

# Working for the Machine:

## Patronage Jobs and Political Services in Argentina

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Why does the control of patronage increase an incumbent's chances of staying in power?<sup>1</sup> What do public employees do that might affect electoral competition? What motivates public employees to do it? This article describes what public employees do that might affect electoral outcomes and provides an explanation of why they do it. Across a vast number of cases, from the United States<sup>2</sup> to Italy,<sup>3</sup> Mexico,<sup>4</sup> Ghana,<sup>5</sup> and Argentina,<sup>6</sup> scholars have argued that patronage jobs help keep machines in power. Patronage jobs are assumed to be distributed to an incumbent's supporters in exchange for political services—such as helping with campaign events and mobilizing voters—that are essential for attracting and maintaining electoral support.<sup>7</sup> Thus, conventional wisdom posits that controlling patronage significantly increases an incumbent's chances of winning elections and staying in power. However, almost no systematic evidence details the political services that patronage employees provide in exchange for their jobs. There is no precise assessment of the types of services that are being provided, which employees provide these services, or the extent of this practice in public administration. Moreover, there is not a sound explanation as to why public employees provide these services.

Consistent with the general understanding in the literature, I argue that patronage jobs are distributed to supporters in exchange for political services. Besides doing their regular jobs, these supporters are expected to provide political services for the incumbent who hired them. Patronage jobs then provide incumbents with a “free” army of political workers. However, a citizen who receives a public sector job with the understanding that she will provide political support in return can easily renege on her side of the contract after getting the job. Why would public employees uphold their end

of the contract and provide political services even after receiving the benefit of the job? How can the patron make sure not to “waste” jobs on citizens who will not fulfill their side of the patronage contract? Existing explanations are based either on reciprocity (clients comply with the agreement because they want to help the person who has helped them) or threat of punishment (clients comply because they are afraid the patron will cut off the benefit if they fail to do so).

Departing from these explanations, I argue that patronage contracts are self-sustaining without reciprocity or the threat of punishment because incumbents distribute patronage jobs to supporters whose fates are tied to that of the incumbent who hires them. Public sector jobs (and, importantly, working conditions) enjoyed by supporters will be maintained by the incumbent but not by the opposition. This is because supporters of the incumbent cannot credibly commit to provide political services for the opposition. Supporters, then, have strong incentives to provide political services to help the incumbent stay in power, which makes their original commitment to provide these services a credible one. This alignment of interests between patrons and clients (or incumbents and patronage employees) makes patronage contracts incentive compatible, and therefore self-sustaining over time.

I test the empirical implications of the theory using a face-to-face survey of about 1,200 local public sector employees fielded from three Argentine municipalities. Using list experiments, I show that a considerable proportion of employees—particularly supporters—provide political services. To establish why public employees provide these services, I use two survey experiments that allow me to identify employees’ comprehension of the likely effect of a change in the administration. The results strongly support the empirical expectations: public employees believe that their jobs are tied to the political success of the incumbent.

### **Patronage Contracts and Commitment**

In contexts of weak civil service rules, as is the case in most Latin American countries,<sup>8</sup> the ability to discretionally appoint public sector workers provides incumbents with a powerful tool that can be used for political gain.<sup>9</sup> Patronage employees are expected to vote for the patron who appointed them, but the type of support that is expected in exchange for a public sector job goes far beyond electoral support. Based mainly on ethnographic work, existing studies suggest that political bias in hiring gets translated into political services.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, patronage employees in mid- and low-level positions—the focus of this article—are often involved in campaigning, organizing, and/or attending political meetings and rallies, mobilizing voters, and providing favors to citizens, among other activities. However, there is no systematic evidence of the provision of political services by public employees, likely because obtaining reliable data on these activities is extremely difficult. Using innovative techniques that provide anonymity and thus generate more reliable answers, this article focuses on three of these services: helping with campaigns, attending rallies, and monitoring elections.

Public employees under patronage contracts provide invaluable services to their patrons. However, patronage contracts are not easy to sustain. First, since the law cannot be used to enforce the contracts, they must be self-enforcing.<sup>11</sup> Second, since the exchange is sequenced, a citizen who provides political services with the expectation of getting a public sector job is always at risk of facing a politician who can decide not to hire her after she has already provided the services. Alternatively, a citizen who receives a job with the implicit or explicit understanding that she will provide political services can easily decide not to comply with her side of the agreement after getting the job.<sup>12</sup>

This article focuses on the second type of exchange, in which political support is provided after the benefit is received. In this case, incumbents are at risk of “wasting” jobs on citizens who, once hired, will not comply with their side of the agreement. Why would they comply after receiving the benefit of the job? The literature so far has provided two main answers to this question: norms of reciprocity and threat of punishment.<sup>13</sup> According to the first set of theories, clients fulfill their side of the agreement because they want to help those who have helped them. Receiving a benefit engenders feelings of obligation and gratitude, and clients help the patron because of these feelings.<sup>14</sup> From this perspective, public employees comply with the agreement and provide political services because they want to reciprocate the incumbent for their jobs.

According to the second line of arguments, clients comply because they are afraid that the patron will cut off their benefits if they fail to do so. Much of the contemporary literature has focused on the monitoring and commitment problems that are associated with this understanding of clientelism.<sup>15</sup> From this perspective, the defining feature of clientelistic exchanges is that they are contingent on the client’s behavior. If the client does not behave according to her patron’s wishes—which requires either the patron’s ability to monitor or the client’s belief that this is possible—the patron has the power to punish the client by withdrawing or withholding the benefit. For patrons to be able to ensure that the political support associated with the benefit is provided, they should be able to credibly commit to punish non-compliers (and/or reward compliers). Thus, the commitment problem is solved on the basis of fear of punishment. Employees provide services because they are afraid that the patron will cut off the job otherwise.

Following some insights from the continuation value aspect of Robinson and Verdier’s model, this article presents a different solution to the commitment problem that arises in clientelistic agreements. I argue that it is neither reciprocity nor fear of punishment that ensures that public employees uphold their part of the deal; it is the fact that their fates are tied to the political fate of their patron. In this theory of self-enforcing patronage, clients’ compliance with patronage agreements is ensured by the fact that their incentives are aligned with those of their patron—both patron and clients will benefit from the patron’s success. Of course, this is not to say that fear of punishment or feelings of reciprocity are never present in clientelistic exchanges, or that they are not possible. Rather, I demonstrate here that neither of these two factors are necessary characteristics of these arrangements.<sup>16</sup>

## **A Theory of Self-Enforcing Patronage**

What makes patronage contracts self-enforcing in the absence of the threat of punishment or feelings of reciprocity is that patronage jobs are distributed to supporters whose fates are tied to the political survival of their patron.<sup>17</sup> In the absence of robust civil service rules, patronage employees believe that if the incumbent loses the election, their own jobs could be in jeopardy. This provides a major incentive to help the incumbent stay in power, thus making their original commitment to provide political services a credible one. Since the interests of patronage employees are aligned with those of the incumbent—both want the politician to stay in office—the commitment problem associated with the non-simultaneity of the clientelistic exchange disappears and patronage contracts become self-enforcing.<sup>18</sup>

Politicians want to distribute jobs to those who are most likely to provide political services. Finding this type of employee, however, is not an easy task. Potential patronage employees can promise future compliance, but absent the threat of punishment for non-compliers or feelings of reciprocity, the provision of political services has to be incentive compatible for this promise to be credible. Only when potential employees can credibly commit to providing support in the future are patronage contracts self-sustaining without punishment and reciprocity. All potential employees can promise to provide political services in the future, but only supporters can make these promises credible. Patronage jobs held by supporters will be maintained as they are by the incumbent, but not by a competing politician. Supporters then have strong incentives to help the incumbent stay in power, which makes their commitment credible.

If politicians could somehow know *ex ante* how potential employees would behave once hired, then the commitment problem associated with the sequenced nature of the patronage agreement would of course disappear. Full information about the intentions of potential employees would prevent strategic defection and solve the commitment problem for politicians. While the intention of potential employees to provide political services once hired is private information, their declared (or perceived) political preferences regarding the politician at the time of hiring are not. When hiring is mainly conducted through informal channels—as is the case in countries with weak civil service systems—politicians can use that information for their own benefit.

Politicians then use referrals as well as personal and partisan connections to screen potential clients and to separate perceived supporters from non-supporters.<sup>19</sup> Supporters might like the politician or the politician's party for ideological or personal reasons, or because of past or expected benefits. They might have connections with the party or they might just be faking support to obtain benefits. In other words, perceived support is not about ideological affinity but rather about proximity to the politician's network. In line with Calvo and Murillo, who show that citizens' perception of the likelihood of being offered a public sector job increases among Argentineans who are more connected to partisan networks,<sup>20</sup> I argue that those citizens who are closer to these networks, those whom I call supporters for simplicity, will be the ones that the politician

chooses to hire. Citizens can make efforts to be visible to the patron (i.e., help with the campaign or attend political rallies) and thus make sure they are identified as supporters.<sup>21</sup> As explained by a Salta employee: “There are people who wait to get hired . . . they work for years and years, and the only thing they want is a job. . . . If they performed, showed up on time, if they attended the rallies . . . yes, it is possible.”<sup>22</sup> Those who demonstrate support are more likely to comply with the agreement and provide the promised services. Note that whether those who demonstrate support are sincere (ideological) supporters or strategic actors with materialistic goals does not affect the empirical implications of the theory. For reasons developed below, being a “real” supporter or just pretending to be one creates the same incentive-compatible patronage contracts. Politicians use perceived preferences at the time of hiring as a proxy for citizens’ future likelihood of providing political services. Empirically, then, we should observe public sector jobs disproportionately distributed to supporters.

This expectation is consistent with studies on clientelism and patronage in Argentina as well as with my own research. Most recent studies argue that politicians allocate resources based on preexisting partisan linkages with the beneficiaries of those resources, especially in the case of patronage jobs.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, data from the survey of public employees described in the following section show considerable discretion and political bias in hiring decisions in the Argentine public administration. Around 64 percent of respondents reported having found their job through an acquaintance, a friend, or a relative, and the majority of respondents (59 percent) considered personal connections to be “important” or “very important” for getting a job.<sup>24</sup> Proximity to partisan networks, however, does not necessarily mean ideological affinity. In their survey of Argentinean voters, Calvo and Murillo find no correlation between ideological self-placement (on a left-right scale) and distributive expectations regarding public jobs.<sup>25</sup> Data from the public employees’ survey show a similar pattern. Public employees reported that personal connections were more important than partisan affiliation and political ideology as hiring criteria in the administration.<sup>26</sup>

Yet, the fact that public jobs are disproportionately distributed to perceived supporters does not solve the commitment problem. Perceptions could be misleading. Once citizens expect the distribution of public jobs on the basis of perceived political preferences, they have an incentive to get closer to the partisan network and misrepresent their preferences. Supporters are often neither completely partisan (or ideological) nor completely opportunistic (only motivated by their own welfare), but rather are some combination of both. Moreover, partisan preferences might be endogenous to the patronage exchange itself. In the words of Diaz-Cayeros et al.: “partisan attachments are constructed through reciprocal material and symbolic exchanges, past, present, and future.”<sup>27</sup> As an employee bluntly explains: “I’ve told you that I got this job through politics, but the thing is that I was politically active *in order to* get a job.”<sup>28</sup> Citizens can pretend to have certain political preferences to get hired, change their minds about their preferences, or simply reduce the effort they are willing to devote to political work. Since the exchange is sequenced, patronage employees still have the possibility of not complying with their side of the agreement.

Being a supporter—or, more accurately, being perceived as one—is not in itself enough to guarantee compliance with the patronage contract.

What makes patronage contracts self-enforcing is public employees' belief that their jobs are tied to their patron's political survival. Why do patronage employees believe that they could lose their jobs or suffer negative effects on their working conditions with a new administration? Perceived political preferences at the time of hiring have the same effect as the public pledges discussed by Kitschelt and Wilkinson: those whose support for the incumbent is publicly known "are effectively then cut off from any expectation of rewards if the opposition should win."<sup>29</sup> Since the distribution of patronage jobs is based on perceived political preferences (or proximity to the partisan network), once citizens are hired as supporters, their genuine political preferences do not matter anymore. Their perceived political preferences dictate the treatment they will get from the opposition. Whether patronage workers are motivated by ideology, opportunism, or—more frequently—some combination of both, they will be branded and treated as true supporters by the opposition. Using the same logic that the incumbent applied to hire her supporters, a new incumbent will want patronage jobs to be distributed to those more likely to provide political services for her. Only her supporters can credibly commit to do that in the future, so current employees will be replaced, demoted, or sidestepped. Once branded as an incumbent's supporters, patronage employees have low expectations for keeping their jobs and working conditions if the opposition were to win. Supporters with patronage jobs understand that it is in their best interest to help the incumbent remain in power. It is this alignment of interests between patrons (politicians) and clients (employees) that makes patronage contracts self-sustaining.<sup>30</sup>

In this theory of self-enforcing patronage, public employees comply with patronage contracts because they believe that it is in their best interest to provide political services to keep their patron in power. More precisely, employees believe that it is in their best interest that political services are provided by someone so the incumbent gets re-elected. What then is the individual's incentive to contribute? As with other public goods (i.e., the re-election of the incumbent) that depend on collective contributions (i.e., political services), there may be a temptation for each individual actor to let others expend the effort. Because the benefit is non-excludable, both those who comply with the patronage contract and provide political services and those who do not will equally enjoy the benefit of keeping the patron in power.

There are, however, at least three factors that reduce the likelihood of widespread free riding in the case of patronage. First, the benefit at stake (a job) might be important enough to provide a significant incentive for cooperation.<sup>31</sup> When the benefit is this large, more people are willing to pay the cost (provide services) to make sure that the desirable outcome will actually happen. Second, the cost of cooperation is not necessarily high. Political services are often provided during regular working hours, so the choice of public employees is not between, for instance, attending a rally and staying at home, but between attending a rally and performing their regular "on-the-job" duties. Third, individual contributions are not necessarily individually irrelevant to the

outcome. While, for instance, it may have little impact whether one particular individual attends a rally, the cooperation of an individual in charge of mobilizing many others to the rally may be quite important to its success.

The argument advanced in this article is related to Robinson and Verdier, who note that promises of public-sector employment tie “the continuation utility of a voter to the political success of a particular politician.”<sup>32</sup> The theory of self-enforcing patronage, however, departs from their formal model in a couple of fundamental ways. First, in their model, the continuation value aspect is not enough to guarantee compliance: “(politicians) must be able to use policies that tie the continuation utility of a voter to their political success, or alternatively, if behavior is observable, allow voters to be punished if they renege on the exchange.”<sup>33</sup> Reversibility (as a threat for punishment) is, for them, key to solving the commitment problem.<sup>34</sup> This also explains, in their view, why (true) supporters are the beneficiaries of jobs. To reduce the moral-hazard problem and solve the commitment issue, jobs need to be distributed to true believers so the “patron can observe their effort with relatively high probability.”<sup>35</sup> In the theory outlined here, in contrast, reversibility only matters because employees believe that a new incumbent could fire or demote them, which creates the incentive to try to help keep the current incumbent in office, without any need for monitoring and punishment.<sup>36</sup>

The theory of self-enforcing patronage has two main empirical implications that are tested in the following sections. First, if patronage jobs are in fact disproportionately distributed to supporters in exchange for political services, we should observe that supporters are more involved than non-supporters in the actual provision of these services. Second, if supporters are more involved in the provision of services, it is because they believe that their jobs are tied to the incumbent’s political success. Thus, I expect public sector employees who are supporters to be more afraid than non-supporters of a new politician replacing the incumbent. Importantly, and departing from existing accounts, it is not just the reversibility of public jobs that matters; the possibility of changes in working conditions such as being demoted or sidestepped with a new administration also creates incentives for patronage employees to comply.

### **The Empirical Strategy**

Despite patronage being a widespread phenomenon, the difficulty in collecting systematic data means that we know very little about what public employees do, and why they do it. The approach I take in this article allows me to elicit accurate information from the actors involved while minimizing social response bias. I use an original survey of about 1,200 public sector employees that incorporates different strategies for encouraging truthful responses.

**Case Selection** Survey data were gathered in face-to-face interviews of 1,184 low- and mid-level local public sector employees in three Argentinean municipalities.<sup>37</sup>

While the patterns described in this article are common to many countries without robust civil service systems, Argentina—infamous for its clientelistic politics—offers a particularly good setting in which to study patronage. First, it lacks stable civil service rules and has a large public sector with “well-developed patronage systems.”<sup>38</sup> Moreover, its extensive decentralization results in significant variation in the size and characteristics of public employment across provinces and municipalities. Finally, while some provincial regulations apply, control over local personnel is the exclusive responsibility of local governments.

To conduct the survey, I selected three similarly sized, but very distinct municipalities: Salta (Salta), Santa Fe (Santa Fe), and Tigre (*Conurbano Bonaerense*, Buenos Aires). Although the municipalities were not selected at random, they are illustrative of the diverse economic and political realities of the country, providing a good opportunity to study patronage across different environments.<sup>39</sup> By including a municipality from the poorer north dominated by the Peronist Party (Salta), a municipality from the relatively richer and more competitive center governed by the Radical Party (Santa Fe), and one from the Peronist *Conurbano Bonaerense* (Tigre), the area most infamous for its clientelistic politics, I intended to capture the regional diversity of Argentine politics.

**The Survey** Together with a team of research assistants, we interviewed around 400 employees in each municipality.<sup>40</sup> I generated a random sample based on the official list of public employees (excluding elected officials and high-level positions).<sup>41</sup> The selected employees were then approached at public offices during working hours.

Asking directly about political services is problematic because respondents could refuse to answer or provide untruthful responses, especially if they think that their jobs could be jeopardized by their answers. To get around this problem of social desirability bias, increase the response rate, and produce more valid estimates, two distinct but complementary strategies were implemented. First, I use list experiments, a technique specially designed to study sensitive issues. Second, I follow Scacco’s strategy and split the questionnaire into two parts.<sup>42</sup> Part A of the survey instrument contained the less sensitive questions and the list experiments described in the next section. Part B had the sensitive questions about political preferences and behavior. Each part of the questionnaire was marked with a different identification number that could only be matched with a document not available to the enumerators. Apart from this number, the second part of the questionnaire had no information that could be used to identify the respondent. Enumerators administered Part A of the questionnaire, while Part B was read and filled out by the respondents themselves. In this way, the other employees in the office were not able to hear the questions or the answers. Finally, the respondents were asked to store Part B in a sealed cardboard box similar to a ballot box.<sup>43</sup>

**List Experiment Technique** The logic of the list experiment technique is straightforward.<sup>44</sup> First, the survey sample is split into random halves: a treatment and a control group. Each group is read the same question and shown a card with the response options.<sup>45</sup> Cards for each group differ only in the number of response



categories. List experiments work by aggregating the item of interest (the treatment) with a list of other items. Respondents are asked to report the number of items on the list that applies to them, but not which ones. The question does not ask respondents to mention specific activities, only how many of those activities they did. Thus, as long as respondents understand that the anonymity of responses is protected, list experiments generate more accurate responses and more valid estimates than direct questioning.<sup>46</sup> Since respondents were randomly assigned to the treatment and control groups, as long as the randomization was successful, the two groups would be identical, on average, on both observable and unobservable characteristics.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, an estimate of the proportion of respondents providing services can be obtained by comparing the average responses across groups.

### **Patronage Contracts and Political Services: Evidence from List Experiments**

According to the theory of self-enforcing patronage, patronage contracts are distributed to supporters in exchange for political services. Politicians choose to hire supporters because their commitment to provide political services in the future is credible. This section presents empirical evidence that public employees—particularly supporters—do in fact provide these services. Using list experiments, I estimate the proportion of employees who (1) help with campaigns, (2) attend rallies, and (3) monitor elections.<sup>48</sup>

**Electoral Campaigns** Since local politicians in Argentina have limited resources to finance professional campaigns through extensive use of the media,<sup>49</sup> participation of supporters is crucial. At the local level, “human-intensive” activities such as painting graffiti, plastering posters, and door-to-door visits are still essential parts of campaigning. Moreover, the availability of “real” volunteers has considerably decreased over the years, making the role of public employees even more important.

One common activity among parties involves door-to-door campaigning—an activity that is usually accompanied by the distribution of paper ballots, the same ones that voters will find at the voting booth. Argentina does not use the Australian ballot (i.e., there is no standard official ballot with all candidates). In contrast, and although the government is in charge of the distribution of the ballots on Election Day, each political party is responsible for producing its own ballots. The distribution of these ballots in the weeks before the election is crucial. It helps voters get to know the candidates and familiarize themselves with the ballot they intend to use on Election Day. This could be key to finding the preferred option at the voting booth, which often contains an overwhelming number of ballots. The distribution of paper ballots before the election has also been related to vote buying.<sup>50</sup> Other important campaign activities include painting graffiti, hanging banners, and plastering posters. These are an essential part of campaigning, especially for local politicians who cannot afford other, more expensive types of advertising on billboards.<sup>51</sup> In addition, campaigning in Argentina usually

involves organizing meetings with neighbors and other activities such as seminars, social gatherings, and cultural events.

**Political Rallies** Argentine political parties invest a lot of time and effort in organizing rallies. A crucial part of the organization effort is making sure that enough people will show up; qualitative research has shown that public employees are expected to turn out to rallies.<sup>52</sup> Rallies continue to play a number of important roles in Argentine politics. First, they serve the straightforward purpose of advertising and allowing candidates to display their power to voters and other politicians. Second, attendance at rallies is considered a way for potential clients to show loyalty to the party—an opportunity to publicly display support.<sup>53</sup> Finally, the number of followers whom each broker can mobilize to rallies provides party leaders with important information about the power of each broker.<sup>54</sup>

**Monitoring Elections** Parties in Argentina consider the presence of party representatives in polling stations (partisan monitors) on Election Day essential to guaranteeing fair elections. Each party has the right to assign a head of partisan monitors by school (where polling stations are located), plus a monitor by voting booth. The electoral law also requires three polling station officials by voting booth selected by the government to monitor the election and count the votes.<sup>55</sup> Although these official monitors are the only ones with legal authority to decide on electoral issues, parties consider it crucial to have their own monitors protecting their votes. Monitors are also in charge of ensuring that enough ballots from their party are in the booth throughout the day. Accusations of missing ballots are frequent in Argentinean elections, and the conventional wisdom posits that parties steal other parties' ballots from the voting booth. Official monitors are in charge of ensuring that this does not happen, but parties consider having their own monitors essential to preventing their ballots from being stolen. Finally, partisan monitors are also considered to be essential to monitor turnout and vote buying.<sup>56</sup>

Table 1 presents the list experiments estimates where the treatment categories are “Work/help in the electoral campaign,” “Attend political rallies,” and “Be an election monitor.”<sup>57</sup> Respondents in the control group report their average number of activities as 1.19, 1.39, and 0.93, respectively, while the average in the treatment group is 1.41, 1.60, and 1.05, respectively. List experiments generate an accurate estimate of the proportion of employees involved in each of these activities: 22 percent reported helping with the campaign, 21 percent reported attending political rallies, and 12 percent reported monitoring the election (all estimates are significant at the 99 percent level).<sup>58</sup> Thus, this section provides the first systematic evidence that public employees do indeed provide political services and offers an unbiased estimation of the rate at which they provide them in Argentina, one of the most studied cases in the literature on clientelism.

**Heterogeneous Treatment Effects** According to the theory of self-enforcing patronage, a higher proportion of supporters should be involved in the provision of political services. To determine whether the provision of services differs across

**Table 1** Political Services: List Experiments Estimates

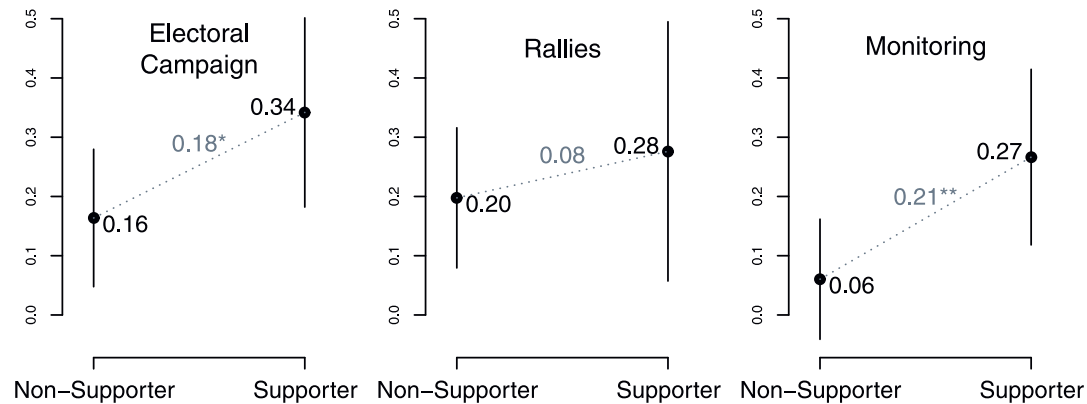
	Electoral Campaign	Rallies	Monitoring
Treatment	1.41 (0.04) N=587	1.60 (0.04) N=586	1.05 (0.03) N=585
Control	1.19 (0.03) N=582	1.39 (0.04) N=584	0.93 (0.02) N=587
Treatment effect	0.22*** (0.05) N=1169	0.21*** (0.06) N=1170	0.12*** (0.04) N=1172

**Note:** Standard errors in parentheses. Two-sample t-test with unequal variance.

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

supporters and non-supporters, I estimate the difference-in-means across these subgroups. Support for the mayor is measured with a question that asked respondents whether they identified themselves with the mayor's party.<sup>59</sup> Figure 1 displays the list experiment estimates of the three services by support for the mayor.<sup>60</sup>

In line with expectations, Figure 1 shows that supporters provide more political services than non-supporters. Among the subgroup who self-identified with the party of the mayor, 34 percent helped with campaigns, as did 16 percent of those who did not identify with the party of the mayor. The 18-point difference is significant at the 90 percent level. I find a similar pattern for the other services. Among supporters, 28 percent reported attending rallies, while among non-supporters the proportion drops to 20 (although the 8-point difference is not significant). Finally, among supporters, 27 percent reported attending monitoring, while among non-supporters the proportion drops to 6 (although the 21-point difference is significant at the 5 percent level).

**Figure 1** List Experiment Estimates of Political Services by Support for the Mayor

**Note:** Average treatment effects calculated as the difference between the treatment and the control group ( $t$ -test with unequal variance). Black circles indicate the proportion of employees in each subgroup who performed the service. Vertical lines represent 95 percent confidence intervals. \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

percent were election monitors in the last election, while among non-supporters the proportion was not significantly different from zero. The difference between the proportion of supporters and non-supporters who reported being monitors is a significant 21 percentage points (at the 95 percent level).

To evaluate these results more rigorously and control for the main alternative explanations—reciprocity and punishment—I conducted multivariate analysis. If reciprocity theories of clientelism were correct, respondents with more favorable attitudes toward reciprocity should be more involved in the provision of services (out of feelings of gratitude). If punishment theories were correct, respondents without tenure rights should be more involved in the provision of services (out of fear of being fired). To measure attitudes about reciprocity (*Reciprocal*), respondents were asked about their agreement with the following statement: “We always have to return the favors that others have done for us.” Those who strongly agreed or agreed more than disagreed were coded as reciprocal (1); those who strongly disagreed or disagreed more than agreed were coded as non-reciprocal (0). *Tenure* takes the value of one for those with a permanent contract, and zero otherwise. Control variables include *Female* (0–1), *College* (0–1), *Age* (1–5), and dummies for municipalities. In all the models, the main variable of interest (*Supporter*) is measured as in the previous section with a question that asks about self-identification with the mayor’s party.

Table 2 presents the multivariate analysis. All the models are ordinary least squares regressions with the list experiment counts as dependent variables. Following Gonzalez-Ocantos et al.<sup>61</sup> and Gonzalez-Ocantos, de Jonge, and Nickerson,<sup>62</sup> the models include a dummy variable indicating the treatment assignment (i.e., the list experiment condition), interactions between this variable and all the independent variables, as well as non-1ptinteracted versions of all the variables. The estimates for the political services are derived from the interacted coefficients, while the non-interacted coefficients (not reported) provide estimates for the activities in the control lists.<sup>63</sup> All models include controls for age, gender, education, and dummy variables for municipality (not shown).<sup>64</sup>

The results show that, in general, being a supporter is positively associated with the provision of services, even when controlling for the two main alternative explanations. In all models the sign of the coefficients for the *Supporter* variable is positive and statistically significant for helping with the campaign and monitoring elections, but not for attending rallies. Neither the *Reciprocal* variable nor the *Tenure* variable is statistically distinguishable from zero in any of the models. Even after controlling for the main alternative explanations, being a supporter seems to be the best predictor for the provision of services.

Indeed, the theory of self-enforcing patronage posits that the main explanatory variable for the provision of services is support for the mayor. Supporters are more involved in the provision of services because they have more to lose from a change in administration. Non-supporters, with or without tenure rights, more or less reciprocal, have nothing to fear from a new government. The reason why employees comply with their side of the agreement is not the threat of punishment or feelings of reciprocity, but

**Table 2** Political Services; OLS Regressions

	Political Campaigns		Political Rallies		Election Monitors	
<b>Treatment List</b>						
Supporter (0-1)	0.217** (0.103)	0.177* (0.103)	0.089 (0.133)	0.055 (0.133)	0.236** (0.099)	0.254** (0.100)
Tenure (0-1)	0.076 (0.120)	0.081 (0.121)	-0.055 (0.139)	-0.044 (0.138)	-0.175 (0.109)	-0.167 (0.109)
Reciprocal (0-1)		0.015 (0.135)		0.112 (0.143)		0.031 (0.128)
Constant	0.214 (0.162)	0.217 (0.198)	0.035 (0.181)	-0.048 (0.218)	0.214 (0.146)	0.184 (0.191)
Observations	1,165	1,157	1,166	1,159	1,168	1,160
R-squared	0.124	0.129	0.165	0.165	0.090	0.094

Note: OLS regressions with the list experiment counts as dependent variables. Tables C6a and C6b in the Appendix report the coefficients for all the variables in these models and the non-interacted variables. Robust standard errors in parentheses, \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

fear of losing their jobs (or negative changes in working conditions) with a change in the administration. The next section tests this claim.

### Self-Enforcing Patronage Contracts

Why do public employees provide political services? This section tests the main empirical implication of the theory: patronage employees believe that their fates are tied to the electoral fate of their patron. To identify the potential effect of a change in the administration on different types of public employees, I use two survey experiments. A randomly selected subset of respondents was asked to estimate the likelihood of losing their jobs and suffering changes in working conditions if the opposition won the next election. The control group was asked the same questions but without providing any information about the hypothetical electoral outcome. I test the theory of self-enforcing patronage by estimating heterogeneous treatment effects across supporters and non-supporters. I expect that supporters will be more likely than non-supporters to fear losing their jobs or experiencing negative changes in their working conditions if a politician from a different party were elected. The results of the survey experiments are consistent with this expectation.

One of the main advantages of experiments is that randomization ensures that the populations in the control and treatment groups are, on average, equivalent on both observable and unobservable characteristics.<sup>65</sup> This allows me to use difference-in-means (t-tests) to analyze the results. Because the individuals who received the treatment were randomly selected, differences in responses across groups can be

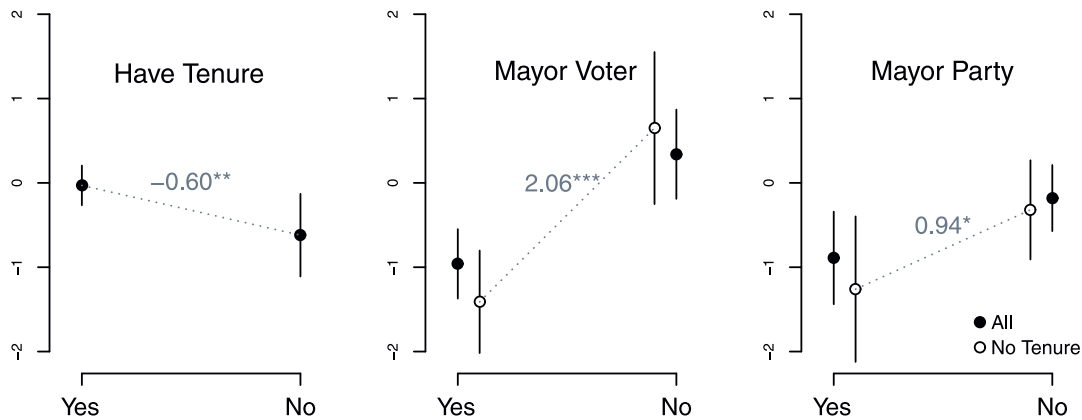
attributed to the extra information received by the treatment group.<sup>66</sup> I have also corroborated the main results with regression analyses in which the treatment is included as an independent variable along with controls for tenure, age, gender, education, and municipality.<sup>67</sup> After analyzing the main treatment effects, the core of the argument is tested by examining how support for the incumbent conditions the size of the treatment effect.

**Perception of Job Stability** To measure perceptions of job stability, respondents were asked to estimate the likelihood of keeping their jobs after the next election as follows: “On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means ‘Not at all likely,’ and 10 means ‘Very likely,’ how likely is it that you will continue working at the municipality next year, after the 2011 mayoral elections?” The treatment group was asked the same question with the addition of: “if the incumbent mayor is not reelected and the opposition wins?”<sup>68</sup> Respondents who were told this hypothetical about the incumbent losing the next election and the opposition winning responded differently from those who did not hear any information about the outcome of the election. Whereas the average response among the control group is 8.15, the figure drops to 7.75 among those who received the treatment. The average treatment effect is a significant 0.41 difference (at the 95 percent level).<sup>69</sup> Employees in general fear losing their jobs if the next election were to be won by the opposition.<sup>70</sup>

The main empirical implication of the theory developed here is that supporters of the incumbent have more to fear than non-supporters from a change in the administration. I expect, then, that supporters estimate a higher likelihood of losing their jobs if the incumbent were to lose the next election. Employees without tenure might also fear more with a new administration. Indeed, tenured employees—who cannot be legally fired—should not fear losing their jobs, regardless of the electoral outcome.

To estimate supporters’ reaction to the hypothetical electoral outcome, I estimate conditional average treatment effects (CATE). I do this simply by estimating causal effects separately for different subgroups of the population.<sup>71</sup> To identify support for the mayor, two questions were used. First, respondents were asked about their identification with the mayor’s party (*Mayor Party*). The second asked for whom they had voted in the last mayoral election (*Mayor Voter*). Results are presented graphically. For example, the left plot in Figure 2 shows the treatment effect of hearing about the hypothetical electoral outcome when asked about the likelihood of staying in the job across employees with tenure (“Yes”) and those without tenure (“No”). The dashed line represents the quantity of greatest interest since a steeper slope indicates that hearing about the hypothetical electoral outcome affects the subgroups differently. Since tenured employees cannot be fired, I present the effect for the whole sample (black dots) and the effect without tenured employees (white dots) for each subgroup. Excluding tenured employees makes all the effects stronger in the predicted directions.

First, and in line with expectations, the treatment effect is much stronger for the non-tenured employees (left plot). Among employees without job security, the

**Figure 2** Perception of Job Stability, Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

Note: Average treatment effects calculated as the difference between the treatment and the control group (*t*-test with unequal variance). Black circles indicate the treatment effect within subgroups; white circles restrict the sample to non-tenured employees. Vertical lines represent 95 percent confidence intervals. \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.1$ .

treatment effect is a significant 0.62 (compared to a nonsignificant 0.03 for tenured employees). The difference between tenured and non-tenured employees is a significant 0.60 (at the 95 percent level). Second, as the figure clearly shows, supporters who receive the hypothetical about a candidate from the opposition winning the election respond quite differently to the question about the likelihood of keeping their jobs than supporters who do not hear the hypothetical. Hearing the hypothetical about the opposition winning, in contrast, has no effect on the expectations of non-supporters.

The difference in effects between those non-tenured employees (white dots) who reported having voted for the incumbent and those who did not (middle plot) is a significant 2.06 difference (at the 99 percent level). Recall that the scale is 0 to 10; this means that those who had voted for the current mayor feel, on average, 20 percent less confident about keeping their jobs if the opposition wins. Results are similar when using the alternative measure of support. The difference between non-tenured employees who identified themselves with the party of the mayor and those who did not (right plot) is a significant 0.94 (at the 90 percent level), indicating that supporters of the mayor's party feel on average around 10 percent less secure about keeping their jobs if the opposition wins.

**Perception of Change** The fear of losing one's job if the opposition wins the next election is not the only mechanism that sustains patronage contracts. Especially for tenured employees, other incentives are in place. If an opposition politician wins the next election, "disloyal" employees—the ones perceived as supporters of the old administration—might be transferred, sidestepped, demoted, or assigned to different activities. A tenured employee who has been working at the municipality of Santa Fe since 1985 explained this clearly: "The fear [for a tenured employee] is about changing

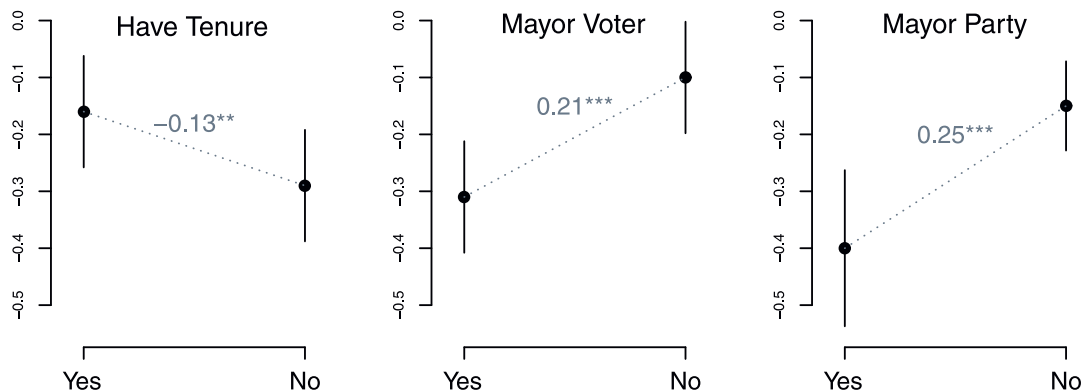
jobs, changing the place of work; it is about being sent somewhere else, somewhere one does not know how to do the job, or where one doesn't have much to do. . . . A lot of things can be changed.” In fact, she continued, there were a few cases like this with the change of administration in 2007: “Old employees have been sidestepped a little, their participation has been restricted. I know of people that had to ask to be transferred to another area because there was no room for them anymore where they used to work.” And she finished her description by adding: “I am not saying this happens, all I am saying is that *one is afraid of it; it is one's salary, one's livelihood.*”<sup>72</sup>

The story of another employee from Santa Fe illustrates how the fear associated with a change in the administration sometimes becomes real. When I met him, he was sitting alone in an empty office at the municipal Art Center with nothing but an empty desk and a couple of chairs. When asked about his job, he said that, formally, he was the director of photography at the Art Center, but he was not doing that anymore because the new administration (that took office in 2007) appointed someone else to that position. He had gotten his job at the municipality in 1983 and he held, at the time of the interview, the highest rank in the local civil service system. He had tenure so the new administration could not fire him and he was still getting his full salary as director, but when asked about what he was actually doing every day at the office, he replied: “nothing.” The new person was doing his former job and there was nothing for him to do. At the time of the interview, he was fifty years old.<sup>73</sup>

To determine whether employees are afraid of these types of changes, I again use a hypothetical about the electoral outcome. All respondents were first asked how satisfied they were with their jobs and then to estimate the likelihood of a change after the election as follows: “On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means ‘Not at all likely,’ and 10 means ‘Very likely,’ how likely do you think it is that that level of satisfaction with your job will change next year, after the 2011 mayoral elections?” Respondents selected into the treatment group received additional information about the outcome of the election: “if the incumbent mayor is not reelected and the opposition wins?” Immediately after this question, all respondents were asked: “Do you think that your situation will be better, the same, or worse?” Responses were coded 1 for better, 0 for no change expected, and -1 for worse.

In line with the results from the previous section, respondents who were told the hypothetical about the incumbent losing the election responded quite differently from those who did not hear this information. Whereas the average response among the control group was 0.36, the average for those who received the treatment was 0.13.<sup>74</sup> The average treatment effect is a significant 0.23 difference. On average, public employees think that their situation would be worse if the opposition were to win.<sup>75</sup> Figure 3 presents the differences in the size of the treatment effect across different subsets of employees—*Tenure*, *Mayor Voter*, and *Mayor Party*. Again, I expect supporters of the incumbent to be more prone to think that the change would be for the worse.<sup>76</sup> Although the theory of self-enforcing patronage does not provide a clear prediction in this case, tenured employees—who have generally been in the job longer and possibly already experienced a change in administration—might be less afraid of suffering negative changes.



**Figure 3** Likelihood of Change, Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

Note: Average treatment effects calculated as the difference between the treatment and the control group ( $t$ -test with unequal variance). Black circles indicate the treatment effect within subgroups. Vertical lines represent 95 percent confidence intervals. \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.1$ .

Supporters who receive information about the electoral outcome respond differently to the question about changes in working conditions than supporters who do not hear any information. Hearing the hypothetical about the opposition winning has a considerably smaller effect on the future expectations of change among non-supporters. In other words, the strength of the main treatment effect is conditional on the characteristics of the respondents predicted by the theory of self-enforcing patronage—namely support for the mayor. The difference in effects between employees who reported having voted for the incumbent and those who did not (middle plot) is a significant 0.21 (at the 99 percent level). Recall that the scale in this case is -1 to 1; so 0.21 indicates that incumbent voters are, on average, 10 percent more negative about potential changes in working conditions if the opposition wins. The difference in effects between those who identify with the party of the mayor and those who do not (right plot) is a significant 0.25 (at the 99 percent level). Tenured employees also feel less afraid than non-tenured employees of the opposition winning (left plot). The difference in effects across respondents with and without tenure is a significant 0.13 (at the 95 percent level).

In sum, the two survey experiments show that incumbent's supporters have strong incentives to try to keep things as they are.<sup>77</sup> The results clearly indicate that those who could be perceived as supporters by the opposition are afraid of losing their jobs or work conditions changing for the worse with a new administration, which is a strong incentive for providing political services that could help keep the incumbent in office.

## Conclusion

This article has set out to answer two questions: what do public sector employees do that affects electoral competition and why do they do it. Using an unobtrusive

measurement technique that generates unbiased estimates, I provide systematic evidence that public employees under patronage contracts do indeed provide political services to the patron who hires them. These political services—attending rallies, helping with campaigns, and monitoring elections, just to mention the ones studied here—are essential for obtaining and maintaining electoral support. In contexts of weak civil service systems, the ability to distribute jobs to those who would provide these services gives incumbents a powerful electoral tool. Patronage contracts, however, are risky. Since the exchange of jobs for political support is sequenced and the law cannot be used to enforce such agreements, defection and betrayal are always a possibility. Here, I have focused on the commitment problems that arise when the job is distributed with the expectation of obtaining political support from the client in the future. A citizen who receives a job with the understanding that she will provide political services in return can easily renege on the agreement after getting the job.

Departing from existing explanations, the theory of self-enforcing patronage posits that public employees comply with the agreement because they believe that their fates are tied to that of their patron. Patrons do not need to monitor employees and threaten to punish non-compliers, nor do they have to encourage feelings of reciprocity among them. When patronage jobs are distributed to perceived supporters, patronage contracts are self-sustaining. Only supporters can credibly commit to provide political support in the future. Patronage jobs and working conditions held by perceived supporters will be maintained by the incumbent (their patron), but not by the opposition (because incumbents' supporters cannot credibly commit to provide political services for the opposition). Once perceived or branded as a supporter of the incumbent, patronage employees have low expectations of keeping their jobs and working conditions if the opposition were to win.

The actual firing or demotion of employees may happen only rarely. Nonetheless, the fact that employees believe in this possibility is enough of an incentive to support their patron. When something as valuable as one's livelihood is at stake, clients might be less willing to risk being wrong. Supporters understand that it is in their best interest to provide political services to help the incumbent remain in power, and this alignment of interests between patrons and clients makes patronage contracts self-sustaining. The empirical evidence provided in this article is consistent with this theory. The list and survey experiment results show that supporters are indeed more likely to be involved in the provision of political services and that they are more afraid than non-supporters of losing their jobs or suffering negative changes in working conditions with a change in administration.

The theory of self-enforcing patronage suggests that clients do not act qualitatively differently from other voters. Clients, as do other citizens, care about their own well-being. They are not necessarily more altruistic than others, and they do not need to be "forced into" supporting a politician who makes them better off. As does any other voter, clients can choose to support the politician who guarantees the continuity of the benefit because they understand it is in their best interest to do so. To the extent that clients believe that the continuation of the benefit is conditional on the patron remaining in a position of power, there is an incentive to help the patron achieve this goal. In the specific

clientelistic case discussed here, public sector employees have such an incentive, which encourages them to comply with the patronage agreement and provide the services needed to ensure the incumbent's electoral success. When the clientelistic exchange is incentive compatible, neither feelings of reciprocity nor monitoring and the threat of punishment are necessary to sustain the exchange. To the extent that patrons and clients share the same interests, there is no need for external enforcement mechanisms.

## NOTES

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Due to space constraints, the Appendix is not in the print version of this article. It can be viewed in the online version, at [www.ingentaconnect.com/cuny/cp](http://www.ingentaconnect.com/cuny/cp), and is also available at <https://virginiaoliveros.com/research/>

1. Patronage is the discretionary and personalized exchange of public sector jobs for political support. Following Martin Shefter, "Party and Patronage: Germany, England, and Italy," *Politics & Society*, 7 (1977), 403–51 and Rebecca Weitz-Shapiro, *Curbing Clientelism in Argentina: Politics, Poverty, and Social Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), among others, I consider patronage as a subtype of clientelism in which the good being exchanged for political support is a public sector job. I use "patronage contract" to denote that patrons and clients engage in contract-like exchange relationships. Patronage contracts are implicit or explicit agreements between those who get (or expect to get) a job (the client) and those who get (or expect to get) political support in return (the patron). Patronage employees are those who get their jobs with the *expectation* of providing political support in return.

2. Olle Folke, Shigeo Hirano, and James M. Snyder, "Patronage and Elections in U.S. States," *American Political Science Review*, 105 (August 2011), 567–85.

3. Judith Chubb, *Patronage, Power and Poverty in Southern Italy: A Tale of Two Cities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

4. Kenneth F. Greene, *Why Dominant Parties Lose: Mexico's Democratization in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

5. Sarah Brierley, "Combining Patronage and Merit in Public Sector Recruitment," *Journal of Politics* (forthcoming).

6. Ernesto Calvo and María Victoria Murillo, "Who Delivers? Partisan Clients in the Argentine Electoral Market," *American Journal of Political Science*, 48 (October 2004), 742–57.

7. I define "supporter" simply as a public employee who supports the incumbent. At the very minimum, this support involves electoral support. Note that, as explained below, support may not be fully orthogonal to the distribution of the job itself.

8. Merilee S. Grindle, *Jobs for the Boys: Patronage and the State in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

9. Most studies of clientelism today agree on the importance of public sector jobs for financing the work of political brokers (Isabela Mares and Lauren Young, "Buying, Expropriating, and Stealing Votes," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 19 (May 2016), 267–88). However, not all patronage employees are brokers, and brokers are not the only ones in the public administration who are involved in political activities. This article presents evidence that public employees other than brokers engage in political activities that are fundamental for attracting and maintaining electoral support. We know very little about the activities of these less studied and less influential, but still fundamental, political workers.

10. Javier Auyero, *Poor People's Politics: Peronist Survival Networks and the Legacy of Evita* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); Mariela Szwarcberg, *Mobilizing Poor Voters: Machine Politics, Clientelism, and Social Networks in Argentina* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Rodrigo Zarazaga, "Brokers beyond Clientelism: A New Perspective through the Argentine Case," *Latin American Politics and Society*, 56 (2014), 23–45.

11. Simona Piattoni, "Clientelism in Historical and Comparative Perspective," in Simona Piattoni, ed., *Clientelism, Interests, and Democratic Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1–29; James A. Robinson and Thierry Verdier, "The Political Economy of Clientelism," *Scandinavian Journal of Economics*, 115 (April 2013), 260–91.

12. Ernesto Calvo and Gergely Ujhelyi, "Political Screening: Theory and Evidence from the Argentine Public Sector," Working paper (Houston: University of Houston, 2012), <http://econpapers.repec.org/paper/houwpaper/201303201.htm>; Scott C. James, "Patronage Regimes and American Party Development from 'The Age of Jackson' to the Progressive Era," *British Journal of Political Science*, 36 (January 2006), 39–60; Robinson and Verdier.

13. For the state of this debate in Latin America, see Ezequiel Gonzalez-Ocantos and Virginia Oliveros, "Clientelism in Latin American Politics," in Gary Prevost and Harry Vanden, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Latin American Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

14. Frederico Finan and Laura Schechter, "Vote-Buying and Reciprocity," *Econometrica*, 80 (March 2012), 863–81; Chappell Lawson and Kenneth F. Greene, "Making Clientelism Work: How Norms of Reciprocity Increase Voter Compliance," *Comparative Politics*, 47 (October 2014), 61–85; James C. Scott, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia," *American Political Science Review*, 66 (March 1972), 91–113.

15. Valeria Brusco, Marcelo Nazareno, and Susan Stokes, "Vote Buying in Argentina," *Latin American Research Review*, 39 (June 2004), 66–88; Simeon Nichter, "Vote Buying or Turnout Buying? Machine Politics and the Secret Ballot," *American Political Science Review*, 102 (February 2008), 19–31; Robinson and Verdier; Susan Stokes, "Perverse Accountability: A Formal Model of Machine Politics with Evidence from Argentina," *American Political Science Review*, 99 (August 2005), 315–25; Weitz-Shapiro.

16. The literature on clientelism has devoted considerable attention to the problem of monitoring voting behavior under the secret ballot (e.g., Brusco et al.; Stokes). The activities studied here are visible and thus potentially easy to monitor. But that does not mean that they are in fact being monitored. To the extent that the theory of patronage developed here is correct and patrons and clients share the same interests, *monitoring is not necessary*.

17. Note that the patron can be, depending on the context, an individual politician or a political party. Similarly, opposition can refer to a party or to an opposition faction within the same party.

18. As with other public goods (in this case, the incumbent's reelection) that depend on collective contributions (political services), there may be a temptation for free riding. This is discussed at the end of this section.

19. Scholars, such as Auyero, Szwarcberg, and Zarazaga, who think about clientelism as a long-lasting relationship emphasize that patrons and brokers know their clients. Finan and Schechter and Susan Stokes, Thad Dunning, Marcelo Nazareno, and Valeria Brusco, *Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013) provide systematic evidence of this.

20. Ernesto Calvo and Maria Victoria Murillo, "When Parties Meet Voters Assessing Political Linkages Through Partisan Networks and Distributive Expectations in Argentina and Chile," *Comparative Political Studies*, 46 (July 2013), 851–82; Ernesto Calvo and María Victoria Murillo, *Non-Policy Politics: Richer Voters, Poorer Voters, and the Diversification of Electoral Strategies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

21. Auyero; Simeon Nichter, "Declared Choice: Citizen Strategies and Dual Commitment Problems in Clientelism," APSA 2009 Toronto Meeting Paper, 2009; Szwarcberg.

22. Interview, Salta, August 1, 2011. Politicians take these efforts seriously, as described by another employee who works in close proximity to the mayor: "If a person has contributed to the mayor's victory, she has a right ("*tiene cierto derecho*") [to get a job]" (Interview, Salta, August 10, 2011).

23. Calvo and Murillo, 2004; 2013; 2019; Özge Kemahlioglu, *Agents or Bosses? Patronage and Intra-Party Politics in Argentina and Turkey* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2012); Stokes et al.

24. See Table C1 in the Appendix. Moreover, Table C3 shows that employees hired during the current administration are far more likely to report having voted for the current mayor and being party supporters than employees hired during previous administrations.

25. Calvo and Murillo, 2019.

26. While 59 percent reported that personal connections were important and very important, 32 percent reported the same for partisan affiliation and 29 percent for ideology. See Table C2 in the Appendix.

27. Alberto Diaz-Cayeros, Federico Estévez, and Beatriz Magaloni, *The Political Logic of Poverty Relief: Electoral Strategies and Social Policy in Mexico* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 10.

28. Interview, Salta, June 8, 2011.

29. Herbert Kitschelt and Steven Wilkinson, "Citizen-Politician Linkages: An Introduction," in Herbert Kitschelt and Steven Wilkinson, eds., *Patrons, Clients, and Policies*, 1–49 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 15. See Nichter (2009) for an example of how clients in Brazil strategically decide to reveal or hide their political preferences according to their expectations about the upcoming election.

30. The scope conditions of the theory outlined here are few. First, patronage is only possible in contexts of weak civil service systems. Second, the theory presumes a minimal level of competition. Finally, political preferences need to be somewhat informative. If citizens can switch at no cost, then being perceived as a supporter does not provide any valuable information.

31. Public sector jobs are indeed highly valued. In 2012, the average public employee in Latin America earned 38 percent more than a formal private employee and twice as much as an informal worker. And the wage gap is generally higher for less-educated employees in Latin America (Malena Arcidiácono et al., "El Empleo Público En América Latina. Evidencia de Las Encuestas de Hogares," *CAF Banco de Desarrollo de America Latina* CAF Documento de Trabajo 2014/05 (2014)) and Argentina (Calvo and Murillo 2004, 2019).

32. Robinson and Verdier, 285.

33. *Ibid.*, 261.

34. "...a job has the additional advantage that it can be withdrawn as punishment," *ibid.*, 262.

35. *Ibid.*, 267.

36. Two other aspects separate their formal model from the argument advanced here: 1) it focuses on voting behavior (vs. political services), and 2) it focuses on the reversibility aspect of the job without any consideration for the possibility of changing working conditions.

37. Civil service systems usually allow for political appointments at the higher levels of the bureaucracy. Top positions were, therefore, excluded from the sample.

38. Calvo and Ujhelyi.

39. See Table A1 in the Appendix for information on the municipalities.

40. Appendix A provides more information about the survey.

41. Information on public employment is not publicly available and politicians are usually reluctant to share it. Obtaining these data was particularly challenging and time consuming, illustrating the opacity of the Argentine civil service.

42. Alexandra Scacco, "Who Riots? Explaining Individual Participation in Ethnic Violence" (New York: Columbia University, 2010) <https://search.proquest.com/openview/7c75f21fd4ed9bb58991c034783c9713/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>

43. To test the strategy, I included an additional question in Salta about the upcoming presidential election. Half of the respondents were asked this question directly (in Part A); the other half found this question at the end of Part B to answer by themselves. The results (available upon request) show that the technique was successful, and employees responded differently when asked under the protected form.

44. See Adam N. Glynn, "What Can We Learn with Statistical Truth Serum? Design and Analysis of the List Experiment," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 77 (January 2013), 159–72.

45. Since most interviews were conducted in front of others, response options were not read aloud.

46. Elisabeth Coutts and Ben Jann, "Sensitive Questions in Online Surveys: Experimental Results for the Randomized Response Technique (RRT) and the Unmatched Count Technique (UCT)," *Sociological Methods & Research*, 40 (January 2011), 169–93; Chad P. Kiewiet De Jonge and David W. Nickerson, "Artificial Inflation or Deflation? Assessing the Item Count Technique in Comparative Surveys," *Political Behavior*, 36 (September 2014), 659–82. To protect anonymity in list experiments, it is crucial to avoid lists that would result in respondents choosing none or all of the items, generating "floor" or "ceiling" effects, respectively. To minimize ceiling effects, the three lists included rare activities or activities that were not possible to perform concurrently. The strategy was successful since only around 1 percent of respondents who received the control list reported all four of the control items. The inclusion of high prevalence activities to minimize the risk of floor effects was less successful (see Table C4). Note, however, that the presence of either ceiling or floor effects would lead to the underestimation of the sensitive activity (Graeme Blair and Kosuke Imai, "Statistical Analysis of List Experiments," *Political Analysis*, 20 (Winter 2012), 47–77); the estimates presented here are thus conservative. Using the method developed by Blair and Imai to test the validity of the

experiments, I fail to reject the null hypothesis for design effects in the three list experiments. See Appendix B for experiments wording and Table C4 for the distribution of responses across groups.

47. Table A6 in the Appendix reports the average age, gender, and education for both groups. The balanced distribution across conditions suggests that the randomization was successful.

48. In Virginia Oliveros, "Making It Personal: Clientelism, Favors, and the Personalization of Public Administration in Argentina," *Comparative Politics*, 48 (April 2016), 373–91, I study another political service: the provision of favors.

49. Kemahlioglu.

50. Brusco et al..

51. Zarazaga.

52. Auyero; Szwarcberg; Zarazaga.

53. Auyero; Szwarcberg.

54. Stokes et al.; Szwarcberg; Zarazaga.

55. Official monitors are responsible for checking voters' identifications, counting votes, and filling the forms reporting the electoral results.

56. Brusco et al.; Szwarcberg.

57. See Appendix B for the baseline categories and question wording.

58. Assessing the magnitude of these estimates is difficult without information about how many monitors, campaign workers, and rallies attendees are "needed" in an election. For the case of monitors, however, the data actually exist. In Tigre, for instance, 14 percent of respondents participated as monitors, which means that around half of all the monitors deployed during the 2009 election were public employees. See Table C4 in the Appendix.

59. See Appendix B for variable operationalization and descriptive statistics.

60. Table C5 presents the numeric values displayed in the figure.

61. Ezequiel Gonzalez-Ocantos, Chad Kiewiet de Jonge, Carlos Meléndez, Javier Osorio, and David Nickerson, "Vote Buying and Social Desirability Bias: Experimental Evidence from Nicaragua," *American Journal of Political Science*, 56 (January 2012), 202–17.

62. Ezequiel Gonzalez-Ocantos, Chad Kiewiet de Jonge, and David Nickerson, "Legitimacy Buying: The Dynamics of Clientelism in the Face of Legitimacy Challenges," *Comparative Political Studies*, 48 (August 2015), 1127–58.

63. Unfortunately, my attempts to use the more efficient estimator proposed by Blair and Imai and Kosuke Imai, "Multivariate Regression Analysis for the Item Count Technique," *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 106 (2011), 407–16 were unsuccessful and the models failed to converge. Note, however, that the less efficient (and therefore conservative) fixed interaction approach used here still produces unbiased estimates.

64. As a robustness check, I ran additional models (Table C7a and C7b in the Appendix) in which I included interaction terms between the main variables. Results are generally consistent with the ones presented here.

65. See Table A6 for randomization checks.

66. Note that both experiments can only manipulate perceptions if respondents thought that reelection was possible. This seems likely considering the reelection rates in the provinces studied here range from 40 to 47 percent (Juan Pablo Micozzi, "The Electoral Connection in Multi-Level Systems with Non-Static Ambition" (Houston: Rice University, 2009), <https://scholarship.rice.edu/handle/1911/61922>, Table A1).

67. See Tables C9 and C12.

68. A slightly different question was used in Salta. See Appendix B.

69. Tables C8 and C9 present the t-test and the regression analysis results.

70. The question may also be capturing cases of employees who would resign. Yet, the comparison of the conditional average treatment effect for tenured and non-tenured employees (below) suggests that the question is more likely capturing the likelihood of being fired than resigning.

71. Table C10 shows the exact numeric effects within subgroups.

72. Interview, Santa Fe, August 16, 2011.

73. Interview, Santa Fe, July 22, 2011.

74. Regardless of the treatment, few respondents were expecting worsen conditions. Since salary increases, promotions, and tenure rights are tied to years in the job, most employees think that, all else equal, working conditions will get better over time.

75. Tables C11 and C12 show the t-test and the regression analysis results.

76. Table C13 displays the exact numeric effects within each subgroup.

77. The results by municipality are broadly consistent with the ones obtained by grouping the three municipalities together (results available upon request).