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Mariela Szwarcberg

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Mariela Szwarcberg
University of Chicago, USA

Abstract
This article provides a novel answer to explain the persistence of party rallies in the mass and social media era. I argue that rallies contribute to the organizational structure of clientelistic parties by providing information to different members within and outside the machine. Rallies provide party leaders with information that enables them to monitor brokers' capacity to mobilize voters, party brokers with an opportunity to display their ability to turn out voters while monitoring voters' responses, and voters with an opportunity to display their gratitude or fear towards brokers. In addition, rallies provide the opposition with an opportunity to gather information about the electoral strength or weakness of the clientelistic party. Drawing on participant observations, over a 100 interviews, archival research in Argentina and Peru, and secondary literature for the cases of Mexico and Brazil, I explain why political parties conduct rallies and why rallies will continue in the future.

Keywords
clientelism, Latin America, party organization, party rallies, political campaigns

Puzzle

Why do political parties conduct rallies during elections? While being able to reach a wider audience by spending money on television advertisements, candidates still travel to participate in rallies across the country. Parties conduct rallies in voters' towns to make them believe that the candidate understands their needs, remembers their claims and listens to their demands. Conducting rallies also enables parties to gain momentum and foster voter turnout (Green and Gerber, 2008). This article advances a different answer to the persistence of party rallies: I argue that rallies contribute to the organizational structure of clientelistic parties by providing information to different members within and outside of the organization.

Rallies provide party leaders with information that enables them to monitor brokers' performances and distribute rewards and punishments based on brokers' true ability to mobilize voters. Rallies also provide party brokers with an opportunity to display their ability to turn out voters and get promoted within the party. In addition, rallies enable brokers to gather information about voters' responses to material inducements by monitoring their attendance (or failure to participate) at rallies. Voters find in rallies an opportunity to display their gratitude towards party brokers for distributing material benefits and solving their everyday problems. Rallies can also force voters' participation due to their fear of losing the flow of goods if they fail to turn out. Finally, rallies provide the opposition with information about the electoral strength or weakness of the clientelistic party by publicly displaying their ability to turn out voters.

Literature and hypotheses: Signalling at party rallies

The literature on distributive politics assumes that clientelistic parties use outcome-contingent transfers to allocate resources among districts (Cox and McCubbins, 1986; Lindbeck and Weibull, 1987) and voters (Diaz-Cayeros et al., 2008; Dunning and Stokes, 2009; Gans-Morse et al., 2009; Nichter, 2008; Stokes, 2005). The argument reasons that party leaders compare voter turnout and support between elections and decide whether to reward or punish districts or voters based on the electoral outcome.

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Corresponding author:
Mariela Szwarcberg, University of Chicago, 5848 S. University Ave., Chicago, IL 60637, USA.
Email: mariela@uchicago.edu

The problem with this logic is that it fails to take into account party brokers, intermediaries whom parties rely on to target and distribute clientelistic inducements while monitoring voter participation.

As independent agents who possess key information about voters' electoral preferences and about their likelihood of turning out to vote, brokers can use clientelistic inducements to pursue personal enrichment, potentially at the cost of lost votes for their party. While party brokers can be reliable agents who will distribute inducements to maximize the party's vote-share because they believe in the party's programme, brokers can also be unreliable agents who will take whatever course of action leads to their personal benefit. In cases where voters will turn out and vote for the party regardless of receiving benefits in exchange, brokers' actions are open to moral hazard.

To diminish the risk of moral hazard, party bosses will monitor brokers' capacity to mobilize voters to avoid rewarding unreliable brokers who will pocket party goods enhancing their personal wealth. Party agents' opportunities to appropriate material goods for self-enrichment will vary depending on leaders' expectations of voter turnout and the voters' propensity to participate in the neighbourhood the broker represents. Brokers in high-support neighbourhoods, where voters are likely to support the party regardless of receiving clientelistic inducements, have more chances to increase their wealth by selling the goods than brokers in low-support neighbourhoods, where voters' support is conditional upon receiving handouts.[1]

I argue that party bosses combine information from voter turnout at rallies and voter support at elections to diminish the risks of moral hazard. In contrast to elections in countries where voting is compulsory, like Argentina, Peru, Mexico and Brazil, voter participation at rallies is voluntary and visibly enabling party leaders to measure how many voters each one of their agents has mobilized to the rally.[2] By comparing a broker's ability to mobilize voters to rallies and get electoral support in their neighbourhood, party bosses are able to make better inferences about reliable brokers who will distribute party goods to voters, and unreliable brokers who will use party goods to pad their own pockets.

My argument assumes that party bosses will compare information from brokers' abilities to turn out voters at rallies and the electoral performance of the party in the neighbourhoods brokers represent to decide whether to reward or punish party agents. Table 1 illustrates the implications of my theory and highlights how it differs from existing explanations assuming that parties transfer particularistic inducements to voters and neighbourhoods based on electoral results.

In the upper-right corner are brokers who succeed at getting voters in elections, but fail at stimulating rally turnout. The literature predicts that brokers who turn out as many or even more voters in elections than in the past will be rewarded. In contrast, I hypothesize that the difference between low turnout at rallies and high support at elections enables party bosses to identify brokers as unreliable and punish them accordingly. Since the broker fails in getting the expected number of votes, the boss assumes the broker is pocketing the goods and that his electoral success is the result of being in a neighbourhood where voters will support the party regardless of receiving material benefits in exchange.

In the lower-left corner are brokers who only succeed in turning out voters to rallies. Again, the literature assumes that these brokers will be punished given their failure to translate voter support at rallies into party votes. In contrast, I hypothesize that bosses will reward these brokers who are clearly identified as reliable; as well as brokers who turn out the expected number of voters at rallies. Party brokers that succeed in turning out voters at rallies, but fail at elections, are likely to be distributing material benefits to voters and getting their support in low-support neighbourhoods. They are identified as reliable brokers and are rewarded to continue in their attempts to cultivate and build a following in neighbourhoods that are not loyal to the party.

Cases where turnout at rallies and elections differs provide bosses with more information than cases with similar levels of voter participation at both instances. And, while a party boss could be surprised by a broker's capacity to turn out voters at rallies, this is almost never the case with electoral support. By combining information from previous elections with the present electoral context, party bosses are skilful in calculating the number of voters they expect agents to mobilize. As a result, brokers can either succeed or fail in getting the estimated number of votes.

Brokers that succeed in mobilizing voters to participate at rallies and elections could be either reliable party agents who distribute goods, or unreliable brokers that represent the party in core support neighbourhoods. To explain the decision of the party boss in these cases, we have to consider their aversion to risk.

Risk-averse party leaders will invest in high-support neighbourhoods even if this implies wasting goods in the hands of unreliable agents. Instead of funding potentially reliable brokers in low-support neighbourhoods, a risk-averse leader will reward brokers in high-support neighbourhoods, even if he suspects that the party agents are not distributing goods to voters. In contrast, risk-prone leaders will invest in low-support neighbourhoods to fund potentially reliable brokers instead of rewarding potentially unreliable brokers in high-support neighbourhoods. A party boss's decision whether to punish or reward party agents that perform as expected, or even above expectations, at rallies, but fail in turning out that support into electoral votes will vary based on his political strategy.

Table 1. Hypotheses and expected findings.

		Voter turnout at rallies		
		Above expectations	As expected	Below expectations
Voter support at elections	As expected	*Reward*	*Reward*	***Punish***
	Below expectations	***Reward***	***Reward***	*Punish*

Bolded are cases where author's expectations differ from those in the literature.

This manuscript argues that by comparing voter turnout at rallies and voter support at elections, bosses are better equipped to identify and reward reliable agents. And, by distributing goods to reliable brokers parties succeed in maximizing the number of votes. This does not imply that bosses do not care about voter support, but that it is the information about reliability that enables party bosses to maximize party votes.

By distributing rewards and punishments based on their agents' ability to turn out voters at rallies, party leaders encourage brokers to distribute party goods to voters instead of pursuing their personal enrichment. At the municipal level, where political machines are anchored and most rallies take place, mayors decide the political future of councillors by enabling or blocking career promotions. Councilmen represent a party in the neighbourhoods where they live, and it is their social proximity to voters that enables them to learn about voters' political preferences and propensity to turn out to vote. In contrast to party activists and volunteers, brokers are interested in pursuing a career in politics and seek to get re-elected.

In countries that employ a system of proportional representation with closed-listed ballots, like Argentina and Mexico, a mayor's decision about a candidate's position on the ballot determines his or her likelihood of getting elected. In countries that use open-listed ballots, like Peru and Brazil, party bosses have less control over candidate nominations.

By contributing to the screening of brokers' reliability, rallies enable party leaders to better allocate limited resources to maximize the party's vote-share. Notwithstanding, party leaders still run the risk of financing strategic brokers that only distribute goods before rallies to boost turn out, but pocket them before elections. Knowing that party leaders can perfectly monitor turnout at rallies, but not at elections, may lead brokers to distribute goods to voters to encourage them to participate in rallies and to pocket the goods they received from the mayor to distribute to voters before Election Day. I argue that while brokers are likely to be more generous in distributing goods before rallies than elections, these differences will not be significant because voters could easily punish the brokers' strategic behaviour. In learning that they are only rewarded for participating at rallies, voters can stay at home during elections.

In being evaluated and rewarded based on their ability to turn out voters, brokers are encouraged to pursue the strategies that are more likely to produce more votes for lower costs. In practice, this implies that brokers who compete for the support of low-income and working-class voters will be encouraged to trade particularistic goods for political participation, a strategy broadly defined as clientelistic (Stokes, 2007).

Clientelistic mobilization works when voters are likely to exchange participation for material goods. In Latin America, a considerable number of citizens who live in extreme poverty are quite willing to engage in these exchanges as the declaration of José Woldenberg, President of Mexico's Electoral Federal Institute (IFE), quoted below illustrates.

> Mexico is a very poor country with enormous disparities. For a lot of people, one kilo of sugar or beans is more important than a vote. There are unscrupulous political operatives who know these needs and will find ways to capitalize on them.[3]

Brokers interested in pursuing a political career use rallies to demonstrate their ability to get votes for the party. The more votes a broker manages to mobilize for the party the more likely he or she will become a party candidate. The testimony of Mario, a party candidate in Buenos Aires, explains this logic sharply:

> This is very simple. You are worth as much as the amount of people you can mobilize. You have a prize, a number. Your number is how many people you can carry to a rally and how many votes you can give in an election.[4]

How candidates mobilize voters varies based on what they have to offer and what potential voters need. In resource-rich, vote-poor neighbourhoods candidates build programmatic linkages with voters, while in resource-poor, vote-rich neighbourhoods these linkages are clientelistic. Candidates' capacities to build clientelistic linkages are determined by the combination of access to particularistic goods, and their ability to distribute these goods to those voters who are likely to turn out and support the party. Access to resources varies based on candidates' partisanship: candidates affiliated to incumbent parties have more opportunities to obtain resources and distribute them

to voters than opposition candidates or candidates affiliated to parties that lack a network of activists capable of exchanging goods for electoral support.

Empirical studies in several Latin American countries document the use of handouts (Brusco et al., 2004) and welfare programmes (Calvo and Murillo, 2009; Diaz-Cayeros et al., 2008; Schady, 2000; Weitz-Shapiro, 2007) to buy voter support; and while the focus of these works is on the distribution of goods for political support at the polls, my ethnographic work suggests that brokers who buy voter turnout at elections also engage in buying voter turnout at party rallies.

In being rewarded only based on the number of voters they mobilized, party brokers that compete for the support of low-income voters are encouraged to turn to clientelistic strategies of mobilization. Brokers that are capable of exchanging particularistic goods for electoral support learn through experience that those who prefer to reject using clientelism to mobilize working and low-income voters are more likely to fail than candidates who prefer to engage in using clientelism. Hence, it is not the case that candidates are always willing to use clientelistic strategies, but that those who reject engaging in these practices are unable to advance in politics. This implies that brokers who prefer not to use clientelism are likely to be replaced by brokers who do not reject using these strategies leading to the consolidation of clientelism in low-income neighbourhoods.

Beyond clientelistic parties: Voters and the opposition

In addition to enabling party bosses to distinguish between reliable and unreliable brokers, and to enabling brokers to display their ability to mobilize voters, rallies also enable brokers to monitor whether or not voters turn out to party rallies. By taking attendance at rallies, brokers are able to gather information about voters' participation and adjust the distribution of favours and goods accordingly. In addition, party brokers are likely to punish voters who fail to turn out at rallies by withdrawing benefits to set precedents that deter defection among other voters. Brokers, however, are not as interested in punishing voters as in inducing turnout. Once voters fear the consequences of failing to attend rallies, brokers do not need to monitor voter participation at every rally. By choosing to randomly monitor some rallies, voters are forced to always be present in case they are being watched.

Even though some voters will show up at rallies to secure the flow of resources, rallies also provide voters with an opportunity to signal their support to party brokers who help them solve their problems. Besides the difficulty in finding out if voters are at rallies because they have to be or want to be, what is of interest here is that rallies provide brokers with an opportunity to monitor voters' responses, and voters with an opportunity to publicly display their gratitude or fear towards the men or women who contribute to solve their everyday problems.

By publicly displaying the party's support, rallies encourage or discourage opposition coordination by signalling potential or existing rivals within and outside the party the strength or weakness of the machine. Overcrowded rallies send the opposition a powerful signal that there is not much space for political alternatives, and increase the costs and potential benefits of building a parallel political organization for party members who might be considering leaving the party.

For instance, successful and well-attended rallies contributed to sustain hegemonic-party autocracies, such as the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI) in Mexico, and the Peronist party in the province of Buenos Aires (Auyero, 2000; Calvo and Murillo, 2004; Levitsky and Murillo, 2003, 2005; Szwarcberg, 2009) by diffusing an image of invincibility that discourages party splits and strategic voting (Cox, 1997; Domínguez et al., 2004; Magaloni, 2006). In this regard, I hypothesize that rally attendance has a direct effect in the coordination of the opposition, enabling it when turnout is lower than expected and disabling it when voter turnout is higher than expected.

Case selection and data

To test the hypotheses advanced in this article, I combine qualitative and quantitative data gathered in Argentina and Peru, with a rich secondary literature for the cases of Mexico and Brazil. Quantitative data were gathered in Argentina, a country that shares the characteristic features of many new democracies: institutional weakness and political instability (Levitsky and Murillo, 2005) with an institutionalized party system (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995) and political parties with stable roots in society and solid party organizations. The two majority parties, the *Unión Cívica Radical* (UCR), and the (Peronist) *Partido Justicialista* (PJ), maintain territorial control over the municipalities by combining a common history that created 'communities of fate' (Welhofer, 1979) and 'electorates of belonging' (Panebianco, 1988) with clientelistic inducements (Auyero, 2000; Calvo and Murillo, 2004; Levitsky, 2003; Levitsky and Murillo, 2005; Szwarcberg, 2009; Torre, 2005).

I selected the municipalities of José C. Paz, San Miguel and Bahía Blanca in Buenos Aires; and the cities of Córdoba, Río Cuarto, Villa María and Colonia Caroya in Córdoba due to their regional differences in levels of economic development, demographic characteristics and electoral patterns. Although not a representative sample, these municipalities comprise considerable variation in the independent variables used in quantitative studies of vote buying and clientelism, such as partisanship, incumbency, population, housing quality, income and education to provide suggestive findings.

Table 2. Case selection and data.

Municipality	Party bosses and advisors interviewed	No. of councilmen participating in the 2005 election	Archival research (municipal level)
Córdoba Capital	5	31	*La Voz del Interior* *La Mañana de Córdoba*
Río Cuarto	2	19	*El Puntal*
Villa María	3	12	*La Voz del Interior* *La Mañana de Córdoba*
Colonia Caroya	2	7	*La Voz del Interior* *La Mañana de Córdoba*
José C. Paz	5	20	*La Hoja*
San Miguel	3	24	*La Hoja*
Bahía Blanca	4	24	*La Nueva Provincia*
Total	24	137	

To test the argument advanced in this article, I recorded the performance of party brokers at rallies and after the national election of October 2005. Although a mid-term election, in 2005 the Peronist party was voting for its Presidential candidate for 2007. As a result, this election was as central and competitive as the following Presidential election. In Argentina, party bosses assign positions on the party closed-ballot to reward reliable brokers and punish unreliable ones. As a result, we expect to observe that candidates who succeed in turning out voters at rallies and getting votes at elections are rewarded with higher-ranked positions, while those who failed are punished with lower-ranked positions. Positions on the party ticket thus provide information about the boss's assessment of brokers' reliability, and by tracing changes in a candidate's positions on the ticket we can measure their reliability (or lack of it) for the party boss.

By combining information from printed party ballots at the municipal, provincial and national level with electoral data from the Minister of the Interior, the Electoral Provincial Judiciary and the Electoral Municipal Judiciary, I was able to test whether candidates ran in the following election, for which office, in which position, and if they were elected or re-elected.

In making comparisons between the positions that candidates received in consecutive elections I did not take into account the nominal position, but the likelihood that the candidate had to get elected based on the position he or she received in each election. To make these calculations, I used the number of seats the party obtained in the previous election as a proxy; and building on this information, I established whether a candidate received a better, equal, or worse position in the following election in terms of electability.

Another indicator that I used was re-election. In contrast to ballot position, in which the outcome depends only on party bosses' evaluations, the possibility that reliable candidates get re-elected varies based on a combination of factors that are not under their control, such as the charisma of the party nominee, the economic situation, the performance of other parties, the social context, etcetera. Thus, a candidate can succeed in getting re-elected with a small turnout or lose with a high turnout conditional upon the turnout of the opposition. Still, re-election serves to provide more metrics, although imperfect, about the effects of reliability on a candidate's political career.

To evaluate each broker's capacity to turn out voters at rallies and get voter support at elections, I asked party bosses if brokers had met their expectations. I predicted party bosses answering either yes or no, but some responded that in the case of party rallies some party agents had over-fulfilled their expectations. I asked these questions during the national election of October 2005. As the election was taking place or had just finished by the time I was interviewing party leaders, they had a very clear memory of their evaluations. I interviewed the mayors of Río Cuarto, Villa María, Colonia Caroya, José C. Paz and Bahía Blanca, and leaders of the opposition parties in each case. In cases in which I could not interview the party leaders directly, I relied on information provided by main advisors and/or private secretaries who had access to the party leaders' evaluations of their agents. To double-check the information, I consulted key informants in each municipality and also reports about rally attendance published in municipal, provincial and national newspapers.

In evaluating the ability of a party broker to get votes on Election Day, bosses compare the number of votes the broker received in his or her neighbourhood in the past vis-à-vis the number of voters he or she obtained in the present election given the popularity of the party's nominee, the economic situation and certain contextual events such as media scandals that can affect the popularity of the party before an election.

Table 2 describes the sources of information used in this article. Column 1 describes the names of the municipalities and column 2 the number of party bosses, close advisors and private secretaries interviewed in each municipality. Column 3 describes the number of elected brokers participating in the 2005 election in each municipality, and,

finally, column 4 describes the sources of archival research in each municipality.

Signalling voter turnout, and rewarding and punishing party brokers

In being rewarded or punished based on the number of voters they mobilized to rallies, brokers will seek to make every single mobilized voter visible to the party boss. To achieve this goal, brokers distribute broker-made hats and t-shirts, and make sure that voters wear these identifiers at the rally. In every one of the over 60 rallies I attended in Argentina in 2002, 2005, 2006 and 2009, and Peru in 2006, I observed party brokers distributing identifiers to voters. In addition, brokers use banners and ask supporters to remain together to make them both visible and countable to the party elite who are monitoring the brokers' capacity to turn out voters.

In his memoirs about the Presidential campaign of 1990, Nobel Prize writer and front-runner Presidential candidate, Mario Vargas Llosa (2005), describes the organization of the rally to celebrate his party's *Libertad* (Freedom) coalition with *Acción Popular* (Popular Action) and the *Partido Popular Cristiano* (Popular Christian Party). Vargas Llosa recalls being aware of the opportunity the rally would provide to parties to display the number of voters they could mobilize. Vargas Llosa (2005: 104) remembers having explicitly asked party leaders of the coalition to ask candidates not to divide voters by making them easily identifiable to a specific party.

> Contrary to what was agreed to unify the groups of supporters to show the fraternal spirit of our political alliance each group of voters only applauded and cheered his political leader to prove how many voters they had mobilized.

During the Argentine national election of 2009, I observed how the governor of the Argentine province of San Luis, Alberto Rodríguez Saá, used local rallies to monitor brokers' work in the neighbourhoods.[5] Invited to a rally by Nélida Perez, a party broker who lives and works in a neighbourhood built by the government in Villa Mercedes, I asked her why the governor would spend time campaigning in a neighbourhood he knew he would carry. Instead, why not visit a swing neighbourhood where his presence could contribute to changing voters' minds? On our way to the rally, Nélida explained to me that the governor was not concerned about getting votes, but monitoring brokers' reliability.

> Here everyone votes for the Rodríguez Saá. Alberto [Rodríguez Saá] knows this. He is not here to get the votes, but to monitor us. They use rallies to see who is working in the neighborhoods, who is solving voters' problems.[6]

This case suggests that rallies are vital tools for party leaders to gather information about their agents' reliability. Further research that supports my argument is presented in Geert Banck's (1998) narrative about Brazilian political parties' failure to organize a civic protest rally during election time in the state of Espírito Santo.[7] In mid-August 1992, Brazil was living an electoral year in the midst of an economic recession and an unprecedented political crisis that would lead to the impeachment of President Fernando Collor de Mello. Joining pro-impeachment rallies across the country, voters in the state of Espírito Santo began organizing a *carreata* (car rally). A multiparty platform led by the *petista* incumbent mayor, Vítor Buaiz, met to organize the rally.[8]

> Part of the debate was about the fact that it was election time and all participants would be likely to use their own campaign slogans, merely adding some anti-Collor phrases. Buaiz was pushing hard to have a real non-partisan rally with themes such as ethics in politics, restoration of dignity and the defense of democracy as a way to building a more just society. [. . .]
>
> The next Sunday morning many cars assembled in the Tancredômo, the local version of the Sanbôdromo, the famous Rio carnival parade place. As well as carrying anti-Collor slogans, practically all the cars were also very visibly adorned with the names of candidates and their party colors and symbols. The drivers parked their cars near their candidate's van or truck, which was packed with loudspeakers and propaganda materials. Some had so many election banners that the anti-Collor slogans were almost invisible as were some of the black flags.[9]

Even though Banck uses this event to study personalism in the Brazilian body politic, his fieldwork and ethnographic data provide further support for my theory. Information gathered at rallies enables party bosses to adjust the distribution of rewards by taking political promotions and goods away from proved unreliable party brokers. Table 3 shows the number of candidates that ran in the following election given their abilities to turn out voters at rallies and in the 2005 election. Among the 63 candidates that ran in the following election, 14 ran in higher positions than those they held in the past election, 29 ran in similar positions as those in the past, and 20 ran in worse positions. Only 31 candidates succeeded in being re-elected.

The results support this article's thesis that party bosses compare information from voter turnout at rallies and elections to infer a broker's reliability and distribute rewards and punishments accordingly. For instance, all candidates that turned out more voters than expected at rallies were re-elected regardless of not fulfilling the boss's expectations on voter turnout at the election. On the other hand, candidates who failed in turning out voters at rallies were not re-elected, and only three of them ran in similar positions. In tracing these cases, I found that these successful

Table 3. Party brokers' positions on the party ticket and re-election based on voter turnout at rallies and voter support at elections.

		Voter turnout at rallies		
		Above expectations	As expected	Below expectations
Voter support at elections	As expected	N=5 *Positions:* 5 better positions *All re-elected*	N=25 *Positions:* 10 didn't run 1 worse position 10 same positions 4 better positions *13 Re-elected*	N=21 *Positions:* 13 didn't run 5 worse positions 3 same positions *None re-elected*
	Below expectations	N=8 *Positions:* 2 didn't run 1 same position 5 better positions *6 Re-elected*	N=28 *Positions:* 17 didn't run 11 same positions *7 Re-elected*	N=50 *Positions:* 32 didn't run 14 worse positions 4 same positions *None re-elected*

candidates were local celebrities, two athletes and one actress, and thus they were likely to get re-elected regardless of their inability to mobilize voters to participate in rallies. Brokers that do not enjoy the same name recognition as celebrity candidates understand that actors and athletes belong to a different category and are thus not evaluated by turning out voters at rallies.

Monitoring voter participation at rallies

Besides using rallies to display their ability to turn out voters, I hypothesize that brokers monitor voters' obedience by taking attendance at rallies. Like schoolteachers, brokers have a list with the names of every voter whose problem they have solved in the past, are solving in the present, mostly by providing them with material resources, and might solve in the future if the voters show that they will be willing to turn out to support the party. Mabel, the private secretary of a councillor in the city of Córdoba explained that candidates use rosters 'made in Excel and organized alphabetically' with the names of beneficiaries of welfare programmes, public employees and voters who had asked for favors.[10]

The mechanism of taking attendance resembles that teachers use in classrooms when they call students by their first and last name and wait for their answer. While all brokers who monitor voters take attendance, they take attendance in different moments and one or more times before, during and after the rally. Some brokers take attendance at their political organizations before getting into the buses hired by the party to drive voters to the rally. Other brokers prefer to take attendance on the bus while driving to the rally, at the rally, or even on the bus returning from the rally. Party brokers' confidence in voters actually turning out at rallies once attendance had been taken explains variation in when and where brokers take attendance.

For instance, an experienced party broker who was working for the candidacy of Chiche Duhalde in San Miguel in 2005 told me that it was the first time that voters would not 'even get in the bus if I took attendance at the party headquarters. Therefore, to be sure that they were coming I took attendance at the rally, and I distributed goods only when we got back from the rally. It was crazy, unheard of if you ask me'.[11] The testimony quoted below from a party activist in Buenos Aires further portrays the monitoring mechanisms at work.

> They come to pick you up at home with the bus and bring you to the local political association of the candidate who mobilized you. After taking attendance they give you a pack of cigarettes, a sandwich, and wine. When we get back from the rally, they give you the merchandise [generally a box with cooking and cleaning products].[12]

Still, whereas brokers can be effective in taking attendance at rallies, monitoring works only if voters believe that failing to participate will imply losing received benefits. To create and enforce this belief, brokers punish voters who fail to turn out to rallies. During the 2005 electoral campaign in Buenos Aires, Enrique, a candidate in the municipality of José C. Paz, had rented four buses to transport voters to attend a rally that was going to take place in a neighbouring municipality. The day of the rally, voter turnout was much lower than Enrique had expected, and voters who participated at the rally travelled comfortably seated in two buses.

José, an unemployed voter who was enrolled in a welfare programme thanks to Enrique, was one of the candidate's followers who failed to attend the rally. The rally was on a Sunday, the same day as José's grandson's birthday, and he chose to remain at the party his daughter had organized instead of attending yet another rally. The following month,

José found out that he had been removed (*dar de baja*) from the welfare programme he was receiving.

> When I went to talk to Enrique, he explained to me that I couldn't get the welfare program anymore because this was a program for only four months. I told him that I was receiving the program for almost a year, and if it was only for four months I should not have received it for the last couple of months. Also, I knew my neighbor was still getting it and it had been more than four months. He smiled and told me, 'but Pedro [the neighbor] is a good fellow, he always comes when I ask him.' I didn't know what to say, I felt so humiliated. I was there begging for 350 pesos [U$S 100 per month] and promising whatever. He just used me to set an example, and you know what the worst thing is? That it really worked. Since they took the program away from me, and people found out, no one else ever failed to attend a rally. And I mean no one.[13]

After Enrique showed that a failure to attend rallies has consequences, his followers were more likely to participate in rallies. In follow-up conversations with Enrique's party boss, I found out that he had not failed in turning out the expected number of voters in following rallies.

Voters' signalling gratitude or fear

Rallies make voters' attendance visible providing grateful voters an opportunity to display their gratitude, and fearful voters an opportunity to turn out to preserve the flow of material resources. In his insightful political ethnography, Javier Auyero (2000) describes how rallies serve voters to publicly display their gratitude towards elected representatives who help them to solve their daily problems.

> Silvina receives food from Andrea [party broker]. Silvina got her husband's pension (he is an invalid, afflicted with sclerosis of the liver) through the timely intervention of Andrea. Since then, Silvina attends the [Peronist (political party)] rallies with Andrea: 'I always tell him [my husband], we have to be thankful when someone does a favor for you. [Andrea] told me: the only favor I ask from you is that you accompany me to the rallies. And I told her: No problem, of course' Silvina's husband agrees: 'We have to thank her.' (p. 161)

Still, the fact that some attendants participate in rallies to display their gratitude does not imply that the gratitude is indeed heart-felt. On the other hand, some voters turn out because they believe that failing to participate will affect the flow of goods and their ability to get their problems solved in the future.

> I know that I have to go with her [party broker] instead of with someone else. Because she gave me medicine, or some milk, or a packet of yerba or sugar, I know that I have to go to her rally in order to fulfill my obligation to her, to show my gratitude. Because, if I do not go to her rally, then, when I need something, she won't give it to me. [She would say,] 'Go ask the person who went to the rally with you' (p. 160)

My own ethnographic work about the tactics employed by female party activists in the distribution of a food programme in Buenos Aires describes and analyses the relationship between Rosa Acevedo, a party broker who ran a soup kitchen, with Alicia, a neighbour who helped her cook for beneficiaries of a welfare programme. Although Rosa believes that Alicia is thankful and comprehends her, I draw on several testimonies to show that this was not true. Alicia told me several times how she did not care about politics, but she participated in rallies and elections simply because she had no alternative. In her own words: 'She [Rosa] knew that the girls [other workers] and I needed the job so she exploited us, made us go to rallies.'[14] By understanding this relationship in terms of shared meanings and cultural practices, we would have completely misunderstood the relationship domination existing in this linkage.

These examples illustrate that voters participate in rallies for different, even contradictory, reasons. The focus of this article is not on explaining why voters attend rallies, but to highlight how rallies' visibility induce voters to turn out regardless of whether they participate out of gratitude or fear.

Signalling and the opposition

Attendance at rallies is informative about government power (Cox, 2009), as well as 'cheering crowds at rallies, TV coverage of adoring supporters, and massive numbers of real voters' (Geddes, 2006: 21) serve to signal the government's base of support. The effort that the Soviets put into campaign rallies to avoid poorer-than-expected attendance at these publicly observable events suggests that they saw a positive probability of a signal of debility being sent and worked to avoid it actually being sent (Cox, 2009: footnote 5, p. 12). A party that is very successful in mobilizing voters to participate at rallies signals local candidates its capacity to turn out voters increasing the costs of splitting from the party. In addition, rallies also serve to send signals to different factions within the party that can be considering splitting.

Hegemonic parties like the Institutional Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, PRI) in Mexico seem to have been more concerned with internal splits than with challenges from external parties engaging in systematic electoral fraud to obtain significant margins of victory at the polls to deter potential opponents (Magaloni, 2006; Simpser, 2010). Alberto Simpser (2010) argues that incumbents engage in electoral manipulation, not only to win elections, but also to consolidate and monopolize political power. In examining the cases of Russia, Iran and Mexico the author shows how incumbents engaged in electoral manipulation in situations in which the practice did not

contribute to the party's electoral victory; moreover, 'victory could be secured with substantially less manipulation or with none at all' (p. 3). Building on this theoretical framework, I argue that rallies matter because, as with electoral manipulation, they convey information to a wide range of actors about the incumbent's capacity to mobilize voters.

On the other hand, rallies contribute to strengthening local monopolies by consolidating their image of invincibility. Rallies can also prove to be the monopoly's Achilles heel if voters manage to coordinate and avoid attending to rallies. Once voters fail to turn out, the opposition learns that they have a unique opportunity to compete for office. This was the case of the electoral victory of the *Alianza* (Alliance), an electoral coalition between the UCR and the FREPASO (*Frente por un País Solidario*, Front for a Country in Solidarity, a party composed of Peronist candidates disillusioned with President Menem's administration) in the 1997 congressional elections in Argentina.

The rallies organized by the *Alianza* contributed to coordinating the opposition and assuring voters that it was possible to defeat the PJ in its electoral stronghold: the province of Buenos Aires. Overcrowded rallies provided the *Alianza'*s candidate, Graciela Fernández Meijide, the confidence necessary to call voters 'to receive with one hand [welfare programs and goods delivered by the government] and to vote with the other' (Szwarcberg, 2004: 2).

In viewing the public support the party received in rallies, those candidates among the electoral coalition that were not supportive of the electoral strategy decided to accept and support it. As was expected, the coalition obtained most middle-class votes, but it also received the electoral support from working and low-income voters, traditionally core supporters of the PJ.[15]

Party rallies in comparative perspective

Recent studies of electoral and competitive authoritarianism (Gandhi, 2008; Levitsky and Way, 2010; Schedler, 2006) suggest that rallies from Russia to Singapore have similar effects in contributing to reward loyal supporters, deterring the organization of the opposition and monitoring voter support. Overcrowded rallies publicly display the severe imbalances in resources and support between the incumbent and potential challengers deterring splints from the ruling coalition and the organization of the opposition. Still, if voter turnout at rallies is lower than expected it could have an effect on the choices and behaviour of political actors by significantly changing their strategies from quiescence obedience to open defiance. Rallies could also have an effect on voters' decision to participate in elections.[16]

If brokers were successful at turning out voters at rallies, but failed in producing party votes, candidates would not care about rallies. The fact that they do suggests that there is a relationship between participation at rallies and electoral support, and further research is needed to fully comprehend the causality and effects of this relationship.

In taking place before elections, rallies contribute to shape perceptions and as a result they have a direct, and in some cases substantive, effect on electoral results by contributing to the organization or disorganization of the opposition and the mobilization or demobilization of voters. The literature on electoral manipulation suggests that rallies have effects beyond electoral support. Rallies contribute to generate perceptions of control (or absence of it) and thus have an effect on candidates' and parties' perceptions about the government's capacity to exercise power effectively.

Rallies like elections in authoritarian regimes 'are not surveys of sincere well informed public opinion' (Geddes, 2006: 20). Voters participate in rallies to display their gratitude towards those who had helped them by solving their problems, as well as to secure that they will not be punished securing the flow of benefits they are receiving thanks to a party broker. And, while voters could participate at rallies to reciprocate the favours and guarantee benefits, they could also be at a rally simply because they fear the consequences of being absent.

Political candidates combine information gathered by conducting surveys, interviewing party operatives and informants, walking the neighbourhoods and organizing and executing rallies. This article focuses on the signalling and informational dimensions of party rallies by studying its electoral effects in Latin America.

Ultimately, rallies matter because in politics numbers matter, and rallies provide party leaders with an opportunity to display the party's support in a straightforward and visible manner. As such, their potential and appeal should not be discarded, even in the mass and social media era.

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Notes

1. Here I assume that preferences among voters are homogeneous and thus the effect of receiving a clientelistic inducement will have the same effect across all voters. If voters have different probabilities to turn out and vote for the party if given a particularistic good, then brokers will make different decisions about who to target with particularistic benefits. For a discussion about what type of voters candidates will target with particularistic inducements, see Cox and McCubbins

(1986), Dixit and Londregan (1996), Stokes (2005), Cox (2010), Nichter (2008), Diaz-Cayeros et al. (2008), Dunning and Stokes (2009) and Gans-Morse et al. (2009).

2. Countries not only vary with regard to compulsory voting, but also with regard to sanctions against non-voters. For a list of countries that have compulsory voting and the type of sanctions see: http://www.idea.int/vt/compulsory_voting.cfm
3. Quoted in Cornelius (2004: 47).
4. Interview conducted by me in José C. Paz, November 2005.
5. A centre–west province of over 447,000 inhabitants San Luis that has been governed by the brothers Adolfo and Alberto Rodríguez Saá since the return of democracy in 1983.
6. Interview conducted by me in Villa Mercedes, San Luis, July 2009; my translation. This and all the remaining translations from the Spanish are mine.
7. Fieldwork was conducted by me in the State of Espírito Santo during the campaign visit of Fernando Henrique Cardoso in 1996, and the campaign for mayor of Vitória, the state capital, in 1992.
8. 'One of the founding fathers of the Workers' Party (PT), Vítor Buaiz, was generally admired for his moral stance in politics. His administration, which was soon coming to an end, had been highly successful. He had been extremely popular in 1992, giving rise to the exceptional situation of all three candidates trying very hard to identify with him' (Banck, 1998: 36).
9. Banck (1998: 38 f.).
10. Interview conducted by me in the city of Córdoba, April 2006.
11. Interview conducted by me in José C. Paz, Buenos Aires, September 2005.
12. Quoted in Daniel Otero (1997: 36).
13. Interview conducted by me in José C. Paz, Buenos Aires, December 2005.
14. Interview conducted by me in Sargento Barrufaldi, Buenos Aires, March 2000.
15. This can be inferred from the vast advantage the coalition obtained in the *Conurbano* of Buenos Aires, as well as the respectable results in places where Peronist landslides were expected, such as San Martin (their greatest defeat), Moreno, Merlo, Florencio Varela, Berazategui and La Matanza. See *Clarín* and *La Nación* newspapers Monday 27 October 1997. For reference to the Conurbano, see note 9.
16. For instance, Simpser (2009) finds that electoral manipulation in Mexico discouraged voters from turning out during the PRI's rule.

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Author biography

Mariela Szwarcberg is a Postdoctoral Lecturer at the University of Chicago's Center for Latin American Studies. Previously, she was a visiting fellow at the University of Notre Dame's Kellogg Institute for International Studies and at Yale University's Program on Democracy. Her research focuses on understanding the incentives that lead to the persistence of clientelism in consolidated democracies. She is also interested in questions of political participation, voter turnout and gender and development in new democracies. Szwarcberg holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Chicago and has published in the *Journal of Comparative Politics, Latin American Research Review, Social Networks* and *Women's Policy Journal of Harvard*.