Do Informal Institutions Make Democracy Work?

Accounting for Accountability in Argentina

By

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Overview. Democratic accountability and responsiveness rely on informal institutions. Voters and politicians must follow certain unwritten rules if democracy is to work well. Furthermore they must expect others to follow these rules: even someone who is inclined to follow rules such as "weigh a politician's past performance in deciding how to vote" will have few incentives to do so if she does not expect others to do so. I describe the experience of a city in Argentina where democracy has functioned better than one might have expected and better than in many other Argentine cities and towns. I then offer evidence that people in this city do think about the informal rules of politics in ways that are systematically different from the beliefs and expectations of people in other places. These expectations are in some ways surprising. I speculate briefly about the origins of these differences, and then end with some reflections about democracy and informal institutions.

Introduction: Informal Institutions and Democracy

Many of the features of democracy that we value most highly rely crucially on informal institutions. Democratic accountability and responsiveness rely on informal institutions, as Helmke and Levitsky define them: unwritten but socially shared rules "created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels" (2003:10-11). Consider responsiveness. Elected office-holders in democratic systems are responsive when they pursue policies that are in line with the preferences of their constituents. Most citizens of democracies (and democratic theorists) believe office-holders *should* be responsive, and we have evidence that they often are (see for example Stimson et al., 1995). Yet when they are, this is not because they follow written,

formalized rules or laws such as: "office-holders must do what their constituents want and if not they will be fined or lose their jobs."

Rather, one way that citizens can induce governments to be responsive is by using elections as a selection device, a device to choose representatives whose policy preferences are the same as their constituents' (Miller and Stokes, 1966), or to chose representatives who are trustworthy and competent (Fearon, 1999). If responsive government is to be achieved through elections-as-a-selection-device, this requires that (1) candidates send reliable signals in the campaign of their policy preferences or of their levels of competence, honesty, etc.; (2) voters pay attention to these signals when they decide how to vote; and (3) the winning candidate implements the announced policies (his preferred ones) or governs in a manner consistent with the personality traits displayed in the campaign. We can re-write these conditions as rules by putting them in the subjunctive voice: (1) candidates shall send reliable signals in the campaign; (2) voters shall pay attention to these signals; and (3) the winner shall act in a manner consistent with his campaign signals. None of these is a formal rule; there is no law or written rule specifying what sorts of signals politicians shall give or how voters shall decide how to vote. Hence responsiveness via elections-as-a-selection-device relies crucially on informal institutions.

But elections may not always work as selection devices, and constituents often find themselves represented by politicians who are not inclined to pursue the constituents' preferred policies or who lack competence or honesty. In these cases, citizens may still be able to induce politicians to be responsive if they can hold politicians accountable. Political theorists since Montesquieu and Madison have noticed that

politicians thus disinclined may still be responsive to voters, if they anticipate getting turned out of office when they are unresponsive. The "electoral connection" (Mayhew 1974), sustained by politicians trying to follow their constituents' preferred course of action lest they lose their next reelection bid, also relies heavily on informal institutions. Not only are the rules or expected behaviors that induce responsiveness via accountability unwritten, they have, as Barry (1972) notes, a kind of "invisible-hand" quality. Politicians anticipate certain patterns of behavior by voters, voters behave in the manner that politicians expect and – without anyone dictating anything specific, much less writing any laws – governments are responsive.

Like the informal rules enforcing responsiveness via elections-as-a-selection-device, the informal rules enforcing responsiveness via accountability can also be made explicit: (1) voters shall pay attention to the performance of an incumbent during the current term in office; (2) voters shall set some threshold of performance, and if the incumbent does not perform above it they shall vote against him; (3) politicians shall look forward during their term to the next election and behave such that voters will reelect him.[1]

Occasionally political systems have adopted formal rules aimed at promoting responsiveness. In the mid-17th century England, electors began to present their parliamentary representatives with *instructions*. Instructions began as enjoinders for members to communicate the grievances of constituents to the full legislature. In the 18th century they evolved into instructions regarding how members should vote on particular pieces of legislation. Following Helmke and Levitsky's terminology, the instructions

[1] Formal rules are not irrelevant. Formal rules establish the length of politicians' terms, and hence imply repeated elections and the rule that the incumbent who does not win will step down. Formal rules can also interfere with responsiveness: term limits can sever the electoral connection (but see Carey, 1996).

themselves were a formalized. But instruction-induced-responsiveness still relied on informal institutions. The sanction for a member who departed from instructions (like for the member who wished to change parties) was that he *should* resign his seat and seek reelection. But this was nothing more than a "moral obligation" (Emden 1962[1933]. The institution of instructions evolved into another informal institution, still with us today, of the campaign pledge, and uniform campaign pledges that all candidates from a party would sign were the origins of the party platform. Rarely is the expectation that politicians will carry out their pledges or platforms sanctified in law.[2] In contemporary Colombia, mayoral candidates must deposit campaign platforms in an official registry, and if they fail to fulfill these promises citizens can recall them. But such formalization of rules inducing responsiveness is the exception. Usually, responsiveness via accountability, like responsiveness via elections-as-selection-devices, relies on informal rules.

The intuition of Helmke and Levitsky is that there is something real and important about informal institutions. This is also the intuition of the theorist who helped inspire their interest in informal institutions: Guillermo O'Donnell (1996). O'Donnell had his eyes turned toward the new democracies of Latin America when he began insisting that informal institutions are, for better or worse, central to the real functioning of democracies. But informal institutions have always mattered for democracy, and the institutional designers of new democracies of eras gone by were well aware of their central role. The authors of the *Federalists Papers* tried to win support for the formal institutions proposed in the Constitution with reference to informal rules and behaviors

[2] The desire to achieve reelection can create political pressures on politicians to abide by their pledges or mandates; see Harrington, 1993; Stokes, 2001.

that, combined with the formal rules, would elicit good results. To cite just one of many possible examples, consider James Madison's efforts to discredit the notion that members of the proposed United States House of Representatives would "aim at an ambitious sacrifice of the many to the aggrandizement of the few" (2000[1788]:292). The appropriate (formal) defense was repeated and frequent elections, which would force members to pursue the public interest. Members "will be compelled to anticipate the moment when their power is to cease, when their exercise of it is to be reviewed, and when they must descend to the level from which they were raised: there for ever to remain unless a faithful discharge of their trust shall have established their true title to a renewal of it" (:294). As we have seen, this "electoral connection" relies heavily on informal rules and behaviors.

If anything, our editors may be too deferential in their claims about the relation between informal and formal institutions. A central claim of theirs is that informal institutions are important supports or bulwarks to formal institutions, operating in their interstices and (sometimes at least) making the formal institutions work better. The examples that I have offered are ones in which informal and formal institutions have compatible goals: inducing representatives to be responsive to voters. Within Helmke and Levitsky's framework, then, these are informal institutions that *complement* formal institutions. Yet the reliance of the formal institution of repeated elections on the informal rules that induce responsiveness seems more central to the formal institutions' workings than in the examples Helmke and Levitsky offer. Here informal institutions and rules are doing the central work of democracy, not just improving on it.

Helmke and Levitsky define informal institutions, again, as unwritten rules that generate (or encapsulate) expected, patterned actions. The examples of responsiveness and accountability underscore the centrality of the term *expected*. If these rules are to work they must accurately describe not just what people do but what people expect others to do. Without these expectations the rules are eviscerated. Consider the informal rules that support accountability. If a voter doesn't think that a politician will be disciplined by the anticipation of the next election, then she may interpret anything good that happens on his watch as fortuitous and owing to circumstances that she can't observe (e.g., a favorable international economic climate). She should then pay no attention to the incumbent's apparent performance in office and focus entirely, perhaps, on whatever she can learn about politicians' characters or preferred policies during the campaign (or chose by some other criterion).

To restate the central claim of my paper, the informal institutions of democracy, and the expectations they generate and encapsulate, are critical factors in shaping how well democracy works. In the remainder of this paper I make this point through a study of expectations about informal rules supporting democratic accountability in one troubled new democracy, Argentina. This is a democracy in which formalized political institutions, understood either as rules or, more traditionally, as political parties and bureaucracies and elections, are, to put it mildly, enfeebled, (see Levitsky, 2003). Popular protest and economic distress, not constitutional rules, frequently determine the length of Argentine presidents' terms. In the last couple of years primary elections have been cancelled when they threaten to produce a result opposed by those who have the power to cancel them, whether that power comes from a command over party machinery

or from physical force. And political parties have failed in one of their key functions: allocating the scarce resource of candidacies among their members. It is not my claim here that informal institutions can save Argentine democracy, or that they can prop up that country's formal institutions of democracy when the latter really collapse. Rather my claim is that democracy functions better there (and probably in most democracies, new and old) when informal rules enforce responsiveness, in this setting through accountability.

The remainder of this paper is laid out as follows. First, I provide evidence from qualitative research that indicates that, despite its generally tattered state, democracy in Argentina works better in some localities than one might expect from the national scene, and better in some localities than in others. I describe the experience of local democracy in one city where for a time at least it functioned surprisingly well. In a setting where local democracy works well, do citizens indeed follow informal rules that are different from the rules and expectations of people in places where democracy works less well? In the following section I draw on survey research that suggests that the answer is "yes." People in the city under consideration have a heightened appreciation for mechanisms of accountability and, more than people from other regions, expect others to behave in ways that make responsiveness possible. I do not in this paper offer a full account of where these expectations and rules came from, but I do eliminate some explanations that the literature on the transition and consolidation of democracy suggest, and speculate about a better answer. I show that neither the income levels of individuals nor social capital explain regional differences in the prominent of rules of accountability. What may matter more are not traits of individuals but of communities: their levels of social equality. I

conclude by returning to the general question of the importance of informal institutions to democracy.

Democracy and Accountability in Mar del Plata

Mar del Plata is a city of a half-million residents, which sits on the Atlantic coast, in the southeast of the province of Buenos Aires.[3] Mar del Plata began in the 19th century as a community of fishermen, and is still Argentina's leading exporter of haddock. Several manufacturing industries were established there in the middle decades of the 20th century, but the leading industry today is tourism. Originally, wealthy porteños summered in Mar del Plata. The city developed infrastructure to attract a wider scale of tourists. In the 1940s, it built a set of hulking casinos on the beachfront. In the 1950s, it opened Route 2, a two-lane road that winds gracefully, parallel to the coast. Today Mar del Plata is a top destination for Argentine tourists, including many middle-class people from Greater Buenos Aires. The city attracts more than six million tourists a year.

Although its economy relies mainly on tourism, Mar del Plata has not escaped many of the social trends and problems that have plagued other Argentine cities in the period since the end of military rule in 1983. With its large service sector and its smaller industrial sector, it has attracted large influxes of population from rural parts of the province of Buenos Aires, as well as from other cities and towns. As of October 2001, 30% of Mar del Plata's residents lived below the poverty line, compared to 38% in the country as a whole (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, 2001).

Perhaps as distinctive as its economic development into a tourist destination were its politics. Mar del Plata had a strong socialist tradition through the middle decades of

[3] Mar del Plata is the major city in a department or "*partido*" called General Pueyrredón. There are several other towns in General Pueyrredón, but only one municipal government (the one housed in Mar del Plata).

the 20th century, electing mayors from the Socialist Democratic Party (*Partido Socialista Democrático*). During the military regime of the 1970s and early 1980s, some of the party's leaders were tarnished by ties to the regime, and since the transition to democracy in 1983 the city's preeminent party has been the Radical Party (*Unión Cívica Radical*). The Peronist party has dominated local labor unions, but it has never won control over city government. Municipal elections returned the Radicals to power in 1983, 1987, 1995, and 1999; in 1991 voters elected members of a center-right coalition, Alianza Marplatense, as mayor (*intendente*) and to the majority of the city council (*Consejo Deliberante*). In 1995, Mar del Plata residents chose as their mayor Elio Aprile, a professor of philosophy at the National University of Mar del Plata and member of the Radical Party.

The events to be described in this section, which paints a picture of relatively healthy local democratic life, do not make Mar del Plata unique in Argentina. But they do make it distinctive; and the distinctiveness of these events in the mid-1990s drew national attention to the city. Political actors in other cities and regions have introduced important innovations and sometimes enlivened local democracy. For example, somewhat later both Rosario and the city of Buenos Aires adopted *participatory budgeting*, modeled in part on the innovations of Porto Alegre, Brazil. Participatory budgeting allows citizens and representatives of local organizations to take part directly in defining budgetary priorities for the coming year and in overseeing expenditures. Mar del Plata's experience was less fully participatory. Yet the innovations in Mar del Plata came earlier and were more home-grown than those of these other cities. Nowhere else in Argentina, as far as the experts whom I have consulted know, has a municipal

government used the device of a plebiscite to attempt to raise taxes for particular projects (and this was the first plebiscite for any purpose ever held in Mar del Plata). Democratic innovation does not make Mar del Plata unique, but it does make it far from typical. The more typical experience of local democracy in these difficult years has been one of incompetence, clientelism, and a lack of transparency in local finances.

In early April 1996, at a time of national economic downturn and uncertainty, Mar del Plata's then newly elected Mayor Aprile announced that he would convoke a plebiscite or "Popular Consultation" (*Consulta Popular*).[4] The Popular Consultation would allow residents to cast votes in favor of or against the mayor's proposal for a special tax to finance a program of improvements to the city's infrastructure. He entitled the program *Mar del Plata 2000*. Households would pay three or four *pesos* per month to finance 25 public-works projects.[5] In the decree announcing the Popular Consultation the mayor described in detail, down to the precise city blocks involved, the 25 public-works programs to be financed by the special tax. They included widening and paving streets; installing lighting at streets and beaches; installing pavement, lighting, and drainage systems in an industrial park; planting trees and greenery; and installing sewers. The decree included the chronological order in which the projects would be carried out.

The Popular Consultation, scheduled for May 12 (1996), was unusual in several respects. The city had never before held a plebiscite. As some of Mayor Aprile's critics

[4] The discussion of the Popular Consultation that follows draws heavily on studies by, and discussions with, a team of researchers that comprise the *Grupo de Análisis Político* at the Universidad Nacional Mar del Plata: Fabio Albo, Rosa Duarte, Daniela Filieri, Fernando Folcher, Gabriel Rodríguez, and Gustavo Vela.

[5] For the purpose of local taxation, the city is divided into zones, some of which pay at a higher rate and some at a lower rate. Which zone a household was located in would determine whether the special tax would be three or four *pesos*. The special tax would be a part of people's contributions for Lighting and Conservation of Public Roads (*Alumbrado y Conservación de la Vía Pública*) which in Mar del Plata, as in other municipalities in the Province of Buenos Aires, accounts for most locally raised municipal revenues.

pointed out, he had the legal authority to carry out public-works programs and to finance them with a special tax if he so desired; his move to generate a public mandate for *Mar del Plata 2000* was politically, not legally, motivated. The Popular Consultation would allow Mayor Aprile to carry out an aggressive public-works program with broad public support (assuming, of course, that his proposal prevailed).

The mayor's design for the election itself emphasized that this was a departure from politics-as-usual in Argentina. Voting would be voluntary, not (as in other elections) compulsory. The usual registration rolls (*padrones*) would not be used, and instead anyone who could show proper documentation would be allowed to vote. Foreigners who resided in the city (many of them immigrants from Paraguay or from Andean countries) who could produce identity cards and proof of residency would also be permitted to vote. In normal Argentine elections, men and women are sorted into separate voting tables (*mesas*) and vote in separate booths; the Consultation dispensed with sex-segregated voting.

The Consultation was a bold move not just in motivation or design but in what people in an economically volatile developing country were being asked to do: agree to pay an extra "contribution" (opponents called it a "tax"), regularly, over a long period. Veterans of efforts to pass bond issues in advanced industrial countries will appreciate the difficulty of the challenge facing the Aprile administration and the boldness of the campaign. The municipality predicted that the special tax would bring in 65 million *pesos* in the first four years (those corresponding with Mayor Aprile's term). It would cost households up to 48 *pesos* per year, or more than 300 *pesos* over the full eight years of the program. For many families this was not an insignificant sum. In a survey my

collaborators and I conducted in Mar del Plata in late 2001 and early 2002 (see below), the average reported household income was between 300-500 pesos per month; over the course of the whole *Mar del Plata 2000* program, the average family could expect to pay almost the equivalent of one-month's household income.[6]

Furthermore, Argentina in the mid-1990s was not a country where one would expect people to be especially trusting of public officials or especially happy to turn over extra resources to any governmental entity. They might well have been distrustful both of the competence of these officials and of their honesty. On competence, Argentines in the 1980s and through the early 1990s had observed national governments flit from economic program to economic program, while the economy surged into hyperinflation and rioters went into the streets. On honesty, by 1996 the national government under Carlos Menem had already suffered from some embarrassing and highly publicized corruption scandals, involving, for example, kickbacks from privatization schemes. Provincial and local authorities in many parts of the country had also given Argentines reasons to be skeptical of the political leadership. We might well expect Argentines to have been leery of voluntarily placing more of their money – which, with the *tequila*-effect-induced recession, they had less of – in the hands of possibly incompetent and possibly corrupt public officials. Indeed, in our survey we asked whether the current crisis (more acute in 2001 than in 1996) was due to politicians pursuing bad policies or to politicians being corrupt. Eighty-two percent believed that corruption caused the collapse. With the public perception of many politicians as incompetent and corrupt,

[6] My collaborators on various parts of this project are Valeria Brusco (Universidad Nacional de Villa María), Matthew Cleary (University of Chicago), and Marcelo Nazareno (Universidad Nacional de Córdoba).

little wonder that Mar del Plata's mayor, trying to drum up support for his Consultation, repeatedly spelled out his "fundamental premises: Honesty and efficiency."[7]

It's hard to review the debate that the announcement of the plebiscite unleashed without feeling that democracy was alive and well in Mar del Plata – at least democracy in the sense of a system that encourages lively and broad-ranging public debates about community affairs.[8] The debate embraced a number of themes: whether *Mar del Plata 2000* would achieve its stated goals of increasing productivity, improving the quality of life, and attracting tourism; whether the tax increase would depress the local economy; whether the distribution of the costs and the benefits was fair and sufficiently progressive; whether changing the location of some of the proposed public works would better promote community development; whether the process of choosing the particular projects included in the plan had been fair and democratic; whether the sequencing of the work would be fair to poor, outlying *barrios*; whether official estimates of the number of jobs the program would create were inflated;[9] whether a plebiscite was an appropriate way to make community decisions; whether the voting would be clean; what level of turnout would legitimize the results; and whether the city government, if it prevailed in the plebiscite, would make appropriate and transparent use of the funds that the special tax would generate.

Official arguments in favor of "the Yes," as it soon came to be known, focused on the collective benefits to the community of the proposed infrastructure improvements and

[7]Quoted in *Diario el Atlantico*, April 16, 1996; cited in Albo et al., 2000, p. 6.
[8] Albo, et al. (2000) use official sources and a day-by-day review of the local newspapers, such as *Diario el Atlántico* and *Diario la Capital* in April and May, 1996, to reconstruct this debate. One of the co-authors, Gustavo Vela, was a member of the City Council during this period.
[9] The mayor put the number at 5,000-7,000. Some critics put it at 500. See Albo et al, 2000, and Folcher et al., 2002.

the timeliness of the program. Two days before the Consultation, Oscar Pagni, president of the City Council and an ally of the mayor's, declared that the program "appeals to the solidarity and the support of works that will transform the city… with the perspective of the next 15 to 20 years. If it's not done now, it will be hard to do in the future. And the city would be delayed (*la ciudad se postergaría*)."[10] Proponents also cast the "special contribution" as relatively modest in size. "Lend me some pesos, and I'll give them back in works" (*Préstenme unos pesos, y los devuelvo en obras*) was Mayor Aprile's favorite slogan.[11] And, at least implicitly, they emphasized the trustworthiness of Mayor Aprile and his administration. The union of municipal workers declared, "Mar del Plata needs a reactivation in all dimensions…it's for all of these reasons that we have our *confidence deposited in the Mayor*."[12]

Opposition to the Consultation and to *Mar del Plata 2000* came from many sources. Some prominent Peronists supported the plebiscite and the program. These included Norma Godoy, a member of the National Congress from Mar del Plata, and Eduardo Duhalde, former vice president under Menem in his first term and, in 1996, the Governor of the Province of Buenos Aires. But the local Peronist party complained about aspects of the plebiscite and the program. In the end the local Peronists took an ambiguous stance: they didn't as a party join the campaign against it (organized into the *Mesa Coordinadora por el NO*), but leading local Peronists, such as Juan Garivoto and Pablo Vacante, declared that they would vote No.

[10] Quoted in *Diario el Atlántico*, May 10, 1996, cited in Albo, et al. 2000, p. 6.
[11] Quoted in Diario la Capital, April 20, 1996, cited in Albo, et al. 2000, p. 2. Throughout the translations are mine.
[12] Quoted in *Diario la Capital*, May 7, 1996, cited in Albo, et al. 2000, p. 7, emphasis mine.

Across the ideological spectrum the partisan opposition in Mar del Plata campaigned against the Consultation and the program. The Right applauded the plebiscite as an instance of participatory democracy but predicted that the tax increase would cause economic decline (MODIN). The leader of the Alianza Marplatense proposed allowing voters to cast ballots for a third option, favoring the realization of public works but with "savings, efficiency, and external financing."[13] On the Center-Left, FREPASO leaders applauded the innovation of a plebiscite on city affairs. But they tried to persuade the mayor to make the special tax progressive; when he refused to alter the proposal they joined the campaign for the No. National FREPASO leader Graciela Fernández Meijide supported the Mar del Plata plebiscite and the *Mar del Plata 2000*. Parties of the traditional Left also complained that the special tax would be regressive, that the Electoral Tribunal was poised to carry off fraud (Communist Party), and that the plebiscite's real intention was "to increase taxes and stick its hand into the pocket of workers and the middle class to finance the fiscal deficit"(Workers' Party).[14] The Workers' Party's phrase "stick its hand into the pockets" (*meterle la mano en el bolsillo*) hints at graft. If residents of Mar del Plata had any latent fears that the mayor had hidden motives and might use the tax proceeds inappropriately, portions of the local political class stoked these fears.

Plan Mar del Plata 2000 received a mixed reception among community organizations and labor unions. The Peronist-controlled municipal workers' union (*Sindicato de Trabajadores Municipales*) and the Mar del Plata regional branch of the General Confederation of Labor (*Confederación General del Trabajo*) complained of a

[13] Quoted in *Diario el Atlántico*, April 22, 1996, cited in Albo, et al. 2000, p. 11.
[14] Quoted in *Diario la Capital*, April 16, 1996, cited in Albo, et al. 2000, p. 9.

"lack of equity" in the financing scheme, applauded the fact that the proposals explained in detail what public works would be supported, and came out in favor of the Yes (the program would, after all, create jobs). And, as mentioned earlier, they also hinted that a good reason to support the plan was that the mayor was competent and honest. Whereas many applauded the participatory quality of the Consultation, the Federation of Neighborhood Development Associations (*Federación de Asociaciones Vecinales de Fomento*) claimed that the process for assigning priorities to the various public-works projects was too exclusive. The Federation asked the mayor for a four-month delay so that a commission could be formed to use a "participatory planning process" (*planificación participativa del proyecto*); when no delay was agreed to, it joined the *Mesa Coordinadora por el No*.[15]

There is much that is remarkable about this story of local democracy in Mar del Plata: the boldness of Mayor Aprile's proposals; the use of a novel form of popular consultation, a form that has the political benefit of producing a mandate and the democratic benefit of allowing people a direct choice crucial community matters; the richness of the debate that the proposals and the plebiscite set off. Perhaps most remarkable of all is that the Yes vote prevailed: on Sunday, May 12, 1996, despite the recession, despite widespread suspicion of the probity of politicians, and despite serious challenges raised against *Mar del Plata 2000*, almost half of Mar del Plata's eligible voters turned out at the polls and 54% voted in favor of raising their own taxes.

The *Grupo de Análisis Político* of the National University of Mar del Plata has studied the distribution of Yes and No votes by electoral *circuito* (similar to a city precinct in the U.S.) and by neighborhood or *barrio*. Among the eight *circuitos* and the

[15] Quoted in *Diario la Capital*, April 16, 1996, cited in Albo, et al. 2000, p. 9.

80 *barrios*, they find little evidence that the income level of a *circuito* or barrio's residents, the stance that community leaders in a particular neighborhood took vis-à-vis the Consultation, or the planned location of public works affected levels of support for the mayor's plan. Mayor Aprile and his allies seem to have persuaded a majority of those who were willing to vote to "deposit their confidence" in the local government, and that if lent "a few *pesos*," these would indeed be returned "in public works."

This story of robust local democracy in Mar del Plata has an epilogue and a moral. On the strength of the Yes vote, the Aprile administration quickly borrowed funds to finance the initiation of *Mar del Plata 2000* projects. The new debt was to be paid off with the increased tax receipts. But as Argentina's economy sank deeper into recession in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Mar del Plata's local tax revenues declined. Total tax receipts fell from nearly 70 million *pesos* in 1996 to just under 48 million in 2000 (Folcher et al. 2002:13). The tax *rate* did not fall, nor did the tax base of the city shrink; in fact it grew from 360,000 households in 1996 to 409,000 in 2000 (Folcher et al.:13.) The unavoidable conclusion is that, having voted themselves a tax increase in 1996, residents of Mar del Plata began evading taxes at a higher rate. (They also reelected Mayor Aprile in 1999; but in 2002, with the city under economic stress, he was forced to resign.) It would be a mistake, however, to infer that Mar del Plata residents evaded taxes in response to the higher tax rate, or that they had voted in favor of the mayor's proposal in 1996 with the intention of evading the new tax. The more likely explanation – and here's the moral – is that a collective commitment to pay more turned out not to be credible – or binding – under the dire economic circumstances that were about to overtake Argentina.

What's Trust Got to do with It? Expectations of Accountability in Mar del Plata

Unaware as everyone was in 1996 of the economic storm that would hit a few years later, people in Mar del Plata were willing to impose burdens on themselves for the purpose of community development. This willingness would seem to require certain expectations of their local leaders: that they were competent and would not take the money and run. Social scientists have emphasized in recent years the importance of *trust*, and of the institutions that promote trust, in making social relations work smoothly, both market relations (see especially North, 1990) and relations between citizens and representatives (see Putnam, 1993, Levi, 1997, and Ferejohn, 1999). Are people from Mar del Plata particularly trusting? Are they more trusting than residents of other cities? Are they more *personally* trusting of political leaders? Or is what is distinctive about them that they believe more in the power of institutions, formal and informal, to constrain politicians and induce them to act in the interests of constituents? These are questions I address in this section.

To do so, I draw on sample surveys that my collaborators and I conducted in three Argentine provinces in December 2001 and January 2002. We instructed the polling firm Consultores en Políticas Públicas, S.A., to conduct face-to-face interviews with 480 adults, aged 18 or older, in the provinces of Buenos Aires (a province that contains 135 municipalities, some of them in the area of Greater Buenos Aires); Córdoba, a relatively industrialized province to the northwest of Buenos Aires; and Misiones, a poorer and more agricultural province in the northeast, bordering Brazil and Paraguay. We also drew a separate sample of 480 adult residents of Mar del Plata.[16] Thus Mar del Plata was

[16] To select our sample, we used multistage cluster sampling procedures, as follows. From the full set of census tracts in each province (and in Mar del Plata) we selected 48, in each of which we interviewed 10

just one of ninety-nine municipalities in the three provinces where we conducted interviews. But by drawing a large random sample from within Mar del Plata we are able to make systematic comparisons between the adult population of that city, on the one hand, and, on the other, the residents of cities and towns across the two other provinces, as well as with residents of cities and towns elsewhere in the province of Buenos Aires.

We asked a series of questions designed to measure people's levels of trust. By *trust* I mean A's belief that B will act in A's interest, even though B would stand to gain in some way by not acting so and even though A cannot directly monitor B's relevant actions (Cleary and Stokes, 2001). Some questions were about people's generalized feelings of trust toward others, whereas other questions explored trust in specific kinds of relations, such as in political relations and market relations. Table 1 reports questions regarding interpersonal trust: whether the respondents trust their neighbors, and whether they view other people in the abstract as trustworthy. Respondents across the three provinces were quite trusting of their neighbors, saying by a margin of three to one that they would trust a neighbor to care for their home while they were away. But they displayed widespread distrust of abstract others, with majorities agreeing that most people will take advantage of you when they can and that a minority of people is trustworthy. Several studies indicate that Argentines trusted others less and less over the first two decades of renewed democracy. The percentage responding in the *World Values*

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individuals. To select the 48 tracts, we divided the entire population of the province by 48. We used the resulting number as a cut-off number. We then drew tracts at random, using a skip number, from the full list of tracts, summing the population of each tract drawn as we proceeded. When the addition of a tract's population put the total over the cut-off point, this tract entered our sample. We repeated the whole procedure, until we had selected 48 tracts. We then used maps to develop a sample frame of streets in each of the selected tracts, and then used random numbers to select square blocks in which to conduct the interviews. Interviewers chose the houses on the blocks by skip numbers. Within each household, interviewers requested interviews with the adult family member who had the last birthday.

Survey that one could trust other people fell from 26% in 1984 to 18% in 1995 (Mussetta 2002:66)

If democracy worked unusually well in Mar del Plata this was not because people in that city were more trusting in a generalized sense than were people in other regions. Consider the question, "Thinking about the locality or *barrio* where you live, if you were to go on a trip, do you have any neighbors whom you could trust to care for your house while you were away?" (variable name, *Neighbor*). To discern the factors influencing people's answers, I estimated logit regression models (not shown) where the dependent variable was a dummy that took the value of 1 when a person said they would leave their house in the care of a neighbor, 0 when they said they would not. Information about a person's income and the quality of their housing, and about the size of the city or town they live in would help us predict their answer to this question. (People with relatively high incomes, who live in high-quality housing, and who are from smaller towns and cities are more likely to trust their neighbors.) But being from Mar del Plata does not help us predict the answer. All else equal, people from Mar del Plata were no more likely to trust their neighbors than were people from the provinces of Córdoba or Misiones; if anything they were slightly *less* trusting, by this measure, than were people from the province of Buenos Aires as a whole.

Do people in Mar del Plata, more than people from other regions, trust *politicians*? To answer this question, we asked survey respondents a series of questions about governments and politicians. Some of these questions, and respondents' answers, appear in Table 2. In the first three questions listed in Table 2 we asserted that politicians sometimes behave well – provide good public services (*Services)*, are efficient (*Efficient)*,

pay attention to the opinions of constituents like the respondent (*Attention)* – and then asked respondents to choose among several alternative explanations for this good behavior. In each case one option that we offered attributed good behavior to the personal qualities of politicians ("they are committed people," "they care about constituents' opinions"), whereas the other attributed it to mechanisms of accountability ("they're under the watch of the courts," "they'll lose the next election"). Among respondents across all three provinces, the "accountability" answer was in all cases the one respondents chose more frequently.

I coded answers to each of these three questions as dummy variables for an "accountability" answer. For example, if a person answered "when municipal governments are efficient this is because otherwise people won't vote for them in the next election," I scored this person 1 on the dummy variable *Efficient*. I then estimated logit regression models of these accountability answers. The results are reported in Table 3. It shows that people with higher incomes often tended to believe more in the personalities of politicians than in mechanisms of accountability, and that younger people were more skeptical of the characters of politicians and more likely to ascribe good behavior to mechanisms of accountability. Men were more likely to ascribe efficiency to the characters of politicians, women to their fear of losing votes. Most important for our purposes, all else equal residents in Mar del Plata generally believed more in accountability than did people from other regions.[17] They were significantly more likely than were people from all other regions to say that governments provide services when

[17] The models in Table 3 include dummy variables for respondents who lived in Buenos Aires, Córdoba, and Misiones. Hence the base category in these models is people who lived in Mar del Plata. Negative signs on the three provincial dummies, *Buenos Aires*, *Córdoba*, and *Misiones*, indicate that people in these regions were *less likely than people from Mar del Plata* to offer an "accountability" answer to the question.

they are under the watch of the courts, the congress, and the press; they were somewhat more likely than were people in Córdoba and elsewhere in Buenos Aires, and significantly more likely than were people in Misiones, to say that efficient governments are ones that fear losing office; and they were significantly more likely than were people in Buenos Aires and Misiones, and close-to-significantly more likely than were people in Córdoba, to say that politicians who pay attention want to be reelected. People from Mar del Plata were significantly more likely than people from Córdoba to believe that a politician who took a bribe would get caught, and somewhat more likely to believe this than people from Misiones (but they were somewhat less likely to believe this than people from elsewhere in the province of Buenos Aires).

Not only do we find more widespread expectations in accountability in Mar del Plata, on some questions residence in Mar del Plata was the strongest predictor of these expectations. Consider *Services*. Region was a better predictor that people would tell the interviewer that politicians provide good services when they are institutionally constrained, and not when the are good people, than was income, education, gender, age, or party affiliation. To see the difference that residence in Mar del Plata made, consider the following simulated results.[18] If we assume a Buenos Aires resident who is a male Peronist supporter, someone of average income, housing quality, educational level, and age, the expected probability that he would say that good politicians are ones who are institutionally constrained is a little better than half: 0.57. Take the same respondent

[18] I generated the simulations using the *Clarify* program (Tomz, Wittenberg, and King, 2001, and King, Tomz, and Wittenberg, 2000). *Clarify* draws simulations of parameters of statistical models (in this case, logit regressions) from their sampling distribution and then converts these simulated parameters into expected values, such as expected probabilities of an answer to a survey question, given hypothetical values of explanatory variables. *Clarify* software and documentation are available from Gary King's website at http://gking.harvard.edu. The differences among the simulated expected probabilities reported here were statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

with exactly the same characteristics, but move him to Mar del Plata, and his probability of offering this "accountability" answer rises to 0.70. A shift from Misiones to Mar del Plata has an even more dramatic effect: the probability of an "accountability" answer rises from 0.42 to 0.70.

Trust in accountability in Mar del Plata focused on both formal and informal institutions. People there, as we have seen, believed that politicians performed well when under the watchful eye of the courts or of other branches of government. But they also believed in informal institutions of accountability. We saw that they had a firmer belief that the anticipation of the "future retrospective judgment of voters" (Manin, 1997) or that anticipation of "the moment when their power is to cease, when their exercise of it is to be reviewed" (Madison 1788) could induce governments to be efficient. The electoral connection, as I noted earlier, involves several informal rules and the expectation that other people will follow these rules. For it to hold, for example, voters must expect other voters to use appropriate criteria in deciding how to vote. Consider again our question, "When municipal governments work efficiently, is this because they are staffed by good, committed people, or because they know that if they don't work well people won't vote for them later?" To answer "because they know that if they don't work well people won't vote for them later," a voter has to believe that other voters do consider the incumbent government's efficiency when they go to the polls. Hence they must believe that voters won't be bought off by the small, individualized inducements of clientelism, which tend to come at the cost of efficiency and of the provision of public goods (see Robinson and Verdier, 2001, Estévez et al., 2001, and Medina and Stokes, 2002).

Our survey offers additional evidence that people in Mar del Plata used retrospective, performance-oriented criteria in voting, and expected their neighbors to use these criteria as well. We asked survey respondents questions about how they vote and how they expected other people in their neighborhood to vote. Table 4 lists four such questions, along with people's responses. Table 5 reports four logit regression estimations. In all estimations, the dependent variable is a dummy for people who cited prospective and non-performance oriented criteria when they decided how to vote or when asked how people around them voted.[19] The positive and significant signs on the regional dummies *Buenos Aires*, *Córdoba*, and *Misiones* show that Mar del Plata residents were significantly more likely to evaluate parties in ways consistent with accountability, and less with clientelist or prospective criteria, than were those from other regions.[20]

Mar del Plata's residents' belief in accountability is focused on politics, and does not does not appear to extend to the sphere of commercial relations. Our survey asked, "Considering now merchants who act honestly, is this because (1) they are honest people, (2) if they weren't they know they could be fined, or (3) they could lose clients?" Among all respondents, 45% answered "because they are honorable," 8% "because they know they could be fined," and 45% "because they could lose customers." One can think of

[19] The dependent variable in model 1 is a dummy for respondents who weigh a parties' proposals for the future more heavily than how they governed in the past when deciding how to vote (*Prospective*). The dependent variable in model 2 is a dummy for respondents who said that people support parties that give out favors, not parties that have the best proposals (*Program*). The dependent variable in model 3 is a dummy for respondents who said that people support parties that did them favors, not ones that are public-spirited (*Favor*). The dependent variable in model 4 is a dummy for respondents who said that other people evaluate the past performance of politicians, not their proposals for the future, when deciding how to vote (*Future*).

[20] In contrast an April 2003 survey in the city of Córdoba asked people, "What aspects do you keep in mind in deciding your vote for the presidential elections?" The most frequent answer was "the candidate's personality" (47%), followed by "proposals and promises" (30%), and finally "the experience of [his/her] government" (*la experiencia de gestión*). *La Voz del Interior* April 20, 2003.

people who answered "they know they may be fined" as believing in formal, legal institutions of commercial accountability, and those who answered "they could lose customers" as believing in informal institutions – there is no law that says that customers must abandon merchants whom they discover to be dishonest, but we would expect many customers to do just this. And such beliefs (as well as formal legal institutions) help reduce transaction costs and smooth the functioning of market economies (North, 1990). But what's important for our purposes is that residents of Mar del Plata were significantly *less* likely to believe in either a formal or an informal institution of market accountability than were people from Córdoba and Misiones, and somewhat less likely than people from other parts of the province of Buenos Aires. Not a generalized belief in institutions of accountability, but a belief specific to political relations, is what distinguished Mar del Plata residents from other Argentines.

These subtleties should not obscure my central finding: people who live in a city where democracy has functioned fairly well, in a national context where democracy more often performs badly, differ from people from other cities and towns in that they are more likely to abide by informal rules of politics that support accountability, and they are more likely to believe that their neighbors also abide by these rules. They also show a stronger appreciation of formal institutions that support democratic accountability. If people from Mar del Plata didn't use calculi of electoral support that supported accountability, if they didn't expect their neighbors to hold politicians to account, and if they didn't believe that politicians could be induced to perform better when they anticipated the future retrospective judgment of voters, it is hard to believe that they would be willing to entrust

their municipal leaders with extra resources on the expectation that these would be used efficiently and transparently.

Coda: region and attitudes toward tax evasion. The epilogue to our story of local democracy in Mar del Plata was not a happy one: with the growing national economic crisis people there increasingly evaded taxes, the municipality's revenues fell its debt rose, and Mayor Aprile, having been reelected in 1999, fell from power in 2002. The moral I drew was that robust local democracy may be no match for dire economic crisis. But how can we know that Mar del Plata voters did not cynically go along with *Mar del Plata 2000*, by voting Yes or by not bothering to turn out to vote No, while never intending to pay? Our survey explored people's attitudes toward the fairness of taxes and tax evasion. Mar del Plata's residents' responses re less suggestive of a brazen acceptance of tax evasion than of the idea that under some circumstances a person is justified in not paying. We asked people, "Do you think that not paying taxes is always justified, sometimes justified, or never justified?" (Frequency of responses: always justified – nine percent; sometimes justified – 45%; never justified – 45%.) Then we asked the follow-up, "If when many people don't pay taxes this means that there will be fewer public services in your locality, is it justified (yes or no)?" (Frequency of responses: 23% yes, 74% no.) Controlling for all other factors, I find in logit estimations (not shown) that people in Mar del Plata were more likely than people from elsewhere to answer that it is *sometimes* justified to evade, and less likely to answer either that it is *never* justified or that it is *always* justified. In response to the second question, they were somewhat more likely than people from the other regions to say that, taking into account

of the loss of services, evasion was never justified.[21] The responses suggest that the view from Mar del Plata was that the morality of tax evasion was conditional, whereas the views from other regions were more absolute (either against or in favor of evasion). Perhaps Mar del Plata's residents' recent experience of raising taxes on themselves and then not being able to pay enhanced their sense of the ambiguities of tax obligations.

Some preliminary thoughts on the roots of accountability. The question that immediately suggests itself is, Do these informal (and formal) rules, and the expectations that others will follow them, in fact *cause* democracy to function better? Perhaps, instead, relatively robust local democracy causes beliefs in these informal rules? *Why* does democracy function relatively well in some settings, and are informal institutions of accountability really the cause? Although I won't in this paper offer a full answer to these questions in the Argentine case, I offer some preliminary thoughts.

Notice first some explanations that we can reject. One line of thinking, proposed most prominently by Robert Putnam (1993), focuses on a culture of trust. Some regions in a country may develop a relatively rich associational life, a greater reservoir of personal trust, and hence larger supplies of social capital. According to Putnam, democracy works better in the North than in the South of Italy because "the civic community" in the former "is marked by an active, public-spirited citizenry, by egalitarian political relations, by *a social fabric of trust and cooperation,*" whereas the South is "cursed with vertically structured politics, a social life of fragmentation and isolation, and *a culture of distrust*" (:15, emphasis mine). In some communities people

[21] Not all of these effects were significant. People in Córdoba and Misiones were significantly less likely to say that not paying taxes was "sometimes" and significantly more likely to say it was "never" justified than were people from Mar del Plata. The differences between Mar del Plata and the rest of Buenos Aires went in the same direction, but tended not to be significant.

interact intensively, observe one another a lot, and believe, even when they don't observe one another, that others are acting for the common good. Social trust in the polity acts like market trust in the economy, allowing people to achieve higher levels of efficiency. A trusting society secretes a well-functioning democracy.

In Argentina, as we have seen, people in one place where democracy seemed to work pretty well did *not* trust people in general, or their neighbors, or merchants, or politicians, more than in other regions where democracy worked less well. They didn't trust politicians except in the convoluted sense of trusting them to follow their own interest in staying in office and out of jail. They weren't particularly prone to entrust their homes to their neighbors, but they did trust their fellow voters to punish politicians who underperformed and not to be bought off by handouts. A final piece of evidence that social capital is not the key to our story is that people in Mar del Plata do not seem to have created more social capital than people elsewhere. We asked a range of questions about respondents' involvement in organizations and about whether and how frequently they attended meetings. These measures of social capital failed to predict adherence to rules of accountability; nor were people from Mar del Plata any more involved in associational life than people from other regions. (They were, however, more likely to get their news from printed sources; the debates about *Mar del Plata 2000* that were aired in dailies such as *La Capital* and *El Atlántico* had a broad local readership.)

Another venerable line of research links the emergence and consolidation of democracy with economic development. Higher incomes are supposed to imbue people with longer time horizons, and make them less conflict-prone and more tolerant of others' opinions – all of which are in turn supposed to promote democracy (see especially Lipset,

1959, 1960). Among people who answered our surveys, we observed no straightforward effect of income, education, or the quality of housing on beliefs might promote democracy. Just as important, whatever effects people's household incomes or educational levels or quality of housing might have had, they did not reduce the effect of region on expectations of accountability. Comparing a resident of Mar del Plata with a person from another region who both have the same level of income, the Mar del Plata resident is considerably more likely to participate in, and expect others to participate in, informal institutions that support responsive governments.

In contrast, income and development, not as traits of individuals but as structural traits of communities, may help explain differences in the quality of local democracy in Argentina. Regions and cities vary in their levels of development and in their class structures. Scholars in comparative politics have contended that equality promotes democracy (see especially Boix, 2003, Acemoglu and Robinson, 2002; this idea also appears in places in Lipset, 1959). When the gap between rich and poor is relatively narrow, the rich may view the poor as less "`beyond the pale'" (Lipset 1958:83) and hence more readily incorporated into civic life; and social equality may make the poor look less threatening to the wealthy, because they are less prone to pursue strongly redistributive measures (Boix 2003). Applied to our context, one could imagine that a community that is not socially polarized would also be one in which people would be relatively ready to expect that the actions of others will be appropriate to sustaining democratic accountability. It is tantalizing to note, along these lines, that a higher percentage of self-reported incomes in Mar del Plata than in any of our three other regions were concentrated in the middle of the range (300-700 pesos per month; 44%

reported this as their household income in Mar del Plata, whereas only 33% did in Misiones, and the other two sampling regions fell in between). It is also tantalizing to note that, when asked to place themselves in the lower, middle, or upper class, a larger percentage of people in Mar del Plata chose "middle class" than in any of the other regions. Yet these comparisons could be misleading: they involve comparing income distribution in a single city with income distribution across whole provinces.[22]

Conclusions: Informal Institutions and Democracy

When democracy works well, when it achieves the effects that make it better than other systems of government, this is because formal and informal institutions interact in felicitous ways. The new institutionalism in comparative politics may have underestimated the importance of informal institutions to democratic outcomes because we have tended to think of institutions creating incentives that map straightforwardly onto outcomes. A better way to think about it is that the effect of formal institutions on outcomes are conditional on informal institutions and rules, and these informal institutions and rules are variables that need to be unpacked empirically. To return to an earlier example, if the formal institution is frequent and repeated elections, then the outcome will depend on whether politicians care about holding office or about rents, on whether voters think that politicians care more about holding office or about rents (which in turn will influence how voters treat their vote), on whether voters pay attention to past

[22] I did study the effect of the proportion of poor people in a municipality, measured either as the proportion of houses that are substandard, or as the proportion of people in a municipality with "unsatisfied basic needs," on the beliefs and expectations discussed in this paper. Unfortunately these data come from the 1991 census, and hence are not very reliable measures of poverty rates in 2001-02, when we conducted the survey. What's more, poverty rates are a very uncertain measure of the distribution of income: two communities with identical poverty rates may have very different Gini indexes, for example. With both caveats, the effect of poverty rates was the reverse of what we might have expected: the *higher* the poverty rate in his community, the more likely a person was (all else equal) to offer "accountability" responses to various questions. Furthermore, poverty rates did not make regional effects disappear; indeed poverty rates if anything brought out these regional effects more strongly.

actions or proposals for the future, on what they expect other voters to pay attention to, and myriad other informal rules. These interactive effects of formal and informal institutions on democracy go beyond the role of "`filling the gaps' left by formal institutions" (:16) which is how Helmke and Levitsky describe this role.

We've seen a lot of evidence from Argentina that certain informal institutions at least covary with good democratic outcomes. What seems to have mattered for a relatively robust local democracy is not that people trust politicians or other people in the simple sense of expecting them to promote one's interests if unconstrained. Expectations of accountability, rather than trust, were the informal institutions that helped support local democracy in Argentina.

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Table 1: Responses to Questions on Interpersonal Trust, Three Provinces (N=1920)

Question	Variable name	Percent "Yes"	Percent "No"	No answer
"Would you trust a neighbor to care for your home while you were away?"	*Neighbor*	75%	25%	<1%
"Do you believe that the majority of people would take advantage of you if they had an opportunity?"	*Advantage*	54%	42%	4%
"Do you agree with the phrase:	*Trust*	"One can trust the majority of people": 22%	"…a minority of people": 59%	"…no one": 18%

Table 2 Responses to Questions Explaining Good Governments

Variable name	Question	*Personal trait* answers	*Accounta-bility* answers	No answer
Services	"When governments provide good services to people, is this because	"They're staffed with good, committed people?" **41%**	"They are under the watch of the courts, the congress, and the press?" **52%**	**7%**
Efficient	"When municipal governments function efficiently, is this because	"The people governing are good, committed people" **26%**	"They know that if they don't work people won't vote for them in the next election" **70%**	**4%**
Attention	"When politicians really pay attention to the opinions of people like you, is this because	"These opinions really matter to them?" **16%**	"They want to be reelected?" **81%**	**4%**
Bribe	"When a politician takes a bribe, how likely is it that he'll be caught?"	"Not at all likely" **25%**	"Somewhat likely" **48%**	"Very likely" **28%**

Table 3 Logit Models of "Accountability" Responses to Questions about Politicians

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Dependent variable	*Service*	*Efficient*	*Attention*	*Bribe*
Model estimated	Logit	Logit	Logit	Ordered logit
Income	-0.068 (0.036)	0.006 (0.039)	**-0.131** (0.046)	-0.0019 (0.0318)
Education	0.047 (0.034)	**-0.077** (0.037)	-0.063 (0.043)	-0.0387 (0.0297)
Housing	0.027 (0.077)	-0.107 (0.084)	-0.040 (0.099)	0.0822 (0.0675)
Gender	**-0.315** (0.105)	-0.006 (0.114)	-0.072 (0.136)	**0.2058** (0.0930)
Age	**-0.015** (0.004)	**-0.194** (0.004)	-0.004 (-0.004)	0.0007 (0.0031)
Peronist	-0.185 (0.125)	0.040 (0.139)	**-0.437** (0.158)	**0.3087** (0.1129)
Radical	-0.044 (0.159)	-0.021 (0.070)	0.045 (0.211)	0.1450 (0.1411)
Log population	0.015 (0.033)	**0.074** (0.036)	0.040 (0.042)	**-0.0797** (0.0294)
Buenos Aires	**-0.536** ().153)	-0.072 (0.170)	**-0.559** (0.021)	0.2092 (0.1314)
Córdoba	**-0.620** (0.171)	-0.138 (0.186)	-0.360 (0.232)	**-0.5954** (0.1468)
Misiones	**-1.195** (0.184)	**-0.525** (0.198)	**-0.622** (0.244	-0.2081 (0.1614)
Constant	**1.539** (0.523)	**1.772** (0.569)	**2.882** (0.675)	
Chi-square	103 (p=0.000)	47 (p=0.000)	38 (p=0.000)	55 (p=0.000)
N observations	1594	1639	1644	1669

Explanation of variables:

Service: Dummy for response, "Governments provide good services when they're under the watch of the courts, congress, and the press."

Efficient: Dummy for response, "When municipal governments are efficient, this is because they know otherwise people won't vote for them."

Attention: Dummy for response, "When politicians pay attention to people like me, this is because they want to be reelected."

Bribe: "When a politician takes a bribe, is it not at all likely (scored 1), somewhat likely (2), or very likely (3) that he'll get caught."

Income: Self-reported by respondent, 9-level scale of family income.

Education: 9-level scale, from no formal education to university.

Housing: Assessed by interviewer, 5-level scale (1=poorest quality, 5=highest quality), based on assessment of building materials, flooring, and presence or absence of consumer durables.

Gender: male=0, female=1.

Peronist: coded 1 for respondents who said, independent of how they voted, that they liked the Peronist Party more than others, 0 otherwise.

Radical: coded 1 for respondents who said, independent of how they voted, that they liked the Radical Party more than others, 0 otherwise.

Log population: natural log of the number of inhabitants, according to 2001 census, residing in the municipality where the respondent lived.

Buenos Aires: Dummy variable for respondents who live in the province of Buenos Aires (outside Mar del Plata sample).

Córdoba: Dummy variable for respondents who live in the province of Córdoba.

Misiones: Dummy variable for respondents who live in the province of Misiones.

Table 4 Responses to Questions about How Other Voters Choose

Question	Variable	Retrospective Response	Prospective response	No ans.
"When deciding which party to vote for, do you think most about how it governed in the past or how it will resolve problems in the future?"	*Prospective*	How it governed: **31%**	How it will resolve problems: **48%**	**6%**
"Do people sympathize with [most important party in neighborhood] because it has a better program, or because it gave out things during the campaign?"	*Program*	Better program: **53%**	Gave things out: **28%**	**19%**
"Do people sympathize with [this party] because they believe it is concerned about everyone, or because it has given out a favor?	*Favor*	Gave out favors: **33%**	Concerned about everyone: **45%**	**22%**
"Do people sympathize with [this party] because it managed things well or has good program?"	*Pastfut*	managed well: 32%	good program: 43%	**24%**

Table 5 Logit Models of "Non-Accountability" Responses to Questions about Voting

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Dependent variable	*Prospective*	*Program*	*Favor*	*Future*
Model estimated	Logit	Logit	Logit	Logit
Income	-0.0598 (0.0352)	-0.0178 (0.0452)	-0.0361 (0.0398)	0.0454 (0.0398)
Education	-0.0334 (0.0333)	0.0177 (0.0432)	-0.0085 (0.0386)	**0.1155** (0.0387)
Housing	-0.0959 (0.0740)	0.0470 (0.0919)	0.0960 (0.0842)	**-0.1742** (0.0836)
Gender	0.0405 (0.1020)	0.0677 (0.1304)	0.0218 (0.1170)	-0.1704 (0.1164)
Age	0.0054 (0.0034)	-0.0020 (0.0044)	**-0.0176** (0.0039)	00.0085 (0.0038)
Peronist	**-0.3628** (0.1234)	**-0.5875** (0.1556)	**-0.7939** (0.1402)	0.0752 (0.1380)
Radical	0.0676 (0.1540)	**-0.865** (0.209)	-0.1802 (0.1740)	0.0372 (0.1754)
Log population	0.0129 (0.0324)	**0.2289** (0.0677)	**0.1456** (0.0362)	**-0.1173** (0.0364)
Poverty rate		**3.155** (0.7657)		
Buenos Aires	**0.2961** (0.1458)	**1.835** (0.2126)	**1.4677** (0.1814)	**0.5624** (0.1724)
Córdoba	**0.3756** (0.1633)	**2.3573** (0.3383)	**1.4120** (0.1999)	**0.6914** (0.1910)
Misiones	-0.1335 (0.1768)	**1.5778** (0.3255)	**1.4100** (0.2162)	**0.9622** (0.2059)
Constant	0.2448 (0.5094)	**-5.195** (1.018)	**-2.2478** (0.5785)	0.0011 (0.5805)
Chi-square	39 (p=0.000)	169 (p=0.000)	147 (p=0.000)	86 (p=0.000)
N observations	1606	1196	1361	1315

Explanation of variables:

Prospective: Dummy for response, "When I decide which party to vote for in an election, I think most about how it will resolve problems in the future [not what it did when it governed]."

Program: Dummy for response, "People support [most important local party] because it gave things out in the campaign [not because it has a better program.]"

Favor: Dummy for response, "People support this party because it has done them a favor [not because it is concerned for everyone]."

Future: Dummy for response, "People support this party because it has performed well in the past [not because it has a good proposal for the future.]"

Poverty rate: Proportion of residents living in sub-standard housing, from the 1991 census.

The remaining independent variables are defined as in the notes to Table 3.