

Testing the Theory of Broker-Mediated Distribution

“‘Machines win elections.’”

– Party operative in Petare, Venezuela, 2010.

“I’ve been working there for 20 years and I know who is a Peronist and who isn’t or who might have an affinity and vote for the Peronists.”

– Broker in Córdoba province, Argentina, 2002.

The broker-mediated model of clientelism is cogent as a theory. It also offers a resolution to the “too-favored-loyalist” paradox. But does our theory capture the realities of distributive politics by machines? This chapter offers evidence in favor of our theoretical approach. We rely on a number of sources of evidence. Because our theory focuses squarely on the incentives and behavior of brokers, we appeal first and foremost to our most direct source of data on brokers: our rich probability sample of city councilors and brokers from four Argentine provinces.¹ We supplement the broker survey with other information, including from our open-ended interviews with brokers, conducted outside of the context of the broker survey. We also draw on original data and information from Venezuela and India.²

We offer evidence of the following:

1. **Brokers Know “Their” Voters.** Brokers are indeed involved in long-lived interactions with their neighbors and clients, interactions which – in the brokers’ view – give them privileged information about the preferences and behaviors of individual voters. They believe that they can observe the political preferences and actions of “their” voters: they know their clients.

¹ See Appendix A.

² There is a rich secondary literature on clientelism and the role of caciques or intermediaries in Mexico. We don’t discuss Mexico in this chapter but do so in Chapter 5.

2. **Networks Tilt Loyal But Include Swing Voters.** Brokers view their networks as partially comprising loyal voters who always turn out to vote and who would not stop supporting their party absent a benefit. However, they also comprising less committed voters. These are in fact heterogeneous networks, and the logic of persuasion of swing voters is not foreign to brokers.
3. **Brokers Extract Rents.** Our respondents offered candid opinions that their fellow brokers are prone to rent extraction. Despite this striking evidence of rent seeking, substantial numbers of brokers say it is difficult for party leaders to take resources away from brokers who pocket party resources, who divert resources in ways that do not contribute to the party's victories, or who fail to exert effective efforts on the party's behalf.
4. **Brokers Want to Win Elections.** Our broker survey and field research provide evidence that brokers *also* care about their parties' winning elections. Their career paths influence these preferences: many began "militating" as young people, drawn to their party by a friend or family member or attracted by a charismatic leader or a compelling vision for change. Many remain with the same party for long careers. Another reason why brokers care about elections is that election outcomes have an impact on their careers within their parties, even if party leaders cannot fully condition rewards on brokers' campaign effort. When a party loses power, brokers lose access to jobs and resources. These mixed objectives – the desire to extract rents and the desire for their party to win – impose trade-offs on brokers.
5. **Leaders Try to Monitor Brokers and Brokers Threaten Exit to Avoid Discipline.** We offer evidence in favor of the assumption that party leaders cannot observe brokers' efforts or effectiveness directly, but try to evaluate these efforts through various monitoring devices. At the same time, our fieldwork and broker survey demonstrate that brokers sometimes threaten to abandon their party leader and join forces with an opposing one, from another faction of their party or even sometimes from another party. The threat is that they will take "their" voters with them.
6. **One's Position in the Party Hierarchy Influences One's Distributive Preferences.** Our broker-mediated theory implies that brokers who operate at the neighborhood level will be inclined to channel resources to loyal supporters, whereas their higher-ups in the party would prefer that resources go to responsive, swing voters. Chapter 5 explores this implication further. However, our broker survey offers additional evidence that distributive preferences vary with a person's location in the party hierarchy. City councilors, people who had risen somewhat in the party to the point where they had run for municipal office, overwhelmingly endorsed the idea that scarce resources should go to districts with many

swing voters. Although many low-level brokers also endorsed this idea, they did so in substantially smaller numbers than did the city councilors.

In sum, we show that brokers play a vital role in intermediating distributive relationships with voters, while also imposing costs on parties. The evidence we offer supports our analytical move of disaggregating clientelist parties. Understanding the divergent incentives of brokers and party leaders sheds substantial new light on the logic of clientelist distribution.

4.1 WHO ARE THE BROKERS?

We begin with descriptive information about the brokers we surveyed and, by extension, those in the Argentine provinces from which our samples were drawn. The central source of information around which this chapter revolves is a sample survey that we conducted, beginning in 2009, of about 800 brokers in four Argentine regions – the provinces of Córdoba, Misiones, and San Luis, and the “urban cone” (*Conurbano*) of Greater Buenos Aires.³ All were face-to-face interviews. These surveys were designed to illuminate brokers’ preferences, motivations, and constraints and their interactions with voters and with party higher-ups. We believe that ours is the largest and most detailed survey of political brokers ever undertaken.

Generating a probability sample of brokers is challenging, because a ready-made sampling frame – that is, a list of brokers from which one could draw a random sample – does not exist. As described further in Appendix A, our approach to this problem is two-fold. First, we developed a probability sample of city councilors. We did this by randomly sampling municipalities from four Argentine provinces and then randomly sampling city councilors from each of those municipalities. Once municipalities were identified, it was straightforward to obtain a list of councilors and thus a sampling frame for councilors in the municipality.

As a second step, we then asked city councilors in our interviews: (1) the number of non-elected activists who work for them; and, later in the survey, (2) a list of the names and contact numbers for those activists. We then sampled at random from the latter list. We therefore generated a probability sample of city councilors; challenges of sample selection (e.g., in the provision of the lists) may imply some deviation from a pure probability sample for non-elected activists (see Appendix A). We consider both city councilors – who in general did territorial work in neighborhoods before being elected as councilors – and the non-elected activists who work for them to be brokers, though they are at different levels of organizational responsibility. Our complex, multi-stage cluster sampling design implies that the most reliable way to attach standard errors to our estimates is by using the bootstrap, described in Appendix A.

³ As mentioned, this survey is described in detail in Appendix A.

About 56 percent of our sample were men, 44 percent women.⁴ They were not as a group either uneducated or very poor by Argentine standards; most could be described as lower middle class. Nearly half reported monthly earnings of 3,000 pesos or less, and 60 percent below 4,000. The average Argentine monthly income is about 2,300 pesos.⁵ The modal respondent was a secondary school graduate (22 percent), though 20 percent of respondents said they were college graduates.⁶ Half of the sample had some postsecondary education.

The mean age of our sample was 48; the youngest broker was 21, and the oldest 87. The average number of years they had “militated” in their party was 18; the average number of years working for the same local boss (*referente*) was 11. Significantly, a full 71 percent had worked for the same party throughout their career.

A broad range of experiences initiated our respondents into political life. Some said that a family member, friend, or work associate got them involved. Some were initially drawn into their activities through a party youth organization. Some began working in a particular campaign, doing simple tasks such as passing out flyers, putting up posters, or “distributing votes” (meaning ballots). Others casually attended a rally or candidate’s speech.

These initial experiences led eventually to professional or at least paid involvement with their party. Whether the brokers are full-time party professionals is a complex question. When asked, 83 percent said that they had other paid work, separate from their political activities. Yet the figure may be misleading. The largest single occupation mentioned was “public employment.” Even excluding city councilors, it was mentioned by 30 percent of brokers. But in not a few instances, their public-sector jobs were secured, and retained, by virtue of their work for the party. (Others described themselves as merchants, self-employed, independent professionals, private sector white-collar employees, or retirees.)

As mentioned, our strategy was to sample local city council members and then their non-elected activists. Of the 800 respondents, 284 described themselves as holding an elected office – in almost all cases, a seat on the city council. A few mentioned their position in the municipal cabinet or administration – secretary of governance, secretary of sport, fiscal oversight board (*tribunal de cuentas*). Several mentioned their position in the local party (e.g., leader of their party delegation on the city council). Thus the sample can be described as comprising local party actors, about one-quarter of whom had ascended to the level of holding local office. Thirty-eight percent had run for office at least once; 62 percent never had.⁷

Turning to party affiliation, not surprisingly the largest number (52 percent) were affiliated with the Peronist party; 22 percent were Radicals; 6 percent

⁴ The bootstrapped standard error on the 56 percent is 5 percent.

⁵ As measured by the INDEC, the official statistical agency, in the final quarter of 2011.

⁶ The bootstrapped standard error is 8 percent.

⁷ The bootstrapped standard error is 6 percent.

were from *Renovador*, a regional party from the province of Misiones that is a coalition of the Peronists and Radicals; and 4 percent Union PRO, a rightist party. The remainder were brokers from smaller parties, whereas 16 percent reported no affiliation.

Our richest data come from Argentina. However, we introduce, when appropriate, evidence from other countries. Our research and many excellent secondary studies suggest that the roles brokers play in Argentina are in many ways parallel to those played by brokers in other democracies, as we discuss later.

4.2 TESTING ASSUMPTIONS AND HYPOTHESES OF THE BROKER-MEDIATED THEORY

4.2.1 Brokers Know Their Clients

In the broker-mediated theory, it is the social embeddedness of brokers with constituents, and the information that this embeddedness provides, that makes brokers valuable to parties. Indeed, clientelism *requires* brokers: only locally embedded agents of the machine command the knowledge of voter preferences and partisan inclinations needed to turn the politically motivated distribution of benefits into electoral support. In contrast to other kinds of parties, political machines' penetration into constituents' social networks and daily lives allows them to infer the partisan orientation and actions of voters, if not perfectly, at least reasonably well.

Evidence that brokers do have this knowledge draws on our extensive fieldwork and prior research. That they have this knowledge is consistent with a large literature on clientelism in Argentina and in other countries.⁸ In our fieldwork, we were struck by the familiarity of brokers with "their" constituents. We interviewed brokers who could rattle off the names, telephone numbers, family characteristics, work situations, and health status of their voters, from memory. Yet because it is fundamental to our theory that brokers command much detailed (and politically relevant information) about voters, a first-order empirical task is to examine more systematic evidence on this question.

Among the information that brokers claim to know about their voters is for whom they vote. As part of our survey of brokers, we asked:

When a neighbor with whom you have a lot of dealings votes for a candidate you do not support, do you think you will realize that the neighbor voted in this manner?⁹

Nearly 80 percent of brokers said yes (Figure 4.1).

⁸ Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes 2004, Stokes 2005; see also Auyero 2001.

⁹ All translations from the Spanish are ours. The Spanish-language survey instrument is posted at www.thaddunning.com.

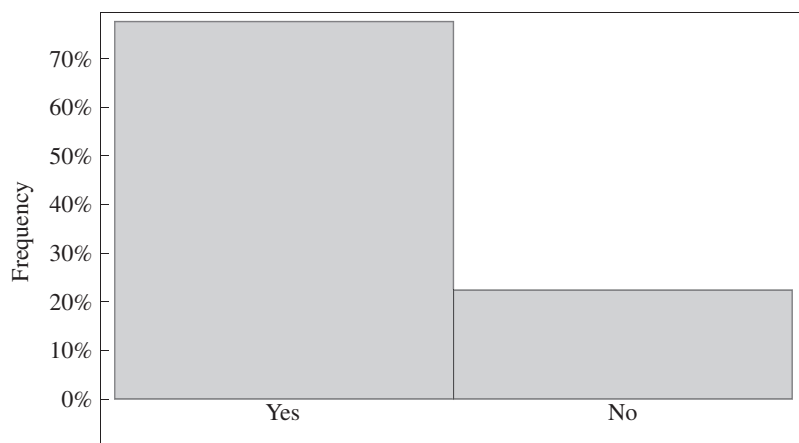


FIGURE 4.1. Can Brokers Infer Voters' Choices? N = 773.

Many voters share the belief that their electoral choices can't be kept secret from brokers. In our 2003 survey of voters, we asked "Even though the vote is secret, do you believe that party operatives can find out how a person in your neighborhood has voted?"¹⁰ Keep in mind that, in a narrow sense, the Argentine ballot is secret and has been since 1912. Nevertheless, 37 percent of the sample responded that party operatives can find out how a person voted, 51 percent that they cannot, and the remaining 12 percent didn't know.

As a follow-up, we asked those voters who said the party could ascertain their vote choice how the party managed this. The most frequent answer was "I don't know" (206). Others said they didn't know but offered some speculative explanations (48), whereas others said that the party somehow marked the ballots (99) or found out by "asking around, investigating, speaking with neighbors" (89), or that party operatives spied on people in the voting booth (46) or that technology and computers were somehow involved (47). Some answered simply that brokers would ask voters (33).

In our fieldwork – in line with the large number of "don't know" responses – some voters perceived brokers' ability to discern their vote choice as mysterious. We interviewed one couple who were stupefied by local brokers' ability to discern particular voters' choices:

Question: When people come and give things out during the campaign, are they people whom you know?

Husband: Yes, they're people from here, they're neighbors. Here everyone knows each other. "Small town, big hell." (*Pueblo chico, infierno grande.*)

Question: Do they know how you voted?

¹⁰ See Appendix B.

Husband: For many years we've seen, people will say, "So-and-so voted for so-and-so." And [the candidate] wins, and they come and say, "You voted for so-and-so." I don't know how they do it, but they know.

Wife: We were at the *unidad básica* [a neighborhood Peronist locale] and they say to me, "[Your cousin] voted for Eloy" [the given name of a Radical-party candidate]. And I asked my cousin, "did you vote for Eloy?" And she said "yes"! They knew that my cousin had voted for Eloy!¹¹

What is mysterious for voters is basic craft knowledge for brokers. In a 2002 interview, we asked a local Peronist operative in the province of Córdoba whether it was possible for him to discover, after an election, how people in his neighborhood had voted. His answer – which we quoted in part in the epigram to this chapter – was as follows:

"In the sector that one works in, yes, you know how to find out, yes. Because you've already been working there with those people, you go around observing the affinities of each person, by way of the campaign events in the neighborhood, or when they come to you and request some medicine or a box of milk, and sometimes they give you a hard time and complain, and you go along identifying people . . . besides I've been working there for 20 years and I know who is a Peronist and who isn't or who might have an affinity and vote for the Peronists."

Notice what this broker is claiming. He can distinguish not just party affiliation – who is a Peronist – but more subtle categories, such as people who have an "affinity" and might be induced to vote for the party, even if they are not part of the party's core constituency. In other words, he can distinguish loyalists from swing voters who might nevertheless be responsive to the broker's help in obtaining gifts.

Close familiarity allows brokers to make inferences from subtle cues. Another grassroots party organizer in Argentina explained, "you know if a neighbor voted against your party if he can't look you in the eye on Election Day."¹²

These accounts of how brokers learn their constituents' voting preferences and actions resonate with the views of brokers in our survey. According to the vast majority of respondents, the relevant information arises out of the day-to-day interactions between brokers and neighbors, often people who have known each other for a long time. What's more, the implicit job description of a broker involves retaining close contacts with people in his or her neighborhood, keeping track of who needs what assistance and who might be available to participate in rallies, meetings, and other party events. In our survey, we asked an open-ended follow-up question to the one just cited, asking brokers *how* they would know if a voter had voted for some other candidate. Respondents

¹¹ Interview conducted by Valeria Brusco, Lucas Lázaro, and Susan Stokes, July 2003.

¹² Stokes 2005, p. 317.

indicated that their daily conversations with voters allowed them to draw inferences from attitudes or affect. The following comments are typical:

“In the neighborhood, everyone knows each other.”

“It’s a community. We all know each other.”

“Through open daily, direct dealings with people.”

“Through mannerisms, discussion, dialogue, attitude, a look or gesture.”

“You see it in their faces.”

“They are transparent.”

“It’s difficult to hide things when we interact.”

“Because he is my neighbor, I know him.”

“Because here we all know each other; the one who didn’t vote with you tries to avoid you.”

“Because the next day he regrets not having done what he said he would do.”

One broker told a story about a neighbor who asked for corrugated iron to make a garage; the broker did not give the iron and saw the neighbor “eating at the site/headquarters of another party . . . he didn’t look at me for two days.”

Other brokers gave other explanations, yet these also emphasized the importance of the repeated interactions between brokers and various neighbors. Brokers emphasized the distributive exchange between themselves and voters, the technology of voting, or the presence of networks of local informants in the following terms:

“Because they stop asking for things.”

“When someone is going to vote with you, he asks you for the ballot; when he doesn’t ask, he’s not going to vote with you.”¹³

“I have many intimate allies who bring this information to me.”

Beyond voting behavior, respondents also emphasized their knowledge of the partisan and ideological orientations of their clients and potential clients:

“Generally, through daily chats, one notes the ideology that the neighbor has.”

“The neighbors are very identified with respect to political orientations.”

“The communities know who is with the party.”

“We politicians have a good sense of smell.”

Thus our systematic data from a probability sample of brokers confirm what our fieldwork (and that of others) suggested. Brokers believe that they can infer

¹³ This quote illustrates the role of the party-created ballot or “ticket” as opposed to Australian ballot in facilitating vote buying.

the preferences and behaviors of their voters – even when voters try to hide them. In total, more than 90 percent of responses to the open-ended follow-up question emphasized in some way the importance of daily interactions or conversations with voters. Only a few brokers mentioned that “the quantity of votes” received at the local polling station (*mesa*) helped them infer the voting behavior of their clients. This overwhelming result shows that – especially in the presence of the secret ballot – the social embeddedness of brokers in their neighborhoods is crucial for inferring individual voting behavior.

Another indication of brokers’ confidence that they know their constituents came from a question about voters feigning positions or preferences that they do not really hold. We asked brokers in our survey the following question:

Some people play hard-to-get and suggest they will only go vote, or will only vote for the party or candidate that you support, if you give them benefits. In your neighborhood, would you say that there are:

1. Many people like this
2. Some people like this
3. Few people like this
4. No people like this

About 67 percent of brokers said there are “many” or “some” voters in their neighborhood who play “hard to get” (left panel of Figure 4.2). We then asked a follow-up question: “How difficult is it to distinguish between those who will turn out to vote only if they receive a benefit from those who will turn out to vote in any case – very easy, easy, neither easy nor difficult, difficult, or very difficult?” About 67 percent of brokers said it was very easy or easy to identify these people (right panel of Figure 4.2).

A second follow-up question asked respondents how they could tell the true swing voters (or potential abstainers) from those who would mimic them. Respondents again emphasized their long trajectories living side-by-side with their neighbors.¹⁴ Answers such as the following were typical:

“I know the people of the neighborhood.”

“Knowing the trajectory of the person.”

“Because here we all know each other.”

“Because we’ve lived together all our lives.”

The back-and-forth between brokers and “their” voters are sometimes initiated by the voters, sometimes by the brokers. When voters request favors from

¹⁴ Although many brokers answered this question by emphasizing that they know their neighbors intimately, many answers were a variant of “they [voters] tell you directly” that they want a benefit or will only vote for the party if given a benefit. Such answers are also illuminating of the close ties between brokers and voters, yet for these respondents, the contrast intended in our question between what voters say they will do and what the broker knows they *really* will do – even if playing hard to get – may have been lost.

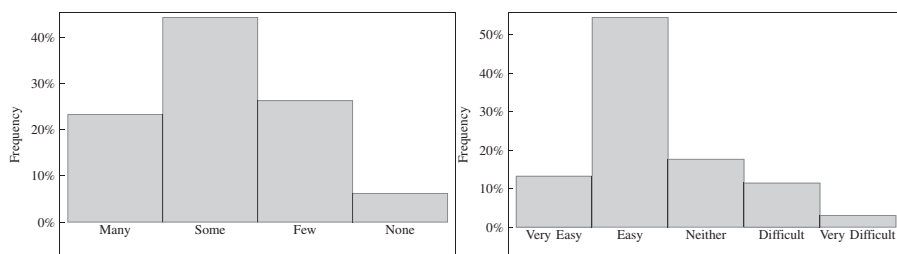


FIGURE 4.2. How Many Voters Play “Hard to Get”? (Left Panel), and Can Brokers Easily Tell? (Right Panel), $N = 774, 773$.

brokers – assistance in finding a job or rations of food or medicine – brokers later cash in their chits by requesting network participation from voters, asking them to participate in a rally or post flyers or vote in a primary election.¹⁵ That they also expect these voters to support the party in general elections goes without saying. We asked brokers what proportion of voters who received goods had requested them, and to what proportion of voters they had extended help without voters asking for it. The question wordings were:

Out of every 10 voters that you have ever helped, to how many have you extended help without them asking for it?”

and

Out of every 10 voters that you have ever helped, how many asked for help directly?

More brokers identify requests as originating with voters than the other way around (Figure 4.3). However, the modal answer to both questions is 5 out of 10, or half: sometimes voters ask for help and sometimes brokers offer it.

Our surveys of Argentine *voters* also underline the long-lived relationships and (informal) networks in which brokers and voters are enmeshed, through which voters sometimes approach brokers for help. Relatively small numbers of respondents said they had received direct gifts or assistance – only 7 percent of respondents in our 2003 survey of poorer voters, for instance (though see our discussion in Chapter 2 of social desirability bias and of credible estimates of the prevalence of clientelist gifts.)¹⁶ Yet whenever we asked voters, “If you

¹⁵ Voting in general elections is compulsory in Argentina, but voting in primaries is a “favor” that a voter can choose to perform.

¹⁶ The question read, “During electoral campaigns, party operatives and neighborhood political leaders often give people things or assistance. In the last presidential campaign, did you receive any of the following?” The respondent was then given a card that listed items that might have been handed out and forms of assistance (*ayudas*) that they might have received. The items included food, mattresses, subsidies, clothing, money, medications, housing, and roofing materials; the assistance included help with legal paperwork, medical attention, obtaining student scholarships, payment or cancellation of bills for public services or taxes, and jobs.

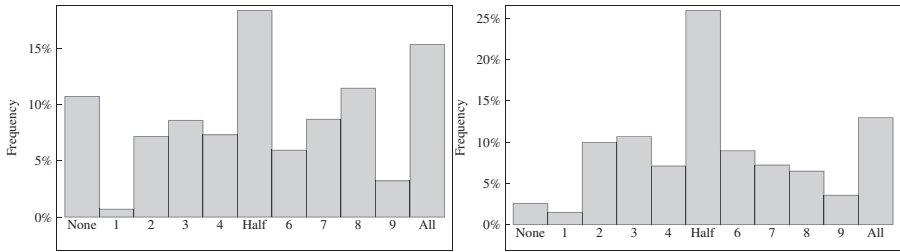


FIGURE 4.3. Percent of Voters to Whom Brokers Have Offered Benefits (Left Panel), and Percent Who Have Asked for Help (Right Panel) (Vertical Bar Indicates Average Response). $N = 742, 742$.

were facing a grave family problem, for example, related to a job or health, would you turn to a party representative [puntero, referente]?” – and we did so in voter surveys in 2001/2002, 2003, and 2009 – about one-third of the sample answered that they would. For many residents of low-income neighborhoods, a local party operative could offer solutions to very personal, family crises.

The findings are a testimony to the contrasting functions of party machines, which directly mediate voters’ access to state benefits and even labor-market opportunities, and bureaucratic parties in advanced democracies, which rarely today play these roles. It is difficult to imagine large numbers of Swedes, Americans, or Spaniards saying that they would turn to a political party representative if faced with a family health or employment emergency.

That voters frequently initiate requests for aid does not mean that brokers respond to these requests without regard for the political inclinations of the voter or political impact of the assistance. Brokers can say no to voters’ requests. Some brokers undoubtedly engage in “constituency service,” as we defined that term in Chapter 1, interceding on the behalf of constituents, with no criteria for attending to constituents’ needs beyond that they live in the broker’s neighborhood or sector. However, frequently brokers are guided by the likely political impact of their problem-solving strategies and mete out their time and assistance preferentially, depending on voters’ electoral responsiveness or willingness to invest in a broker’s local power base.

We shall see evidence that politics comes into play in a later section, where we report brokers’ perception that certain kinds of voters – those who are loyal supporters, and to some extent those who are swing and hence electorally responsive – are likely beneficiaries of party largess. As Auyero contends, clientelism involves poor people getting help through “personal problem-solving networks” – which does not preclude the extraction of a political price from the voter, such as a vote, participation in a rally, or some other benefit to the broker.¹⁷

¹⁷ Auyero 2001.

In Venezuela as well, brokers acquire detailed, electorally relevant information about “their” voters. We discussed in Chapter 2 the efforts to which pro-Chávez party leaders went to extract, systematize, and diffuse this information. The opposition also used clientelistic strategies, and also went to lengths to extract information about constituents.

In the lead-up to the Venezuelan legislative elections of 2010, the political opposition invested in clientelism and in pork-barrel strategies as well. In the Caracas slum of Petare – formerly a stronghold for Chavismo, after Chávez’s rise to power in 1999 – opposition candidates began to gain a toehold, in part by recruiting disaffected activists and operatives who had previously worked with Acción Democrática (AD) and COPEI.¹⁸ The opposition gradually gained support in the Caracas municipality of Sucre and even in Petare (which is located in Sucre), and opposition candidate Carlos Ocariz won the mayoralty in 2008. One of the disaffected brokers recruited by the opposition Justice First (*Primero Justicia* party) who gave her first name as Betti, had spent nearly 35 years with AD and had also briefly worked with COPEI (she left because AD “didn’t value one the way one deserved” but the leaders of COPEI were “just the same”). But she had “never stopped communicating with neighbors” who were not all with Chávez. After Ocariz approached her about working with him, she worked “house by house . . . sharing coffees” with her neighbors.

Betti and other brokers like her provide important information about their clients to party leaders. During the 2010 legislative election campaign, the opposition incumbent in the municipality divided Petare into 38 informal “zones” and recruited “zone chiefs” (*jefes zonales*) – that is, brokers – to manage each of these zones on behalf of the opposition party Primera Justicia. Betti, as a zone chief, was responsible for 13 sectors (blocks) that comprised one of these zones. The brokers were recruited from the panoply of parties that comprised the opposition Unity Table, including Primero Justicia, the Movement to Socialism (MAS), COPEI, and AD, as well as disaffected brokers from the *chavista* United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). Political workers in the mayor’s office refer to these brokers as “mini-mayors” (*mini-alcaldes*) and as “the eyes of the mayor in the street” (*los ojos del alcalde en la calle*). Each of these zone chiefs in turn had six “promoters” (*promotores*) who worked with him or her in the zone, and the promoters in turn helped many residents. The zone chiefs and their promoters are given responsibility for turning people out not just for elections but also for rallies and other events in non-election season and are given explicit quotas (e.g., one broker might be required to turn out 100 voters). According to workers in the mayor’s office, this system becomes a channel for distributing jobs as well as access for favors. For example, street sweeping is done by the municipality, and the jobs are given to the zone chiefs

¹⁸ These two parties, which were predominant in the pre-Chávez era, have almost entirely lost popular support during the period preceding and following Chávez’s first election.

or are under their control for allocation to followers. As one might imagine, this control over economic resources gives brokers substantial local power. It also allows brokers to gain substantial information about the neighborhoods under their purviews.¹⁹

In sum, brokers do have privileged knowledge of the voters they organize. This knowledge arises from brokers' long-term involvement in local social networks and from their ongoing if sometimes intermittent interactions with their clients. Relationships between voters and brokers are repeated and sustained and involve substantial opportunities for brokers to infer the political preferences and actions of individual voters. These relationships also give brokers a privileged ability to discriminate between individual voters when allocating benefits.

4.2.2 Targeting Loyalists (and Some Swing Voters)

How do brokers use their knowledge of individual voters to distribute access to scarce resources? What types of voters do they prioritize? And how do the objectives of brokers, such as building political careers or broadening local power bases, shape their distributive strategies? We take up the question of targeting first and then investigate the broader question of the types of activities in which brokers are engaged.

Chapter 2 explained in some detail the tendency of machines to channel resources to party loyalists – not exclusively, but often predominantly and to a degree certainly unanticipated in theories of distributive politics. Our surveys of Argentine brokers reveal again the marked tendency of brokers to target loyal co-partisans, while not excluding swing voters. Our broker survey included the following set of questions, asked as a survey experiment. Approximately one-half of brokers were assigned at random to be asked the following question:

Suppose that the mayor of a hypothetical municipality called a broker and gave him access to 10 social-assistance programs with which to mobilize voters. The broker has 40 neighbors who need assistance. Suppose that all of them always turn out to vote. Among them, there are **neighbors who prefer the party of the broker and others who are indifferent between the parties**. To which type of neighbors would the broker give more programs?

The bolded text indicates that the hypothetical choice was between Certain/Loyal and Certain/Swing voters. The other half of the sample was asked the same question, but here we asked whom a broker would choose between (1) voters who are certain to turn out but are indifferent between the parties (Certain/Swing Voters) and (2) voters at risk of abstaining who prefer the party of the broker (Potential/Loyal voters).

¹⁹ One political worker we interviewed had read Auyero's description of clientelism in the Conurbano of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and commented that it had sounded just like Petare.

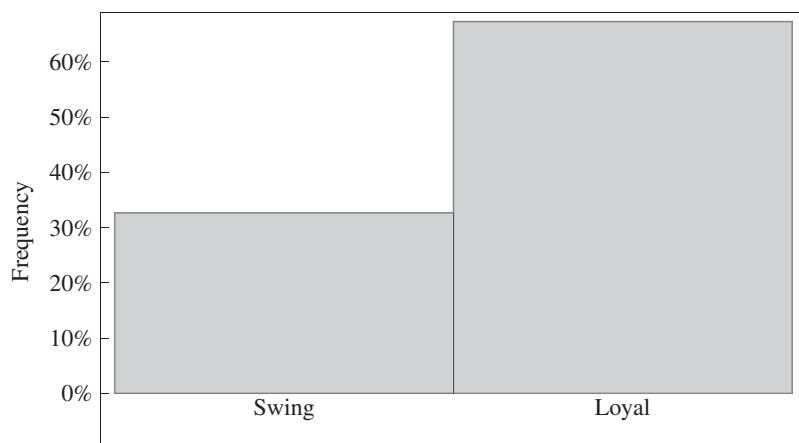


FIGURE 4.4. Brokers' Preference for Loyal Voters (Survey Experiment). N = 682.

The results are reported in Figure 4.4, which gives the percentage of respondents who indicated that the broker would give to loyal voters and the percentage who indicated they would give to swing voters, pooling across the two versions of the question. In responding to the first version of the question, two-thirds of the surveyed brokers said that the broker would distribute more programs to voters who are certain to vote and prefer the party of the broker – that is, to Certain/Loyal voters. Just over 30 percent said the broker would favor voters who are certain to vote but are indifferent between the parties – that is, Certain/Swing voters. If received theories reviewed in Chapter 2 are right, we would expect these percentages to be reversed.

In response to the second version of the question, about 69 percent said the broker would give to party supporters who are at risk of abstaining (i.e., potential/loyal voters). Just 31 percent said they would give to certain/swing voters. The disinclination brokers expressed to target swing voters who are certain to vote especially sharply contradicts many of the theories of distributive politics.

We also posed a non-experimental, hypothetical question to brokers in our survey, this time asking them to consider voters who were at some risk of abstaining (i.e., they were Potential Voters). Every broker was asked to compare Potential Voters who preferred the party of the broker with Potential Voters who were indifferent between the parties.²⁰ In response to this question, brokers again overwhelmingly chose Loyal/Potential over Swing/Potential voters.

²⁰ For the “Potential Voters” version of the question, we asked “Returning to the hypothetical municipality we mentioned before, now let’s suppose that the broker cannot count on his neighbors to turn out to vote of their own initiative. Among them, there are neighbors who prefer the party of the broker and others who are indifferent between the parties. To which type of neighbors would the broker give more programs – to those who do not always vote and

The evidence in Figure 4.4 would be fairly easily explained if the logic were to “get out the vote” – increase turnout among supporters. But the broker survey reveals starkly that, given a choice between different kinds of voters, the broker is strongly predicted to choose the loyal supporter, regardless of whether the party supporter is at risk of abstaining. Indeed, the preference for loyal voters is if anything slightly stronger when the voter is certain to vote, though the difference between the 70 percent and 69 percent is not statistically significant. Thus respondents expect a hypothetical broker to favor loyal people who always turn out to vote even more than they do loyal people who may not turn out to vote (in both cases in comparison with indifferent voters who are certain to turn out to vote). Again, this result is hard to square with received theories in which machines give rewards to loyal voters as long as these voters are at risk of abstaining.²¹

In Chapter 2 we reviewed evidence indicating that the preponderance of loyalists among the beneficiaries of machines was not an artifact of endogenous party affinities, turnout buying, or subcontracting. Still another possible explanation is that brokers worry that distributing largess to swing voters would lead to resentment among “loyalists,” who would then be in danger of defecting. Another way of saying this is that the construct of “loyalists” may be logically plausible but actually an empty category: maybe there are no voters whose support can be taken for granted. To explore this possibility, we posed the following question:

Suppose that, in a very competitive election, a broker distributes access to social programs to voters who are not affiliated with his party. What would be the reaction of voters who are sympathetic to the party and who have supported it in the past? Would they:

- (1) Not change their behavior
- (2) Fail to turn out to vote
- (3) Turn out to vote but vote for a different candidate or party?

About 63 percent of respondents said the loyal voter would not change her behavior. Thirty-two percent thought she would vote for another candidate or party and about 8 percent thought she would not turn out. Although a third of respondents did worry about the defection of loyalists, most did not. A majority of brokers believe that the loyal supporter as we have conceived her – an ideological or partisan supporter who would continue to support her party even absent a benefit – is not an empty category.

who prefer the candidate of the broker, or those who do not always vote and are indifferent between the parties?”

²¹ This does not imply that turnout buying cannot be effective. When we asked brokers “Would you expect a neighbor who does not always vote to decide to turn out if s/he receives a social program?” about 68 percent said yes. Our point is simply that the evidence does not suggest that turnout buying provides the main reason for targeting loyal voters.

As a follow-up to the experimental question about the hypothetical broker who is called on to distribute social-assistance programs before an election, we asked brokers to explain their response, in an open-ended format. Their comments point toward another important fact: it is often ambiguous whether the respondent is referring to past loyalty to the *party* or to the *broker*. Indeed, the latter interpretation is suggested by phrases that brokers used to explain their choice. Giving to loyalists would allow the broker to “continue assuring himself of *his* votes”²² or “to assure himself of the votes of *his* voters.”²³ This interpretation is also consistent with our field work, as well as with the field-work of researchers such as Camp and Szwarcberg.²⁴ Brokers may be giving benefits to loyal voters to assure their loyalty not to the party but to *the broker*. This interpretation takes us to alternative possibilities that are more consistent with the broker-mediated model.

Still, some responses were suggestive of brokers’ fearing that loyalists who were ignored might defect. Some respondents used the verb “to assure” (*asegurar*) – giving the impression that respondents saw these voters as possibly voting for the party of their own accord but only being certain to do so if they received some direct benefit. For instance, the broker would give the benefit to the loyal supporter:

“Because it would assure [the votes of] those followers.”

“Because he has them assured. They always vote [for the party] but that’s because they were always given [programs].”

If brokers viewed most loyalists as in danger of defecting if taken off the gravy train, this fear did not come through in great numbers in response to the questions reported in Chapter 2. As we showed there, many brokers think that the majority of voters in their neighborhoods are loyalists who are prone to vote for the party, even absent targeted benefits provided by the party (see Figure 2.9). It may be that this was simply a face-saving response or a self-serving belief among brokers who would prefer not to see themselves as purchasing people’s loyalty with benefits. Yet both in field work and in the broker survey, we found brokers to be quite candid and pragmatic in their explanations of how they and their colleagues operated. Their frank admission – described later – that many brokers pocket party resources is just one example. We tend, then, to take at face value brokers’ assertion that they count quite a number of loyal supporters among their constituents, as we do the view of many that these voters’ electoral support is not at risk should party largess be expended elsewhere.

In addition to asking brokers how many people living in their neighborhoods were certain to turn out to vote and were avid adherents to their

²² Emphasis added; translation of *Sigue asegurando sus votos*.

²³ Emphasis added; translation of *para asegurarse los votos de los suyos*.

²⁴ Camp 2012; Szwarcberg 2009.

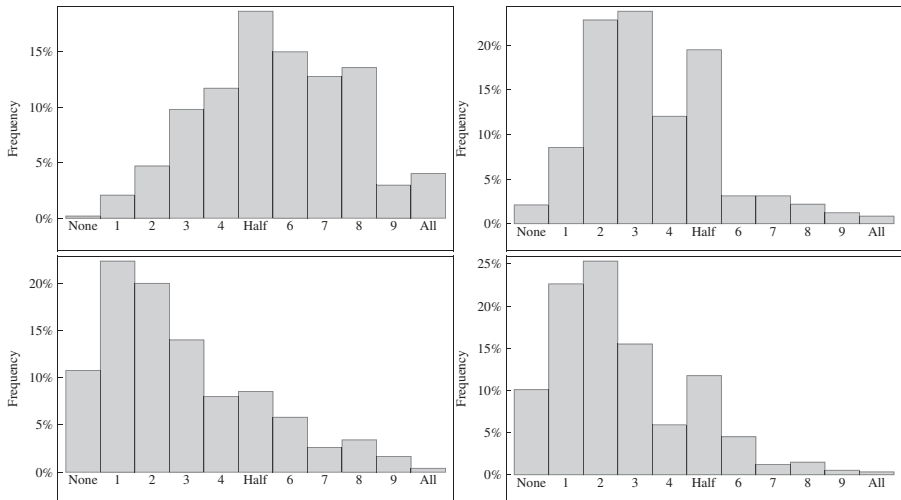


FIGURE 4.5. Distribution of Brokers' Voters (Certain/Loyal, Top-Left Panel; Certain/Swing, Top-Right Panel; Potential/Swing, Bottom-Left Panel; Potential/Loyal, Bottom-Right Panel). $N = 773, 753, 739, 741$.

party – Certain/Loyal voters – we asked about the presence of Certain/Swing voters, Potential/Loyal voters, and Potential/Swing voters. The results can be seen in Figure 4.5. What jumps out from this figure are the large (asserted) percentage of Certain/Loyal voters (top-left panel), especially compared with the smaller percentage of Certain/Swing voters (top-right panel); the small percentage of Potential voters (unsurprisingly in Argentina, with its formally compulsory voting – panels 3 and 4). Note also the much higher concentration of non-abstainers rather than potential abstainers among Loyal voters (top-left versus bottom-panel).²⁵ All of this evidence about the perceived distribution of voters in brokers' own neighborhoods – and their tendency not to abandon the party if denied clientelistic benefits – tends to go against an explanation whereby brokers shower benefits on loyalists out of fear that they will lose the loyalists' votes should they not do so.

The phenomenon of brokers favoring loyalists is by no means unique to Argentine clientelism. Earlier we reviewed relevant evidence from India, Venezuela, and Mexico. In India, to recap, our survey data from the southern state of Karnataka showed that party members disproportionately received jobs and benefits from village councils when the council president was a co-partisan.²⁶ In addition, we found that citizens who share the party of the council president are 13 percentage points more likely than other citizens to say they

²⁵ This may suggest that ideology/partisanship and propensity to abstain are not independent.

²⁶ Appendix D describes this survey in more detail.

had received a gift from a political party or candidate before an election, in return for turning out to vote – a highly statistically significant difference that is also substantively large.

To summarize, our systematic research in Argentina, India, and Venezuela shows that brokers view their networks as heavily populated by loyal voters who always turn out to vote and whose electoral support is not contingent on the voters' receiving minor gifts. Alongside of these loyalists, brokers also describe their networks as composed of less committed voters. From the standpoint of the partisan inclinations of voters, networks are heterogeneous. And in their dealings with swing voters, brokers are well aware of the electoral payoffs that their parties can reap when they give out minor gifts and favors. By implication they are aware of the loss of votes for their party when they direct favors toward party loyalists.

That brokers are prone to targeting loyalists does not mean that their efforts are exclusively aimed at dogged partisans. Instead, the evidence – consistent with the broker-mediated theory – points toward brokers' favoring loyalists but building heterogeneous networks of followers.

To probe the types of voters whom brokers tended to target, we asked the following question:

Of every 10 people whom you have helped, how many were already sympathizers of the party?

As Figure 4.6 shows, over one-quarter of the sample responded “5 out of 10,” about 10 percent responded “All,” and about 6 percent responded “None.” Although the figure hints at some intriguing heterogeneity across brokers, we do not find substantial heterogeneity by province, or across brokers who are elected councilors and those who are not.²⁷ For present purposes, the major point is that the modal answer is “Half” – suggesting that many brokers do indeed have heterogeneous networks, consisting of both previous supporters as well as nonsupporters of the party.

The thinking of swing-voter theorists is at odds with that of many brokers, but not all of them. In response to our question about how a broker would allocate 10 social programs, only around 31–32 percent of surveyed brokers said they would target voters who are certain to turn out and who were relatively indifferent in their party affinities – the response that prevailing theories would predict (see Figure 4.4). In a follow-up, open-ended question, among the minority who chose this Certain/Swing response, around 15 to 20 percent gave the precise rationale of these theorists: a peso spent on a loyal voter is a

²⁷ For example, the mean response is 5.76 in Buenos Aires, 5.35 in Misiones 5.53 in San Luis, and 5.21 in Córdoba. Among elected councilors, it is 4.69, whereas among non-elected brokers, it is 5.42.

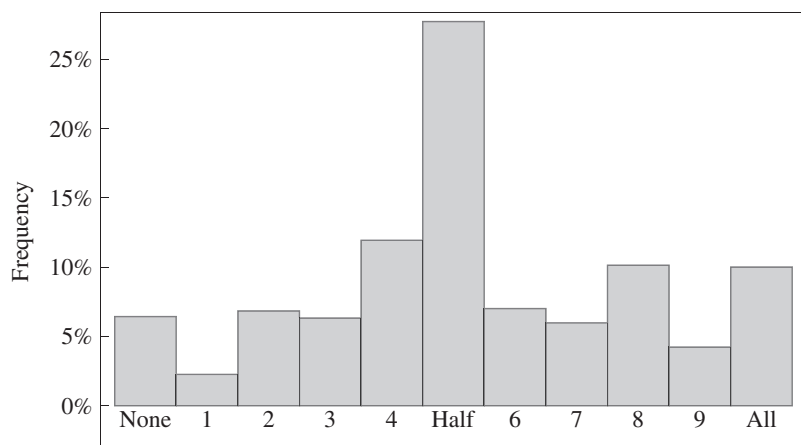


FIGURE 4.6. Brokers' Heterogeneous Networks: Number of Clients Out of 10 Who Were Already Party Sympathizers (Vertical Bar Indicates Average Response). N = 654.

peso wasted. One broker explained the logic of targeting swing voters in the following terms:

"To capture new votes; he's already got the others captive."²⁸

This broker and many others would therefore reach out to swing voters to increase his electoral market share.²⁹

Fieldwork – ours and that of other investigators – indicates that voters who receive benefits are often expected to reciprocate by participating in the broker's network-building activities: putting up posters, attending rallies, or voting in primaries. Although in the next section we review evidence that brokers require network participation with an eye toward building their own local power, many also view organization building as an effective route to winning elections.³⁰ We asked brokers:

Out of every 10 voters that accompany a broker to a political rally, how many do you think will vote for the candidate of the broker in a primary election?

and then we repeated the question, replacing "primary election" with "general election." In all cases, brokers thought that the great preponderance of voters

²⁸ "Para captar votos nuevos, a los otros ya los tiene cautivos."

²⁹ We did not find substantial heterogeneity in responses to this question as a function either of region or of position (i.e., being an elected councilman or working for an elected councilman). About 27 percent of respondents in Buenos Aires and 25 percent of respondents in each of Córdoba, Misiones, and San Luis reported that half of the people they have helped were already party supporters. Other features of the distribution of responses appear similar across provinces. Hence, about 28 percent of councilors and 24 percent of non-elected brokers said that half of their beneficiaries consisted of supporters.

³⁰ Auyero 2001.

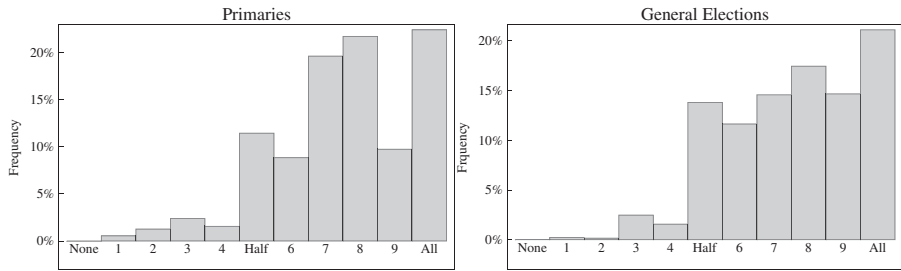


FIGURE 4.7. Network Participation and Voting Behavior: Number of Rally Attendees Out of 10 Who Will Vote For Broker's Candidate (Vertical Bar Indicates Average Response). $N = 759, 761$.

would indeed vote for the candidate preferred by the broker (Figure 4.7). Apparently, heterogeneous networks have some electoral impact.

On balance, the evidence about clientelist networks and strategies is consistent with the broker-mediated theory. Brokers expend party resources on loyalists. To some extent they do so because some “loyalists” will abandon the party if they are ignored. To some extent they do so because they want to bring reluctant voters among the loyalists to the polls. However, frequently they do so for neither reason. They simply want to build up their local network of supporters and can do so most cheaply by recruiting voters who prefer their party. We offer more evidence on this last point in the next section. Brokers also care about their party winning elections, which induces them to deliver some benefits to swing voters in search of votes.

4.2.3 Networks and Rent Seeking

Argentina

The broker-mediated theory pivots around the idea that brokers are rewarded for building large networks and that they build networks for reasons other than winning elections. Is the evidence consistent with these assumptions?

If turnout buying is clearly *not* the main reason for targeting loyal voters in this context – and if rewards really do go to long-time supporters who would probably support the party even absent clientelist inducements – why *do* brokers target loyal individual voters? The broker-mediated theory posits two reasons.

One reason, consistent with Szwarzberg's findings, is that by building large networks of followers, brokers can send a signal of their strength and competence to party leaders, thereby securing “employment” or, more generally, advancing their careers.³¹ Because networks are cheaper to build with partisan or ideological sympathizers of the party, much of brokers' network-building

³¹ Sczwarzberg 2008.

effort is focused on loyal voters. A corollary to this idea is that various modes of formal or informal intraparty competition – primaries, for instance – may also give local operatives incentives to build large networks of sympathetic followers.

A second reason why brokers “waste” resources on loyalists is that building large local power bases may itself provide a more diffuse kind of “rent” to brokers, even beyond the point at which these power bases are electorally useful for the party. Brokers may extract various kinds of rents from parties and use these rents for a variety of purposes – including the building of a local power base of followers. Thus the targeting of loyal voters can also be seen as a part of the rent-seeking behavior explored in the model of the previous chapter.

Results from our broker survey show that when brokers offer access to social programs to people who already prefer the party, the brokers are reinforcing their local organizational structure and territorial control. To those in our samples who predicted that brokers would favor loyal voters, we asked, *why*? They gave the following kinds of answers:

“Because it is important to the broker to maintain the structure of his internal perquisites.”

“It gives him more possibilities to manage convocations [e.g. of rallies or strikes].”

“To take care of people who are always faithful, loyal to the party.”

“Because he is rewarding loyalty and affection for the party.”

The first statements suggest that enhancing the power of the *broker* – not boosting the electoral fortunes of the party – is a key reason why brokers target partisan sympathizers of the party. The second two quotes emphasize that voters may also be rewarded for loyalty to the party, not just to the broker. Still, a sizeable number of responses underscored the personal obligation that the broker was under to return the favor extended by the voter’s participation in political activities. For example, one broker said that a supporter would be given a social program “to reward the accompaniment [*Para premiar el acompañamiento*].”³² Such phrases suggest the ways in which brokers are seeking to obtain accompaniment – for example, network participation – from voters.

The broker-mediated theory assumes that brokers care both about their party’s winning elections and about extracting rents – skimming resources from the party, building their local power by allocating too many resources

³² Of course, this type of response is sometimes ambiguous. Did the respondent mean that a *referente* needs to reciprocate to keep the person on his/her side and voting for the party? Or was this a more normative and/or psychological comment, that it’s difficult not to reciprocate when someone has helped you in the past? We address these questions in more detail elsewhere.

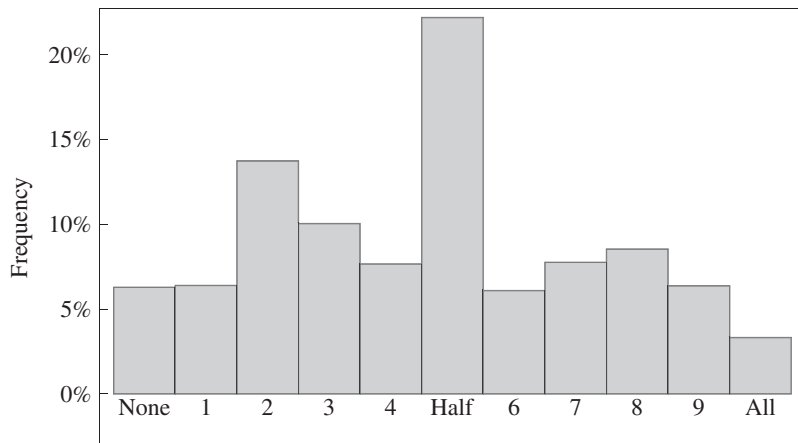


FIGURE 4.8. Rent-Seeking by Brokers: Number of Brokers Out of 10 Who Keep Party Benefits for Themselves. $N = 640$.

to loyalists, perhaps saving on effort. To investigate rent seeking, we asked respondents to our broker survey:

Out of every 10 brokers, how many do you think keep for themselves benefits that the party gives them to distribute to voters?

The answers suggest substantial rent seeking. In total, among the 86 percent of brokers who answered this question, more than 90 percent suggested that at least some brokers extract benefits not intended for them by the party (Figure 4.8). Nearly 25 percent of the sample said that “half” of brokers keep resources intended for voters. A mere 6 percent claimed that no brokers extract rents. Note that social desirability might induce brokers to minimize any rent seeking, so their willingness to acknowledge widespread rent seeking of the crudest form is striking.

The broker survey turned up a good deal of evidence of brokers building local organizations by providing resources to clients in exchange for their participation in rallies. We asked brokers:

Out of every 10 brokers who have the possibility to distribute benefits in exchange for attendance at rallies, how many would you say choose to do so?³³

Figure 4.9 indicates that most brokers do engage in this form of organization/participation buying, at least according to their peers. Thirteen percent say that all brokers would do this, whereas about three quarters say that three or more

³³ The wording in the survey instrument asked brokers how many would “not choose to do so”; for clarity, we recoded the data as an increasing measure of payments for rally participation, so that 0 became 10, 1 became 9, and so forth.

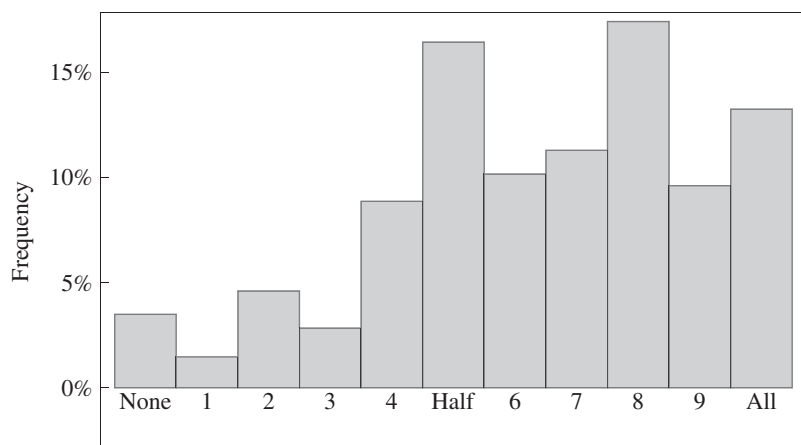


FIGURE 4.9. Organization Building by Brokers: Number of Brokers Out of 10 Who Distribute Benefits in Exchange for Rally Attendance. N = 731.

brokers of every 10 would engage in this kind of participation buying; only 4 percent say none would.

Brokers simultaneously extract rents while engaging in organization building. As a follow-up to the preceding question, about how brokers get people to take part in network activities, we asked:

Thinking of the brokers who, having the possibility to distribute benefits in exchange for participation in rallies and elections, choose not to do so, what do you think explains this decisions?

- (1) Because they think it does not get results.
- (2) Because they prefer to keep the benefits themselves.
- (3) Because they think participation should be voluntary.
- (4) Other.

Of those who answered this question (about 91 percent of respondents), fully 30 percent suggested that brokers keep resources for themselves. (About half gave the perhaps socially desirable response that participation should be voluntary, whereas 11 percent said participation buying does not work.)³⁴

Here again, when asked about the actions and motivations of their fellow brokers, large numbers quite frankly describe them as extracting rents – saving on effort, recruiting loyalists because of the ease and benefits (to the brokers) of doing so, and skimming party resources for their own use.

India

In India, as in Argentina, brokers have opportunities and incentives to extract rents, and they exert substantial effort in network building. Local council members and presidents are rewarded by their parties for turning out the vote

³⁴ Nine percent said “other.”

at election time. These rewards create strong incentives for brokers to allocate benefits to co-partisans. After all, leaders, unlike brokers, cannot easily discern electorally responsive (swing) voters from hard-core loyalists, so heavy turnout or other visible signs of widespread participation will naturally be interpreted by leaders as indicating that the local brokers are energetic and capable. Brokers are intimately involved with building local party organizations, and they often target partisan supporters with benefits.

In interviews, council members talked about their intimate relationships with “their” voters in terms that were strikingly similar to some of the comments of the Argentine brokers. In the villages we visited, voters readily identified council members with particular parties, but they also readily identified themselves with their preferred representatives. Future research in India should probe the relationship between brokers and voters in the kind of detail allowed by our surveys in Argentina, but preliminary evidence suggests a tendency of brokers cultivate networks of loyal followers, whom they seek to mobilize with gifts and favors.³⁵

What, then, about rent seeking in India, another central objective of brokers in our model? As Bussell noted, extracting rents is particularly important for elected officials, because of the high cost of campaigns and the expectation that parties will extend tickets to candidates who can finance part of the cost.³⁶ Oldenburg, as well as Wade, have analyzed the role of mediation by brokers and in particular the cycle of rents that flows through brokers, from officials to citizens in the form of electoral bribes or from citizens to officials in the form of bribes for services (often via the bureaucracy).³⁷ In the case of land consolidation in the state of Uttar Pradesh, for instance, Oldenburg shows that middlemen play an important role in facilitating bribe payments from citizens and also keep a large portion of the bribe.³⁸ As for our own research in India, we have already noted the discrepancy between the official monetary return to elected posts in village councils and what individuals are willing to spend on campaigns to win these posts. This gap may in itself indicate an important role for rent extraction.

4.2.4 Winning Elections

We have seen that many brokers do not invest all their effort in helping their party win. They shirk, skim resources, or invest in their own local power base at the party’s expense. The very local scale on which brokers operate – a scale that has to be small if the broker is to be able to provide the information and monitoring of voters that clientelism requires – means that their actions are

³⁵ Dunning and Nilekani 2012.

³⁶ Bussell 2012.

³⁷ Oldenburg 1987; Wade 1985.

³⁸ Oldenburg 1987: 521–522. Ironically, according to Oldenburg, it was the relatively *low* level of bureaucratic corruption in the process of land consolidation that allowed middlemen to exploit the *perception* of high corruption to induce citizens to pay them to pass on bribes.

unlikely to make the difference between their party's winning or losing, even in elections in moderate-sized municipalities, certainly in provincial or national elections. The temptation is to leave the hard work and sacrifice for the party's cause to other brokers.³⁹

Still, brokers are rarely indifferent about their party's electoral prospects. In the opening discussion of this chapter, we mentioned several reasons why they want their party to win. In general they feel strong attachments to their party. Framed, yellowing photographs of Juan Domingo and Eva Perón graced the walls of many Peronist operatives whom we interviewed, whether the interviews were conducted in public spaces or in the brokers' homes. Radical party centers often feature murals with images from that party's pantheon, especially of Hipólito Yrigoyen. This is far from a peculiarity of Argentine politics. More than mere cults of personality, the prevalence of these images speaks of partisan and to some degree ideological convictions of brokers. Partisan attachments are fed by the same sorts of self-identification and emotions that also feed attachments to sports teams among many people. Of course, working to boost a party's vote share is not so simple as working for the Peronists or the Radicals or other parties. A broker might well feel himself or herself to be working for one faction or candidacy of (say) the Peronists and not another, or for one local boss (*referente*) and not another.

Our interviews and broker survey in Argentina trace the career paths of brokers. Many first worked for the party because they were swept up in youthful enthusiasm for a particular candidate. Others became proselytizers for their party's program or vision. We would not expect such people to be indifferent to their party's electoral fortunes, even if they had some self-interested reasons not to exert themselves fully on its behalf and even if their efforts would make only a small difference in whether their party won or lost. What's more, even despite some significant shuffling of brokers among distinct party factions or, on occasion, from one political party to another, for the most part these individuals have committed years, often decades, to promoting the party's cause. Recall that more than 70 percent of brokers in our survey had never changed parties and that the average broker had toiled for 14 years on behalf of his or her party and 11 years on behalf of his or her local boss. The figure of the broker is hence deeply ambiguous: he is at once an extreme version of a loyal voter but also someone who plays his own game and in so doing may work against the party's interests.

Brokers' commitment to their party is not just a matter of ideological conviction or deep partisan identification. Brokers draw resources from their parties and build their careers around the party. When their party or faction loses, they lose access to the kinds of resources around which they construct their local followings. What's more, if their livelihood comes from state employment

³⁹ Camp 2012 analyzed a formal model in which this collective-action problem plays a central role.

or patronage, the consequences of their patron's losing control over the public sector can be personally catastrophic. Even factional disputes can get in the way of brokers' drawing benefits from the party.

An event in the recent history of the province of Córdoba starkly illustrates the costs that lost access to patronage impose on brokers. In this case, the loss of state resources was the fallout not of a lost election but of the breakup of the marriage of a Peronist governor and his wife, the latter having served as the Secretary of Government in her husband's provincial cabinet. Juan Manuel de la Sota was elected governor of Córdoba in 1999 and was reelected in 2003; in 2005, he and his wife, Olga Riutort, divorced. Their split reverberated throughout the provincial Peronist party and state government. A party worker who had been a city council candidate on Riutort's dissident Peronist list recalled:

We [Peronists] had about 15,000 public sector workers [*contratados*]. After the political divorce happened, on December 31 one thousand letters went out informing people that they were now out of the government. This is something the government can do, legally it can do it, even if it represents a failure of ethics and of sentiment, to throw out some guy who lives on his salary, it's crazy . . . This is the way the state, and any party, handles things.⁴⁰

Brokers come in different flavors. Some are "pragmatists," in Szwarcberg's categorization, who readily trade minor benefits for electoral support.⁴¹ Others are "idealists," who believe in their party's ideals and program and would prefer to work to boost its fortunes and spread the word. Probably these instincts are mixed in the minds of many brokers. A broker whom Szwarcberg interviewed expressed the frustration of someone who is an idealist by nature but who understood the advantages that material handouts offered: "Unfortunately, voters listen to you, they are interested in you, but they need things. Then, if you do not have money, if you can't give them things, they can't support you. They support whomever has things to give away, no matter who she or he is."⁴²

4.2.5 Leaders' Efforts to Monitor Brokers and Brokers' Efforts to Avoid Discipline

Argentina

From a party leader's perspective, the challenge is to make use of brokers' efforts on behalf of the party while minimizing the rents that brokers extract. Just as brokers come up with many ways to monitor voters, leaders are inventive when it comes to monitoring brokers. In the Argentine municipality of Florencio Varela, located within greater Buenos Aires, Camp found that the mayor

⁴⁰ Interview conducted by Valeria Brusco 2003.

⁴¹ Szwarcberg 2013 (forthcoming).

⁴² Szwarcberg 2013, p. 27.

maintained a detailed database with information about his party's brokers.⁴³ The database included telephone numbers of some voters in each broker's neighborhood. The mayor's office periodically phoned a smattering of voters to inquire whether certain benefits that the party had disbursed through its brokers had ended up in the hands of voters. The implication was that incompetent or self-promoting brokers might not pass the benefits along; this was an elaborate effort to catch them.

In our Argentina brokers' survey, many brokers concurred that their work was evaluated in electoral terms. Many brokers identified electoral performance as a key factor that their parties used to evaluate the brokers' efforts. A preponderance of brokers asserted that providing a large number of votes in the general election was among the most important ways for a broker to boost his or her political career.

This finding is intuitive – after all, winning elections should be most valued by party leaders. Yet it is not always easy to judge brokers by returns in their neighborhoods. Even party insiders do not necessarily have access to turnout figures or party vote share on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis. And even if they did, electoral performance is a noisy signal of brokers' efforts. Unobserved factors can thwart energetic efforts of a “good” broker and mask a mediocre performance by a “bad” one. We should therefore not be surprised that many brokers in our survey saw other activities as crucial to their reputations with party leaders. We asked:

If you had to state what is most important for a *referente* who is interested in a political career, would you say that it is best to mobilize voters for a political rally, for a primary election, or for a general election?

The left panel of Figure 4.10 shows that about 64 percent of respondents answered “a general election.” Yet a full 36 percent mentioned primary elections or rallies as most important for the broker's career – quite a striking result, given that the purpose of broker-mediated distribution, for party leaders, is presumably to win general elections.

Some close observers of Argentine elections have suggested that clientelism mainly operates during intra-party competition.⁴⁴ Our results indicate that primaries are not the whole (or even the major) story behind vote buying in Argentina. These findings are all the more noteworthy given that we conducted the surveys during a period of particularly intense factionalism and intra-party competition in Argentina, competition that presumably heightened the importance of vote-buying during primaries. However, consistent with our theoretical model, our evidence does suggest that party leaders are expected to use both primaries and rallies to judge brokers' effectiveness. A sizeable

⁴³ Camp 2012.

⁴⁴ See De Luca et al. 2006.

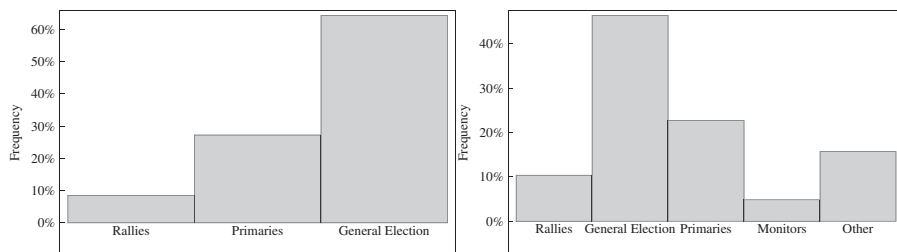


FIGURE 4.10. Most Important Perceived Criterion Party Leaders Use to Evaluate Brokers (as Perceived by Brokers). N = 735, 749.

minority of brokers view mobilizing voters for rallies or for primary elections as even more important than mobilizing them for general elections.

Our survey elicited brokers' views about how party leaders evaluated them with a wider of response categories. We asked:

When party leaders evaluate the political work of *referentes*, what aspect weighs most heavily in their evaluation?

- (1) The number of people whom the *referente* takes to rallies.
- (2) The number of votes the party receives from the *referente*'s neighborhood in a general election.
- (3) The number of votes that a candidate receives in a primary election.
- (4) The number of election judges/monitors (*fiscales*) whom the *referente* provides for the party.
- (5) Other information?

Although the most frequent answer is again "a general election" (see right panel of Figure 4.11), here this option no longer enjoys a simple majority. Instead, about 54 percent of brokers cited one of the other options – rallies, primaries, election judges, and other – as the most single important aspect for evaluating the success of monitors, with the distribution of responses being about evenly split across these options (though the frequency is somewhat lower in the case of election judges).⁴⁵

Notice that when brokers turn people out to rallies, provide election judges or monitors (*fiscales*), and elicit voter participation in primaries, they are signaling the size of their networks. Election judges/monitors – who give out envelopes at polling places, register voters' participation, and tally votes – are often clients who have received benefits from the broker and reciprocate by playing these roles. Brokers also organize the clients in their networks to

⁴⁵ We also asked what is the second-most important activity used to evaluate a broker. Among those who answered this question, $111/590 = 18.8$ percent said "rallies;" $158/590 = 26.8$ percent said "general elections;" $208/590 = 35.3$ percent said "primary elections;" $80/590 = 13.6$ percent said "election judges;" and $33/590 = 5.6$ percent said "other."

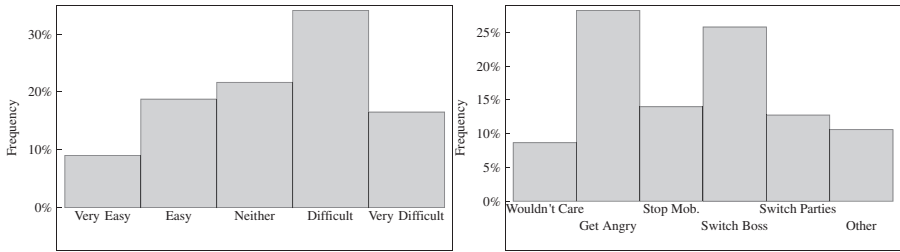


FIGURE 4.11. Broker Exit Options and Party Resources: Perceived Ease with Which Party Leaders Can Remove Resources (Left Panel) and Brokers' Probable Response (Right Panel).

attend rallies, providing buses for transportation and sometimes food, alcohol, or even marijuana for those who attend.⁴⁶ The respondents in our broker survey who chose the “other information” response to the question about evaluating the work of brokers also frequently emphasized the importance of repeated interaction with voters and of network-building, often in terms of organizing their “territory.” In response to a follow-up open-ended question, they explained their view about what is most important for evaluating brokers in the following typical terms:

“Closeness to the people”

“Daily contact, militance, and how much they cover the capital”

“Form of organization”

“The image of the broker in the neighborhood”

“Territorial work”⁴⁷

“The degree of insertion of the broker, reaching distinct sectors, and the general acceptance [of the broker by voters]”

“Presence with the people, listening to the people”

That brokers expect party leaders to value these efforts, as well as valuing brokers' contributions to the party's votes in a general election, is consistent with our approach in the “hiring model” of the previous chapter. If leaders glean something important about a broker's capacities from the size of the network that the broker constructs, and if primary elections also play an important

⁴⁶ Auyero 2001, Scwarzberg 2008. Election judges may sometimes play a key role in electoral fraud as well, or at least in careful monitoring of the electoral process. One Peronist broker in the Conurbano of Buenos Aires described a judge who had been hired by an opposition candidate seeking to “buy” a local machine. This monitor did not notice that the opposition leader's ballots were actually printed for a nearby municipality – so ballots from that area were disqualified. Interview, July 2009.

⁴⁷ “Trabajo territorial.”

role in evaluating brokers, then we should expect to see – and do see – brokers prioritizing network-related activities.

Leaders attempt to use whatever information they can glean about their brokers' efforts and capacities to condition benefits they send to brokers. Leaders can threaten to discipline brokers by taking away resources from those who extract rents. The key question is how credible, from the vantage point of brokers, is the threat? We asked brokers:

Imagine that a political leader thinks he can augment the number of votes by taking resources away from one broker and transferring them to another. The broker who would lose the resources has few voters and they are all loyal to him. How difficult would it be for the political leader to do this?

As the left panel of Figure 4.11 shows, although responses were quite scattered, the modal answer was “difficult,” whereas almost half the sample said “difficult” or “very difficult.”⁴⁸

Why are party leaders unable to freely shift resources away from brokers, even from ones who are extracting rents or using those resources in electorally inefficient ways? One explanation is that brokers have substantial exit options, either in the form of defection to leaders from the same party or leaders of a different party. We asked the follow-up question:

What would the broker who lost resources do? Would he:

- (1) Not care
- (2) Get angry but do nothing
- (3) Cease to mobilize voters
- (4) Go work for another leader of his same party
- (5) Go to work for a leader of another party
- (6) Something else?

Nearly 40 percent of the sample said the broker would shift his/her efforts to another leader (with a greater proportion, indicating a shift within rather than outside the party). Taken together, respondents who mentioned an exit option of some kind – ceasing to mobilize voters, switching to another faction or to another party – constituted half the sample (right panel of Figure 4.11).

In turn, about 28 percent said that the broker would get angry but nothing more – a response suggestive of the view that there is no exit option. Indeed, the modal answer was “get angry but not do anything.” Moreover, of those who said it would “difficult” or “very difficult” for party leaders to switch resources from one broker to another (left panel of Figure 4.11), about 35 percent said that a broker stripped of resources “wouldn’t care” or “would get angry but wouldn’t do anything,” whereas another 15 percent said that the broker would stop mobilizing. Just 11 percent said the resource-deprived broker would switch parties. These opinions are consistent with what we learned

⁴⁸ Elsewhere, we explore the heterogeneity of responses across distinct strata of brokers.

about brokers' career paths, in particular that 71 percent worked for the same party throughout their careers. Thus, although there is some evidence that exit options matter, they may not provide the only opportunity that brokers have to extract rents from the party. The imperfect ability of leaders to detect brokers' impact on the party's electoral fortunes, as in the model of the previous chapter, also plays a role.

Leaders' Efforts to Discipline Brokers: India and Venezuela

The opportunities that brokers enjoy to extract rents, and the incentive leaders have to come up with strong monitoring devices, is not idiosyncratic to Argentine politics. In India, party leaders in the states and even in the national government use their ability to promote the careers of underlings as a disciplining device. Party leaders in India play an important role in structuring career advancement for local politicians – for instance, for council members and presidents who aspire to candidacies for subdistrict or district councils. Party leaders at higher levels are frequently in contact with their affiliates on village councils, and leaders, including members of state legislative assemblies, are sometimes present at village council meetings.⁴⁹ Thus the idea developed in Chapter 3 that brokers who build large organizations are “hired” by parties seems quite relevant in the Indian context.

In Venezuela as well, party higher-ups try to monitor the party's brokers. Given the scope for agency loss among Venezuelan brokers – whether *chavistas* or opposition operatives – leaders there invest substantial effort in monitoring the actions of their brokers. In the opposition stronghold of Petare, the mayor's office went to great lengths to subvert rent seeking or wasteful targeting on the part of brokers. The structure of zone chiefs and promoters working under them, described earlier, is overseen by several coordinators working out of the mayor's office.⁵⁰ These coordinators and the mayor's support staff designed a survey of neighbors and gave the task of conducting the survey to the brokers. Reminiscent of the Florencio Varela mayor's efforts in Argentina, the mayor's staff planned to conduct random call-backs to voters to solicit any complaints about brokers.

Zone chiefs and their promoters were also assigned specific vote quotas for the legislative elections: they were supposed to increase the vote total in each polling station under their command by a specified number over the total gained by the opposition in the previous mayoral election of 2008. To achieve this goal, each promotor was obliged to recruit “mobilizers” (*movilizadores*)

⁴⁹ Wilkinson 2007. Our field research suggests that parties also contribute to the cost of horse trading and vote buying at the council level. For example, in councils that are split along partisan lines, parties are said to help to supply the funds necessary to buy members' votes and thus obtain majorities for important council decisions.

⁵⁰ One was seen as particularly relevant because he grew up in the most impoverished part of Petare and thus has substantial credibility with voters there.

who were in turn responsible for recruiting 10 voters who would promise to turn out to vote for the mayor. The number of mobilizers that each broker had to recruit was assigned by the mayor's office, on the basis of surveys of electoral results by zone. By the time of the September 2010 legislative elections, the mayor had 360 brokers working with him, and the mayor's office thought it might have organized as many as 60,000 to 80,000 voters in this fashion. Operatives clearly believed in the electoral efficacy of this structure. As one municipal coordinator put it when we asked him why they had constructed this elaborate hierarchy of brokers, "Machines win elections."⁵¹ To be sure, vote quotas are noisy indicators of brokers' effort, because the mapping from effort to electoral outcomes is far from tight. Nonetheless, this does indicate attempts by party leaders to use votes and vote shares to monitor brokers.

These machines and the local knowledge they generated very likely played a role in the targeted distribution of benefits to voters. At rallies for opposition candidates in the Sucre neighborhoods of Winché (in the *parroquia* of Caucaguita) and Dolorita, two days before the legislative elections, the mayor presented checks ranging in amounts from 1,200 to 2,000 Bolívares (about US\$300–\$500 at official exchange rates) to neighbors. Beneficiaries had been selected in advance, their names and identity numbers (*cédulas*) appearing on a spreadsheet compiled by mayor's staff; the neighbors came up one by one to pick up the checks, as the mayor called their names. In Winché, the mayor made a point that his party had never asked anyone about their political affiliation before giving assistance (many people applauded in apparent agreement); in Dolorita, he noted that this "help" (*ayuda*) was just a little something to tide neighbors over during times of economic crisis and was not being given simply because there was an election in two days.⁵²

At the same time, the opposition incumbent in Sucre appears to have followed a mixed strategy, involving the provision of valued public goods as well as targeted inducements. Perhaps because they understood that the clientelist strategy would leak resources through broker rent extraction, officials in the Petare mayoral administration did not rely on clientelism alone but also invested in the improvement of public goods and services. The mayor's office has invested substantial resources in tracking violent crime and in deploying neighborhood police to try to combat it; crime ranks consistently in public-opinion surveys as the most important public policy issue to Venezuelans, and the opposition in Petare has been given credit for reducing it (even if crime rates are, in truth, stubbornly high). Thus both machine politics and public-good provision have their political role.

⁵¹ Interviews, Caracas, September 2010.

⁵² In fact, we could not pinpoint the selection criteria for these people, other than that selection was based on "economic need." The recipients were mostly but not exclusively women.

Whatever the source of their bargaining power, brokers appear to possess substantial autonomy and considerable ability to extract rents from party leaders. Although our model does not explore many aspects of the intra-party bargaining between brokers and leaders – a topic powerfully analyzed by Camp – our analysis in the previous chapter does suggest that brokers can use their agency advantages to pull rents from party leaders, and the evidence in this section is consistent with that assertion.⁵³

4.2.6 Positions in the Party Hierarchy and Preferences Over Which Voters to Target

If the broker-mediated theory is accurate, we might expect distribution to swing voters to be more enthusiastically embraced the higher one ascends in the party hierarchy. In Chapter 5, we compare distributive practices when they are under the control of actors at the extremes of party ladder: high-level officials in central offices versus lowly activists and brokers. In this section, we explore these preferences among party actors who are more proximate to one another: city councilors and grassroots brokers.

The brokers whom we surveyed in Argentina, as noted, fell into two categories. Most (516 out of 800) were neighborhood-level party operatives. The remaining 284 held the elected office of city council member, and a few of these served in other capacities in the municipal administration. We take advantage of this stratification to study the impact of party position on distributive preferences. We asked:

Imagine that your party is in the midst of a very competitive electoral campaign. You work in a neighborhood that has voted historically for the party's candidates. There is another broker who works in a neighborhood where half of the voters are undecided. How would you prefer that the political boss (*jefe político*) distribute resources? Should he give more resources to you, recognizing the loyalty of your neighborhood, or should he prioritize the other broker, whose neighborhood has many undecided voters?

The framing of the question emphasized the electoral advantages of targeting swing districts, and even low-level brokers endorsed this strategy at a rate of two to one. However, the endorsement was closer to universal among city councilors. Support for targeting loyalist strongholds was just 15 percent among the somewhat more highly placed party operatives; it rose to 28 percent among low-level brokers (see Table 4.1).

One explanation for this difference is that it reflects a selection mechanism. Some brokers are more attuned to the needs of the party or more susceptible to the incentives party leaders deploy to encourage brokers to adhere to the party's electoral interests. These well-behaved brokers (from the leadership's vantage point) rise in the party hierarchy. Another explanation is that the difference

⁵³ See Camp 2012 for further discussion.

TABLE 4.1. *Preference for Distribution Among Different Types of Party Actors*

	Swing District	Loyal District
City councilor	85.3%	14.7%
Broker	72.3%	27.8%

The table presents weighted estimates of percentages in the population of brokers, where the weights are the inverse of the sampling probabilities, N = 714.

reflects an adaptation mechanism. Party operatives begin to see things more from the leadership’s point of view once they rise in the hierarchy. Our surveys do not allow us to easily adjudicate between these mechanisms, but either explanation is consistent with the broker-mediated theory.

4.3 CONCLUSION

What are the broader implications of the evidence presented in this chapter? One is that brokers think they have substantial knowledge of the preferences and behaviors of their clients – the kind of information that is valuable to parties but that party actors at a further remove from the neighborhoods lack. We have also seen that brokers pursue a variety of goals, including organization building and electoral mobilization. Their statements about how fellow brokers use resources implicitly acknowledge both electoral and rent-seeking activities. They candidly acknowledge that brokers use their positions to pocket resources and to build their own power bases – retaining at least some benefits that party leaders would like to pass on to voters. Party leaders use career incentives to attempt to minimize rents, and brokers can threaten to exit, taking their voters with them, but neither side entirely solves its problems, and a certain level of agency loss remains inevitable. In these regards, the evidence presented in this chapter largely substantiates the main claims of the broker-mediated model.

Looking ahead, the four next chapters further explore assumptions and implications of the broker-mediated model. The next chapter investigates further the observable implication that distributive preferences should be a function of an actor’s position in the party hierarchy (Chapter 5). We then explore a distinct dimension of the model, its implications for the impact of poverty on clientelism (Chapter 6). Next we turn to the macro-historical implications: if party machines pivot around an imperfect agency relationship between brokers and leaders, under what historical conditions does this relationship remain a solid grounding for machines, and when does this grounding soften and decay? (Chapters 7 and 8).