

THE MICROFOUNDATIONS OF POLITICAL CLIENTELISM

Lessons from the Argentine Case

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Abstract: This article challenges the assumption that parties and candidates with access to material benefits will always distribute goods to low-income voters in exchange for electoral support. I claim that a candidate's capacity to turn to clientelistic strategies of mobilization is a necessary but insufficient condition to explain his or her decision to use clientelism. Besides having the capacity to use clientelism, candidates have to prefer to use clientelism to mobilize voters. In studying candidates' capacities and preferences to use clientelism, this article provides an account of the microfoundations of political clientelism in Argentina. By combining quantitative and qualitative data at the municipal level, I find that the number of pragmatist candidates, who are capable of using clientelism and prefer to turn to such strategies, is almost equaled by the number of idealist candidates, who, though capable of doing so, prefer not to use clientelism.

In her seminal article about machine politics in Argentina, Susan Stokes (2005) describes how party operatives are forced to make choices about how to distribute limited resources. "Machine operatives everywhere face a version of the dilemma that an Argentine Peronist explains. About 40 voters live in her neighborhood and her responsibility is to get them to the polls and get them to vote for her party. But the party gives her only 10 bags of food to distribute, 'ten little bags,' she laments, 'nothing more'" (Stokes 2005, 315). Stokes concludes that the party operative will give the bags of food to those swing voters who will support her party only in exchange for a bag. Stokes also argues that the operative will monitor those voters who receive the bags to make sure that they hold up their end of the clientelistic deal. Building on the work of Stokes, Simeon Nichter (2008) argues that, given the constraints of the secret ballot, party operatives will monitor voter turnout instead of vote choice because monitoring electoral participation simply requires observing whether voters who received bags of food went to vote.

A new research agenda is focusing on modeling formally and testing empirically how clientelistic parties will distribute goods to maximize vote returns (Díaz-Cayeros, Estévez, and Magaloni 2008; Dunning and Stokes 2009; Gans-Morse, Mazzuca, and Nichter 2009; Rosas and Hawkins 2007; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). While this literature undoubtedly enhances our understanding of the dynamics of distributive politics, it assumes that party operatives, such as the one described by Stokes, will always distribute goods in exchange for support.

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However, party operatives in Argentina and elsewhere can prefer not to distribute goods in exchange for electoral support, thus forgoing the use of clientelistic strategies, as the testimony of an Argentine Peronist operative in Buenos Aires highlights: "I'll never get twenty bags of food, drive to a neighborhood, and say, 'This is for you to vote for me.' I'll give voters the bags: 'Take this because you need it. *Chau!*'"¹

This article questions the assumption that parties and party operatives with access to material benefits such as bags of food will always distribute goods to low-income and working-class voters in exchange for electoral support. Instead, I argue that a party operative's capacity to turn to clientelistic strategies of mobilization is a necessary but insufficient condition to explain the use of clientelism. Besides having the capacity to employ clientelistic strategies, party operatives have to prefer to build clientelistic linkages with voters.

In advancing a distinction between a candidate's capacity to use and preference for using clientelism, this article aims to improve existing theories about and measurement of clientelistic and programmatic linkages between politicians and voters in democracy (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). To examine the effects of a set of incentives on individual party operative preferences, I used original evidence from municipal candidates in Argentina. The country shares the characteristic features present in many new democracies—institutional weakness and political instability (Levitsky and Murillo 2005)—and it provides insights into candidates' capacities and preferences for using clientelism to turn out voters in countries beyond Argentina and Latin America.²

MOBILIZING VOTERS: CONTRIBUTIONS AND SHORTCOMINGS OF EXISTING EXPLANATIONS

How candidates mobilize voters varies on the basis of what they have to offer and what potential voters need. The literature overwhelmingly highlights how clientelism "is a feature disproportionately of poor countries" (Stokes 2007, 617), although the mechanisms that link poverty and clientelism are contested. Hence, while the poor are the targets of clientelistic strategies, scholars have convincingly shown that the poor are strategic and sophisticated when making political decisions. By using ethnographic methods, Sian Lazar's (2004) study of local politics in El Alto, Bolivia, the country's poorest and most indigenous city, shows that voters use electoral campaigns at the local level to make politicians more representative and responsive. Jonathan Fox (1994) has shown that the transition from clientelism to citizenship in Mexico led to cycles of conflict and negotiations among political actors in which authoritarian subnational regimes coexist with enclaves of pluralist tolerance and large areas of semiclientelism. Ethnographic work in Brazilian favelas conducted by Robert Gay (1990, 1994) and in squatter

1. Interview conducted by the author in José C. Paz, Argentina, September 2005. This and all subsequent translations from the Spanish are by the author.

2. Furthermore, it is worth noting that some recent and seminal studies of clientelism (Auyero 2000), patronage networks (Calvo and Murillo 2004), vote buying (Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes 2004; Stokes 2005), turnout buying (Nichter 2008), welfare policy (Weitz-Shapiro 2012), and political participation in party rallies (Szwarcberg 2011) are also based on empirical evidence from Argentina.

settlements in Quito, Ecuador, by Gerrit Burgwal (1996) shows how voters can organize and negotiate with politicians to obtain more goods than they would receive individually.

In studying the political participation of poor voters in Peronist party rallies in Buenos Aires, Javier Auyero (2000) demonstrates the importance of informal networks and shared cultural representations. Poor voters attend rallies to secure their material survival by receiving goods in exchange for participation as much as to share a network of relationships and claim a common Peronist identity. In studying poor people's politics, Auyero focuses on how clients understand clientelism and thus examines their relationships with brokers. In his ethnography, Auyero describes voters' relationships with different Peronist brokers in Villa Paraíso without explaining the reasons that led brokers to build different types of linkages with voters. Certainly, the author's interest is in voters, and he therefore examines how those differences have an effect on voters' political behavior without explaining variation in brokers' decisions to avoid or threaten voters—more or less directly—with the withdrawal of benefits in the case that they fail to participate in political events. Building on these ethnographies, this study changes the focus from voters to brokers to explain variation in their capacities and preferences to mobilize voters.

Díaz-Cayeros, Estévez, and Magaloni (2008) argue that parties employ a portfolio of strategies to turn out voters by offering voters private or public goods on the basis of the extent of poverty, the existence (or absence) of political alternatives, and the party's aversion to risk. Scholars have found that it is not poverty per se but inequality that explains the relationship between poverty and clientelism (Stokes 2005; Robinson and Verdier 2003). "If clientelism must be paid for by a growing (upper) middle class and if its targets are themselves increasingly from the (lower) middle class, then the transfer will increasingly be as painful for those on the giving side as they are profitable for those on the receiving side, and one should encounter more resistance from the givers" (Stokes 2007, 618). Indeed, by using empirical evidence from Argentina, Rebecca Weitz-Shapiro (2012) has found that clientelistic strategies are effective in municipalities with high poverty and intense political competition.

Assuming that working-class and low-income voters will exchange political support for goods, why would any party candidate ever forgo the use of clientelistic strategies that contribute to turning out voters?

To explain variation in candidates' strategic choices to turn out voters, I distinguish between a candidate's capacity and preference to use clientelism. A candidate's capacity to build clientelistic linkages with voters is determined by the combination of access to particularistic goods and his or her ability to distribute those goods to those voters who are likely to turn out and support the party. Current literature discusses the type of voter whom candidates target with particularistic inducements: core voters who are likely to support the candidate regardless of receiving particularistic goods (Nichter 2008; Calvo and Murillo 2004; Ansolabehere, Figueiredo, and Snyder 2003; Cox and McCubbins 1986), or swing voters who are likely to support the candidate only if they receive a good in exchange (Stokes 2005; Dahlberg and Johansson 2002; Case 2001; Schady 2000; Naza-

reno, Brusco, and Stokes 2006; Dixit and Londregan 1996). Within this framework, scholars are developing theories that comprise different strategies targeted to different voters on the basis of the strength of their partisanship identification and propensity to turn out to vote (Dunning and Stokes 2009; Gans-Morse, Mazzuca, and Nichter 2009).

Yet beyond a candidate's capacity to use clientelism, he or she also has to prefer to use clientelistic strategies to mobilize voters. Political parties contribute to shaping politicians' strategies by providing (or not providing) incentives to use clientelism to turn out voters. In a classic essay, Shefter (1977, 414) argues that parties' decisions whether to use patronage and clientelism to build a constituency have enduring "character forming" consequences. Building on the work of Shefter, a recent edited volume about clientelism in Europe (Piattoni 2002) uses a comprehensive approach to study clientelism by incorporating both demand and supply. The authors in the edited volume study clientelism as a strategy that entails "both an apprehension of the context in which choices take place and the purposive attempt to redefine such context" (Piattoni 2002, 18). While these authors are interested in identifying the incentives that make clientelism an acceptable and viable strategy in Western Europe, this article extends the scope of the framework by testing it in Latin America.

This study focuses on local candidates' capacities and preferences to employ clientelistic strategies to mobilize voters at the municipal level. Whereas the exchange of favors for votes takes place throughout the political spectrum, it is at the local level where this is pervasive and has a direct effect on the quality of local government (Weitz-Shapiro 2012; Cleary 2007). The persistence of these practices and their effects on political regimes is also documented in a burgeoning literature about subnational authoritarianism within democratic national states (Giraudy 2010; Gervasoni 2010; Gibson 2005). Scholars have shown how some political scandals have contributed to open up spaces to new political forces in tightly controlled local political monopolies (Balan 2011; Peruzzotti 2006; Waisbord 2004). Yet all the scandals revisited in the literature took place at the provincial level, not the municipal level, and although governors could be successfully replaced, mayors seem to enjoy much more endurance.

CHOOSING STRATEGIES OF POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

Candidates interested in pursuing a political career have to demonstrate their ability to get votes for the party. The more votes a candidate manages to provide for the party, the more likely it is that he or she will be promoted. The testimony of Mario, a party candidate in Buenos Aires, explains this logic sharply: "This is very simple. You are worth as much as the number of people you can mobilize. You have a prize, a number. Your number is how many people you can carry to a rally and how many votes you can give in an election. I tell you, what you need to do is simple. How you do it, that is strategy."³

3. Interview conducted by the author in José C. Paz, November 2005.

Table 1 *Candidates' capacities and preferences to employ clientelistic strategies of mobilization*

Candidate has the capacity to access and distribute clientelistic goods	Candidate prefers to employ clientelism to mobilize voters	
	Yes	No
Yes	Pragmatist	Idealist
No	Resentful	Utopist

How brokers decide whether to use clientelism to mobilize voters will vary according to their capacity to use and preference for using clientelism. Table 1 categorizes candidates on the basis of the combination of their capacity and preference to employ such strategies. In the upper-left corner, one finds pragmatist candidates who are capable of using clientelism and of employing those strategies to get promoted. In the lower-left corner are resentful candidates who prefer to use clientelism but are unable to employ such strategies. In the upper-right corner, one finds idealist candidates who are capable of using clientelism but prefer not to employ such strategies, even if that decision works against their interest in being promoted within the party. Finally, in the lower-right corner, one finds utopist candidates who have neither the capacity nor the preference for distributing goods in exchange for electoral support.

Without observing an explicit choice to forgo clientelistic politics, we cannot be sure whether candidates are resentful or utopist. In contrast, with the capacity to use clientelism, idealist and pragmatist candidates make their preferences visible by deciding whether to use clientelism.

CASE SELECTION AND DATA

Drawing on the comparative method, this article combines quantitative and qualitative observations of the capacities to use and preferences for using clientelism of elected municipal candidates in Argentina. Since 1983 the country has held free and fair elections with alternation in the executive and considerable competition in provinces and municipalities. The two major parties, the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR, the Radical party) and the Partido Justicialista (PJ, the Peronist party), maintain territorial control over most municipalities by combining a recollection of shared watershed historical events with clientelistic inducements (Torre 2005; Auyero 2000; Levitsky 2003; Calvo and Murillo 2004; Szwarcberg 2009). By making comparisons across municipalities in two provinces with different political traditions, Buenos Aires and Córdoba, I was able to test the effects of partisanship on candidates' decisions to use clientelistic strategies of mobilization.

Partisanship is important in that it provides candidates with access to public resources that, when used for political purposes, made clientelism possible: pork, patronage, and vote buying. Calvo and Murillo (2003) show how the combination of voters' skill levels and labor-market expectations with fiscal and electoral institutions that regulate the access and distribution of public resources benefits

the Peronist party. Clientelism is a possibility for candidates with access to goods, which enables them to solve problems.

In studying candidates' strategic choices in Argentina, I was able to make comparisons across different provinces and municipalities without having to control for historical and cultural variables at the national level (Snyder 2001). The data were gathered between June 2005 and December 2006 in seven municipalities in two Argentine provinces: Buenos Aires and Córdoba. In Buenos Aires, I selected the municipalities of José C. Paz, San Miguel, and Bahía Blanca, and in Córdoba, I selected Río Cuarto, Villa María, Colonia Caroya, and the city of Córdoba. By focusing on seven cases, I was able to carry out the extensive fieldwork that was necessary to gather data on individual candidates' capacities and preferences.

The case selection was based on differences in population, housing quality, income, partisanship, and incumbency that quantitative studies of vote buying and clientelism have used to explain variation in parties' selection of strategies of mobilization. Table 2 provides sociodemographic and electoral information about the selected cases.

Descriptive statistics provide information about general patterns that, combined with qualitative information, establish plausibility for the hypotheses proposed in this article. While the results presented here are confined to seven municipalities across two Argentine provinces, I also interviewed local candidates and voters and attended rallies and political meetings in other municipalities in Buenos Aires—Malvinas Argentinas, Hurlingham, Avellaneda, Vicente López, Quilmes, Merlo, La Matanza, Morón, Ayacucho, and Pergamino. I also conducted fieldwork across other municipalities in the province of Córdoba: Mina Clavero, Yacanto, Villa Carlos Paz, and San Francisco. In 2009, I did a follow-up field trip to Buenos Aires and the province of San Luis. The information I collected in these districts supports the findings presented in this article, and thus I am confident that the selected municipalities are representative of a larger universe of cases.

Argentina uses a system of proportional representation with closed-list ballots in which a candidate's position on the party ticket determines his or her chance of being elected. Party mayors decide a candidate's position on the ticket, and thus, by distributing positions, mayors are able to effectively reward or punish candidates on the basis of their ability to turn out voters. Consequently, party operatives interested in pursuing a political career are encouraged to mobilize as many voters as possible to secure a higher-ranked position on the ticket, which increases their likelihood of being elected, reelected, or promoted to a higher office. In focusing on municipal candidates, I was able to gather systematic data for a large population of party operatives who vary in their capacity and preference to use clientelism.

The sample comprises the 137 candidates who held elected positions as council members in 2005. I traveled to the seven selected districts and conducted in-depth interviews with the majority of the candidates who were mobilizing voters during a national election in Buenos Aires in 2005 and a primary election in Córdoba in 2006. Comparisons between the strategies pursued by candidates in Buenos Aires whose tenure was going to be renewed in two years and those who were running for reelection and election in 2005 did not show dramatic differences, nor

Table 2 Selected municipalities in Argentina

Province	Municipality	Population (%)	Low-income households (%)	Social welfare beneficiaries (Plan Jefes) (%)	Municipal, provincial, and national incumbent in 2005
Córdoba	City of Córdoba	3.51	25.63	2.93	New Party
	Río Cuarto	0.40	2.91	0.30	Radical party
	Villa María	0.20	0.08	0.02	Peronist party
	Colonia Caroya	0.04	0.28	0.01	Peronist party
Total Córdoba	443 municipalities	8.46	6.75	5.88	Peronist party
Buenos Aires	José C. Paz	0.63	3.88	0.91	Peronist party
	San Miguel	0.70	4.55	0.60	Peronist party
	Bahía Blanca	0.79	6.12	0.33	Peronist party
Total Buenos Aires	136 municipalities	38.13	35.25	37.47	Peronist party

Note: Population numbers are based on the 2000 national census (National Institute of Statistics and Census of Argentina). By combining educational, occupational, and construction characteristics, the census measures the income levels of Argentine homes. A household that fulfills three of the following five characteristics is classified as low income: (1) a density per room that exceeds three inhabitants, (2) precarious physical conditions, (3) absence of indoor plumbing, (4) children between the ages of six and twelve who do not attend school, and (5) more than four members per one employed member and a head of the household who has not finished primary school. I collected data about the most widespread welfare program, Plan Jefes, in each municipality for the year 2004. Incumbency describes the party in charge of the local executive in each municipality. In 2005, the Radical party ran in alliance with the New Party under the coalition More for Río Cuarto. I do not take into account the intraparty divisions within the Peronist party in the election, and thus I do not distinguish between the Front for Victory (Frente para la Victoria) and the Partido Justicialista. The percentages given are in comparison to the entire country.

did the strategies of candidates who were on the top of the closed list, at the cutoff point at which candidates could either succeed or fail in getting elected, or even below the cutoff point at which candidates were certain that they were not going to get elected. These findings reinforce the argument advanced in this article that candidates have to constantly show their ability to turn out voters to advance in their political careers.

To maximize the number of votes the party obtains, bosses distribute positions on the basis of how many voters each candidate is capable of turning out. Ballot positions therefore reflect the value that each candidate has for the party. Building on the argument developed in this article, one expects to find clientelistic candidates holding higher positions than candidates who prefer not to use such strategies. However, several candidates who hold middle and lower positions on the ticket also employ clientelistic strategies, thus canceling out a significant effect. This does not reflect the inefficacy of clientelistic strategies but, rather, differences in the length of candidates' use of clientelism. In fact, the data suggest that the longer candidates use clientelism to build a constituency, the larger is their following and the more likely it is that they will climb to a higher position on the party ticket.

I conducted 101 in-depth interviews and 36 semistructured interviews with elected candidates in their municipalities. In cases in which I could not interview the candidates directly, I relied on information provided by key informants who were mostly advisers who had known and worked for the candidates for several years, even decades, and were thus able to provide knowledgeable and reliable information about candidate preferences. The length of the interviews ranged from two to several hours, during which candidates reflected on their decisions to use or not to use clientelism to get out voters. As the qualitative section of this article shows, candidates talked very openly about their capacities and preferences.

I consulted the archives of *La Hoja*, a local independent daily newspaper that focuses on the municipalities of San Miguel and José C. Paz, and reviewed *La Nueva Provincia* for Bahía Blanca, *El Puntal* for Río Cuarto, and *La Voz del Interior* and *La Mañana de Córdoba* for provincial information on Córdoba, to provide external validity for my participant observation research and ethnographic data. I carried out additional archival research in the national newspapers *Clarín*, *La Nación*, and *Página/12*. Besides providing descriptive statistics on the selected cases, table 3 describes the sources of information and the number and types of interviews conducted by the author in each municipality.

CANDIDATES' CAPACITY TO USE CLIENTELISM

A candidate's capacity to use clientelistic strategies of mobilization varies depending on his or her access to resources and the existence of a network of party activists who contribute to distributing those goods to voters who are likely to turn out and support the candidate as a result of receiving particularistic goods. Incumbent candidates are more likely to have access to material goods that enable them to solve voter problems than candidates affiliated to opposition parties. Access to resources is, however, conditioned by the level of government—national,

Table 3 Data gathered between June 2005 and December 2006

Municipality	Number of council members	Number of in-depth interviews	Number of semistructured interviews	Number of key informants interviewed	Archival research (municipal level)
City of Córdoba	31	20	11	5	<i>La Voz del Interior; La Mañana de Córdoba</i>
Río Cuarto	19	15	4	2	<i>El Puntal</i>
Villa María	12	9	3	3	<i>La Voz del Interior</i>
Colonia Caroya	7	5	2	2	<i>La Voz del Interior; La Mañana de Córdoba</i>
José C. Paz	20	20	0	5	<i>La Hoja</i>
San Miguel	24	17	7	3	<i>La Hoja</i>
Bahía Blanca	24	15	9	4	<i>La Nueva Provincia</i>
Total	137	101	36	24	

provincial, or municipal. Thus, a candidate who ran with a party that counted on the support of the president (national incumbent), governor (provincial incumbent), and mayor (local incumbent) would have more resources than one who could count only on the support of the president. It is arguable that local support is as important as national and provincial support, given that municipalities can count on multiple resources to promote political rallies and events and distribute goods to voters. Still, this article focuses on candidates' potential to use clientelism, not on the quantity of resources available to engage in those strategies.

To distinguish candidates who were able to use clientelism from those who were unable to employ such strategies, I employ two necessary conditions. First, I distinguish candidates who were affiliated to parties that held one or more executive offices in 2005. Column 5 in table 4 provides descriptive statistics about candidates who ran with the support of the local government (70.8 percent); national and local governments (13.87 percent); provincial and national governments (11.68 percent); and national, provincial, and local governments (36.50 percent). Only twenty-four candidates (17.52 percent) did not have any governmental support and therefore were unable to use clientelism.

Incumbent candidates could, nevertheless, be unable to distribute goods in exchange for support. To be effective in using clientelism, candidates need not only access to resources but also a network of party activists to distribute those goods to voters who are likely to turn out and support the party in exchange for receiving goods. Building on this criterion, the second condition implies that only candidates who have access either to an organization capable of distributing and

Table 4 Support for incumbent candidates and partisanship (number of candidates)

	Partisanship			Total
	Other party	Radical party	Peronist party	Number of candidates
No support	8 (5.84%)	16 (11.68%)	—	24 (17.52%)
Local support	18 (13.14%)	10 (7.30%)	69 (50.36%)	97 (70.8%)
Provincial support	—	—	66 (48.18%)	66 (48.18%)
National support	—	—	85 (62.04%)	85 (62.04%)
Combinations				
National and local support	—	—	19 (13.87%)	19 (13.87%)
Provincial and national support	—	—	16 (11.68%)	16 (11.68%)
National, provincial, and local support	—	—	50 (36.50)	50 (36.50%)
Total	26 (18.98%)	26 (18.98%)	85 (62.04%)	137 (100%)

Note: A dash (—) indicates cases where there are no observations. Percentages represent the proportion of candidates in each category to the total number of candidates.

monitoring voters' electoral support or to their own network (*agrupación*, in the case of Argentina) are able to employ clientelism.

In Argentina, only the Peronist and Radical parties have had systematic access to public office and large networks of party activists capable of trading favors for votes effectively. Scholars of Argentine politics have consistently highlighted working-class and low-income voters' loyalty to the Peronist party (Torre 2005; Levitsky 2003; Calvo and Murillo 2004; Ostiguy 1998; Mora y Araujo and Lorente 1980). Calvo and Murillo (2004) show that political parties' access to resources (supply side) and voters' dependence on fiscal largesse (demand side) benefit the Peronist party because of the geographic concentration of its voters and its linkages with less skilled constituencies. In their study of vote buying in Argentina, Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes (2004, 70–71) show that voters who receive a handout from a Peronist candidate are more likely to vote for the Peronist party. The ethnographic and qualitative works of Javier Auyero (2000), Steven Levitsky (2003), and Mariela Szwarcberg (2009) found further support for these arguments.

Table 5 shows that only 22 (16.06 percent) candidates were unable to use clientelism: the remaining 115 candidates could turn to such strategies; among those, 62.04 percent were affiliated to the Peronist party and 18.98 percent to the Radical and other parties. Whereas Peronist candidates could count on the support of the national, provincial, and local governments in José C. Paz, Bahía Blanca, Villa María, and Colonia Caroya, non-Peronist candidates could count on the support

Table 5 *Partisanship and clientelism (number of candidates)*

Did the candidate take attendance of voter participation at rallies?	Candidates' partisanship			
	Other party	Radical party	Peronist party	Total
No	22 (16.06%)	19 (13.87%)	33 (24.09%)	74 (54.01%)
Yes	4 (2.92%)	7 (5.11%)	52 (36.96%)	63 (45.99%)
Total	26 (18.98%)	26 (18.98%)	85 (62.04%)	137 (100%)

of the municipal executive in Río Cuarto (Radical party) and in the city of Córdoba (New Party). Luis Juez, a former Peronist candidate and provincial anticorruption prosecutor, created the New Party (Partido Nuevo, PN) to compete for office after being fired by the governor. The name of Juez's party summarized the leitmotiv of his political campaign: Córdoba needed a change, something new, different from Peronism and Radicalism. Competing for votes in a context where the leadership of the Peronist and Radical parties was heavily questioned, Juez ended Córdoba's historical bipartisanship, becoming mayor of the city of Córdoba in 2003. The majority of the eighteen elected candidates affiliated to the PN lacked a network of activists and were thus unable to use clientelism. Yet, as I examine later, candidates who participated in politics with either the Peronist party or the Radical party before joining this new party did possess networks of activists and the know-how to use clientelism, and some of them indeed continued exchanging favors for votes as in the past. Likewise, ten Radical and eighty-five Peronist candidates had the possibility to engage in clientelistic strategies of mobilization.

These findings suggest that Peronist candidates were more capable of using clientelistic strategies than Radical candidates, but they do not provide information on candidate preferences. Are Peronist candidates more likely to prefer to use clientelism than Radical candidates under similar circumstances? To answer this question, I compare the strategies employed by Peronist and Radical candidates who had the same capacity to use clientelism when competing for the same voters.

CANDIDATES' PREFERENCES FOR USING CLIENTELISM

Having the capacity to use clientelism does not imply using it. Candidates have to also prefer solving voter problems in exchange for electoral support. As the testimony from a party operative in Buenos Aires quoted at the beginning of this article illustrates, what distinguishes clientelistic from not clientelistic candidates is not the use of resources to solve voter problems but the request that, in exchange for solving problems, voters support the candidate. "If I was using clientelism I would give voters bags of food only if they would vote for me, but I don't do that, do you understand? I give them the bags because they need them. Of course, I will prefer them to vote for me, but if they need it, I'll give it to them no matter what. Do I explain myself?"⁴

4. Interview conducted by the author in José C. Paz, September 2005.

Clientelistic candidates engage in solving voter problems to obtain their electoral support and will thus monitor voters' participation. Without monitoring voter turnout, candidates run the risk that voters will follow the political advice of opposition candidates and "take the goods with one hand and vote with the other" (Szwarcberg 2004, 4). In countries where voting is compulsory, as in Argentina, and turnout numbers are considerably high by international standards (Canton and Jorrot 2003), it is not possible to determine whether voters turn out because they are mobilized or because they have strong partisan preferences, or a combination of both.⁵ Indeed, I have argued that party bosses compare information from voter turnout at rallies and elections to judge a candidate's reliability and to dole out rewards and punishments accordingly (Szwarcberg 2012). Reliable candidates who distribute goods to voters instead of pocketing them are rewarded with higher-ranked positions on the closed list, whereas unreliable candidates are punished with lower-ranked positions.

By combining direct participation in more than forty rallies during the 2005 national election in Buenos Aires, five rallies and a primary election in Córdoba in 2006, in-depth and semistructured interviews with candidates, and interviews with key informants, I classified the mobilization strategies of 137 candidates. I consider that a candidate engaged in clientelistic strategies of mobilization if he or she, or a designated party activist, took attendance of voter participation at rallies. To monitor voter participation at rallies, candidates simply screen voters by taking attendance. Mabel, the private secretary of a Peronist councilor in the city of Córdoba, explained to me that candidates use rosters "made in Excel and organized alphabetically" with the names of beneficiaries of welfare programs, public employees, and voters who had asked for favors. She said this while showing me the rosters that she makes and updates "at least once a week, and during elections almost daily."⁶

Using attendance taken at rallies as a proxy to measure a candidate's use of clientelistic strategies enables me to discard a candidate who distributes goods to voters without requesting their electoral support in exchange. Hence, a candidate who does not monitor voter participation at rallies is not classified as clientelistic. Still, it is possible that a candidate monitors voter participation at rallies and not at elections and vice versa. I expect clientelistic candidates to prefer monitoring voter participation at rallies over elections because rally performance is easier to measure and reward than voter turnout at elections. In my previous work (Szwarcberg 2012), I argued that clientelistic candidates tend to rely on clientelism to mobilize voters to participate in both rallies and elections and to monitor both political events accordingly.

Table 5 shows that, though not even, the division between candidates who distributed goods in exchange for participation and those who did not engage in such strategies to turn out voters was very uniform: sixty-three candidates used clientelism (45.99 percent), and seventy-four candidates (54.01 percent) did not.

5. See also the website *Voter Turnout*, of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, <http://www.idea.int/vt>.

6. Interview conducted by the author in the city of Córdoba, April 2006.

Among those who engaged in clientelistic strategies, fifty-two candidates were affiliated with the Peronist party, seven with the Radical party, and four candidates were former Peronist candidates who had ties to networks of party activists then affiliated with the New Party. Most candidates affiliated with the New Party preferred not to use clientelism, but these four candidates, nevertheless, chose otherwise. I examine these cases in detail in the following section.

Among candidates who did not use clientelism, twenty-two were affiliated with other parties, nineteen with the Radical party, and thirty-three with the Peronist party. To explain why fifty-two candidates affiliated with majority parties and with the capacity to use clientelism preferred not to turn to these strategies, I combine the use of descriptive statistics with life histories and in-depth and semistructured interviews. I also examine the preferences of candidates affiliated to other parties who opted out of pursuing clientelistic strategies.

EXPLAINING VARIATION IN PARTY CANDIDATES' SELECTION OF STRATEGIES OF POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

My theory predicts the existence of four types of candidates on the basis of the combination of their capacities to use and preferences for using clientelism. Table 6 uses comparative data from Argentina to categorize municipal candidates on the basis of this schema, showing not only that idealist candidates exist but also that the number of pragmatists (59 candidates) and idealists (52 candidates) was almost even. In failing to consider that 52 of 111 candidates prefer not to use clientelism, the literature both miscalculates the extent of clientelism and misinterprets candidate preferences. First, in ignoring candidate preferences, the literature assumes that in these cases, 111 candidates will use clientelistic strategies, when only 59 actually did employ clientelism to turn out voters. Second, in making policy makers aware of the existence of significant numbers of candidates who prefer not to use clientelism, the current work will help make a successful case for designing institutional incentives that will promote the political careers of idealist candidates.

Candidate testimonies collected in this article highlight the importance of having access to material resources to turn out voters and how this capacity induces candidates to prefer to use clientelism. "Money is fundamental. If you don't have money you can't do anything in politics: You can't solve voter problems, you can't mobilize people [*no podés tener gente*]."⁷

In linking access to material resources with the possibility of solving voter problems, candidates' partisan affiliation becomes a key variable in explaining variation in candidates' preferences. To study partisanship effects in candidates' preferences, I compare cases of candidates affiliated to the same party running in the same election and under similar circumstances. Minority parties' lack of access to government resources mostly prevents them from turning to clientelistic strategies of mobilization, and thus I focus on the cases of the Peronist and

7. Interview conducted by the author in Villa María, April 2006.

Table 6 Municipal candidates' capacities and preferences (number of candidates in each group)

Candidate has the capacity to access and distribute clientelistic goods	Candidate prefers to employ clientelism to mobilize voters		
	Yes	No	Total
Yes	Pragmatist	Idealist	
	59 (43.07%)	52 (37.96%)	111 (81.02%)
No	Resentful	Utopist	
	4 (2.92%)	22 (16.06%)	26 (18.98%)
Total	63 (45.99%)	74 (54.01%)	137 (100%)

Radiical parties. I also study the unique case of the PN, as it succeeded in winning a local election by using programmatic linkages with voters.

By making comparisons among candidates affiliated to the Peronist party in José C. Paz with those of the Radical party in Río Cuarto, and the PN in the city of Córdoba, I was able to conduct in-depth interviews with every elected candidate while participating in several political mobilizations and activities. In comparing the strategies chosen by candidates affiliated to the same party, competing for the same voters, and with the same capacity to use clientelism, I was able to hold variables such as age, gender, education, and income, as well as capacity to use clientelism, constant and focus on variation on candidates' preferences, thus gaining internal validity for my argument.

José C. Paz, one of the poorest municipalities in Buenos Aires, can easily be classified as a shantytown. Socioeconomic indicators collected during the 2001 national census showed that 44 percent of the municipality's households live in "precarious" homes, and 7.7 percent of those households experience situations of critical overcrowding (*hacinamiento crítico*). More than a quarter of the municipality's 230,208 residents live without meeting their basic needs (*necesidades básicas insatisfechas*), such as indoor plumbing, employment, and education, and 63.2 percent of residents do not have health insurance. More than half of the population has not finished high school, and fewer than 10 percent attended college.

The municipality has 160 soup kitchens and 6,400 unpaved roads (*calles de tierra*). Local authorities delivered between four thousand and five thousand bags of food daily during the economic crisis in 2001, and almost 50 percent of the population received state aid, mostly in the form of welfare programs. During that time, 80 percent of the economically active population was unemployed.⁸ Under these conditions, incumbent candidates could easily mobilize voters by simply distributing bags of food, a strategy that several of them pursued. In explaining or justifying their decisions, pragmatist candidates referred to a more or less explicit conception of *realpolitik*, defined as a system of politics or principles

8. Data collected from municipal authorities by the author.

based on practical rather than moral considerations, to explain their decision to use clientelism.

The only thing to eat is shit and there isn't enough for everyone. Under these circumstances, one cannot think of an ideal world. Either you go home or you stay in a coffee shop philosophizing about how it should be. It is messed up, but the rest of the reasoning is immature in that it confuses what should be with what is. The activists have to stay true to their principles everyday. Yeah, that is wonderful, you know, but if I think like that I'm a romantic without practical consequences.⁹

The dynamics of intraparty competition induces candidates to engage in clientelism, because if they do not exchange goods for support, someone else from their party will do so and get their political promotion instead.

CANDIDATE: In that election, they brought our voters in the bus we had rented to mobilize people.

AUTHOR: Dirty?

CANDIDATE: Dirty or not, that's politics. You can be the Mother Teresa of Calcutta, but in politics you don't go anywhere if you don't know how to play these games. When the definite moment comes, you have to show what you got [*poner la carne en la parrilla*]. There is always someone who believes that he is better than you are, and they are convinced that you are trash, that you're completely unworthy. There is always someone competing with you, ready to cut your throat [*serruchándote el piso*], because he wants to be in your position. And instead of being happy because you had been elected, he wants to be elected even though he doesn't have the capacity to be an elected official [*aunque no le de el cuero*]. The worst among politicians are never those who are in front of you but those who are by your side. The ones who are in front of you compete against you by using another image, with another program. But those who are supposed to be with you, those are the worst of all.¹⁰

Still, there are idealist candidates who, having the possibility to use clientelism, prefer not to use such strategies even when that choice will mean political suicide. Candidates who prefer not to use clientelism fail not only to mobilize voters but also to send party leaders the signal that they are willing to do what it takes to remain in power. Idealist candidates are neither naive nor inept; they understand well how clientelism works, yet they prefer not to use the strategies that would secure their tenure in office. Idealist Peronist candidates in José C. Paz as well as idealist Radical candidates in Río Cuarto shared the idea that political action should be guided by a normative commitment to social justice.

By comparing the preferences of candidates competing for the same voters under the same conditions in José C. Paz, I am able to examine the causes that explain why some candidates prefer to use clientelism while others prefer to avoid engaging in these strategies. Of the twenty elected candidates in José C. Paz, nineteen were affiliated to the Peronist party. Sergio, a candidate affiliated to the Federalist Union Party (Partido Unidad Federalista, PAUFE) is examined here as a representative of a resentful candidate.¹¹ Here, I focus on three Peronist candidates affiliated to the

9. Interview conducted by the author in José C. Paz, November 2005.

10. Interview conducted by the author in José C. Paz, September 2005.

11. Only first names are used to protect the identity of the candidates interviewed. The PAUFE is a right-wing political party whose founder, leader, and former mayor of Escobar (a municipality in Bue-

mayor's agrupación who worked in low-income neighborhoods that are comparable in terms of size, voter partisanship, and propensity to turn out. I chose these cases for two reasons. First, these three cases enabled me to learn about candidates' preferences, given that they represent cases of candidates who made different choices with regard to using clientelism despite facing the same opportunities. Second, two of the three candidates preferred not to use clientelism, thus providing me with an opportunity to understand the reasons candidates opt to commit political suicide.

Néstor exemplifies the mind of idealist candidates who reject the use of clientelism even though they are aware that this means committing political suicide. Candidates from his own and rival parties, key informants, and party strategists agreed on highlighting Néstor's political potential. In the words of one activist, "He could have been reelected easily if he was a little bit more flexible."¹² By "flexible," this activist was referring to Néstor's well-known rejection of the use of clientelism to gain political support. When I asked Néstor why he rejected using a strategy that he knew would allow him to be reelected and thus conduct politics on his own terms, he replied: "I just don't believe in a clientelistic political construction. It's that simple. I believe that supporters have to choose to become part of a political project after discussing ideas, policies, not salaries."¹³

Although he obtained a significant number of votes, Néstor failed to win reelection when competing against the political machine of the José C. Paz mayor, who had a personal grudge against him and thus deployed additional money to make sure that Néstor's low-income supporters had a hard time getting to the polls.¹⁴ At the time of the interview, Néstor was selling acrylic paint while still participating in afternoon political meetings in his neighborhood. In these meetings voters discussed political issues such as who should be taxed in the municipality, who should have a right to receive state aid, and how that aid should be distributed to guarantee that voters take those goods as rights and not as political favors with conditions attached. These political meetings were significantly different from the meetings of other Peronist agrupaciones in the municipality, where most people attended because otherwise their benefits would be taken away and where there was no discussion of politics but, rather, of logistics: Who is going to mobilize voters in each neighborhood? Who is going to go house by house to inform voters about an upcoming party rally?

Municipal candidate Juan Carlos, whose tenure was to expire in two years, echoed Néstor's preferences as well as his awareness of the consequences of the rejection of the use of clientelism. During our conversations before the 2005 election, Juan Carlos acknowledged that if he wanted to boost his turnout numbers, he had to threaten voters who were receiving benefits and those whose problems he had solved because, otherwise, it was very likely that those voters would go to support another candidate from his party. "Voters are not bad people, they just

nos Aires), Luis Patti, was police chief during the last dictatorship and has been accused and convicted of torturing people during that period.

12. Interview conducted by the author in José C. Paz, November 2005.

13. Interview conducted by the author in José C. Paz, September 2005.

14. For instance, there is evidence that the mayor purposely restricted public transportation to the neighborhoods that were likely to support Néstor's candidacy (*La Hoja*, October 29, 2005).

have dire needs, and so they will support whoever helps them to solve their problems. It's simple, even understandable, and straightforward."¹⁵

Juan Carlos also informed me about the effects that his preference not to use clientelism had on candidates from his party who made the opposite choice. "They don't forgive me," he told me, as his tone of voice began changing and his eyes got wet:

AUTHOR: You got emotional . . .

JUAN CARLOS: No. It's that I have my ideals, right? And there are things that I will not accept because they go against what I think. And I say it; I make it manifest.¹⁶

It was a strange moment, and he asked me not to keep on talking about this issue. There was a long silence, and I felt sympathy for him. Juan Carlos was raised embedded in a popular *machista* culture in which men are not supposed to cry at all, much less in public and in front of a woman. Juan Carlos's tears capture the impotence a candidate can feel in choosing not to use clientelism. At the end of our interview, Juan Carlos conceded, "This is how politics works." Yet understanding how politics works is also what explains why some candidates prefer to use clientelism, as the case of pragmatist candidate José illustrates. José envisions politics as a boxing match without referees:

I get up to the ring to box with gloves, but if you kick me in the kneé, I'll kick you back. If I don't kick you, I'll lose, you'll win, and there won't be a judge to tell me, "You, sir, are correct." You are kicked out, and left alone, crying, and that's a pretty thing about politics. There are no untouchables. No one will look out for you. No matter how much they respect you, and tell you that you are great. No one is going to make an effort for you. This isn't bad; it's just the rules. One cannot take things too personally but must use the rules of the game. Either you get used to it, or you go crazy, or you leave.¹⁷

In José C. Paz, Peronist and non-Peronist candidates observed that those who engage in clientelism succeed in their political careers without being effectively penalized by either the party or the courts. As a result, candidates interested in pursuing a political career who have the capacity to employ clientelistic strategies are strongly encouraged to turn to these strategies.

Radical candidates in Río Cuarto, a municipality that only once since the return of democracy has had a Peronist government, experienced the tension between an idealist and a pragmatist campaign during the primary of the Radical party in 2000. At the time, two former reelected mayors, Miguel Ángel Abella and Antonio Benigno Rins, took different approaches to recover the local administration for their party: whereas Rins favored building an electoral alliance with the PN to secure the Radical party's electoral victory, Abella openly rejected such a strategy and campaigned against compromising Radical principles by building pragmatic alliances. It was a highly contested primary, which Rins won to become again the mayor of Río Cuarto by joining forces with More for Río Cuarto (*Más por Río Cuarto*), the electoral coalition between the Radical party and the PN.

15. Interview conducted by the author in José C. Paz, August 2005.

16. Interview conducted by the author in José C. Paz, August 2005.

17. Interview conducted by the author in Bahía Blanca, September 2006.

When I asked Abella what he had learned from that experience, he replied that he still held the same convictions and would have done exactly the same no matter what. I asked him if he didn't feel like David fighting against Goliath for trying to compete using ideals, to which he replied that he envisioned himself rather as Moses walking in the desert—he and other idealist activists believed that they were training a new generation of politicians who would eventually get elected on the basis of programmatic and not clientelistic appeals.

Utopist candidates' beliefs mirrored those of idealist candidates, but their inability to distribute goods makes them ineligible to commit political suicide. Opposition candidates affiliated to parties with limited resources are unable to turn to clientelism. In practice, this means that neither resentful nor utopist candidates will employ clientelistic strategies, but for significantly different reasons. Resentful candidates are unable to use clientelism because they do not have access to material goods, whereas utopist candidates would not use clientelism even if they had that access. The cases of resentful and utopist candidates constitute 19 percent of the sample, and it is worth noting that there were 13.14 percent more utopist than resentful candidates.

Resentful candidates constantly referred to what they define as unfair competition, that is, competing to mobilize low-income voters in situations in which some candidates (those affiliated with incumbent parties) have more access to resources than other candidates (those affiliated with nonincumbent parties):

In reality, there is less conspiracy than it seems. For instance, in the 2001 election, an election of which we are very proud, I went to the neighborhoods of very poor people, people with whom I had worked a lot, people who knew me and liked me, and nevertheless, one of the guys who had helped me came to ask me for money because he needed to buy some construction materials to repair the roof of his house. He told me that he was not asking for money to vote for me, he said that it was OK if I didn't have money, but he said that I had to understand that people needed money. Today you can't mobilize twenty voters if you don't buy them.¹⁸

This was the reasoning of Sergio, a candidate affiliated to the PAUFE who was competing to mobilize the same voters targeted by Peronist candidates in José C. Paz, a municipality where Peronist candidates could count on the support of the national, provincial, and municipal governments. Following Sergio's reasoning, if he had been able to distribute construction materials, he would have been able to get voters' support. Candidates like Sergio, who were unable to solve voter problems, constantly pointed out their incapacity as the reason for their failure to mobilize voters. "Unfortunately, voters listen to you, they are interested in you, but they need things. Then, if you do not have money, if you can't give them things, they can't support you. They support whoever has things to give away, no matter who she or he is."¹⁹

Table 7 describes the partisanship affiliation of each type of candidate, further demonstrating the strong relationship between Peronism and clientelism, since the majority of pragmatist candidates were affiliated to the Peronist party.

18. Interview conducted by the author in José C. Paz, December 2005.

19. Interview conducted by the author in Río Cuarto, May 2006.

Table 7 *Candidates' capacities and preferences in relation to partisanship*

Candidates	Other party	Radical party	Peronist party	Total
Pragmatist	0 (0%)	7 (5.11%)	52 (37.96%)	59 (43.07%)
Idealist	0 (0%)	19 (13.87%)	33 (24.09%)	52 (37.96%)
Resentful	4 (2.92%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (2.92%)
Utopist	22 (16.06%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	22 (16.06%)
Total	26 (18.98%)	26 (18.98%)	85 (62.04%)	137 (100%)

Still, the number of idealist candidates within the Peronist party was significant. Partisanship differences also highlight the fact that Radical candidates were less prone to use clientelism than were Peronist candidates. The high number of utopist candidates is driven mostly by the emergence and success of the New Party in Córdoba. Four out of eighteen candidates affiliated with the PN did not distribute goods to voters. The majority of the New Party candidates were successful businesspeople, professionals, and professors who had decided to participate in politics for the first time and thus had neither the know-how nor the networks of activists that would have enabled them to use clientelism. Indeed, it is plausible to suppose that Juez selected these candidates precisely because they were new to the existing political establishment and thus unfamiliar with the old clientelistic strategies used to turn out voters.

In contrast, the four candidates who resorted to clientelism were former Peronist (three candidates) and Radical (one candidate) party members. Placed in lower-ranked positions on the party ticket, these candidates continued to mobilize voters by exchanging favors for votes.

CONCLUSION

Political parties are organizations that seek to win elections, and to achieve this goal, they try to turn out as many voters as possible. By distributing rewards to candidates only on the basis of the number of voters they mobilized, parties encourage the use of clientelistic strategies. Candidates who are capable of using and prefer to use clientelism are encouraged to employ these strategies by a perverse system of incentives that promotes the careers of clientelistic candidates to the detriment of candidates who are either unable or unwilling to use such strategies. Hence, it is not the case that candidates are always willing to use clientelistic strategies; rather, those who refuse to engage in clientelistic practices are unable to advance in politics.²⁰

20. In the case of Argentina, I suspect that candidates' political activity and involvement in the resistance or exile during the dictatorship have an important effect on their future decisions about how to "do" politics. Most of those interviewed who had been persecuted during the dictatorship had

When only candidates who use clientelism succeed in getting promoted within the party, career-oriented candidates are indirectly, but successfully, encouraged to use clientelistic strategies. In examining the causes and consequences that induce individual candidates to prefer clientelism, this article contributes to the literature by improving our understanding of causal mechanisms. The perverse logic of incentives that induces candidates to use clientelism becomes evident only if we focus on the conditions under which candidates make decisions about how to mobilize voters.

A candidate who solves voter problems and does not mind if that voter is not loyal to him or her is committing political suicide. Yet the logic of an alternative, nonclientelistic political construction is based on building trust with voters. Non-clientelistic candidates tend to believe in the importance of building relationships of mutual trust and respect between voters and candidates as the foundation of stronger and healthier relationships of representation. Empirical evidence suggests that the combination of a large opposition and a sizable middle class (Weitz Shapiro 2012), and/or a critical juncture at the local level that opens up spaces for new and inexperienced political parties (Szwarcberg 2009), explains the disappearance of clientelism.

Understanding the mechanisms through which local candidates get promoted at the local level enables scholars and policy makers to study the effects of these strategies on democratic representation, as well as to design effective political reforms. The systematic promotion of pragmatic candidates over suicidal ones poses a potential challenge to the effective representation of low-income and working-class voters. In cases where pragmatist candidates prefer to pursue their reelection by silencing voters' demands, poor voters' voice in the decision-making process is effectively muted. Only by comprehending how political promotions actually work will policy makers be able to modify the existing system of incentives to favor the promotion of idealist candidates.

While economic growth and, more important, the distribution of wealth are directly related to the transition away from clientelism, this article contributes to an understanding of the effects of the combination of candidates' capacities and preferences on their decisions to mobilize voters. By taking individual candidates' preferences into account, policy makers could find ways to reward idealist candidates who would otherwise abandon politics.

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