates follow through on their electoral promises, then democracy yields policies that match the preferences of the median voter.<sup>4</sup> Scores of studies have debated whether voting in U.S. elections is driven by issues (e.g., Ansolabehere, Rodden, and Snyder 2008; Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1964). Although scholars of developing democracies have long thought that policy positions play a trivial role in elections in these contexts (Kitschelt et al. 2010; Mainwaring and Scully 1995; McCann and Lawson 2003), recent studies find more widespread issue voting (Baker 2015; Baker and Greene 2011, 2015; Nadeau et al. 2017; Tavits 2007).

In the absence of strong, politically salient group attachments and positional voting, vote choices may be a function of more contingent, ephemeral considerations. These unattached voters are what Torre (2003) calls “political orphans.” Their chief consideration is valence. Rather than choosing the candidate whose platform best approximates their policy preferences, valence voters choose the one they agree is most competent (Stokes 1963). A common evaluation of competence is based on performance: incumbents who perform well are reelected, whereas those who perform poorly are replaced. Of course, performance may be evaluated along different dimensions. One common performance evaluation is economic, typically focused on

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<sup>4</sup> In Latin America, the expectation that candidates will follow through with their electoral promises is especially problematic. Particularly during the 1990s, various presidential candidates run promising to avoid economic adjustment and neoliberal reforms just to do the exact opposite once in office (Stokes 2001).



the local or national economy (Kinder and Kiewiet 1981; Samuels 2004; Tucker 2006; Weghorst and Lindberg 2013), but sometimes also based on the delivery of local public goods (Baldwin 2013, 2015; Weghorst and Lindberg 2013); on personal material benefits, such as from welfare programs (De la O 2013, 2015; Díaz-Cayeros, Estévez, and Magaloni 2009; Zucco 2013); or clientelism and patronage (Calvo and Murillo 2004; Hicken 2011; Mares and Young 2016; Stokes et al. 2013). In other situations, valence voters may choose the party perceived to be least corrupt (Klašnja, Tucker, and Deegan-Krause 2016; Krause and Méndez 2009), the candidate thought to be best qualified to manage the state and shepherd the economy (e.g., Miller, Wattenberg, and Malanchuk 1986), or the party best equipped to reduce crime or violence (Holland 2013).

Unattached voters may also be more susceptible to the influence of campaigns and media. Campaigns and media may prime voters to take certain considerations into account more than others in their vote choice. Parties and partisan media may emphasize the issues they own and downplay those on which voters evaluate them more harshly (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Petrocik 1996). Alternatively, campaigns and media may persuade impressionable voters to evaluate the candidates differently, or to adopt the positions of certain candidates (Bartels 1993; Popkin 1991). Whereas canonical studies in the U.S. famously found “minimal” campaign effects (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944), recent research in developing democracies has found that campaigns and media can shape voter choice to a substantial degree (Boas 2005, 2015; Greene 2011, 2015; Lawson and McCann 2005; Popescu and Tóka 2002).

In sum, we argue that four sets of considerations determine vote choice: social group attachments, policy positions, valence, and campaigns or media.<sup>5</sup> We further argue that these considerations matter in descending order of importance. Those voters who hold strong attachments to politically salient social groups will base their votes primarily on that consideration.<sup>6</sup> More loosely attached voters will focus their choices instead on policy positions. Finally, those with neither strong attachments nor coherent issue positions—or those who cannot map their attachments or positions onto specific political options—will base their choice in the voting booth on valence evaluations. They will also be more susceptible than others to the effects of election campaigns and the biases of media coverage.

In the aggregate, which of these considerations will matter more to the average voters in a given election depends on the makeup of the electorate. If large swaths of the electorate hold strong political attachments, then voting will, on average, be based in-group identity. In a more unattached electorate, policy positions may determine outcomes on average. And where neither group attachments nor issues are widespread, valence, campaigns, and the media may play determinative roles.

We argue that this model broadly explains voting behavior in both advanced and developing democracies. In many advanced democracies, group attachments are stable, strongly held, and politically salient. As a result, identities seem to play a determinative role in most elections in these contexts (Achen and Bartels 2016). The context in developing democracies differs significantly in two crucial ways. First, formal civil society organizations like labor

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<sup>5</sup> This list leaves out a set of potential considerations having to do with the traits of individual candidates, such as their physical appearance (e.g., Lawson et al. 2010), their gender (e.g., Morgan 2015), or charisma (e.g., Merolla and Zechmeister 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Most likely, their evaluations with respect to the other considerations are themselves a function of their social group attachments and the group of political actors with which their group is associated.

unions, church groups, or ethnic communal associations are weak or only weakly integrated into politics (Oxhorn 2011; Schneider 2013).<sup>7</sup> Moreover, political parties are often fleeting and indistinct. As a result, relatively fewer voters either identify strongly with these identity groups or base their vote on their group or partisan attachment (Brader, Tucker, and Duell 2013; Lupu 2016a). In these contexts, social identity groups play a more limited role in informing citizens' vote choice (e.g., Nadeau et al. 2017), far less than the one posited by the classic group-based view of U.S. voting behavior (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954).

In addition, we argue that policy positions play a fairly limited role in political discourse in developing democracies. Given high rates of poverty, inequality, informality, and political uncertainty (Lupu and Riedl 2013), candidates tend to focus their campaigns on valence issues like incumbent performance and competence (Bleck and van de Walle 2013). With weaker attachments to social groups and the political debate less focused on policy, voters in developing democracies are more likely to be swayed by short-term forces. Valence issues like economic performance or corruption are likely to shape vote choice considerably (Bratton, Bhavnani, and Chen 2012; Carlson 2015; Chong et al. 2004; Ferraz and Finan 2008; Gélinau and Singer 2015; Klačnja and Tucker 2013; Samuels 2004; Singer 2011). That makes them more easily influenced by media and campaigns. Scholars of elections in advanced democracies may rarely find campaign effects because voters in those contexts rely on other considerations—group identity or issue positions—in deciding how to cast their ballots. In contrast, less strongly attached and more

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<sup>7</sup> There are notable exceptions, of course. With regard to the organizational and political role of labor unions, Argentina is a particular exception, although even their clout has declined in recent decades (Etchemendy and Collier 2007; Levitsky 2003; Murillo 2001). Many scholars of developing democracies also highlight the role of ethnic identity in vote choice (e.g., Horowitz 1985). Still, more recent evidence suggests that the extent of ethnic voting has been overstated (Norris and Mattes 2013) and that what looks like identity-based ethnic voting is really a function of patronage (Chandra 2004; Ferey 2006; Ichino and Nathan 2013), service provision (Thachil 2014), or performance (Carlson 2015)—considerations we regard as examples of valence.

policy-driven voters in the developing world may be persuaded more readily by campaigns (Greene 2011).

If our general model of voting behavior is accurate, then what distinguishes voters in developing and advanced democracies is not the considerations that go into their choices in the voting booth, but the relative weights given to those considerations. Those weights are determined by the context—the substance of political discourse, the structure of the political system, and its links to social groups. Indeed, our model expects to observe some group-based voting in developing democracies, among those voters with strongly-held attachments that map clearly onto certain political options. Given the institutional and economic differences between advanced and developing democracies, we merely expect these types of voters to be a minority.<sup>8</sup>

### **Voting and Representation**

Understanding how voters make their Election Day choices is not a mere empirical curiosity. The basis of voter decision-making also has implications for the kind of representation they might hope to receive from their elected officials. Elections determine who governs, but they also determine *how* they govern.

Democratic theorists identify two major models of democratic representation (Fearon 1999; Mansbridge 2009). In the selection model, citizens use their vote to select candidates who are intrinsically motivated to carry out certain objectives in office. Selection requires that citizens compare candidates *ex ante* on traits that are relevant for holding office, such as policy positions,

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<sup>8</sup> Although we apply our theory to the broad differences between advanced and developing democracies, one could draw similar implications for changes over time within countries. That is, in contexts where social identities erode, we would expect other considerations to become more important in determining vote choice, on average. For instance, Lupu (2016a) finds that as partisan attachments erode in the aggregate, performance evaluations become more determinative of vote choice (see also Kayser and Wlezien 2011).

competence, and character. Going back to our hierarchy of considerations, the selection model is more likely to obtain when citizens vote on the basis of affiliations to politically salient groups or policy positions. Candidates who belong to an established social group or political party can credibly signal to voters that they have the endorsement of these groups as well as an affinity with their policy positions. Citizens can, in turn, use this information as a reliable shortcut to select candidates for public office.

Democratic representation can also conform to an accountability model. In this model, citizens use their vote to reward or punish politician on the basis of the actions they take in office. Citizens thus monitor the actions of politicians *ex post* in order to collect information about dimensions that they value, such as performance, competence, or honesty. Retrospective monitoring makes the accountability model more likely to obtain whenever citizens vote on the basis of valence. Since information on individual candidates tends to be scarce and unreliable, it is exceedingly difficult for the typical voter to classify individual candidates on these dimensions. As a result, voters who care about these traits have incentives to rely on retrospective accountability when forming their electoral preferences.

While selection and accountability offer alternative models of representation, it does not follow that they are equally effective at achieving it. When citizens engage in selection, they choose the politician they consider most likely to pursue their objectives in office. Selection thus allows citizens to indicate the policies that they prefer and the type of individual they would like to carry them out. This two-way communication between citizens and prospective representatives can produce an electoral mandate that outlines citizens' expectations of their

representatives (Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999).<sup>9</sup> In the accountability model, by contrast, incumbent politicians are the first movers, deciding policies and their mode of implementation. Citizens are reactive players, rewarding or punishing these decisions. If citizens use their vote in this retrospective fashion, they can only credibly commit to upholding a certain standard of performance, but they will not be able to deliver a mandate specifying the kinds of policies they want implemented. This makes elections a blunter instrument of representation in the accountability model than in the selection model of representation.<sup>10</sup>

While real-world political systems mix elements of both selection and accountability, they tend to approximate one model better than the other.<sup>11</sup> This is because not all democracies satisfy the informational prerequisites of the selection model. Only when parties establish reliable reputations conveying meaningful information on the policy preferences and competence of candidates will citizens have incentive to use their vote to select good representatives prospectively. Voters do in fact prioritize partisanship and ideology in advanced democracies where political parties are firmly institutionalized and offer clear policy differences (Duch and Stevenson 2008; Kayser and Wlezien 2011). But citizens are less likely to rely on these considerations in settings where parties are weakly institutionalized (Carlin, Singer, and Zechmeister 2015b; Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Mainwaring 2017; Zechmeister and Corral

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<sup>9</sup> Mansbridge argues that in contrast with the accountability model, the selection model approximates “narrative” or “deliberative” representation (2009: 370.)

<sup>10</sup> The benefits of the selection model should not be taken too far. Corruption and other motives may lead politicians to renege on their campaign promises. A credible threat of sanctioning may be necessary for representation to work properly (Stokes 2001). Even then, as Mansbridge (2009) notes, it is possible to conceive of a model of representation with selection at its core and sanctioning at its periphery. Fearon (1999) makes a similar point formally.

<sup>11</sup> Voters have incentives to mix strategies (Fearon 1999). Even if their primary goal is selection, their ability to identify good candidates increases if they can use the past as information about the future behavior of politicians (Downs 1957). The incentives for sanctioning bad performance may be higher in settings where politicians renege on their campaign promises or use office for rent-seeking.

2013) and hold inconsistent policy commitments (Lupu 2015). These contextual constraints on selection may explain why retrospective forms of accountability, such as economic voting (Gélineau and Singer 2015; Murillo, Oliveros, and Vaishnav 2010; Murillo and Visconti 2017; Samuels 2004; Singer 2011) and clientelistic exchanges (Calvo and Murillo 2004; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Stokes et al. 2013), have been a widespread form of representation in developing democracies.

### **Panel Surveys and the Case of Argentina**

How do voters in developing democracies arrive at their vote choices? How do they weigh different types of considerations in the voting booth? Do those patterns differ from those we see in advanced democracies? And how do these differences influence the type of representation that citizens can obtain? Our general theory of voting behavior offers responses to each of these empirical questions: voters in developing democracies will tend to vote on the basis on valence evaluations rather than group identities or issues. Unlike in advanced democracies like the U.S., the relative weakness of political attachments will leave room for campaigns and media to substantially shape vote choice. This implies, in turn, that representation in the developing world is more likely to follow an accountability model, whereas representation in advanced democracies is likely to conform to the selection model. These are the observable implications of our theoretical framework.

There are many possible ways to consider testing these implications empirically. One straightforward option is to use the growing number of cross-national barometers to study the individual-level variables associated with vote choice. Indeed, some prominent volumes have done exactly that and yielded a trove of insightful findings (Bratton 2013; Carlin, Singer and

Zechmeister 2015a; Nadeau et al. 2017). Still, this approach also has two important drawbacks. First, barometer surveys are not election studies: that is, they are not timed to coincide with election cycles (indeed, they are often scheduled to avoid election cycles). As a result, they may underestimate the salience of particular identities or attitudes that are activated during campaigns (e.g., Michelitch 2015). It is also impossible to assess campaign effects outside of the campaign period.

A second limitation of barometer studies is that they rely on one-shot surveys that measure both vote choice, the dependent variable, and the independent variables within the same interview. Increasingly, election studies instead leverage panel surveys, which offer repeated observations of the same individuals at different points of the electoral cycle (e.g., Lewis-Beck, Nadeau, and Elias 2008). This data structure allows scholars to trace the preferences of voters to attitudinal changes that took place at earlier points of the electoral campaign (e.g., Lenz 2013). Part of the definition of a cause is that it occurs prior to an outcome (Campbell and Stanley 1963). Panel surveys allow us to test whether certain political identities or attitudes affect changes in vote intentions within the same individuals over time, helping to identify the causal link (Bartels 2006; Finkel 1995; Miller 1999). Thus, for example, the chapter in this volume by Greene exploits the panel structure of the APES to show that electoral support for the incumbent party's candidate declined amongst those who developed more negative evaluations about his competence. Analyzing a cross-sectional survey would mean drawing leverage from variation in vote choice among respondents with different perceptions about this candidate's competence.



But any observed relationship would not have a causal interpretation, as it could be spuriously correlated with other factors, such as ideology, class, or voting history.<sup>12</sup>

One common tradeoff when choosing to leverage panel survey data is that it typically requires focusing on a specific case. Our choice in this volume to focus on the Argentine Panel Election Study makes such a tradeoff. In our view, panel data is better suited to convincingly addressing our questions about voter behavior in the developing world. Moreover, findings from panel data can build upon the insights of prior studies that rely on cross-national surveys. Additionally, while the bulk of our analysis focuses on a particular empirical case, several chapters also leverage panel election studies in Brazil and Mexico for the purpose of comparison.<sup>13</sup> Given how rare panel election studies are in the developing world, we think this approach strikes the right balance between rigorous empirical analysis and generality. At the same time, we hope that it serves as a call for more panel election surveys in developing democracies.

Moreover, there are good reasons to think the particular tradeoff we make in choosing to study Argentina is reasonable. In important ways, Argentina is fairly typical of many developing democracies. As in most developing democracies, political parties and partisanship in Argentina are still far more fluid and unstable than in advanced democracies (Baker and Dorr, this volume; Calvo and Escolar 2005; Leiras 2006; Lupu 2015). Despite a long history of exceptional stability (Lupu and Stokes 2010), Argentina's party system since the early 2000s has been volatile, characteristic of many other developing democracies (Mainwaring 2017). Political parties have appeared and disappeared, alliances have been formed only to last one election, and parties have

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<sup>12</sup> While multivariate regression could attenuate this omitted variable bias, doing so would require having perfect measures of all potential confounders, clearly an unrealistic assumption.

<sup>13</sup> Baker and Dorr (this volume) also analyze panel election studies in the U.K. and U.S. as points of comparison.

allied in some provinces while competing against each other in others (Clerici 2016; Gervasoni 2017). At the same time, formal civil society organizations, once also exceptionally strong, have weakened (Machado, Scartascini, and Tommasi 2011; Murillo 2001). As a result, personalism continues to dominate elections in Argentina, evidenced by the fact that unstable partisan labels coexist with the high stability of individual politicians (Malamud and De Luca 2016; Murillo and Levitsky, this volume).<sup>14</sup>

Argentina is a middle-income country in terms of per capita wealth, but income is distributed unequally and poverty is quite high. World Bank data for 2014 puts Argentina at a Gini inequality index of 42.7, just above the median for developing countries. Although Argentina scores higher than most developing countries on the United Nations' Human Development Index—likely a legacy of its richer past—its current poverty rate is 32 percent, just above the median for low- and middle-income countries.

Argentina's 2015 presidential election is a particularly useful case for studying elections in developing democracies. With a term-limited incumbent president and instability of the party system, the election was open and competitive. Fifteen candidates contested the open primary elections in August. The economy, which had grown rapidly in 2003-2011 had begun to stagnate. Like many elections in Latin America and throughout the developing world (Lupu and Riedl 2013), Argentina's 2015 election was held amid economic uncertainty. That also makes it particularly useful to compare Argentina's 2015 election with earlier elections in Brazil and Mexico, where we also have panel election studies.

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<sup>14</sup> The newly elected president exemplifies the phenomenon. Macri was a businessman—later president of an important soccer team—who created a party to support his candidacy for mayor of the City of Buenos Aires (an election he won in 2007 and then again in 2011). By the time his party, *Propuesta Republicana* (Republican Proposal—PRO), won the presidency as well as the governorship of the two most important provinces (the province of Buenos Aires and the City of Buenos Aires), the party was about 10 years old. On the characteristics and origins of PRO, see Murillo and Levitsky (this volume) and Vommaro, Morresi, and Bellotti (2015).

## Argentina's Developing Democracy in 2015<sup>15</sup>

According to standard macro-level measures, Argentine democracy, like most of Latin America's developing democracies, is consolidating. The 2015 election was the eighth executive election since the return to democracy in 1983 and marks the second time a president from one party completed a full term and turned power over to a president from an opposing party.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the winning candidate, was the first candidate not from the two main traditional parties—the Peronist Party (PJ) and the *Unión Cívica Radical* (Radical Civic Union—UCR)—ever to win a presidential election since the appearance of Peronism in the 1940s. As in most other developing democracies, elections and democracy appear to be the norm in Argentina.

Survey measures also reveal widespread public support for democracy and respect for political institutions. According to data from the 2014 AmericasBarometer survey,<sup>17</sup> 82 percent of Argentines agreed that, “democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government.”<sup>18</sup> The APES data paint a similar image. In 2015, fully 90 percent of Argentines

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<sup>15</sup> This section draws in part on Lupu (2016c).

<sup>16</sup> In 1989, Raúl Alfonsín (UCR) was succeeded by Carlos Menem (PJ), but Alfonsín left office shortly after the new president was elected (but before the official end of his term) in the middle of a serious economic crisis. In 2001, De la Rúa (UCR) resigned only two years after taking office amidst the worst economic crisis in Argentinean history. The only previous uneventful transition to an opposition party was in 1999 when De la Rúa (UCR) succeeded Menem (PJ).

<sup>17</sup> We thank the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) and its major supporters (the United States Agency for International Development, the Inter-American Development Bank, and Vanderbilt University) for making these data available.

<sup>18</sup> In the AmericasBarometer, respondents are asked to respond on a 7-point scale, where 1 means “strongly disagree” and 7 means “strongly agree.” Here, we consider responses between 5 and 7 as agreement.

agreed with the same statement.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, when asked to what extent they, “respect the political institutions of Argentina,” 61 percent of Argentines answered positively.<sup>20</sup>

Yet, while Argentines support democracy, these figures belie a general distrust of and dissatisfaction with democratic political institutions. APES respondents were asked about their level of confidence in a number of institutions on an 11-point scale (where 0 means no confidence and 10 means a lot of confidence). Overall, Argentines, like many respondents in developing democracies, exhibited low levels of confidence in their institutions. On average, levels of confidence were: 3.0 for the police, 3.2 for the political parties, 3.9 for the judicial system, 4.1 for Congress, and 5.0 for the media (wave 1).<sup>21</sup> Perhaps more troublingly, Argentines are far from perceiving elections to be free and fair: 32 percent in wave 1 and 28 percent in wave 2 did not believe that their votes are actually secret (see Oliveros, this volume).

Against this backdrop, Argentines went to the polls on October 25, 2015 and set the stage for a presidential runoff.<sup>22</sup> Scioli, the Peronist governor of Buenos Aires Province, was the top vote-getter with 37 percent, but Macri, the two-term City of Buenos Aires mayor, was close behind him with 34 percent. A third major candidate, Sergio Massa, played the spoiler with 21 percent. A former powerboat racer turned politician, Scioli was the hand-picked successor to the term-limited incumbent, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007–15). He promised to maintain the achievements in economic and social policy that many voters credit to Kirchner and her

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<sup>19</sup> In the APES, respondents were given a 5-point scale, where 1 means “strongly disagree” and 5 means “strongly agree.” The same distribution of responses was obtained in both waves.

<sup>20</sup> Again, AmericasBarometer respondents were given a 7-point scale, where 1 means “Not at all” and 7 means “A lot.” We consider positive answers to be those between 5 and 7.

<sup>21</sup> When asked the same question after the election (wave 2), the levels of confidence are slightly higher for all institutions except the media: 3.6 for the police, 3.5 for political parties, 4.1 for the judicial system, 4.3 for Congress, and 4.7 for the media.

<sup>22</sup> A runoff is required if no candidate secures more than 45 percent of valid votes or 40 percent of valid votes and a difference of more than 10 percentage points over the runner-up.

predecessor (2003–07) and late husband Néstor Kirchner, who died in 2010. Scioli ran as the standard-bearer of the Kirchners' wing of Peronism, the *Frente Para la Victoria* (Front for Victory—FPV).

Macri, the first-round runner-up, was a prominent businessman serving his second term as mayor of Argentina's capital and largest city. He was the candidate of a coalition of non-Peronist opposition parties known as *Cambiamos* (Let's Change), which included Macri's own party, the center-right PRO, and the historic UCR. Massa, the mayor of Tigre in Buenos Aires Province, was a dissident Peronist. A one-time member of the Chamber of Deputies, he had served as chief of cabinet (a constitutional office somewhat resembling that of prime minister) during Cristina Kirchner's first term. He had opportunistically broken with the FPV in 2013 when forming his own party gave him better electoral odds.

Scioli was never an obvious heir to the Kirchner dynasty. Cristina Fernández found herself forced to choose a successor after two terms in office—and after her supporters had unsuccessfully floated the idea of altering the constitution to let her have a third term. Rather than choosing someone from her inner circle and hence a close associate of her leftist political faction known as Kirchnerism, she opted for a more moderate option. Scioli was a politician's politician, a pragmatist. When an earlier Peronist president, Carlos Menem, had been popular in the mid-1990s, Scioli was an avowed Menemist. When Menem fell from grace and Kirchner's star ascended, Scioli became a Kirchnerist. Even so, he was never very close to the Kirchners. The electoral calculation, it seemed, was that Scioli would attract some votes from non-Kirchnerists, middle-class voters who liked the Kirchner's subsidies for utilities and progressive discourse but disliked their confrontational governing style.

At the same time, Kirchner and Scioli needed to reassure the Kirchnerist base that he would keep in place the Kirchners' signature policy mix of capital controls, government subsidies, and welfare benefits. That meant sending clear signals of continuity. Thus, Scioli picked as his running mate the Kirchner loyalist Carlos Zannini.

All of this left Scioli with the unenviable task of trying to reassure his base while also appealing beyond it. Particularly after the first round, he began deemphasizing continuity in order to back what he called "continuity *with* change." It was never clear that he could have it both ways. He was neither close enough to Kirchner to appear thoroughly convincing as a guarantor of continuity, nor far enough from her to be the most credible change agent in the race. And the voters wanted change.

Macri's advantage was not having to play this double game. He was closely associated with Argentina's business elite, had openly supported the neoliberal economic reforms of the 1990s, and had allied himself with right-wing politicians in the early 2000s. Yet as mayor of Buenos Aires and in the run-up to 2015, he surrounded himself with technocrats rather than ideologues. He portrayed himself as a pragmatist who could manage bureaucrats and get things done. Holding only a local office, he could avoid taking positions on national economic issues, though he took great pains to reassure voters that they would not lose their welfare benefits and that state-owned corporations would not be privatized under a Macri administration.

The discourse of the election campaign contained little more than this back and forth between continuity and change, pessimism and optimism, good versus bad. One does not have to dig all that deep to find evidence that this election—like many in developing democracies—revolved around valence issues. We need only go so far as the discussion of political candidates on social media. With help from the Social Media and Political Participation lab at New York

University, we gathered every tweet between January 23 and November 22, 2015 that mentioned one of 468 Argentine politicians.<sup>23</sup> Figure 1.1 is a word cloud of the 33 million tweets in that dataset, where words that appear more frequently appear larger. As is readily apparent, the vast majority of campaign discourse on social media revolved around change, the qualities of the candidates, and platitudes about working together and improving the future. Very few, relatively small words refer to actual policy areas, such as drug-trafficking, infrastructure, or schools. In fact, even the names of the candidates' parties are barely perceptible. Like most elections in the developing world, Argentina's 2015 campaign rhetoric focused on valence issues.

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<sup>23</sup> These 468 politicians include all the members of the Argentine legislature who had Twitter accounts at the beginning of 2015, all of the presidential candidates, and a number of additional prominent political figures with Twitter accounts.





supporters broke disproportionately for Macri, as did most supporters of minor candidates, and he won the runoff with 51 percent of the vote.

### **Structure of the Volume**

What do the events of 2015 in Argentina teach us about voting behavior in developing democracies? And how do Argentine voters compare with those making voting decisions in similar contexts? The first two chapters in this volume help place Argentina in comparative perspective. Murillo and Levitsky situate the 2015 election within electoral trends across Latin America. They remind us that for some observers, Macri's victory was a realignment, the beginning of a rightward ideological turn in the region. In contrast with this view—and in line with our argument—they argue instead that the election represents an “anti-incumbent turn.” When an economic downturn hit the region in the early 2000s, voters punished incumbents—most of them rightwing—and ushered in a wave of leftist leaders. Once in office, these presidents were buoyed by a commodity boom that began in 2002 and helped them stay in power (see, e.g., Levitsky and Roberts 2011; Murillo, Oliveros, and Vaishnav 2011). With the end of the boom in 2014, economies across the region began to stagnate and decline. Latin American incumbent presidents from Brazil to Chile to Venezuela suffered significant losses in public support, and Argentina was no exception. In a context of relatively weak political attachments and issue voting, Argentine voters voted on valence. With economic conditions deteriorating and inflation high, they chose to change the party in power.

Calvo adds additional nuance to this regional picture. Offering a more detailed look at the entire 2015 electoral cycle—from the primary election in August through the November runoff—he concurs with Murillo and Levitsky that voters primarily evaluated the incumbent.

Macri's victory was the FPV's loss. But he argues that part of the mechanism underlying the anti-incumbent outcome was factional strife within the governing coalition. After controlling the executive for twelve years, faced with economic decline, and with a term-limited leader, the FPV fell into factionalism that split its support. That left an electoral opening for the opposition to exploit. Voters punished the incumbent for bad performance, but incumbent elites also failed to coordinate.

Why were voters so focused on punishing the incumbent? What about other considerations? Did political identities and attachments play a role in determining the outcome? The chapters by Lupu and Baker and Dorr study two political identities that are most likely to determine vote choice in a developing democracy like Argentina. As Lupu notes, Argentina has a long history of class voting. On the other hand, partisanship—once unusually strong—has eroded dramatically in recent decades. Lupu studies why wealth affects vote choice. He finds that the relationship between wealth and vote choice is mediated not by issue positions or partisan attachments, but by perceptions and state transfers. Wealth affects vote choice because it affects how much inequality citizens see and their eligibility for government transfers like Argentina's conditional cash transfer program. In other words, even what looks like strong class identities determining vote choice are actually much more ephemeral considerations.

Baker and Dorr similarly find weak partisan effects. Comparing panel surveys from three Latin American developing democracies (Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico) with two from advanced democracies (the U.K. and the U.S.), they find that partisanship is generally lower and more unstable in the developing democracies than in the two advanced democracies. Within the Latin American cases, more programmatic parties—like Mexico's PAN and Brazil's PT—have more stable partisans than the “ideologically amorphous” Peronist Party in Argentina. In the end,

partisanship does not seem to be that different in developing democracies, it is just weaker and more unstable. Partisanship simply carries less weight in these contexts.

If political identities have little effect on vote choice in developing democracies like Argentina, what about positional and valence issues? The chapters by Gervasoni and Tagina and by Schiumerini examine these considerations. Gervasoni and Tagina present an umbrella model of vote choice and conclude that Argentines voted primarily on the basis of valence. Consistent with Murillo and Levitsky's comparative take, Gervasoni and Tagina find that Argentines used their votes to punish a poorly performing incumbent. In their words, "the election was largely a referendum on the performance of outgoing President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner."

Schiumerini examines whether the electoral shift from a leftist president to a rightist one represents a policy mandate. Did Argentines demand an abrupt reorientation of economic policy in a market-friendly direction? The chapter offers a resounding no. Schiumerini finds that incumbent evaluations, far more than ideology or policy preferences, determined vote choice. He further demonstrates that, irrespective of vote choice, Argentine citizens did not perceive meaningful ideological differences between the candidates. Indeed, he shows that public opinion on economic policy in Argentina has remained stably statist for more than a decade. Like many voters in the developing world, in 2015, Argentines voted for a change of administration, not a change of policies.

If political identities and positional issues play only a small role in determining vote choice, we also expect campaigns and media to have more impact. The chapters by Mitchelstein and Greene study these possibilities, both in Argentina and in similar developing democracies. Mitchelstein finds that media effects are significant in both Argentina and Brazil, but that differences in the media market condition those effects. In Argentina, where the media market is

more politically polarized, the type of media conditioned its effect on vote choice. In Brazil, where media are less polarized, exposure to any media has a similar impact on vote choice.

Greene finds that campaign effects were substantial in Argentina. In fact, he shows that they were decisive: his analyses suggest that were it not for the campaign, Scioli would have won the election. Comparing Argentina to Mexico and the U.S., Greene finds that campaign effects are stronger in the two developing democracies, where considerations like partisanship or other political identities have less impact on vote choice. Since voters in newer democracies have weaker prior attachments that strongly predispose their vote choices, we should expect them to be more susceptible to the effects of campaigns. And that is exactly what panel data from Argentina, Mexico, and the U.S. reveal.

While the context might lead citizens in developing countries to weight electoral considerations differently than their counterparts in advanced democracies, this volume also shows that voting behavior follows a similar logic in both cases. This point is driven home by two final chapters. Weitz-Shapiro and Winters find that Argentine voters are strategic: when casting a ballot for president, some withdrew support from their preferred candidate in order to avoid a win for their least preferred candidate. Indeed, they find a rate of strategic voting (between 6 and 10 percent of voters) that is similar to that found in advanced democracies like Canada and the United Kingdom. Consistent with those studies, they find that the best predictors of strategic voting are not personal characteristics like wealth or education, but attitudes towards the major candidates.

Oliveros uncovers another striking similarity between the attitudes of Argentine voters and their counterparts in advanced democracies: their perceptions of electoral integrity. Many citizens in both contexts distrust the secrecy of the ballot, a perception exacerbated in Argentina

by suspicions of rampant vote-buying. Oliveros examines the roots of perceptions of clientelism and ballot integrity and finds that these perceptions are related not to personal experiences, but to biases.

Taken together, these chapters offer strong support for our expectations about voting behavior in developing democracies. Voters in these contexts are less motivated by political attachments, ideology, or policy preferences than are voters in advanced democracies. Instead, they reward or punish incumbent politicians on the basis of their performance in office. And this means that the electoral cycle—the structure of the campaign and media coverage—can substantially affect vote choice.

Political attachments like partisanship and social identities like class still affect vote choice in developing democracies like Argentina. They are simply far less prevalent in these electorates than in those of advanced democracies. On the whole, Argentines vote strategically and prioritize retrospective performance when choosing candidates. Thus, Argentine democracy conforms to an accountability model of representation. Voters in developing democracies do not have the widespread, politically salient attachments nor the programmatic elite discourse to base their votes on these considerations. Whether this equilibrium is stable—or whether it is instead likely to change as these democracies further consolidate—is an open question. Another is whether this state of affairs is desirable.

Zechmeister's concluding chapter reflects on how the contributions in this volume speak to these questions. Survey data—and panel election surveys in particular—are increasingly available for developing democracies. As the quality and quantity of these data increase, comparative scholars ought to shed further light on these important questions.

## **Methodological Appendix: The Argentine Panel Election Study**

The APES consists of two face-to-face waves of interviews, administered by MBC MORI, the first between June 24, 2015 and August 7, 2015, and the second between November 21, 2015 and December 30, 2015. The first wave was based on a nationally representative sample of Argentine voters living in cities of 10,000 inhabitants and more, while the second wave consisted of a panel sample of those wave 1 respondents that accepted to participate again in the second wave, plus a refreshment sample.

The first wave of the APES relied on a national household sample of 1,149 Argentine citizens aged 18 years and over. The general design was a stratified multistage cluster sample, using probabilistic selection at some stages and non-probabilistic selection at others.<sup>24</sup> The panel design implied that we attempted to re-contact all respondents from wave 1. Our success rate was 68% (780 out of 1,149 original respondents). To compensate for sample attrition, we drew a refreshment sample of 626 respondents (see Deng et al. 2013), selected according to the same procedures described above for wave 1. The wave 2 sample therefore has a sample size of 1,406.

To adjust for unit nonresponse and attrition (see below), the APES dataset includes poststratification weights. These weights were constructed using raking considering the marginal distribution of three demographic characteristics: gender, age, and educational attainment.

### *Common variables*

The analyses in this volume use a common set of three constructed variables: education, wealth, and political knowledge. Education is a five-point ordinal variable based on levels of

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<sup>24</sup> For a more detailed description of the sample design and the complete questionnaire, see <http://www.noamlupu.com/data.html>.

formal education.<sup>25</sup> Following Filmer and Pritchett (2001), relative wealth is measured in quintiles of a factored index constructed from a series of questions about household assets. Political knowledge is the number of correct answers to three factual questions included in both survey waves.<sup>26</sup>

### *Panel attrition*

A common concern in analyzing panel data is panel attrition (Bartels 1999; Frankel and Hillygus 2014). In any panel, some of the individuals who responded to the first wave refuse to participate in the second (32% in the APES). If researchers are interested in leveraging the panel's repeated observations of the same individuals—as many chapters in this volume do—they analyze only the subset of initial respondents who participated in both waves. And if certain types of individuals are systematically more likely to refuse the second interview (that is, attrite), then the panel sample is no longer representative of the population.

In Table 1.A1, we follow Frankel and Hillygus (2014) in comparing attriters and nonattriters on both a series of demographic characteristics and a series of variables intended to capture their interest in the topic of the survey (politics) and their experiences taking the first wave of the survey. In terms of demographics, we compare attriters and nonattriters on their gender, age, education level, wealth, marital status, household size, and the number of children in their household. Regarding interest and survey experience, we compare the two groups in terms

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<sup>25</sup> The levels are: 0: Without formal education or incomplete primary, 1: Complete primary, 2: Incomplete secondary, 3: Complete secondary, 4: Incomplete tertiary or university, 5: Complete tertiary or university.

<sup>26</sup> These are: (1) “Including the Federal District, how many provinces does Argentina have?” (2) “Who is the Minister of the Economy?” and (3) “Who is the President of Brazil?”

of their political knowledge (in wave 1), social trust,<sup>27</sup> whether they identify with a political party, whether they or a household member was the victim of a crime in the prior 12 months, and an indicator for whether or not they refused to respond to a question in wave 1. We find that the only statistically significant difference between attriters and nonattriters in the APES is that nonattriters—that is, those in the panel sample—are slightly more likely to be female and slightly less educated.<sup>28</sup>

**Table 1.A1. Comparisons between attriters and nonattriters in APES**

	<b>Attriters</b>	<b>Nonattriters</b>
Female	<b>0.46</b>	<b>0.57</b>
Age	42	43
Education (0-5)	<b>2.56</b>	<b>2.36</b>
Wealth	3.03	3.01
Married	0.48	0.52
Household size	3.63	3.83
Children in household	1.11	1.25
Political knowledge	1.60	1.62
Social trust	0.18	0.17
Partisan	0.44	0.49
Crime victim	0.33	0.32
Refused question on wave 1	0.63	0.57

*Note:* Bold type indicates a significant difference between attriters and nonattriters at  $p < 0.5$ .

Of course, we cannot rule out the possibility that attrition biases our panel sample, but the comparisons in Table 1.A1 give us some confidence that attrition bias is minimal. The refreshment sample also allows analysts to correct for potential attrition bias (e.g. Hirano et al. 2001).

<sup>27</sup> The question is: “In general, would you say that one can trust in most people or that one can never be too careful when dealing with other people?”

<sup>28</sup> These differences are confirmed by logistic regression analyses (see online appendix).



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