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THE RESILIENCE OF CLIENTELISM IN MENEM'S ARGENTINA

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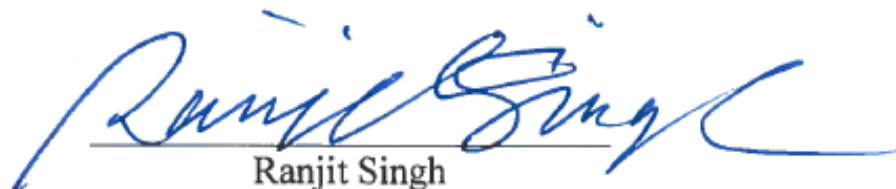
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### **Abstract**

This paper explains the resilience of clientelism in Argentina from 1989 to 1999, or the years of Carlos Menem's presidency. Menem enacted sweeping neoliberal reforms, which leading theories predicted would extinguish clientelism. Nevertheless, it persisted throughout the decade. The paper first reconstructs the concept of clientelism, presenting a definition of the phenomenon. It then tests and finds support for two hypotheses to explain its resilience. The first, from the leading school of thought in the literature, predicts that the use of clientelism decreases with an increase in competition. I suggest a new hypothesis that Menem's position relative to the Peronist party influences his decision to pursue the clientelist linkage. If he is in a dominant position, then he is likely to choose clientelism.

Keywords: conceptual reconstruction, clientelism, neoliberalism, political competition, Peronist party

### **Acknowledgments**

Thank you, Professor Barr, for sharing with me your love of concepts, methodology, and Latin American politics. Over the years, you've taught me how to think and ask questions, thereby changing my life. Here's to more questions!

I also want to thank Professor Singh, who served as my second reader while on sabbatical.

## I. Introduction

Given Carlos Menem's Peronist campaign rhetoric, no one expected him to embrace neoliberalism in 1989. That he did so vigorously and with considerable success—thereby managing an economic miracle—was surprising; that the use of clientelism contributed to his success defied theory. This paper focuses on the last puzzle, which continues to elude political science. Specifically, it seeks to explain the resilience of clientelism in Menem's Argentina, the decade of 1989 to 1999. During his tenure, he privatized state assets while transforming the Peronist party into a clientelist, machine-based party (Levitsky 2003). Most work focuses on the early years of his administration, or the height of neoliberal reform. The tail end of his presidency, too, has received considerable attention from scholars, who look to understand the 2001 collapse of the Argentine economy. These remarkable periods alone, however, cannot explain the conditions in which politicians pursue clientelist strategies. As such, the half-life of the clientelism-neoliberalism duo warrants further study as it may be consequential for democratic functioning.

Much of the economic restructuring that continues to influence Argentine politics occurred in the years leading up to Menem's reelection in 1995. And clientelism often mediated such restructuring, an interesting fact for several reasons. First, Menem was arguably in a position to push for plebiscitarian linkages, connecting him directly to voters. He nevertheless invested in clientelist linkages, thus opting for a system with intermediaries on whom he relied to accomplish his political goals. Indeed, the paper finds that he selected clientelism on several occasions at different points in his tenure. Second, theory predicts that clientelism should not exist in conditions of economic strain. The logic here is that, as the state's role in the economy decreases, politicians should have less access to resources which they can use for clientelist purposes. Yet, again, machine politics prevailed in Argentina's neoliberal years. Its resilience

raises questions about the functioning of democracy since—at a minimum—there is a tension between the existence of clientelism in democratic regimes. Where voters exchange their right to political representation for benefits, it becomes unclear whether popular sovereignty defines democracy. The inconsistency between clientelism, present in a number of democracies, and democratic representation indicates that the topic at hand is significant.

To explain Menem's use of clientelism, I first need to examine the concept itself. I review existing conceptualizations by concept type and offer my own definition in the classical structure. I then apply my concept to explore the question of resilience through the creation of three case studies in the Menem presidency. Process tracing functions as the method through which I test my hypothesis that Menem's relationship to the Peronist party accounts for the persistence of clientelism. I also test the leading hypothesis in the literature that political competition explains variation in clientelism. The results for both hypotheses emphasize the importance of understanding the concept as a system. Overall, I find that the economically improbable is politically feasible, but with significant implications for the quality of democracy. Clientelism is simultaneously the guardian of democracy—allowing painful economic reforms to occur in a democratic context—and its assailant attacking it from within.

## **II. Conceptualizing Clientelism**

Clientelism is one of those terms that mean different things to different people. For some, it brings to mind an unequal, personal relationship, which functions to control the weaker party; for others, it is a simple exchange of benefits with political consequences. A wide range of understandings occupies the space between these ends of the spectrum, and almost every writer on the subject offers a different definition. Disagreement over the definition of clientelism undermines its utility as a valuable explanatory tool (Landé 1983, 441). Scholars have used it to explain the political behavior of subaltern classes in three related aspects: their incorporation into

the political process, inability to form horizontal associations with peers, and as a method of seeking security in uncertain environments (e.g., Eisenstadt and Roniger 1980; Graziano 1983; Powell 1970; Scott 1972). The concept also illustrates, then, the behavior of higher authority actors such as politicians and brokers; that is, it explains the actions of those on the dominant side of clientelist deals (Kaufman 1974, 302). Clientelism hence remains an appealing concept for the student of development and perhaps especially so given its resilient quality. In fact, it has reentered the mainstream political science literature after defying theoretical expectations.<sup>1</sup> Neither democratization nor modernization, for instance, has extinguished the phenomenon. Clientelism is alive and well throughout the developing world—and though the concept may be abstract, its effects are not.<sup>2</sup>

The extant literature maintains that clientelism negatively affects democracy by threatening mechanisms of accountability. If a clientelist exchange entails a surrendering of political rights for benefits, then citizens lose the ability to hold their politicians accountable (Hicken 2011, 302). Moreover, politicians can hold voters accountable by withholding benefits based on voting results, what Stokes (2005) has termed “perverse accountability.” On the economic front, clientelism hinders development by incentivizing governments to perpetuate poverty among constituents. These adverse effects and the concept’s empirical relevance indicate that clientelism is worth understanding.

While the literature agrees on the negative implications of clientelism, disagreement persists over its conceptual core; thus, the literature is not in a position to resolve it or abate its consequences. An understanding of the phenomenon’s nature must precede structural policy

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<sup>1</sup> Stokes (2011) labels this the second wave of studies on clientelism. Prominent works include Piattoni (2001), Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007), and Stokes et al. (2013).

<sup>2</sup> The World Bank’s *World Development Report 2017*, for instance, notes the persistence of clientelism and its role in undermining democracy.

recommendations (Goertz 2006). Yet an understanding of clientelism is insufficient; one must be conscious of the mechanism of understanding. Put differently, the *how*, or method of conceptualization (concept type), matters as much as the *what*. Agreement on characteristics that define clientelism does not equal agreement on empirical cases of the phenomenon; true understanding requires study of concept types (Barr 2017, 26).

This section aims to shed light on the concept of clientelism. First, it discusses the nature of concepts in the social sciences and provides an overview of three conceptualization strategies. It then evaluates the advantages and disadvantages of each type, finding that an ideal strategy does not exist. Rather, the concept-builder should evaluate how each type serves her goals regarding the essence of clientelism. Although clarity should be a product of each conceptualization, it is likely that choice of characteristics will vary based on discipline. A definition of clientelism emerges from this section's conceptual exploration of the phenomenon.

### **Background on Concepts**

Concepts are the foundation and building blocks of knowledge in the social sciences. One must answer the question of “what is” before asking “how much.” In other words, qualitative conceptualization should precede quantitative research (Sartori 1970, 1038). There is a positive relationship between a concept's quality and its quantitative measure. According to Giovanni Sartori, a dominant figure in concept development, a concept is the “basic unit of thinking” that allows a researcher to “distinguish A from whatever is not-A” (1984, 74). Although there is a lack of consensus on the definition of concept, Sartori's definition appears to best suit the research goals of political science. Moreover, an unequivocal understanding of the word concept is unlikely and unnecessary (Adcock 2005, 31). Of greater importance is increased methodological awareness through conceptual reconstruction: a process that entails reviewing

the meanings of a concept (Sartori 1984, 50). Specifically, it is “an explication that consists of extracting (and ordering) the characteristics from the definitions of a term” (Sartori 1984, 74). When successful, conceptual reconstruction enhances the clarity of a given phenomenon and provides a base for concept formation (Sartori 1984, 50).<sup>3</sup>

A concept has three components: 1) phenomena to be clarified; 2) characteristics that define the phenomena; and 3) the term that captures the first two components (Gerring 1999, 357-8). Concept scholars refer to the first component, or a concept’s empirical coverage, as extension (Goertz 2006, 69). Intension, by contrast, denotes the attributes of a concept. Students of concept design can understand these three components as a triangular operation. Proper conceptualization aligns all three components in service of the observed phenomena (Gerring 1999, 358).

The relationship between intension and extension drives a significant amount of the scholarly debate on concept development. Most scholars maintain that there is an inverse relationship between the two components (Collier and Mahon 1993, 846).<sup>4</sup> As intension increases, extension decreases: if the concept-builder increases the number of attributes, then the concept’s coverage decreases. Sartori, motivated by comparative politics, sought to resolve the tension between intension and extension. More precisely, he was concerned that conceptual traveling was not possible because of the level of specificity that characterized his concepts of interest (Goertz 2006, 71). Conceptual traveling refers to the application of a concept to other cases, countries, or time periods. Thus, Sartori wanted to make concepts more general, without

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<sup>3</sup> Reconstruction has its limits in that it cannot restore consensus on a given concept; therefore, it is not a panacea, but an essential step in furthering our understanding of the world (Sartori 1984, 50).

<sup>4</sup> One should note, however, that there are different ways of understanding concepts. For instance, Giovanni Sartori (1970) favors a semantic approach, whereas Gary Goertz (2006) emphasizes an ontological view of concepts. These approaches respectively inform each scholar’s preferred conceptualization strategy (necessary and sufficient condition structure for Sartori and family resemblance structure for Goertz), which, in turn, has implications for the intension-extension relationship. To be fair, Sartori is not explicit regarding his views on concept structure, but it is likely that the necessary and sufficient structure represents his beliefs (Goertz 2006, 70).



committing the “sin” of conceptual stretching (Collier and Mahon 1993, 846). To stretch a concept is to increase extension without regard for a change in intension. Conceptual stretching, then, results in a generality, not a general concept. While a general concept arises naturally from an accumulation of specifics, a generality lacks such grounding (Sartori 1970, 1041).

Sartori’s ladder of abstraction resolves the problem of conceptual stretching and allows more generalization (1970, 1040). The ladder consists of three levels of abstraction, which the concept-builder should navigate inductively. Put differently, one should start at the low level by engaging in fieldwork and climb the ladder as she decides, based on the evidence, which classification best suits the phenomena (Sartori 1970, 1043). In operational terms, to climb the ladder is to remove necessary attributes or decrease intension and increase extension (Sartori 1970, 1041).

### **Concept Types**

Three types of conceptualization guide the present study: classical, family resemblance, and radial.<sup>5</sup> These are the main concept types, making them appropriate for a reconstruction of clientelism. Furthermore, they set the groundwork for the empirical components of this study. The classical strategy utilizes the necessary and sufficient condition structure and operates through the logical “and” (Goertz 2006, 40). Each characteristic is necessary and all are required for sufficiency. Cases must meet *all* of the set characteristics to qualify as examples of the concept. This strategy has high standards for inclusion, but it also reduces the risk of false positives. Ergo, a case that meets these ambitious standards warrants careful study (Weyland 2001, 2). Such demanding criteria, however, can result in narrow extension, and if the concept is not empirically useful, then it does not contribute to the accumulation of knowledge.

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<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, there exists a multitude of types. Some examples include comparative, connotative, contextual, core, deductive, denotative, experiential, inductive, lexical, metrical, minimal, nominal, object, precisising, residual, and stipulative. See Gerring (1999, 365) for more.

In contrast, the family resemblance structure relies on the logical “or.” It does not require that phenomena meet any single characteristic for membership. Consequently, this strategy allows for sufficiency without necessity (Goertz 2006, 41). If the case has at least some of the identified characteristics, it qualifies as an instance of the concept. This approach is the “m of n rule,” which states that if a case meets a predetermined number of characteristics, then it counts as a case of the concept under study (Goertz 2006, 40). Thus, the sufficiency threshold supersedes the nature of a given characteristic.

Radial concepts capture elements of classical and family resemblance structures. For a given concept, this structure specifies an ideal type and accompanying subtypes (Collier and Mahon 1993). The former approximates the classical standard of necessary characteristics (all of which are required for sufficiency); the latter require fewer characteristics and serve as diluted versions of the ideal type. The concept developer categorizes these versions as diminished subtypes through qualifying adjectives and thereby achieves differentiation while avoiding conceptual stretching. As such, radial concepts foster some conceptual agreement (Collier and Mahon 1993, 848). Yet, this consensus may be illegitimate because the diminished subtype may function to obscure the concept (Goertz 2006, 94). In other words, agreement on the subtype can mask disagreement regarding the concept.

The earlier discussion of intension and extension becomes more concrete when applied to concept types. The dynamics also aid in understanding the costs and benefits associated with each type. For example, an inverse relationship connects classical and family resemblance concepts (Goertz 2006, 71-72). As the concept developer adds additional characteristics, she increases the intension and, in doing so, narrows the extension for the classical concept structure. This same action, however, has the opposite effect on the family resemblance structure: it

expands extension. Yet an increase in characteristics outside of the necessary and sufficient condition structure may jeopardize the goals of reconstruction. Since membership is “all or nothing,” classical concepts have clearly established boundaries (Goertz 2006, 29). The family resemblance concept, by contrast, lacks clear boundaries because it has no requirements for membership. If one evaluates concepts in the Sartori tradition, then family resemblance concepts are not desirable because they do not solve the “border problem” (1984, 34). Radial concepts fare better in terms of borders but still fail to provide the dichotomous view of categories that classify classical concepts. One should therefore approach concept formation from an understanding that it is a dynamic, not rule based, process. Satisfying one criterion (term, intension, and extension) of the concept will likely cause another area to suffer: the concept-builder must sacrifice some aspects to prioritize others (Gerring 1999, 389).

### **Understandings of Clientelism**

Such prioritization within concept-building assumes that the analyst has already narrowed her goals. In this case, a conceptualization of clientelism must facilitate empirical study of the phenomenon in contemporary Argentina. To reiterate, conceptualization aims to elucidate essence and thus often results in definitions of the phenomena under study. The goal here is to identify what *it* (clientelism) is; hence, this section judges a concept structure’s analytical value according to Sartori’s taxonomic logic.<sup>6</sup> This “either-or” approach allows one to identify differences in kind and thereby achieve conceptual differentiation (Sartori 1970, 1036). Evaluations of domain, or the “general realm in which the phenomenon predominantly falls,” are essential to this end (Barr 2017, 31). If analysts understand a concept in terms of the struggle for or exercise of power, then the concept belongs in the political domain. A focus on the

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<sup>6</sup> An alternative would be the gradualistic approach with its differences in degree; however, the literature is not yet in a position to benefit from employing this approach to identify clientelism.

distribution of resources, however, places the concept in the economic domain. What follows is an examination of the literature's conceptualizations of clientelism across domain and concept structure.

### Classical Conceptualizations

In classical conceptualizations, authors vary on their selection of core and secondary characteristics, but—in keeping with the classical structure—agree that all those characteristics they posit are necessary for a concept of clientelism. Powell (1970), for instance, identifies three characteristics: a reciprocal exchange of goods and services (his primary characteristic), a relationship between two parties that are unequal in status, and the proximity of such a relationship (412). On proximity, he specifies that frequent, face-to-face contact guarantees the relationship. Powell's conceptualization is parsimonious but does little to delimit clientelism. Consider the Latin American *compadrazgo* wherein parents select a godmother or father to their child based on a person's ability to provide necessary resources. This fictive kinship brings together two unequal parties in a mutually beneficial, long-term relationship; the parents and child receive resources while the *compadres* boost their social clout. Though a simple example, it illustrates the ubiquitous nature of Powell's characteristics. Following Powell, one should include the *compadrazgo* and the patron-client relationship that occurs in the political sphere as instances of clientelism. In other words, the concept's extension is too broad: it fails to restore clientelism's descriptive power.

Hilgers (2011) creates a concept of clientelism that is not worlds away from Powell's but more narrow in its extension. She determines clientelism's main characteristic as the "interest-maximizing exchange of resources for political support" (2011, 573). Hence, the political element differentiates clientelism from other patron-client exchanges like the *compadrazgo*. Her

secondary characteristics include longevity, diffuseness, face-to-face contact and status inequality. These secondary characteristics demonstrate her understanding of clientelism as a lasting personal relationship in addition to an exchange (573). It seems that this conceptualization fulfills Sartori's taxonomical requisites by identifying clientelism. Yet, there may be a substantial gap between Hilgers's definition and empirical examples of the phenomenon. By limiting "conceptually the patron-client relationship to one between two individuals," Hilgers aptly describes a clientelist exchange but not clientelism (580). Put differently, the patron-client relationship and clientelism are not synonymous.<sup>7</sup> The latter refers—as this paper will demonstrate—to a political *system* and, in restricting the concept to the microsociological level of analysis, Hilgers fails to capture this empirical reality.<sup>8</sup>

Hopkin (2006) presents an alternative conceptualization of clientelism as an "economic or 'market' exchange, in which the client seeks to maximize utility irrespective of any sense of obligation toward or identification with another actor" (4). He thus places clientelism in the economic domain and argues that clients enjoy a great deal of autonomy. Consequently, they are free to shop around with their vote, in search of the best economic return. In contrast, Piattoni (2001) interprets clientelism as essentially political, albeit with an economic characteristic. At its core, clientelism is a strategy that patrons use to amass political power and clients to advance their interests (2). Patron-client relations are "ruled by economic principles" but not economic in

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<sup>7</sup> Hilgers is certainly not alone in her decision to treat interchangeably the patron-client relationship and clientelism. Kaufman, for one, agrees that, "Given the difficulties involved in 'extending' the clientele concept, it may well be that we ought to be content with this somewhat modest choice [clientelism as a two-person exchange relationship] and concentrate comparative research on the relatively narrow arenas from which the concept was originally drawn" (1974, 302). Unfortunately, not all authors (e.g., Archer 1990; Lemarchand and Legg 1972) are as conscious of the liberties they exercise when they conceptualize clientelism as a dyadic exchange but use the concept to explain behavior in a larger unit of analysis (e.g. national political systems). The traditional patron-client relationship and clientelism may in fact refer to different phenomena, an argument that appears later in this section.

<sup>8</sup> Clientelism's systemic nature is evident in Javier Auyero's seminal study of the concept, which he understands as a series of "problem-solving networks" (Auyero 2000b). His rich, ethnographic work details urban clientelism in the shantytowns of Buenos Aires.

principle (11). Stokes's (2011) definition—which arguably best reflects the current understanding of clientelism—also emphasizes its political essence. In Stokes's words, clientelism is “the proffering of material goods in return for electoral support, where the criterion of distribution that the patron uses is simply: did you (will you) support me?” (649). Her criterion suggests the excludable nature of clientelist benefits. For Piattoni and Stokes, clientelism is analogous to an economic exchange but anchored in the political domain; resources flow from above to realize political agendas. The point here is that the classical concept structure is valuable because it clarifies clientelism's crux. Its clarity reveals areas of disagreement and encourages focused debate on the *it*. Moreover, the structure itself facilitates comparison across understandings.

#### Family Resemblance Conceptualizations

Family resemblance conceptualizations abound in the literature but are perhaps the least helpful in the specification of clientelism. Most authors argue that clientelism is present in all states in some form or degree (e.g., Hicken 2011; van de Walle 2007). Therefore, not only is there ontological disagreement, but the “elements which enter into the definition of clientelism are liable to vary at any given stage of political development” (Lemarchand and Legg 1972, 158). The resulting level of conceptual stretching leaves one wondering whether there exists a concept of clientelism at all. If so, it is improbable that the concept would be useful for systematic comparison of cases.

To be sure, almost all writers on the subject include two characteristics: clientelism is a contingent exchange between unequal parties.<sup>9</sup> One might gather from such consensus that clientelism, unlike say populism (see Barr 2017, chapter 2), is not an essentially contested concept. Yet these characteristics leave the analyst with an overwhelming number of empirical

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<sup>9</sup> More recent work (e.g., Hopkin 2006) calls the element of inequality into question.

cases: the *compadrazgo*, employer-employee relationship, and one-off vote buying are all examples of clientelism under the two characteristics. While contingency and status inequality appear central for a definition, they delimit little when taken together. One should not, then, forgo the use of the family resemblance structure for those who, in their conceptualizations, require the above characteristics. That is, authors may call for these two characteristics *and* use the family resemblance structure. Although family resemblance concepts do not necessitate any single characteristic for membership, the analyst might be better suited—for the concept of clientelism—by taking the presence of contingency and inequality as starting points. Strict adherence to this structure’s rules might hinder categorization of significant chunks of the clientelist literature.

Lemarchand and Legg (1972), for example, use the family resemblance structure to identify clientelism in feudal, patrimonial, and industrial polities. Despite significant variation in what patrons and clients exchange and the relationship’s level of affect and formalization, they deem clientelism present in all three political systems (160-1). Their classification springs from the single domain of political bargaining and requires that exchanges be between unequal parties and reciprocal (151). From this point, however, the presence of any three characteristics, the three being an affective component; the informal nature of the relationship; and the existence of brokers, signals an instance of clientelism. In other words, it appears that no specific characteristic is necessary for membership beyond the foundational two. For Lemarchand and Legg, the affective lord-vassal relationship, in which a lord granted a fief in exchange for the vassal’s services, is equivalent to the more pragmatic patron-broker-client exchange of selective benefits for political support. And these transactions, in turn, are not categorically different from the appointment of administrative and political offices in patrimonial systems for loyalty to a

ruler. Furthermore, that lord-vassal relations were of a contractual, institutionalized nature, whereas clientelism in industrial systems is informal and semilegal, is insufficient reason to separate the two—both belong to the family of clientelism. Unlike radial advocates, the authors here do not present a full instance of the phenomenon or allow for ranking of subtypes; feudal clientelism is not more clientelistic than patrimonial or industrial clientelism. Lemarchand and Legg instead seek to create a wide-ranging concept.

One could argue that this family resemblance concept is advantageous because it does not limit clientelism to a historical stage of development. On the other hand, it does not indicate continuity in the use of the concept over time; rather it presents consequentially different phenomena under the same group. When used, the family resemblance structure functions to obscure clientelism more than it reveals. Specifically, it tends to include vote buying, pork-barreling, bribery, corruption, patronage, friendship and machine politics under the family of clientelism (Hilgers 2011, 572). A misappropriation of public goods and misrepresentation of citizens usually connect these phenomena. However, in terms of the goals at hand, this structure does not enhance conceptual clarity.

### Radial Conceptualizations

Through the addition of adjectives, radial concept structures present ideal and diminished varieties of clientelism. Again, the attachment of an adjective reflects the removal of a characteristic and thus creation of a subtype.<sup>10</sup> Fox (1994), for example, notes a shift from “authoritarian” to “semiclientelism” as the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) lost its hegemonic status in Mexican politics. Authoritarian clientelism functions as the starting point for his analysis and ideal type. The term refers to “imbalanced bargaining relations [that] require the

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<sup>10</sup> Radial concepts thus differ from classical ones wherein adjectives add characteristics that a case must meet to warrant inclusion.



enduring political subordination of clients and are reinforced by the threat of coercion” (153). Semiclientelism, by contrast, does not have a coercive aspect; accordingly, the enforcement of compliance takes a different form under this subtype. Where politicians previously threatened with sticks, they begin to intimidate via carrots, or the discontinuation of benefits (157). The transitional category of semiclientelism thereby illustrates the gray area in between authoritarian clientelism and citizenship. Although politicians no longer threatened the use of force, they continued to infringe on citizens’ right to associational autonomy, which grants citizens the ability to organize and defend their interests without fear of punishment. Fox’s ideal and diminished conceptualizations, then, highlight the role of political domination in the operation of clientelism. In short, the method of enforcement may change but continue to serve the same objective, that of control.

Gay (2006), too, utilizes a radial structure when he isolates “thin clientelism” in the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro. Where clientelism represents the overt exchange of votes for benefits, its thinner variant delivers these political results in a more implicit manner. The Partido Democrático Trabalhista (PDT) in particular enjoyed considerable electoral success through the latter in the 1980s. At this time in the Vidigal *favela*, for example, there existed an autonomous neighborhood association bent on eradicating the practice of clientelism from the *favela*. The association only accepted public works projects that did not require reciprocation at the ballot box; furthermore, association leaders invited politicians to weekly meetings to introduce their ideas, not negotiate with voters (206).<sup>11</sup> PDT representatives at meetings discussed public works sponsored by the party based on need. That is, regarding the distribution of resources, the party treated favelas equally whether they were PDT strongholds or not. During the meetings

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<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, leaders could not thwart individual material transactions between politicians and voters outside of association meetings.

politicians even declared they, ““wanted nothing in return; these are your rights”” (208). Gay observes, though, that this was a change in discourse alone—politicians were effectively asking for votes. And voters, despite the efforts of association leaders, rewarded the PDT with their votes, unwilling to trust “abstract systems of distribution and justice” (211). The PDT’s strategy thus resembles clientelism, yet the receipt of benefits did not depend on compliance. Put differently, thin clientelism suggests that contingency in exchange need not be a functional characteristic of clientelism and thus actually refers to pork barrel politics.

Although these radial structures elucidate specific cases, they do not contribute to a definition of clientelism itself. They instead increase the concept’s empirical coverage through the proselytization of subtypes, which do not allow for direct observation of the phenomenon. Given the existing plethora of empirical cases, one must question the radial structure’s utility. The classical concept structure therefore surfaces from this review as the most promising for the goals of this study. Its clear boundaries illuminate clientelism’s essence and aid in case selection. However, that classical authors present different core characteristics—through their placement of clientelism in the economic and political domains—suggests a heretofore unaddressed rift in understanding. Accompanying this division is a broader debate in the literature regarding the extent of clientelism. In other words, concerns over more granular aspects such as the numbers and links necessary to distinguish the concept from others. An exploration of such matters entails insight into clientelism’s origin story.

### **Setting up a Political Understanding: Numbers, Links, and Domains**

One can trace the conceptual development of clientelism through the disciplines of anthropology and political science. Anthropologists first termed clientelism as the “analysis of how persons of unequal authority, yet linked through ties of interest and friendship, manipulate

their relationships in order to attain their ends” (Weingrod 1968, 379). This understanding refers to a vertical relationship between landlord and peasant, wherein a patron provides clients with access to basic goods in exchange for services (rent, labor, etc.) and demonstrations of social loyalty (speaking highly of the patron in public). Political scientists, however, comprehend clientelism as “the study of how political party leaders seek to turn public institutions and public resources to their own ends, and how favors of various kinds are exchanged for votes” (Weingrod 1968, 379). The political interpretation also emphasizes a vertical relationship even though scholars refer to it as “mass party” or new clientelism (Hopkin 2006, 3). In this version of the concept, political party leaders replace landlords as patrons and distribute excludable benefits and resources for votes. One can also understand the transition between old and new clientelism through the introduction of brokers. In this view, party leaders co-opted landlords to further their political goals (Mouzelis 1985, 334). Landlords were thus still patrons to clients but not the overarching patrons; instead, they became part of a broader clientelist chain. Those who use the classical structure, then, continue to present two types of clientelism: old and new.

Addressing this separation is the first challenge for the student of clientelism, who must question if it is analytically useful to accommodate both types through the same term. Most scholars find that old and new are not sufficiently different and therefore one term is satisfactory (e.g., Archer 1990; Graziano 1976; Mouzelis 1985).<sup>12</sup> For the goals of this political study, though, the typical approach may not be appropriate. The need at hand is for a concept that allows empirical analysis of clientelism’s resilience in present-day Argentina. Consequently, the view here is that the new type is “real” clientelism, so to speak, while the traditional variant refers to a separate phenomenon. Classification as a different entity occurs on the basis of the

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<sup>12</sup> Archer, for instance, argues that the two types vary in scope, intensity, durability, and types of transactions but are fundamentally similar (1990, 9). He thus identifies differences in degree, not kind.

core characteristic, meaning that the two types can—and indeed do—share several secondary categories.

Consider Hopkin (2006) who places clientelism in the economic domain. He quotes Gellner (1977) who argues that: “Economic benefits are, at least ideally, calculable, noncommittal and single-shot: hence, an economic operation is isolable, and does not need to give rise to any permanent relationship...By contrast, the long-term imponderables which are being ‘exchanged’ in a political relationship, ipso facto give a much deeper colouring to the links between the parties to the transaction” (5-6). Hopkin claims that Gellner “draws the distinction [between new and old clientelism] with striking clarity” (4). The former’s position raises several important points, including where one draws the line between the types. The literature broadly understands old clientelism as those patron-client relations that prevailed before state centralization and the expansion of the market (e.g., Powell 1970, Weingrod 1968). Hopkin does not deviate explicitly from this norm. Nevertheless, what he terms old clientelism is actually fairly consistent with general, modern interpretations of the concept; meanwhile, his new version references distinct phenomena.

For Hopkin, new clientelism does not include the political subordination of clients. Established scholars, though, would likely take issue with his understanding of the phenomenon. In new clientelism, the patron’s bargaining power still exceeds that of the client (Powell 1970, 413). Some level of autonomy is intrinsic to any bargaining exchange but, in clientelism, clients face disproportionately more constraints than patrons (Fox 1994, 153). The fear of punishment, be it through coercive means or the withdrawal of benefits (as is typical in the present-day), is characteristic of both types. An emphasis on client autonomy that significantly reduces the

relationship's quotient of asymmetry moves away from clientelism and, in doing so, begins to reflect a different kind of exchange (Lemarchand and Legg 1972, 152).

Additionally, the Gellner quote more appropriately details ad hoc forms of bargaining such as acts of vote buying, logrolling, bribery, and cooptation.<sup>13</sup> Clientelism, by contrast, is iterative. Ad hoc bargaining may or may not occur repeatedly, while iteration is a characteristic of clientelism. Norms-driven scholars attribute its iterative nature to the principle of generalized—as opposed to balanced—reciprocity. Clientelist exchanges are not of a “tit-for-tat” sort where patrons specify what they expect in return from clients, and clients are in a position to reciprocate equally (Wolf 1966, 13). The phenomenon lacks a set measure of exchange and as such there is “no way to free oneself through payment of an agreed price” (Graziano 1976, 160). Those who provide interest-oriented accounts observe a commitment issue that is particular to clientelism (e.g., Magaloni 2014; Stokes 2011). This type of political linkage involves an ongoing relationship between the two parties; ergo, with the knowledge that the two will meet again, each side has an incentive to uphold its end of the bargain. Without digressing too far into the mechanics of clientelism, these examples demonstrate that scholars of different persuasions from both types (old and new) identify iteration as a characteristic.

Having established asymmetry and iteration as secondary characteristics of clientelism in general, one is in a position to differentiate the two types by analyzing their core characteristics. Though Hopkin deems new clientelism economic in nature, it seems that most scholars conceptualize its predecessor through the economic lens (e.g., Eisenstadt and Roniger 1980; Medina and Stokes 2007).<sup>14</sup> In a pre-mercantile context, clients relied almost exclusively on

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<sup>13</sup> To be sure, ad hoc bargaining, too, is inherently political. The one-off nature of such bargaining does not place it in the economic domain either. Policy based distribution can be ad hoc or iterative.

<sup>14</sup> For an opposing view, see Graziano who argues that the traditional version of the concept was political (1976, 161).

patrons for the distribution of resources (Piattoni 2001, 12). Market expansion and state centralization nevertheless threatened the monopolies of patrons and presented a political opportunity (Mouzelis 1985, 333). Powell (1970) ably underscores the seizure of such an opportunity by Italian and Venezuelan political parties:

Unlike simple patron-client relations, or primitive clientele systems, the Italian and Venezuelan networks have been *purposively organized from above*, endure in institutionalized form, exchange a wide range of goods and services, and provide quite *lengthy chains of linkages*—from the peasant to the President or Prime Minister. They are, in a quite specific sense, politically representative. (418; emphasis added)

Powell's point stresses a political intentionality unique to modern clientelism. Unlike traditional patron-client relations—such as the *compadrazgo*, wherein patrons or clients could initiate the relationship—political actors organize clientelism from above in the new type.

Powell also alludes to networks and various linkages, which are not present in the concept's traditional use but are essential to distinguishing old from new. The aforementioned brokers or intermediaries are comparatively autonomous individuals in that they do not obtain their authority from national political leaders (Mouzelis 1985, 343). Their existence can call into question the legitimacy of political elites, as clients are most loyal to brokers, not politicians. Accordingly, obligations to mobilize become weaker the further one moves from the original dyadic relationship (Landé 1983, 442).<sup>15</sup> The introduction of brokers hence creates new opportunities for control while maintaining the element of personalism that is a hallmark of the dyadic exchange. Brokers facilitate the extension of clientelism and thereby accommodation of greater numbers into politics. One can still observe the dyad in new clientelism, but this two-person behavioral system no longer entirely encapsulates reality. The old patron-client relation now occurs in a broader network or system of such dyads, and this change has important

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<sup>15</sup> Archer describes the negative consequences of this transition to broker-mediated clientelism for Colombian state capacity. The point being that a change in the rules of the game—that is, form—changed the outcome as well (1990, 35-7). One must then learn the new rules to continue playing the game.

conceptual repercussions. Scholars tend to detail a dyadic relationship but then transpose the concept to explain political behavior at the national level. Kaufman (1974) names this the “level of analysis problem” and its fundamental implication is that, by failing to adapt the concept to their phenomenon of interest, political scientists are unable to explore the answers to their questions. Although the temptation to conceptualize clientelism as a dyadic exchange is understandable, the patron-client concept is usually invalid for the goals of political science.

This review of domains, numbers, and links leads one to wonder whether the literature goes far enough by separating the phenomenon into two distinct types (old and new). Indeed, closer examination reveals substantive differences in domain. Old clientelism represents the economic domain, whereas new clientelism is political.<sup>16</sup> The former concerns the distribution of resources; the latter revolves around the struggle for power. Earlier forms of clientelism were, in other words, more strictly material than those observed in the present day where economic transactions are a characteristic—but not the essence—of clientelism. Simply put, material transactions in new clientelism are a means to a political end. And this end involves significantly more clients and hierarchical steps. These differences raise a question: do the conceptual divisions at hand concern old and new, or thing one and thing two? It is likely that the second perspective is more suited for this study.

### **A Definition Emerges**

The preceding review of concept structures and domains now informs my definition of the phenomenon: clientelism is a system that involves personal and iterative exchanges of selective benefits between unequal actors for political support. In defining it, I utilize the classical concept structure together with a single, political domain. One can best understand

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<sup>16</sup> Others have not explicitly made this argument but consider that several notable authors refer to the newer version as *political* clientelism (e.g., Landé 1983; Lemarchand and Legg 1972; Magaloni 2014; Stokes 2011).

clientelism through the classical structure, because this type sets clear boundaries for inclusion and exclusion of cases. Given the lack of conceptual precision, the literature on clientelism benefits most from the clarity classical concepts provide. On domain, this review maintains that the *it* cannot be simultaneously economic and political. The political intentionality of modern clientelism suggests that it is more than a new manifestation of old behavior. It is instead a different concept—the actual clientelism—and belongs in the political domain. My definition specifies five secondary characteristics: personalism, iteration, contingency, status inequality, and a systemic makeup. The classical structure requires the presence of all five characteristics for an instance of the concept, and one finds that the five are intimately related. Personalism and iteration, for instance, ensure contingency by serving as monitoring mechanisms. Brokers develop relationships with clients and collect information on their political behavior, from attendance at rallies to voting choices. If clients believe that brokers are monitoring, they are likely to exhibit the desired behavior. Again, pragmatic concerns explain my evaluation of the concept's characteristics. In this case, the interest lies in understanding clientelism in a political light, leading me to make a few basic assumptions. Iteration and contingency allow politicians—or self-interested actors, who seek more, not less, power—to distribute resources judiciously. They reward those clients who support them and punish those who do not. An inability to withhold benefits means that politicians would be giving away resources with no return and such a strategy is inconsistent with the typical politician's goals. Lastly, inequality is a familiar trait for the student of clientelism, who detects the trait in virtually every empirical case.

The definition I propose differs from those in the extant literature in two important ways. First, clientelism is a strategy politicians use to obtain and maintain power. It is, therefore, not inherent but manufactured and dependent on the flow of resources. Second, its iterative and



systemic nature is essential in distinguishing it from other potentially related concepts. Clientelism refers to multiple personal and contingent exchanges at different levels of the political food chain. At each level, one must ask whether the exchange is isolated. If so, then clientelism is not at play. Other political science works emphasize that clientelism is personal, discretionary, and typically occurs between unequal actors (e.g. Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Stokes 2011). Though helpful, these conceptualizations do not go far enough in identifying the phenomenon. My inclusion of iteration as a characteristic indicates that clientelism refers to a broader *system* of exchanges. This understanding helps to differentiate the concept from one-off exchanges such as vote buying. In doing so, my definition increases conceptual precision, placing the discipline of political science in a better position to address clientelism and its associated ills.

### **III. Literature Review**

An understanding of clientelism also helps one sift through the vast literature on the subject. Given clientelism's important implications for the quality of democracy, what factors explain its emergence and decline? The following section reviews the literature on the causal factors of clientelism, paying special attention to international and subnational variation.

#### **On Mechanisms: Establishing a Framework**

Underlying my reading of the literature is the observation that mechanisms matter. One must study how clientelism works before commenting on why it continues to thrive. In fact, explanations of resilience may be inseparable from the phenomenon's inner workings: clientelism persists, in part, because it works so well. Simply put, the question of how must precede that of why. A literature review on this topic that fails to contextualize the causal factors is incomplete. Toward that end, I group the literature into two main categories (instrumental and

obligatory), which reflect the logic of clientelism from the voter's perspective.<sup>17</sup> In doing so, I anchor the schools of thought in their broader theoretical assumptions. This step will aid in my eventual evaluation of the literature's strengths and weaknesses.

Clientelism succeeds when citizens exchange their political allegiance for goods and services. Such allegiance takes the form of attendance at party rallies, campaigning on behalf of parties, and, most commonly, voting in favor of the party that distributed benefits. This last type of political behavior is of particular interest to the present study, given that the ballot box is the ultimate test of clientelism's efficacy as an electoral strategy. In addition, it functions as the lever through which clientelism directly impacts the quality of democracy (Weitz-Shapiro 2014, 40). Furthermore, controversy over the voting behavior of clients defines the divisions in the literature on this topic. The secret ballot presents the opportunity to defect: clients can accept material goods and proceed to vote according to their actual preferences. Yet, empirical evidence shows that clients honor their commitments (e.g., Brusco et al. 2004). Scholars offer competing explanations for this observed accountability at the micro-level of analysis.<sup>18</sup> And this accountability, in turn, is worthy of study because of the suspected role it plays in sustaining clientelism.

Political scientists have diligently developed the instrumental approach since the resurgence of interest in clientelism (e.g., Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Piattoni 2001; Stokes et al. 2013). This approach assumes that patrons and clients are rational actors. They weigh the costs and benefits of clientelist exchanges and engage in goal oriented behavior. Clients understand that their continued access to material benefits is contingent upon their return of the

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<sup>17</sup> Some may question my framework but even those who present macro-level arguments note that micro-decisions can overwhelm and change them (Piattoni 2001, 2). Thus, attention to the micro-level is necessary.

<sup>18</sup> The scenario here holds macro-level factors constant for now; namely, the flow of resources and politicians' access to these resources. Put differently, it assumes that resources flow freely or there exists the possibility for them to do so. Reception of benefits, then, depends on individual voting behavior alone.

favor at the ballot box. In the instrumentalist tradition, fear is the mechanism for client compliance. Consequently, clients believe that politicians or brokers monitor their political behavior. An assumption on the part of instrumental politicians is that clients value material benefits over the ability to express their genuine political views.

Despite the instrumentalist view's dominance, the obligatory approach may also shed light on the maintenance of the clientelist relationship (e.g., Landini 2013; Lawson and Greene 2014; Wolf 1966). According to this approach, client behavior observes a different set of rules but is not necessarily irrational (O'Donnell 1996, 40). The main assumption here is that clients who receive goods and services feel an obligation to their patrons. And they resolve that sense of obligation through political support of their benefactors. Therefore, reciprocity governs the obligatory approach. Clients self-monitor, meaning that the guaranteeing mechanism is internal not external. An additional distinction to note is that clients vote retrospectively. Unlike instrumentalists, these scholars argue that clients vote according to previous experiences (positive and negative) with patrons. Since the mechanisms of clientelism function as a fault line—or a fundamental set of assumptions from which all other work follows—in existing scholarship, clarity on these mechanisms puts one in a better position to categorize the literature.

### **Variation in Clientelism: the Leading Explanations**

Three streams of research explain variation in the presence of clientelism: the cultural, historical institutional, and structural approaches. While topical, the first two approaches are no longer at the center of scholarly debate and do not seem particularly conducive to my research goals; thus, I do not devote a great deal of attention to them. The bulk of this review focuses instead on the remaining school, which appears ripe for hypothesis development. Numerous works defy categorization and adopt several of the aforementioned perspectives. To maximize

clarity, I discuss below those works and authors that define each approach. I also acknowledge, though, that clientelism is a complex phenomenon and one should not sacrifice accuracy for clarity. As such, I note overlap in schools of thought where it exists.

Sociologists tend to argue the cultural perspective that collective identity and norms sustain clientelism. In other words, distribution of material resources, while necessary, is an insufficient condition. Javier Auyero's ethnographic fieldwork in the outskirts of Buenos Aires figures prominently in this school (e.g., 2000a, 2000b). From the client's point of view, he finds that clientelism persists as a dynamic "structure of feeling" that is rooted in Peronist imagery (2000b, 213-4). Such imagery confers legitimacy on clientelist networks so that they become independent of changes in brokers and patrons (2000a, 73-4). The language of commitments matters as well. A study of clientelist discourse reveals the prevalence of expressions such as the "given word" and "integrity" (Roniger 2012, 37). Roniger plainly states: "whoever tries to undermine clientelism addressing just a change in the formal 'rules of the game' without addressing such embedded cultural idioms will likely fail to eradicate it" (2012, 37). These idioms point to the importance of individual honor in a collective. Those scholars who continue to work in this tradition, however, recognize that cultural norms alone cannot account for the variability of clientelism. Yet, as I will later demonstrate, this camp in the literature remains relevant and serves as inspiration for the burgeoning psychological camp.

Martin Shefter (1977) led the historical institutional approach with his contributions on bureaucratic professionalization and the role of formal democratic institutions. Specifically, his explanation emphasizes the interaction of state formation, industrialization, and enfranchisement. A state that professionalized its bureaucracy prior to democratization was less susceptible to

clientelism.<sup>19</sup> Professionalization guarded against the distribution of the spoils of power by the victorious party. That is, parties' inability to court voters with administrative positions forced them to resort to programmatic appeals. Meanwhile, external parties, or those not in power, attracted disenfranchised citizens through programmatic appeals as well. Shefter observes that the latter relied on programmatic appeals because they too could not access state resources. To be clear, their lack of access was due to their distance from the political system. These parties consistently bypassed clientelism because it was not an option. Alternatively, variation exists in internal parties where constraints were institutional in nature. Those internal parties in states without an independent bureaucracy seized the clientelist opportunity. Thus, per historical institutionalism, institutional differences account for variation in the presence of clientelism across and within states.

Critics of the historical institutional school assert that it is problematically one-sided and contradicts empirical findings. On the former, recent works indicate an emerging consensus regarding the explication of clientelism (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007, Morgan 2011, Piattoni 2001). The works frame clientelism in supply and demand terms wherein patrons represent supply and clients demand. Addressing each factor *and* the interaction of the two allows for a more accurate explanation. Shefter essentially argues that supply side factors alone account for clientelism; researchers need not attend to voter preferences or characteristics of the electorate. As a result, he overly simplifies clientelism and thus effectively captures only one side of the phenomenon (Piattoni 2001, 17). An emphasis on institutions, moreover, may reflect a lack of appreciation for clientelism as a political strategy. Patrons and clients *choose* clientelism to

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<sup>19</sup> Although they are not synonymous, the literature uses the terms clientelism and patronage interchangeably. The latter typically refers to the exchange of public employment for political support. Hence, one can conceive of patronage as a subtype, or more limited form, of clientelism. It may be useful for the reader to keep this nuance in mind to evaluate Shefter's argument, which he bases on observations of patronage politics.

maximize their interests. The case for choice over constraint is evident in the example of the French MRP (Mouvement Républicain Populaire) and Italian DC (Democrazia Cristiana). In the years following World War II, these Christian Democratic parties sought to appeal to a wide array of voters but differed in their goals. MRP set out to reform French society, while DC concentrated on keeping communism at bay. Both parties operated in comparable institutional contexts in which clientelism was a viable option. However, only DC pursued the clientelist linkage. Having assessed internal demand—alongside their own goals—politicians chose to meet it differently (Warner 2007, 123). Ergo, institutions and historical conditions may influence, but not cause, clientelism; it may be inappropriate to assume that institutions act as constraints on actors' behavior (Piattoni 2001, 18).

Other historical case studies suggest that institutional constraint *and* individual choice are responsible for the observed outcome. A comparison of clientelism in Great Britain and the United States, for example, isolates American federalism as chief among explanations for why clientelism was more resilient in the U.S. (Stokes et al. 2013, ch. 8). In Britain, the 1883 British Anti-Corrupt Practices Act successfully curtailed clientelism through the introduction of restrictions on campaign spending. The U.S., on the other hand, took considerably longer to introduce similar reforms.<sup>20</sup> Independent state parties and courts constrained the central government in the U.S., thereby acting as obstacles to antimachine reforms (Stokes et al. 2013, 205). Federalism essentially created 48 collective action problems. Nevertheless, party leaders themselves eventually pushed for reforms, dismantling their political machines.<sup>21</sup> Unlike the French and Italian example, this case emphasizes institutional context but also recognizes individual choice. Consequently, the role of institutions remains unclear.

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<sup>20</sup> See Stokes et al. pages 240-1 for examples of U.S. reforms.

<sup>21</sup> Structural factors (e.g. expansion of the electorate) decreased the utility of clientelism for politicians, incentivizing them to reform existing institutions.

The structural school presents two main variables: political competition and economic development. Structuralists, or developmentalists as they are also named in the literature, argue that, as countries modernize, these variables increase and make clientelism less likely<sup>22</sup>; therefore, states can outgrow clientelism, so to speak. The logic is relatively straightforward: for clientelism to function, politicians must have access to resources, and levels of economic development determine the extent of available resources. States at the lower end of development engage in prebendal clientelism, which sees politicians distribute the few available resources among ethnic elites (van de Walle 2007). Clientelism is usually absent in highly developed states, where voters enjoy a certain level of economic autonomy (Magaloni et al. 2007, 187). Their independence makes them more likely to reject clientelism in favor of programmatic distribution.<sup>23</sup> In contrast, one tends to find full instances of clientelism at the intermediate stage of development where the conditions for patronage politics are opportune from a political perspective. By conditions, these authors refer to the balance between economic development and political competition. Politicians have enough funds at their discretion to finance clientelism and the economic status of the electorate allows them to do so. Political competition, too, is not yet so stiff that clientelism becomes more expensive than programmatic distribution. Rebecca Weitz-Shapiro (2014) posits a promising developmental argument, which clarifies the interaction of these two variables. She demonstrates that politicians reject clientelism in the face of high levels of political competition *and* a sizeable middle class (14). The former subjects politicians to the latter's preferences. However, if voters are mostly poor and political competition for this

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<sup>22</sup> To be sure, the relationship is not linear, as I discuss below.

<sup>23</sup> Middle class voters tend to reject clientelism for two reasons: 1) it prevents the government from investing in more substantial methods of constituency service (e.g., infrastructure and security), and 2) is morally reprehensible. The distinction of note here is the first reason; nonpoor voters—because of their economic status—stand to gain from considerable material benefits. Poor voters can also deem clientelism problematic in a moral sense. Still, their immediate material needs make such concerns a luxury (Weitz-Shapiro 2014, 12-3 and 41).

subaltern group is high, then clientelism is likely. As a strategy, clientelism generates “audience costs” or electoral tradeoffs (53). It is not appropriate for every constituency and politicians know as such.

In general, this school posits that market-oriented reforms threaten clientelism. Yet Levitsky (2007) provides compelling evidence of the contrary. In the Latin American context, neoliberal reforms acted as an opportunity to strengthen clientelist linkages. The growth of widespread urban poverty in Latin America outpaced the emergence of the middle class, making clientelism a viable strategy. The urban poor preferred concrete benefits over ideological or programmatic appeals, while the middle class responded to more professional electoral strategies (217). Since the middle class was in the electoral minority, parties were able to adopt both strategies. Levitsky’s findings thus suggest that this structural perspective fails to capture clientelism’s transformative properties. Political competition and economic development are certainly important factors in the persistence of clientelism but fail to fully explain empirical reality.

Leading structuralists continue to recognize the importance of these two main variables, albeit with slightly different approaches. According to Morgan (2011), whose cogent argument is worthy of careful examination, the clientelist system decays when demand outstrips supply. On the demand side, she posits that social transformation and political decentralization explain the rise and fall of clientelism. Increases in population, immigration, poverty, and the size of the electorate account for social transformation. Such changes increase the number of voters seeking clientelist benefits. Furthermore, decentralization leads to an increase in elections at the subnational level.<sup>24</sup> Taken together, the implication of these demand side factors is that political

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<sup>24</sup> Subnational elections make local patrons more independent, and therefore less responsive, to the national party. From the party’s point of view, then, it expends more resources but receives fewer rewards.



parties must play the clientelist game more frequently with a greater number of players (61-5). Supply side factors include economic conditions and parties' access to state resources. Economic crises constrain resources thereby making it harder to sustain the clientelist linkage. Regarding access, professionalization of the bureaucracy, neoliberalism, and limits to a parties' ability to monitor also decrease the likelihood of clientelism. If one party cannot maintain clientelism, then clients will look to other parties for benefits. In the case that those parties also cannot meet demand, clientelism disappears (66).

Stokes et al. (2013) present many of the same structural factors but evaluate them through their broker-mediated model. Population growth, for instance, makes it more difficult for brokers to monitor individual voters. To adapt, parties must hire more brokers—i.e. bear an additional cost associated with the clientelist strategy. When it becomes less costly to communicate directly with voters, politicians will favor a return to programmatic politics. Stated succinctly, Stokes et al. argue that macro-changes affect broker efficiency, which in turn makes clientelism more or less attractive to parties. Given that brokers are imperfect agents to begin with, specific structural changes may exacerbate their flawed nature.<sup>25</sup> At a certain point, it is in the parties' interest to cut out the middleman. Despite these substantial and varied contributions, the structural school essentially offers one answer to my question: that political competition explains variation in clientelism.

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<sup>25</sup> Examples of broker imperfection include high levels of rent seeking and inefficient targeting of voters; see Stokes et al., chapter 3.

## Evaluation of the Literature

The competition hypothesis appears to be the most relevant and testable hypothesis in the literature. Notably absent from my review, however, is a discussion on electoral institutions.<sup>26</sup> Although some in the clientelist literature insist on their importance (e.g. Taylor-Robinson 2006, 108-10), others deny that such institutions play a role (e.g., Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; 42; Müller 2007). Given that clientelism is an informal institution, an examination of formal institutions does not appear fruitful. Moreover, the electoral institutional approach suffers from an endogeneity problem. It is unclear whether causation stems from behavior or institutions (Weyland 2002, 68). To this end, politicians may modify institutions in their favor (Piattoni 2001, 18). Brazilian politicians, for instance, advocated open-list proportional representation to facilitate their reliance on clientelism at local levels (Mainwaring 1999, 258). In this case, prior patterns of behavior account for the dependent variable. More importantly, a consideration of electoral institutions seems inappropriate for the present study, since, by adopting a subnational approach, I hold institutions mostly constant. This thesis proceeds under the standard assumption that clientelism works in an instrumental, or rational, manner. There is certainly a healthy amount of debate on the issue but to engage further would be to adopt a different, additional research question (See Appendix A).

### IV. Overview of Empirical Study

The goal here is to explain the conditions under which politicians, in this case President Menem (1989-1999) and his administration, choose the clientelist strategy. The empirical literature offers several indirect indicators of clientelism, with the most common revolving

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<sup>26</sup> Electoral institutions typically fall under rational choice institutionalism (RCI). Thus, they differ from historical institutionalism wherein institutions are assigned a historical, not functional, role. RCI moves from individuals to institutions, whereas historical institutionalism operates in the reverse order.

around measures of the extent of the public sector (Hicken 2011, 304).<sup>27</sup> Specifically, scholars have used public employment and the size of construction budgets to identify clientelism (Kitschelt et al. 2009, 745). Since these are imperfect indicators at best—and I am hindered to some extent by data availability issues<sup>28</sup>—I will rely on cases of the concept that the literature agrees represent clientelism. Doing so is appropriate for my purposes given the richness of the clientelism literature on Argentina during the neoliberal turn. Levitsky’s (2003) influential study of Argentina’s Justicialista Party (PJ) accordingly informs much of this work.

The party of famed populist Juan Perón, who led the PJ from its creation in the mid-1940s to his death in 1974, is notorious for its support of labor unions and the working class. Though scholars (e.g., Auyero 2001; Levitsky 2003; Stokes 2005) most closely associate the PJ with the use of clientelism in Argentina, it is worth noting that the Radical Civic Union (UCR), the other major party whose base consists of the wealthy classes and business community, pursued the strategy—albeit perhaps unintentionally—during the Alfonsín administration (1983–89). Specifically, Congress approved the National Food Plan (PAN) to improve living conditions in the face of the debt crisis. Alfonsín and his ministers designed PAN as a nondiscretionary, need-based program. It even operated through an aligned government structure to—in the words of Aldo Neri, Alfonsín’s minister of health and social welfare—“bypass the heavy state bureaucracy and make it more transparent” (Garay 2017, 107). In practice, though, PAN’s implementation was highly clientelist as the provinces intervened, expressing concern that a nationally operated program would challenge provincial authority. Alfonsín caved to provincial

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<sup>27</sup> These quantitative indicators supplement ethnographic fieldwork and survey research, which represent the standard approaches to the study of the phenomenon.

<sup>28</sup> Szwarcberg (2013), for example, tests for the presence of clientelism by observing whether party activists took voter attendance at rallies. Her measure hence determines contingency, a core characteristic of the concept. In the absence of such data for my time period of interest, I look to the literature for alternative measures and assessments.

governments and allowed governors to appoint half of the PAN agents, who controlled access to food and other nutrition benefits. The lack of systematic data to assess need meant that municipal governments themselves collected information from which they selected beneficiaries. At a greater level of specificity, PAN agents typically identified beneficiaries and thus the agents were, essentially, brokers (Grassi et al. 1994, 194-5). In sum, clientelism was present in Argentina before Menem's embrace of neoliberalism. And I find that politicians continued to select the strategy throughout Menem's presidency, despite the significant change in circumstances brought on by neoliberalism (See Table 1).

Table 1. Overview of Variables

Variables	Cases		
	Resilience I	Resilience II	
	1989-1991	1992-1995	1996-1999
Clientelism	Present	Present	Present
Menem's relationship to the Peronist party	Party adherent	Party insider	Party insider-Lame duck <sup>a</sup>
Electoral competition	Low	Low-moderate	Moderate-high

Notes: <sup>a</sup> Menem achieved lame duck status in July 1998 when he announced that he would not seek reelection in 1999. Until then, he was a significant force in party politics (Levitsky 2003, 176), and some argue his announcement did not alter his vote-seeking logic as he declared that he would run again in 2003 (Weitz-Shapiro 2006, 134). Menem did in fact seek the presidency that year.

## V. Methodology

On independent variables, this thesis pays special attention to the impact of economic conditions on a) political competition as well as b) the PJ's affinity for Menem, and how these two factors in turn explain his reliance on clientelism. More formally, the two variables manifest themselves in the following hypotheses:

H<sub>1</sub>: As political competition increases, clientelism decreases.

H<sub>2</sub>: Executive leaders are more likely to select clientelism when in a dominant position relative to their party.

The first hypothesis comes from the literature, whereas my conceptualization inspires the second. Though resources flow from above, clientelism's systemic essence suggests that power may be concentrated at certain levels in the political food chain at different points in time. These shifts in power may, therefore, explain the persistence of clientelism. When power lies with the executive, he decides whether to pursue clientelism based on a series of structural conditions (competition, resource availability, future political goals, etc.); if the executive finds himself in a difficult political situation, but has previously released clientelist benefits, his intermediaries no longer have a reason to remain loyal and can leverage their remaining clientelist resources against the executive. In this second scenario, clientelism sustains itself for the time being in a more decentralized manner.

I measure political competition by the number of political parties in the Argentine party system and changes in the percentage of the total vote for each party. Regarding Menem's relationship to the PJ, I track changes in Menem's political fortunes which I use to assess Menem's freedom to pursue clientelism independent of the PJ. I treat clientelism and Menem's relationship to the party as nominal variables, while competition is ordinal. A limitation of the former is that I am unable to capture differences in the degree of these variables from 1989 to 1999, settling instead for the presence or absence of clientelism and Menem's categorical proximity to the party. I nevertheless observe other qualitative changes, like personnel shifts in machine organizations, related to the dependent variable.

My method of choice in the testing of these hypotheses is process tracing, a tool of qualitative analysis that emphasizes the order of events to evaluate causal claims (George and Bennett 2005, chapter 10). Statements from politicians, electoral results, and economic figures constitute the majority of my data. With this data, I conduct straw-in-the-wind tests to assess the

validity of each hypothesis. Passing straw-in-the-wind tests affirms the pertinence of the hypothesis under study and marginally weakens competing hypotheses (Collier 2011, 826; See Appendix B). This type of test requires the least number of assumptions regarding the relationship between the available data and my causal inferences. As such, it seems to be the most appropriate test at this stage of the research.

I explore the hypotheses through three case studies within Menem's presidency: 1989-91, 1992-95, and 1996-99. Each case study coincides with a marked shift in economic conditions and Menem's political fortunes, while clientelism persists.<sup>29</sup> For instance, 1989 saw Menem perform a bait-and-switch with his embrace of neoliberalism. By 1991, the hyperinflationary crisis had passed and the economy stabilized; consequently, citizens rewarded the Peronist party handsomely in midterm elections. In 1994, though, Argentina experienced another economic recession due to the strong devaluation of the Mexican peso. Menem was reelected in 1995 but struggled to realize his agenda from this point forward, significantly constrained by the very policies he implemented in his first term. The case studies allow for variation in clientelism and economic conditions yet hold the main actor (Menem) and other potential variables, such as country differences, constant. Argentina makes for quite an interesting case study given my question as it experienced the most drastic and rapid neoliberal turn in a fully democratic context (Levitsky and Murillo 2005). The downside, of course, is a concern about Argentina's exceptionalism and thus the generalizability of these findings.

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<sup>29</sup> In Argentina, the economy tends to have an outsized role in the functioning of political institutions (see Chen 2014).

## VI. Case Studies

### 1989-1991: From Peronism without Peron to Peronism without Peronism

With no authority to his name, Raul Alfonsín pushed Menem to assume the presidency five months ahead of schedule in July 1989. The Argentine economy was in shambles and hyperinflation neared 200% (Treisman 2003, 94). Despite Menem's traditional, Peronist electoral platform that advocated for a "productive revolution" and *salario* (substantial wage increase), he pursued a drastically different platform once in office (Smith 1991). Evidence of this came early when Menem appointed non-Peronists to his cabinet and other positions of significance. His selection of Miguel Roig as economic minister was of particular interest. Roig worked previously as an executive for the multinational firm Bunge & Born and, after Roig's sudden death, Menem appointed Nestor Rapanelli, another Bunge & Born executive. Menem's Peronist label was apparently quite fluid. And he was acutely aware that a) his high-level appointments signaled a break from Peronism, and b) this fact would likely have political repercussions (Armijo 1994). He even remarked on the former, "there is a joke going around that says the only Peronist that infiltrated the government is me" (Drosdoff 1989). He resolved to end the crisis but warned Argentines of "major surgery without anesthesia" (Smith 1991, 53).

True to his word, Peronist legislators approved two extensive bills by September 1989: the Economic Emergency Law and the State Reform Law. These bills swapped the statist, import-substitution economic model for one that was market-oriented, privatizing nearly all state-owned enterprises and cutting around 700,000 jobs from the state bureaucracy (Levitsky 2003, 145-6). Yet the bills, along with several other economic plans (e.g., Plan Bonex, Erman III-VI), provided only short-term economic stabilization. Hyperinflation returned in 1990 and only abated with new Minister of Economy Domingo Cavallo's Convertibility Plan in 1991, wherein the Argentine peso became freely convertible with the dollar (Smith 1991, 63).

Confronted with a severe hyperinflationary crisis, Menem and Argentines alike spent the 1989-91 years in an extremely difficult political situation (Weyland 2002, 101-14). In short, the crisis incentivized politicians and citizens to adopt risk-acceptant strategies.

Levitsky (2003, chapter 5) argues convincingly that the PJ's deunionization and the subsequent rise of machine politics occurred *before* Menem became president. In other words, the organizational changes necessary to facilitate clientelism had already taken place. As this section demonstrates, Menem and the PJ strengthened the clientelist linkage in the 1989-91 period, but their investment was not new or radical; the party was already moving toward clientelism before Menem's neoliberal turn. Menem bolstered the PJ's reliance on clientelism once in office in discrete ways. In 1989, for instance, he appointed Carlos Grosso—president of the local PJ in the Federal Capital—as mayor of Buenos Aires city. Grosso began to build a patronage network in 1985 after his election. He then expanded and consolidated this network, or the “System” as it was known, in his mayoral role until 1992 when he resigned due to corruption charges. By then, however, Grosso's *punteros* ran nearly all of the city's base units, solidifying the dominance of clientelism within the PJ in the city of Buenos Aires (Levitsky 2003, 126).

It mattered not to the PJ—which criticized the UCR heavily for PAN's discretionary nature—that Alfonsín sought to create a transparent large-scale program to assist with growing poverty rates. Yet, once in power, Menem delivered more of the same for a short time in the form of the Solidary Bonus (BS). He established the equally clientelist program through a presidential decree of emergency. (Such decrees were his *modus operandi*, especially in the first three years of his presidency.) BS was a national food stamp program, which provided vouchers for food and medicine up to half a minimum wage for those families earning less than the minimum wage. Menem launched BS in a few provinces but soon separated himself from the



program when PJ senators rejected the proposal. Their criticisms were consistent with those regarding PAN: BS was problematic because it infringed on the provinces and was a poster child of clientelism—a simply inappropriate strategy (Garay 2017, 108). The Congress eventually approved a more limited and short-term version of the BS, but Menem did not push the program. He instead stated that a new workfare program, Plan Trabajar (Work Plan), would soon replace BS. Unlike under BS, municipalities would run the Work Plan entirely. And while the former indeed dissipated, the implementation of the Work Plan occurred later in the Menem administration; I therefore return to Plan Trabajar in the final case study.

It seems obvious enough that the PJ would denounce PAN as clientelist in an effort to tarnish the UCR. Less clear, however, is why Peronist governors and senators would criticize BS, a plan put forward by their president. One must wonder whether the PJ's initial criticism stemmed from concern over the presence of clientelism or frustration over the insufficient degree thereof. Put differently, BS was not clientelist enough that the PJ governors saw themselves in it; the plan, to them, may not have included enough provincial involvement. If Alfonsín compromised with the PJ regarding the appointment of PAN agents (half by federal government and the rest provincial appointees), maybe the PJ expected steeper concessions from Menem. And perhaps Menem was unwilling to bend to the party's wishes but also not yet in a position to assert his agenda. His political fortunes—and thus his relationship to the party—changed after his successful resolution of the hyperinflationary crisis. The second case study demonstrates how Menem used his new political capital to invest in clientelism.

### **1992-1995: Menem's Prime Time**

Economic stabilization in April 1991 significantly improved Menem's political fortunes. Inflation fell from a yearly average of 1,344 percent in 1990 to 17.5 percent in 1992; by 1994, it

registered at 3.9 percent. Furthermore, poverty in the Metropolitan Region of Buenos Aires decreased substantially from 47.4 percent in October 1989 to 21.6 percent by October of 1991 and 16.1 percent in May 1994 (Weyland 2002, 158). The PJ's resounding electoral victories in the midterm elections of 1991 and 1993 particularly emboldened Menem, serving as referenda on his handling of the crisis (Levitsky and Murillo 2005, 35). Yet in these years of his presidency, Menem did not forge forward with economic reform; instead, he elected to preserve the status quo through two fiscal pacts, constitutional revisions, and clientelism. Economic stabilization motivated the fiscal pacts, as Menem realized that an increase in federal tax revenues would result in more substantial provincial transfers—potentially threatening the current economic situation. A 1987 coparticipation law set aside 57 percent of revenues for the provinces. The fiscal pact of 1992 altered this arrangement by reserving 15 percent of revenues for the national social security system. In exchange for such a concession from the provinces, Menem agreed to a minimum floor for provincial transfers irrespective of revenue levels (Eaton 2005, 97-8). 1993 saw Menem inflict additional losses on the provinces with the second pact restricting governors' ability to tax businesses (Gordin 2006, 269-70).

The 1994 constitution, though, was arguably Menem's greatest personal achievement. Negotiated by Menem and Alfonsín the previous year as the Olivos Pact, it allowed Menem to run for reelection in 1995. Menem's priorities after the crisis, therefore, reflect a president interested in living life above zero (Weyland 2002, 159). His personal political survival no longer immediately tied to economic reform, Menem positioned himself to enjoy the fruits of his labor.

One continues to observe clientelism between 1992 and 1995 despite a series of personnel changes. In fact, clientelism may have become the PJ's primary linkage during these

years. Though Grosso resigned in 1992, for instance, the System—and thus clientelism—persisted in Buenos Aires under Menem-appointed mayors Saúl Bouer and Jorge Domínguez (Levitsky 2003, 126-7).<sup>30</sup> Vice President Eduardo Duhalde also took on a new role, leaving the vice presidency for the governorship of Buenos Aires in December 1991. Duhalde disagreed with Menem’s approach to the economic crisis and expected him to move toward statist economic policies after the crisis abated (Palermo and Novaro 1996, 269). While Menem appeared to reward Duhalde with the Conurbano Reparation Fund (FRHC) in 1992, a closer look at the fund’s negotiations reveals a pair with competing political ambitions. Bonvecchi and Lodola (2010, 203) reference “anecdotal evidence” which illustrates that Menem and Duhalde negotiated the FRHC on the condition that Duhalde would not run for president in 1995, thereby solidifying Menem’s chances of reelection.

The Fund directed 10 percent of federal income tax revenues to Greater Buenos Aires for the funding of social policy programs. Duhalde managed the funds in an outright clientelist manner, prioritizing those mayors who supported him and building a robust machine known as the *Duhaldistas* (Levitsky 128-9). The funds, moreover, constituted an ever-increasing amount of the provincial GDP, with 4.4 percent in 1992, 7.8 percent in 1993, 9.5 percent in 1994, and 10.6 percent the following year (Bonvecchi and Lodola 2010, 195). Overall, the FRHC financed over twelve hundred social policy projects at a cost of \$1.6 billion from 1992 to 1995. Former provincial senator José María Rocca noted that this control over resources created a situation in which Duhalde established “total hegemony” over party politics in Buenos Aires (Levitsky 2003, 129). And the FRHC may not have been the only source of Duhalde’s clientelism. His vice-governor—in this case also the president of the Senate of Buenos Aires—said in reference to the city budget that “in the legislature, sincerely, we should admit that 30 or 40 percent of the budget

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<sup>30</sup> The 1994 constitution established the direct election of the city’s mayor (Levitsky and Murillo 2005, 34).

is destined for its specific purpose. And the rest is hidden financing of political activity” (Gingerich 2016, 102-3). To be sure, the remaining 70 or 60 percent may refer to a variety of activities such as patronage and corruption. Given the PJ’s increasing use of clientelism, however, it is also likely that Duhalde diverted a portion of these funds for clientelist purposes.

Life above zero allowed Menem himself to pursue clientelism more forcefully. In the final months of 1991, he began to distribute funds to the *Obras Sociales* (social funds) of labor unions via clientelist tactics. He also exercised discretion over wage increases to unions—those that supported his reform program received increases, while unions that remained in opposition did not (Grassi et al. 1994, 153-4). The degree of clientelism shifted from thin to thick thus indicating an increase in connectivity. In other words, Menem took steps to institutionalize clientelism once his political fortunes changed for the better. The 1992 Necessity and Urgency Decree that modified Law 20.337 is one example of this institutionalization. The 1973 law stated that cooperatives had to maintain political and religious neutrality. Menem’s decree, nevertheless, called for the politicization of the cooperatives, which licensed political *punteros* to influence the cooperativist organizational structure. Cooperatives therefore lost their independent status and became “instruments of political action,” arranged “*arriba hacia abajo*” (from top to bottom) (Trotta 2003, 155-6). Between 1992 and 1995, then, one sees Menem select clientelism as a strategy to maintain power.

### **1996-1999: The Unraveling**

Menem was reelected in 1995 with nearly 50 percent of the vote. Yet this overwhelming victory was not predictive of his political fortunes in his second and final presidential term. The tequila crisis of 1994—with its devaluation of the Mexican *peso*—plunged the Argentine economy into recession once more (Weyland 2002, 160). Additionally, the return of economic

troubles compounded a growing unemployment rate, which reached 19 percent in 1995 (Garay 2017, 170). High unemployment, in turn, gave rise to the *piquetero* (unemployed worker) movement, whose protests drew significant attention throughout Menem's second term, forcing him to address unemployment (Weitz-Shapiro 2006). His unwillingness or inability to achieve meaningful labor reform in his first term caught up to him, so to speak, in the second half of the 1990s. Menem's cherished fiscal pacts, too, no longer served his interests: as federal tax revenue decreased due to the economic crisis, the pacts bound him to the minimum floor, or a set transfer agreement the federal government had to meet for each province. Though Cavallo argued—veritably—that the pacts were set to expire on July 1, 1995, Peronist and Radical legislators managed to extend them and thus uphold federal and provincial obligations from each pact. In practice, nevertheless, the provinces did not fully honor their stipulated commitments (Eaton 2005, 101). One can understand this bipartisan effort to extend the fiscal pacts in straightforward, rational terms. The provinces, be they Peronist or Radical in political affiliation, now stood to gain from the terms set in the early 1990s. However, other instances of convergence—as well as more pronounced cases of divergence between the two main parties—may have been indicative of a broader change in political dynamics.

Specifically, political competition increased from 1996 to 1999. The clearest indicator of this increase was the electoral success of Argentina's newest party, the Alliance for Jobs, Justice, and Education. The Alliance was a coalition of the UCR and the Front for a Country in Solidarity (FREPASO).<sup>31</sup> FREPASO enjoyed some success toward the end of Menem's first term, even capturing 29.2 percent of the presidential vote in 1995. It nevertheless performed better with the UCR as the Alliance, which defeated the PJ by substantial margins in the legislative elections of

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<sup>31</sup> José Octavio Bordón and the Group of Eight formed FREPASO, a center-left party, in September 1994 (Levitsky 2003, 174).

1997 and 1999. The center-left party also won the presidency in 1999, with a convincing 48.4 percent of the vote to the PJ's 38.3 percent (See Appendix C). With its intent to fight corruption and reduce unemployment, the Alliance captured mainly educated, middle and upper middle class voters. In doing so, it left the PJ to secure its traditional constituencies, or the poorer sectors of Argentine society (Levitsky 2003, 226). The Alliance, therefore, proved to be a competitive party capable of rivaling the PJ.

Clientelism persisted in Menem's second term, although in slightly different forms. In keeping with the eventual negative returns of the fiscal pacts for Menem, the 1994 constitution established the direct election of the Buenos Aires city mayor, thereby removing Menem's ability to appoint the individual of his choice (Levitsky and Murillo 2005, 34). Consequently, the clientelist System collapsed with the election of Fernando De la Rúa, a Radical, as mayor in 1996 (Levitsky 2003, 127). Clientelism was still rampant, however, in the province of Buenos Aires, where Duhalde and his wife Chiche ran the *Plan Vida* (Life Plan). The Duhaldes made use of a \$200 million yearly budget (taken from the Conurbano Fund) to build the largest food-distribution program in Argentina (129). Party activists provided milk, cereal, and eggs to pregnant women based on their political support for Duhalde and the Peronist party (Auyero 2000a, 56). A survey of base units in Buenos Aires demonstrates the PJ's—truly Duhalde's in this case—preference for clientelism over time with 64.7 percent of base units established after 1995 identifying selective material benefits as the main incentive for activist participation. This figure reflects an increase of nearly 16 percent compared to those base units established between 1985 and 1995 (See Appendix D).<sup>32</sup> With presidential ambitions for 1999, Duhalde spent the years leading up to the election fine-tuning his increasingly responsive machine. He knew that he

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<sup>32</sup> For their services, Plan Vida activists, or *manzaneras*, received the same amount of food each week as program beneficiaries (Auyero 2000a, 56).

would first have to face Menem and secure his party's nomination. And though Menem was president, the poor of Buenos Aires were loyal to Duhalde, who controlled the Conurbano Fund.

Menem's direct involvement with clientelism after 1996 was, like Alfonsín with PAN, for the most part unintentional. In mid-1996, his administration launched the aforementioned Plan Trabajar to address unemployment. The program distributed funds from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MTSS) to employ unemployed workers in local projects (Lodola 2005). Initially, provinces exercised discretion over the funds, and thus clientelist manipulation defined the initiative's first year. This manipulation led the *piqueteros*, who became a source of collective action, to pressure the administration for an expansion of social policy through consistent and effective protests (Garay 2007). MTSS responded in 1997 by calculating the actual number of poor unemployed individuals per province and allotting funds according to these calculations. Provinces with greater numbers of unemployed poor residents thus received more funds (Weitz-Shapiro 2006, 127). As a result, the program shifted from an overtly political, clientelist distribution of funds to need-based standards. Another significant change was that municipalities and NGOs implemented most Plan Trabajar projects, essentially cutting out the middleman in the form of provincial governments (135, fn 30). Moreover, Menem committed to the program by increasing its beneficiaries from 62, 083 in 1996 to 126,264 in 1997 (Garay 2007, 312). The final years of Menem's presidency therefore tell a more complicated story regarding the use of clientelism than prior years. While the PJ continued to prefer clientelism, the strategy was no longer generally suitable. Indeed, Menem was quick to repair Plan Trabajar's clientelist image, but Duhalde further invested in the strategy.

## **VII. Discussion**

This study finds some support for both hypotheses through a series of tests characteristic of the process tracing technique. The competition hypothesis, depicted in Table 5, passes a

straw-in-the-wind test. Competition and clientelism covary when one considers Menem's strategic calculus. Low levels of competition marked his first years in office. The country as a whole found itself in extremely unfavorable economic circumstances, and the UCR, the PJ's main rival, discredited itself during the Alfonsín administration. Hence, politicians and citizens across the political spectrum hoped Menem would turn the tide. He was cognizant of both their expectations for his presidency and dependence on him. When asked about the possibility of a challenger taking his position, he often replied, "it's me or chaos" (Gallo 2008, 95). There were, in other words, low levels of political competition from 1989 to 1991. This trend would largely hold through the presidential elections of 1995, with Argentines repeatedly rewarding the Peronist party in the legislative elections of 1991 and 1993 for the party's successful resolution of the economic crisis. Two new parties (FREPASO and MODIN) entered the party system in the 1992-1995 period, but this development increased ideological polarization more than competition. In fact, the emergence of these parties arguably further diluted the PJ's competition. Table 2 shows an 18.2 percentage increase in FREPASO's vote share between the legislative elections of 1993 and 1995. Meanwhile, the UCR and MODIN suffered losses of 8.5 and 4.1 percent, respectively, whereas the PJ experienced almost no change in support from 1993 to 1995. FREPASO's electoral success, though noteworthy, did not generate meaningful competition, because it failed to a) attract enough members of the business community, and b) did not cater to the PJ's most important constituency: the poor. One PJ activist elaborates on the latter that, "FREPASO has no organization and no power...FREPASO has built up a team of journalists and people who denounce corruption, which is fine. But what good does that do us here in the shantytown? We need access to real things" (quoted in Levitsky 2003, 197). Therefore, the political situation *around* the PJ changed in the 1992-1995 years but not to the



point where it affected the party: competition remained low for the majority of this time period, increasing slightly toward the 1995 elections. The PJ's performance in the polls reinforced the party's clientelist strategy; the more clientelism delivered, the more the party pursued it.

Table 2. Percentage Change in Total Vote for Lower House Elections<sup>a</sup>

Party	1991-1993	1993-1995	1995-1997	1997-1999
Justicialista Party (PJ)	2.3	0.5	-6.7	-3.3
Radical Civic Union (UCR)	1.2	-8.5	-	-
Democratic Center Union (UCeDe)	-2.6	0.6	-2.6	-
Front for a Country in Solidarity (FREPASO)	-	18.2	-	-
Movement for Dignity and Independence (MODIN)	-	-4.1	-0.8	-
Alliance for Jobs, Justice, and Education (Alianza) <sup>b</sup>	-	-	-	-0.2
Action for the Republic	-	-	-	4.1
Minor and provincial parties	-9.2	-6.7	2.9	0.9

Notes: <sup>a</sup> Calculated from electoral results in Levitsky (2003, see Appendix C)

<sup>b</sup> UCR and FREPASO

Table 3. Electoral Results for Presidential Elections, 1995 and 1999

Party	1995	1999	Percentage change
Justicialista Party (PJ)	49.9	38.3	-11.6
Radical Civic Union (UCR)	17	-	-
Front for a Country in Solidarity (FREPASO)	29.2	-	-
Movement for Dignity and Independence (MODIN)	1.7	-	-
Alliance for Jobs, Justice, and Education	-	48.4	48.4
Action for the Republic (Alianza)	-	10.2	10.2

Minor and provincial parties	2.2	3.1	0.9
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Table 4. Party System Composition<sup>a</sup>

1989-1991	1992-1995	1996-1999 <sup>b</sup>
PJ UCR UCeDe	PJ UCR UCeDe FREPASO MODIN	PJ Alianza Action for the Republic

Notes: <sup>a</sup> Minor and provincial parties are considered to exist outside the party system.

<sup>b</sup> Excluded from this time period are those parties (UCeDe and MODIN) that failed to capture at least 1 percent of the vote in legislative or presidential elections.

The Argentine party system became a two-party system once more in Menem's final years as president (See Tables 3 and 4). The UCR-FREPASO coalition, the Alliance, proved to be a formidable opponent and captured the PJ's margin of victory by offering middle and upper class citizens a clear, ideological alternative to the PJ grounded in clean government. In the promotion of competition, then, parties' efficacy in contesting the main party matters more than the actual number of parties in existence (Dalton 2008). This uptick in competition left the PJ to focus solely on working and lower class voters, causing it to double down on its clientelist strategy. Yet not all members of the party's traditional poor constituency approved of the strategy by the time the Alliance endangered the PJ's control of Argentine politics. Menem and Cavallo shielded peripheral provinces from neoliberal policies in the early 1990s through discretionary transfers to fund clientelist networks. By staggering the implementation of neoliberalism, the two could more effectively handle resistance to their efforts. However, the same belt-tightening reforms that jolted industrial provinces at the outset of Menem's presidency reached the peripheral provinces after 1995 (Gibson and Calvo 2000). These provinces furthermore became the hotbeds of the *piquetero* movement, which forced Menem to move

beyond clientelism to establish legitimate forms of social assistance through workfare programs (See Appendix E). One thus sees Menem revise the PJ's rural strategy, while Duhalde forged forward with clientelism in urban settings.

Table 5. Competition Hypothesis Test

<i>H<sub>1</sub></i> : As political competition increases, clientelism decreases.
<i>Evidence</i> : The Menem administration worked to expand social policy in response to the piquetero movement.
<i>Inference</i> : Menem shifted tactics with the knowledge that the PJ was losing middle and upper class support to the Alliance. Given that poor electoral results would decrease Menem's likelihood of reelection in 1999, it was in his interest to keep the poor and unemployed (i.e. Peronist voters) content.
<i>Summary</i> : This straw-in-the-wind test supports but does not confirm H <sub>1</sub> .

Another potential explanation for the resilience of clientelism is Menem's relationship to the Peronist party. The changes in this relationship throughout his presidency may have influenced his decision to seek or abandon the clientelist linkage (See Tables 1 and 6). Upon taking office, he was a party adherent, known for his involvement in the restructuring of the party leading up to the 1989 elections but also for his poor leadership as governor of La Rioja (De Luca 2008, 198-9). Menem caved to party demands concerning the implementation of the Solidarity Bonus, a clientelist endeavor, even though he personally pushed for the program with a decree of emergency days into his presidency. He also failed to execute Plan Trabajar—a less clientelist program but one that would shortchange the provinces—in 1989 despite his public intent to do so. It appears that he entered the clientelist system yet could not leverage it to his benefit: the provinces and PJ party leadership denied him free rein on his use of clientelism, while they granted it with respect to the economy. His success in the economic arena, though, unlocked any preexisting restrictions.

In the years of the second case study, Menem *was* the PJ. Through the fiscal pacts, he imposed an “immediate and huge loss in revenue to the provinces” (Eaton 2005, 99). The move was strategic and explicitly intended to increase central control over provincial revenues to prevent the strengthening of provincial patronage networks—networks that were not loyal to or controlled by Menem at the time (Gordin 2006, 270). Additional new methods of clientelist control included Law 20.337, allowing for the politicization of cooperatives. After 1996, the PJ simply tolerated Menem. The clearest example of the party’s apathy toward him was perhaps its endorsement of Duhalde as the PJ candidate for president in 1998. Still, leading up to 1996, Menem maximized his position relative to the PJ to make clientelism work for him. Future research must explore alternative inferences, but, for the time being, the passage of two straw-in-the-wind tests strengthens the hypothesis that Menem’s relationship to the party explains the resilience of clientelism. When Menem found himself in favorable political circumstances, clientelism stemmed from the national government, benefitting mostly Menem. In contrast, provincial clientelism, with its apparent restrictions on the executive, prevailed when Menem had less political room in which to maneuver.

Table 6. Relationship to Party Hypothesis Test

<i>H<sub>2</sub></i> : Executive leaders are more likely to select clientelism when in a dominant position relative to their party.
<i>Evidence</i> : Though he expressed interest in both, Menem did not push for the Solidarity Bonus or Plan Trabajar after taking office.
<i>Inference</i> : He was unable or unwilling to overcome the PJ’s resistance to the plans.
<i>Summary</i> : This straw-in-the-wind test supports but does not confirm H <sub>2</sub> .
<i>H<sub>2</sub></i> : Executive leaders are more likely to select clientelism when in a dominant position relative to their party.
<i>Evidence</i> : Menem signed Law 20.337 which allowed for the politicization of cooperatives in 1992.
<i>Inference</i> : Upon his resolution of the economic crisis, Menem dominated the PJ and hence set the agenda regarding those strategies that best suited him.
<i>Summary</i> : This straw-in-the-wind test supports but does not confirm H <sub>2</sub> .

## VIII. Conclusion

Several findings emerge from this study. For one, a reconstruction of the concept reveals that clientelism is systematic in nature, strategic, and discretionary. All of these characteristics are essential to understanding the concept's inner workings and effects. The study observed variation in the phenomenon over the course of a single individual's presidency, suggesting that clientelism is situational. Indeed, this very individual, Carlos Menem, relied on clientelism at different points in his presidency as he saw fit. An important caveat, however, is that the existence of clientelism elsewhere also restricted Menem. Two variables, political competition and Menem's relationship to the Peronist party, explain the resilience of the dependent variable. I find that clientelism decreased as competition increased and Menem was more likely to pursue the strategy when he faced the least amount of resistance from the PJ. The second of these hypotheses is a new addition to the literature. Though the study fails to confirm or eliminate either hypothesis, that both passed straw-in-the-wind tests suggests that these propositions warrant further study. Future research might do well to create two new types of clientelism: central and provincial. The types refer to the source of clientelism; that is, they specify whether politicians at the national or provincial level are pursuing the strategy. Using these types, the literature might develop a model, or life cycle, of the concept to understand resilience. A final recommendation is that the discipline of political science carefully consider psychological explanations for the mechanisms of clientelism. As this camp in the literature expands, it will be important to rigorously test its findings and, if appropriate, more fully incorporate them into existing explanations.

Perhaps my argument for the significance of a president's relationship to his party is complicated. Yet, such an argument may be fitting as clientelism is a complex phenomenon. It is at once the guarantor of democracy, facilitating fundamental economic change with some level

of accountability for politicians—who must exchange benefits to citizens for continued political support—and the assailant breaking down necessary democratic institutions. It is the guardian-assailant...a collection of contradictions.

## Appendix A

### A Return to Mechanisms

To be clear, this thesis explores why politicians use clientelism—a question of political strategy—and thus approaches empirical concerns entirely from the patron’s perspective. It assumes that clients will return the favor at the ballot box without explicating why they do so. Yet, in the clientelism literature, scholars conceive of the mechanisms question (i.e. why clientelism works) as fundamental, with influential works explicitly including it as a necessary precursor to the main question of interest (e.g., Brusco et al. 2004; Stokes et al. 2013). I was unable to pursue two questions with the care that each requires but have reached a tentative conclusion that political science’s reliance on the instrumental approach may be cause for concern.

Apart from the cultural school, the leading explanations in the extant literature fall squarely under the instrumental category. Recent scholarship, however, questions instrumental dominance in a convincing manner. In particular, the work of Lawson and Greene (2014) is a welcome addition to the literature. They challenge the instrumentalist view by identifying cases of clientelism in which monitoring is not possible or does not occur. Clientelism’s persistence under these circumstances signals that fear does not fully explain voter compliance. Instead, voters feel indebted to patrons who provide them with gifts and therefore reciprocate with their political support. Feelings of obligation vary according to the gift’s value—good and services that are of significant value to clients elicit greater levels of obligation (65). And, when voting, clients prioritize past experience over potential future benefits. For instance, 48.6 percent of Mexican voters who received benefits from, and voted for, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas’ party admitted that they did not believe Cárdenas would win (70). The instrumental view cannot explain why voters would support a candidate who would be unable to maintain the clientelist

linkage. Nevertheless, Lawson and Greene note that the obligatory approach likewise faces limitations—the first of which some instrumental models also recognize. Some votes may be too expensive to court via clientelism because of a citizen’s economic status or overwhelming political leanings. In addition—and uniquely accounted for by the obligatory approach—the desire to reciprocate may compete with civic obligations (64). An internal onus to abide by the law and uphold democracy places some votes out of reach. On this second limitation, data shows that civic education campaigns reduce support for clientelism. In other words, voters’ perceptions of the clientelist arrangement are not immutable (72).

Lawson and Greene’s work is part of an emergent camp in the literature, which emphasizes psychological mechanisms in the explication of clientelism’s resilience. In line with the discipline of psychology, this camp highlights subjective aspects of the clientelist relationship. It focuses almost exclusively on the demand side, albeit with greater structure than the cultural school from which it emerges. For example, Landini (2013) explicates the link between the worldview of clients and clientelism, finding that the former facilitates the development of the latter. Clients expect politicians to help citizens in need through a network of personal relationships (120). Nonetheless, even though clients expect assistance they do not actively seek or approve of its inseparable political characteristics (122-3). In conjunction, clients want assistance but reject their roles as pawns in a larger political game. Clientelism persists, then, because it effectively fulfills what is arguably the most important client expectation—that of personalized aid in a hierarchical context.

At this point, it is instructive to explore areas of consensus between the two main categories. Both the instrumental and obligatory approaches assert that clientelism continues only so long as resources flow (e.g., Stokes et al. 2013; Auyero 2000a, 74). The two diverge on



what spells the end of clientelism, though. Instrumentalists contend that a move away from clientelism requires that voters no longer believe their individual voting behavior determines their individual prosperity. Obligatory scholars, by contrast, stress a normative component. It appears unlikely that these prescriptions are mutually exclusive.

In general, the literature underscores the complex nature of clientelism through the interaction of various variables. Interaction among schools of thought, nevertheless, is not as prevalent. I observed high levels of isolation in the literature at times between the instrumental and obligatory camps. Such isolation may be suggestive of a broader theoretical debate on rationality. Rational choice approaches are now well-developed in the literature but one would do well to remember that the superiority of this approach is usually “more assumed than demonstrated” (Weyland 2002, 69). That democratization and periods of economic crisis have not extinguished clientelism suggests that something else is at work. Political science need not desert rational choice—indeed, it would likely be unwise to do so—but should more willingly embrace psychological perspectives. Psychology appears better positioned than cultural approaches to rival the rational paradigm. Certainly, the parsimonious rational actor model remains appealing, but may be “psychologically unrealistic.” Moreover, the “alternative to simple and precise models is not chaos” (Kahneman 2003, 1449). Political science would thus benefit from incorporating psychological insights to understand the resilience of clientelism. As this camp in the literature expands, it will be important to test its findings rigorously and, if appropriate, more fully incorporate them into existing explanations.

## Appendix B

### Process Tracing Test for Causal Inference

<b>Necessary for Affirming Causal Inference</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Sufficient for Affirming Causal Inference</b>
		<b>No</b>
		<b>Straw-in-the-Wind</b>
		a. <b>Passing:</b> Affirms relevance of hypothesis, but does not confirm it.
		b. <b>Failing:</b> Hypothesis is not eliminated, but is slightly weakened.
		c. <b>Implications for rival hypotheses:</b> <b>Passing</b> slightly weakens them <b>Failing</b> slightly strengthens them

Source: Collier 2011, 825

## Appendix C

Table 1: Argentine Electoral Results, 1991-9 (Percentage of Valid Vote)

Party <sup>a</sup>	1991 (L)	1993 (L)	1994 (C)	1995 (P)	1995 (L)	1997 (L)	1999 (P)	1999 (L)
Justicialista Party (PJ)	40.2	42.5	38.5	49.9	43.0	36.3	38.3	33.0
Radical Civic Union (UCR)	29.0	30.2	20.5	17.0	21.7	—	—	—
Democratic Center Union (UCeDe)	5.2	2.6	1.5	—	3.2	0.6	—	—
Front for a Country in Solidarity (FREPASO) <sup>b</sup>	—	2.5	13.6	29.2	20.7	—	—	—
Movement for Dignity and Independence (MODIN)	—	5.8	9.2	1.7	1.7	0.9	—	—
Alliance for Jobs, Justice, and Education <sup>c</sup>	—	—	—	—	—	45.7 <sup>d</sup>	48.4	45.5
Action for the Republic	—	—	—	—	—	3.9	10.2	8.0
Minor and provincial parties	25.6	16.4	16.7	2.2	9.7	12.6	3.1	13.5
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

*Notes:*

<sup>a</sup> (P) Presidential election; (L) lower house election; (C) Constituent Assembly election.

<sup>b</sup> Big Front (FG) in 1993 and 1994.

<sup>c</sup> UCR and FREPASO.

<sup>d</sup> Total includes vote for the UCR and FREPASO in districts in which these parties ran separately.

Sources: Fraga (1995), McGuire (1995); Gervasoni (1997); www.mivoto.com.

Source: Levitsky 2003, 182

## Appendix D

Table 2: *The increasing role of material benefits in fostering PJ activist participation\**  
(percentage of surveyed base units)

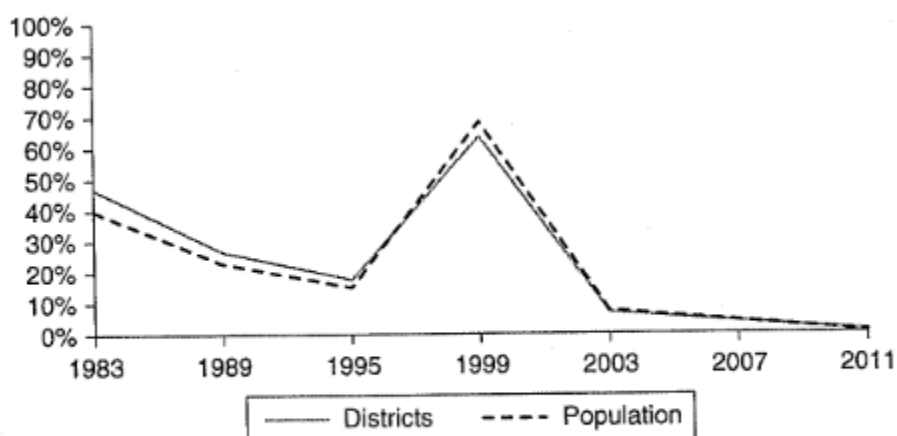
Primary Incentive for Activist Participation	UB established before 1985 ( <i>n</i> = 45)	UB established between 1985–1995 ( <i>n</i> = 39)	UB established after 1995 ( <i>n</i> = 17)
Personal ties, social networks, or ideology	82.2	51.2	35.3
Material benefits	17.8	48.8	64.7

\* Author's judgements, based on interviews with activists in each base unit. 11 UBs could not be scored due to lack of sufficient information.

Source: Levitsky 2003, 209

## Appendix E

Figure 2: *Electoral competition for outsiders in presidential elections, Argentina, 1983-2011* (% outsider districts and outsider population in outsider districts with electoral competition)



Source: INDEC, electoral data from Ministerio del Interior for most years and Abal-Medina and Calvo for 1999. See Appendix 3.

Source: Garay 2017, 169

Notes: Garay defines outsiders as “workers outside the formal labor market and their dependents” (1). Her definition and data are thus valuable as they closely approximate the typical Peronist supporter.

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