

Trabajo presentado en el V Congreso Nacional de Ciencia Política - Sociedad Argentina de  
Análisis Político - 14 al 17 de Noviembre de 2001

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Panel

Opción I: Carlos Acuña "Reforma económica, reforma institucional y políticas públicas"

Opción II: Mario Serrafiero "Partidos y procesos políticos comparados"

Título

**Clientelism and Democracy**  
**An Analysis of Ecological Data from Argentina \***

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\* Este trabajo forma parte de un proyecto que se desarrolla bajo la dirección de Susan Stokes - University of Chicago. Una versión previa del mismo fue presentado en el 2001 Meeting de la American Political Science Association, Septiembre-Agosto de 2001

## Clientelism and New Democracies

To elect is to choose. A fundamental tenet of democratic theory is that voters should be able to make their choices freely. Of course our choices are never completely free but always constrained by the alternatives that political parties and leaders present to us. But at least among these constrained choices, democratic theory posits that we do, or should, choose freely. And yet a nagging worry of students of real democracies, especially new democracies in the developing world, is that poverty and dependence distort the choices that many citizens make.

The term *clientelism* crystallizes these concerns. It is a term that has made a big comeback in recent years, as scholars and observers turn their attention to politics in the new democracies of Latin America, Eastern Europe, and parts of Africa and Asia (see, e.g., Kitschelt 2000, Robinson and Verdier 2000, Diaz-Cayeros, Estévez, and Magaloni 2001, Medina and Stokes 2001). They find it a useful term because, in new democracies from Mexico to Bulgaria to Taiwan, parties sometimes appear to compete not by presenting attractive candidates and offering policy programs. Instead they give out goods – a bag of rice, a cooking pot, a job – and expect a vote in return.<sup>1</sup> And governments, looking toward reelection, channel individual rewards to supporters rather than public goods to a broader set of constituents. If individual payoffs to poor voters induce them to choose parties and candidates whose policies are bad for them, and if this electoral support allows parties and governments to get away with providing insufficient public goods and distorts debates over public policy, then the quality of these new democracies is tarnished.

This paper uses demographic, electoral, and fiscal data to explore the voting choices of poor people in Argentina. We have constructed databases that include census data and aggregate voting returns in a number of elections in two Argentine provinces. We examine these data for evidence that political parties' *efforts* to mobilize support with clientelist payoffs make a difference in the voting *choices* that poor people make. Most analyses of voting behavior in Argentina and elsewhere in Latin America use public opinion polls, which offer only limited opportunities to explore the structure of voting over time and the effect of location-specific government performance on people's subsequent electoral decisions.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, many ecological analyses from the region – such as those of Valenzuela and Scully (1997), or Mora y Araujo and Llorente (1975) – fail to deal with problems of inference from aggregate data to individual behavior. To avoid these pitfalls we employ techniques developed by Gary King (1997).

The paper is part of a broader project, the goal of which is to identify the conditions under which democracies undergo a transition from clientelist to programmatic politics. To identify the conditions for this transition we first need a rigorous ways of identifying clientelism and measuring its impact. One can turn to the literature for several trenchant theoretical discussions of clientelism, and for many rich descriptions of how it works on the ground. But relatively little has been accomplished to measure its actual electoral impact. We do not claim in this paper to solve the daunting methodological problems involved, but

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<sup>1</sup> The most substantial object that we have seen reported as an inducement for a vote is automatic washing machines, which the Mexican PRI reportedly distributed before the 2000 national elections.

<sup>2</sup> For some exceptions, see Ames 2001, Schady 2000, Roberts and Arce 1998, Valenzuela and Scully 1997, Mora y Araujo y Llorente 1975.

just to think out loud (or in print) about what kind of tracks clientelist mobilization might leave in aggregate voting patterns.<sup>3</sup> The overall thrust of the paper, as the reader will see, is to cast some doubt on the claim that clientelist parties in post-transition Argentina succeeded in inducing electoral support by offering clientelist payoffs to individual voters. Rather than being anchored by clientelist practices, poor people's electoral choices were more volatile than those of people who were better off, and equally sensitive to the ability of parties in government to produce public or collective goods for their communities.

We define clientelism as the *exchange between politicians and voters of material private goods for votes*. Under clientelism, electoral support is the sole criterion on which politicians give goods to voters. This exclusively electoral criterion distinguishes clientelist exchanges from programmatic exchanges, in which the beneficiaries are defined by more universalistic or generic categories. Several theorists associate clientelism with the provision by politicians of *private goods*, in contrast to programmatic politics, in which politicians provide *public goods* (Robinson and Verdier, 2000, Diaz-Cayeros, Estévez, and Magaloni 2001).<sup>4</sup> We disagree with half of this equation: whereas most public goods provisions are the stuff of programmatic politics, not all private goods provisions are the stuff of clientelism (see Medina and Stokes 2001). A change in the tax code, for example, creates winners and losers and is not a public good from the losers' perspective. Yet it is a programmatic change: in most democracies, alterations of the tax code follow lengthy public debates, must be approved by multiple actors in executive and legislative branches, and are tailored to help (and hurt) abstractly construed subsets of the citizenry (the middle class, single parents, technology corporations), categories that are more abstract than *people who will vote for us*. In contrast, clientelist exchanges do not involve public or collective goods. Collective goods give non-excludable benefits to an entire collectivity, and hence cannot be channeled only to those who support the party that provides the goods. In sum, whereas private-goods provision may be part of either clientelism or programmatic politics, public goods provision is deeply in tension with clientelism.

Most people's hunch is that clientelism is undemocratic. But this hunch has yet to be developed into a full explanation, nor is it universally shared. Kitschelt et al. (1999) claim that, under clientelist mobilization, parties' exchange of material benefits with voters is "direct", whereas under programmatic mobilization the exchange is "indirect", implying that clientelism raises no normative problems (but see Kitschelt 2000). Scott (1969) sees patronage-based political parties as a step toward the institutionalization of politics in poor countries and anti-patronage, good- government reforms as a threat to institutionalization. Schaffer (2000) studies the introduction of the secret ballot in new democracies, a reform

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<sup>3</sup> To get a sense of the difficulty of measuring clientelism, consider the Mavrogordatos's study of Greek politics between the World Wars. He begins with a persuasive conceptual and historical discussion that identifies three bases of party mobilization: class cleavages, charismatic leadership, and clientelism. But when he turns to an analysis of electoral outcomes, he simply declares clientelism to be impossible to study and limits his analysis to class and charisma.

<sup>4</sup> Clientelism is, therefore, also distinct from a third form of political exchange, known in the U.S. vernacular as *pork-barrel politics*: the redistribution of resources from a national polity to a geographically circumscribed segment of that polity, mediated by the representative of the smaller segment who hopes to extend his or her political career (Aldrich 1995). Pork-barrel politics presents normative problems of its own. But it involves the provision of what from the perspective of recipients are public goods, and is therefore distinct from clientelism as we conceptualize it.

that eliminates a technology useful to parties that want to enforce the clientelist bargain. He finds that the secret ballot can have the nefarious effect of depressing turnout. But the majority view is that clientelism is bad for democracy and development. Politicians target the poor for clientelist payoffs, taking advantage of their need for immediate benefits and their limited information and autonomy (Wilson and Banfield 1963). It discourages the provision of public goods (Robinson and Verdier 2000). It deters the entry of challengers and hence is associated with local political monopolies and pockets of authoritarianism in transitional democracies (Diaz-Cayeros, Estévez, and Magaloni 2001). It keeps voters' incomes below what they would be if politics were competitive (Medina and Stokes, 2001). And because it feeds on poverty, clientelism creates an interest among politicians in economic stagnation (Chubb, 1981). Clientelism is the politics of the self-enclosed village, controlled by patrons and notables, whereas programmatic mobilization is the politics of outward-looking, entrepreneurial, and developing polities (Popkin, 1979).

### **Clientelism and Party Mobilization in Argentina**

Whatever its normative status, the claim is frequently made that clientelism plays a leading role in the unfolding of national politics in many new democracies. Argentina is a good example. Clientelism is invoked to explain a big puzzle in that country's recent political history. The puzzle is this. Within a decade of the transition from military rule to democracy, a party came to power that had always represented the interests and aspirations of labor unions and the poor (the *descamisados* or "shirtless ones"), had always been suspicious of international capital and free trade, and had always embraced a model of aggressive intervention in the economy and of welfare statism. The party's presidential candidate reiterated these basic stances in his campaign (see Stokes 2001). Yet once in power the party reversed its historical stances: it quarreled with labor unions, freed trade, privatized industry, and forged an alliance with the Right and with the most internationalized sectors of the national bourgeoisie.<sup>5</sup> The party's policies after this about-face brought some stability but a lot of pain to its traditional bases: unemployment surged, the value of pensions and other social transfers declined, wages fell. Yet through all this poor voters, rather than abandoning the party, continued to provide it with electoral support. Why?

The answer of some students of Argentine politics is that the Peronist party (*Partido Justicialista*, PJ) under Carlos Menem enmeshed its poor constituents in a system of clientelism, giving what it glossed as "gifts" from party operatives: food, medicines, sometimes jobs. The party induced them to forego a more favorable set of public policies by taking advantage of their immediate needs, needs that, ironically, were made all the more pressing by the liberalization and the rollback of the welfare state.

Clientelism as the solution to the puzzle of poor Argentines' persistent support of Peronism appears in some of the most compelling accounts Argentine politics in the 1990s. Levitsky (1999) offers a detailed account of how the provision of food, favors, and jobs reinforced the Peronist party organization in Buenos Aires. Auyero (2001) even more

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<sup>5</sup> For accounts of why the Peronists under Menem switched to policies that could be expected to alienate their popular base, see Murillo 2001, Stokes 2001, McGuire 1997, and Palermo and Novoa [Novaro] 1996.

explicitly credits clientelism with the survival of popular support for Peronism. Here's how clientelism works, according to Auyero. Peronist operatives – “brokers” who own *unidades básicas*, community service centers – give poor people handouts of food, medicine, and sometimes employment (e.g., a loyal, struggling community resident becomes an operative's maid). They also give out information about when and where people can obtain handouts from other (Church, government) sources. The exchange is not a strict *quid pro quo*, which in any case would be hard for the party to enforce. Instead, the Peronists' “personal problem-solving networks” (:84) and the steady flow of minor assistance – the food, medicines, information – create among the recipients a sense of obligation to the party, and this sense of obligation induces them to vote Peronist.

Levitsky and Auyero describe Peronism in Buenos Aires as series of carrots. A team of political anthropologists from the National University of Misiones, who studied the political mobilization of poor people in the province, describes it as a mix of carrots and sticks. One scholar who conducted ethnographic research during the electoral campaign of 1999 explained the role of a prominent merchant and businessman in one of the larger towns. Because of the extent of his economic power there, she jokingly referred to him as the “owner of the town” (*el dueño del pueblo*). The *dueño del pueblo* had supported a fellow Peronist who became mayor in 1995. But when the mayor became too independent, the *dueño* in effect fired him. He decided that his son would make a better mayor. According to the researcher, not only did the mayor lose his day job but many townspeople who were employees of the *dueño* or depended on him for services believed that their welfare was at risk if they didn't support his son.<sup>6</sup> Alvarez, another member of the National University of Misiones team, quotes a Peronist *puntero* (the rough equivalent of a ward boss in the U.S.) who used a mix of favors and social control in trying to produce votes for his party:

[On election day] we have to keep them [*retenerlos*]. In the early morning, or the night before, we bring them down from the mountains... Then we bring them down and send them to Pedro. That night they drink, eat *asado*, dance, and the next day they vote; but we keep them there because otherwise they get taken away [*nos sacan*]. You have to have them tied down [*sujetos*]. We put the ballot straight in their pocket.

Alvarez underscores the “sense of control over others” that the *punteros*' words convey (1999:8).

A wealthy man like the *el dueño del pueblo* can exert political influence by throwing resources behind his favored candidate and denying them to his disfavored one. But how can he influence voters? What means does he have to enforce the apparent clientelist bargain, which in this case is: vote for my son and I won't fire you (cut off your fuel supply, refuse to let you travel on my buses, etc.). The obvious impediment to enforcement is the secret ballot, which Argentines have enjoyed since the Saenz Peña reforms of 1912. The secret ballot makes it difficult for the patron to identify defectors. In this example, if the *dueño*'s son won some votes but lost the election, in meting out punishments the *dueño* would face a challenge like the one facing the authors of this paper: inferring individual votes from aggregate returns (worse: we will be satisfied with abstractions such as proportions of poor voters voting for one party or another!). Still, he

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<sup>6</sup> Yolanda Urquizo, personal communication.

might threaten group punishment and have some effect. He might adopt a decision rule of massive retaliation: if my son loses I fire all the townspeople who work for me and hire replacement workers from the next town over. The townspeople, knowing this rule, might then reason in the following way. Suppose the election is a tie, and mine will be the deciding vote.<sup>7</sup> Therefore if I vote for the incumbent I will lose my job, if I vote for the *dueño's* son I will keep it. Voters would have to feel very strongly indeed about the value of keeping the incumbent in office to support him after making such a calculation.

Yet sometimes the clientelist bargains described in accounts of politics in Argentina and elsewhere seem unenforceable. Consider Auyero's account. He vividly describes the pain suffered by the residents of Cospito City, a poor section of Greater Buenos Aires, a pain that has been perpetual over the decades but was worsened by Menem's policies of liberalization. To retain the loyalty of local people, Peronist organizers spun a web of personal networks and offered lots of small favors. But consider the hypothetical example of a resident of Cospito who loses her job when the Menem government privatizes the company she works for. It seems likely that she would graciously accept all gifts proffered by local Peronist organizers and then vote for opposition parties whose programs promised to soften the blow of liberalization on the poor. Her decision-rule might be: accept gifts, calculate the value of these against the benefits or losses accruing as a result of the government's past policies, and, if the damage done by the government's policies outweighs the private clientelist benefits, vote for the opposition. Another way of making this point is to ask, Why is the Peronists' clientelist strategy, as described by authors such as Auyero, not vulnerable to opposition parties that might offer good public policy, the benefits of which (these same authors imply) would outweigh the minor private benefits of clientelism?

Alvarez offers some good examples of the vulnerability of clientelism to this kind of retrospective calculation. She reports the dismay of a *puntera* (a female *puntero*) in Posadas, the capital of Misiones, looking back on the 1987 congressional election. The *puntera's* party was Radical Party (*Unión CPvica Radical*), led by then-president Raúl Alfonsín. In 1987 the economy was beginning to unravel, and the *puntera* feared that her efforts to transport voters to the polls only delivered votes to the opposition Peronists:

In '87 we lost because we went around like crazy looking for people to vote for us. The country was in a really bad state...the last period of Dr. Alfonsín was very nefarious. So we were sure we were going to lose, and we went out like crazy to look for people who might vote for us and we took anyone [to the polling place]...we lost because we took all the Peronists (*peronchos*) to vote. Their party didn't even bother to mobilize (cited in Alvarez, 1999: 14; my translation).

If clients who, it would seem, should defect don't, perhaps it is because patrons also play a role of persuading them that, if their party did not retain office, things would be worse still. Perhaps we need something less than a full information model to understand the dynamics of clientelism. Or perhaps we need to take seriously the idea of a norm of obligation, which, if powerful, would help enforce the clientelist bargain.

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<sup>7</sup>In stipulating this reasoning, we follow Austen-Smith and Banks, 1996.

The technology of elections in Argentina offers some assistance to parties that attempt to mobilize voters with clientelist inducements. Although it has had the secret ballot since 1912, never has an Argentine government – national, provincial, or local – produced a ballot. Parties provide voters with “ballots” or *boletas*, slips of paper imprinted with the names of candidates and parties, and people vote by depositing these slips of paper, inside envelopes, into ballot boxes. The system seems to allow parties more influence over voters than they would have if voters were presented, in the privacy of the voting booth, with a publicly produced ballot listing the full range of candidates and lists. This influence is made vivid by Alvarez’s description of *punteros* jockeying to “put the ballot straight in [the voters’] pockets”.

One effect of this anachronistic voting method is to make it difficult for voters to split their vote among parties. Vote-splitting would be useful, for example, to a voter under the dominion of the *dueño del pueblo*, who wants to avoid retribution by voting for the *dueño*’s son, but still exercise a negative retrospective vote against the Peronist national administration by voting for the opposition’s presidential candidate. To split the vote in this way, he would have to cut a Peronist ballot and (in 1999) a ballot from the Alianza coalition and recombine them appropriately. He would have to make sure ahead of time that he had the right slips of paper and engage in two cutting operations. Little wonder that parties manage to impose straight-party voting much of the time, as our election data show. In 140 municipalities in the province of Córdoba we calculated the proportion of poor (and non-poor) residents who voted for Peronist candidates in simultaneous national, provincial, and local elections in 1995. The correlation coefficient between proportion of the poor supporting Peronists in the presidential and provincial-legislative elections was 0.88; the correlation among the non-poor was 0.96.

To summarize, we have seen that parties may be able to enforce clientelist bargains of private benefits in exchange for votes, but under some strategic conditions voters will simply take the carrots (or elude the sticks) and vote their will. We have seen that electoral technologies in Argentina may have allowed parties to enforce the clientelist bargain more readily than parties are able to in systems where governments produces universal ballots. And we have seen some persuasive descriptions of *efforts* by parties (in Argentina in particular the Peronist party) to use clientelist incentives to win votes. But we have seen little direct evidence that clientelist incentives overwhelm other considerations in the *actual electoral choices* that poor people make.

## Expectations and Evidence

If clientelism is a powerful force among poor voters, then we should expect a relative *stability* in the voting patterns of poor people over time. Indeed, the stability of the lower-class Peronist vote is a stylized fact on which some authors construct the theory of Argentine clientelism. For these same reasons, if clientelism is a potent force we expect a relative *insensitivity of poor people’s votes to the performance of a party in office*. Finally, if parties, particularly when they are in power, make the best use of scarce resources by channeling private payoffs to the poor and collective goods to wealthier voters, we expect that poor voters support parties that emphasize private expenditures, wealthier ones to parties that favor public goods. Hence we expect a differential retrospective sensitivity of poor and non-poor to incumbents who favor, respectively, private and public goods.

In this section we analyze datasets that contain electoral results and census data, aggregated at the level of municipalities, in two provinces of Argentina: Córdoba and Misiones.<sup>8</sup> In addition we analyze data on budgetary expenditures at the municipal level, in the province of Córdoba. Our decision to analyze elections in Córdoba and Misiones was driven by data availability. But the two provinces present some fortuitous contrasts. Córdoba is one of Argentina's wealthiest provinces, with significant industrial development (automobiles, mining) as well as dairy and cereal farming. The value of its industrial product in 1993 was more than ten times that of Misiones. With a population two-and-one-half that of Misiones (2.5 million versus 1 million), Córdoba has six times the number of hospital beds (in 1995), three times the number of primary and secondary students (1997), and nine times the hotels (1998; all data are from INDEC). Its capital, Córdoba, with a population of about a million, is Argentina's second city. The capital houses the National University of Córdoba, an institution with an august history, remembered throughout Latin America as the site in 1918 of reforms that introduced to the continent the principle of university autonomy. A combative labor movement arose there in the 1960s, eventually instigating the uprising known as the *cordobazo*, which ultimately led to the demise in 1966 of the military dictatorship of General Carlos Onganía. Córdoba has produced two of the country's presidents, both from the Radical Party: Arturo Illía (1963-1966) and Fernando de la Rúa (1999-present).

A traveler who goes from Córdoba to Misiones experiences a change of climate like that between, say, western Kansas and the Louisiana bayous. Córdoba is temperate and verges into foothills of the Andes; Misiones is semi-tropical, with a landscape dominated by lush forests. On the map of Argentina, Misiones appears as a spit of land in the northeast, jutting up across the Paraná River into Brazil and Paraguay. The Iguazú Falls, which lie on the border with Brazil, attract tourism; but tourist flights go directly to Iguazú, so the impact elsewhere in the province is minimal. In the last census (1991) the population of Posadas, the provincial capital, was 136,000. Posadas is a tidy, somewhat sleepy city, where awnings and trees protect pedestrians from the midday heat. There are other large towns, such as Oberá (29,000) and El Dorado (28,000); but much of the province's population lives in small towns and hamlets. Agriculture is the principal economic activity, dominated by tea and *mate* plantations. Logging is also important. Some towns were founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by European immigrants: Germans, Swiss, and Czechs. Others are populated by more recent Latin American immigrants, especially from Paraguay, many of them living in fourth-world conditions. If Córdoba's partisan history is dominated by the Radical party, Misiones's is dominated by the Peronists. In all but one gubernatorial election since the transition to democracy in 1983 the Radicals were triumphant in Córdoba; in all but one the Peronists were triumphant in Misiones.

In addition, then, to our expectations about differences in vote stability and sensitivity to governmental performance, we also have some contrasting expectations about the electoral choices of poor voters in Córdoba and Misiones. Because Misiones is poorer, because its politics are dominated by the Peronist party (more frequently described in the secondary literature as using clientelist strategies than the Radicals or other parties), and,

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<sup>8</sup> We are grateful to Norma Alvarez for providing us with data from Misiones. The Córdoba data were made available by the Justicia Electoral Nacional and the Justicia Electoral Provincial.



finally, because the literature makes more mention of clientelism in the politics of Misiones than of Córdoba, we expect our empirical symptoms of clientelism to be more pronounced in the former than the latter province. Specifically, we expect poor voters in Misiones to have a more stable pattern of voting over time, compared to wealthier people in Misiones and compared to poor people in Córdoba, and we expect the gap between electoral stability of poor and others to be wider in Misiones than in Córdoba.

In both provinces our raw election data consist of returns, by party, in presidential, national-legislative, gubernatorial, provincial-legislative, mayoral, and city council elections in each of 140 municipalities in Córdoba and in each of 75 municipalities in Misiones. The 140 municipalities account for 87% of Córdoba's population, but the sample excludes (because they were unavailable) more than 300 municipalities with populations of less than 2,000 at the 1991 census. We do not know what sort of bias this selection may introduce. The 75 municipalities of Misiones constitute all municipalities in the province. Census data available at the municipal level for Córdoba include population, housing conditions, literacy, age and sex structures, school attendance, and some information on residents' occupations. Census data available at the municipal level in for Misiones include population, quality of housing, unemployment rates, working population, and age and sex structures.

Our first step was to use King's (1997) method of ecological inference to calculate the proportion of poor and non-poor voters supporting the major (Peronist and Radical) parties in each province as a whole, and in the individual municipalities of each. We defined as *poor* people whom the 1991 census found living in "type B" housing, housing that meets at least one of the following criteria: it lacks running water, or sewage connections, or has floors made of dirt or another low-quality material. On average 19% of residents in the 140 municipalities of Córdoba lived in type B housing; the corresponding number for Misiones was 64%.

Table 1 reports province-wide proportions of poor and non-poor voters supporting each party in three provincial legislative elections in the 1990s. Figures 1 and 2 are tomography plots corresponding to 1991 elections in Córdoba and Misiones, respectively. Table 1 reveals several facts. First, in both provinces, the Peronists drew much more support from the poor than from wealthier voters. This finding is consistent with everything we know about electoral politics in Argentina. Second, province-wide levels of support for Peronists among the poor were not very different between the two provinces. Somewhat more than half of poor voters in both provinces voted Peronist in most elections. The Peronists' greater dominance in Misiones was due not to stronger support among the poor but to stronger support among wealthier people, those whose housing placed them in the upper 35% of Misiones's population. In Misiones, 39-44% of wealthier voters supported the Peronists, as against 28-31% in Córdoba. Finally, it is not obvious from these province-wide proportions that poor people's support of the Peronists in either province was more stable from election to election than that of the non-poor; indeed, changes in support over time are if anything greater among poor voters than among the non-poor.

Our next step was to examine the volatility of support from election to election at the municipal level. Table 2 reports the results. We calculated the cell entries in the following way: first we used King's method to calculate proportions of poor (and non-poor) voters supporting the two major parties in each election. Then we calculated the

absolute value of the difference between the proportions of poor (and non-poor) in pairs of elections: 1991-1995, 1995-1999, and 1991-1999 for Córdoba; 1991-1995, 1995-1997, and 1991-1997 for Misiones. The resulting figures confirm what we suspected from table 1: poor people's voting was *more volatile* from election to election than wealthier people's voting. In two-thirds of the pairs of elections the change in the proportion of poor voters supporting a party was greater than the change of proportion of wealthier voters. The finding holds for both Peronist and Radical parties. If clientelism stabilizes poor people's electoral choices, it does not do so powerfully enough to make them more stable than those of the non-poor. The results are less than a resounding vindication of the clientelism hypothesis.

One finding is consistent with the clientelism hypothesis: we do see slightly greater electoral stability among poor voters in Misiones than in Córdoba. For example, averaging the rows corresponding to each province in the first and third columns of table 2, we find an average volatility for poor Peronist supporters in Córdoba of 9.17%, in Misiones of 8.92%. We find an average volatility of poor Radical Party supporters Córdoba of 12.06%, in Misiones of 9.24%. The differences are slight but consistent with the sense of observers that parties exert more clientelist influence over poor voters in Misiones than in Córdoba. On the other hand, the gap in volatility between rich and poor is somewhat larger in Córdoba than in Misiones, against our expectations.

If poor people's voting was more volatile from election to election than wealthier people's, can we detect other class differences in the calculi of support for parties? For example, were the poor responsive to the performance of parties in government? And did the poor show a preference, as the some theoretical treatments propose that political clients will, for governments that expanded the payroll as opposed to those that provided public goods? Did their responsiveness to private versus public goods differ from that of wealthier people? Finally, discussions of clientelism in Argentina focus mainly on the Peronist party. Do we find evidence of a different calculus of support for Radicals versus Peronists?

To answer these questions we made use of budget data, provided to us for the 140 municipalities of Córdoba.<sup>9</sup> Expenditures were from 1994 and 1998, in each case one year before local and provincial elections. Budgets were broken down into the broad rubrics of current and capital expenditures; within the rubric of capital expenditures they were further broken down into public works (*trabajo público*) and other capital expenditures. Aggregating over the whole province, capital expenditures amounted to 28% of the total. Among capital expenditures, 89% fell into the category of public works. Public works were the nuts and bolts of municipal responsibilities: street paving, sewage and running water connections, electrification, etc.

Our first step was to estimate an OLS regression model of the proportion of poor people voting Peronist in the 1995 elections for the provincial legislature. Observations on our dependent variable were the proportions in each municipality generated by the King method.<sup>10</sup> In the model reported in table 3, our independent variables were two interaction

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<sup>9</sup> Data are from the Secretaría de Asuntos Municipales, Provincia de Córdoba.

<sup>10</sup> The imposition of OLS regression does less damage than it might, because none of our observed proportions fell close to the 0 or 1 extremes. We are filling some gaps in our data that will allow us to model

terms. The first (PJBUDGET) interacts a dummy for a Peronist mayor in 1991-95 with per capita municipal expenditures in 1994. The second (UCRBUDGET) interacts a dummy for a Radical mayor in 1991-95 with per capita municipal expenditures in 1994. Hence, if a town's mayor was a Peronist, its score on PJBUDGET was the equivalent of per capita expenditures for that city or town in 1994, and its score on UCRBUDGET was 0.

Expenditures by Peronist mayoral administrations in 1994 increased the proportion of poor voters supporting Peronist candidates in 1995. The reverse effect, of Radical mayors' expenditures depressing support for Peronists, is too small to achieve statistical significance (see table 3).

Wealthier voters' calculus of support for Peronists in response to overall expenditures was almost identical to that of the poor. Table 4 reports an OLS estimation of the proportion of non-poor voters supporting Peronists in 1995 as a function of local per capita expenditures in 1994. The coefficient relating per capita expenditures by Peronists to subsequent non-poor voters' support of Peronists is positive, statistically significant, and nearly identical in magnitude as the one associated with the poor. The coefficient relating Radical expenditures to the subsequent Peronist vote was (as with the poor) negative but statistically insignificant. The model as a whole is a better fit, explaining almost a third of the variation in the proportion of non-poor voters supporting the Peronists.

Hence poor people and not-so-poor people both were responsive to the overall level of local expenditures by Peronists when they decided whether to support the Peronists in the next election.

Did it matter what kinds of expenditures? The two broad categories – current and capital – tend to correspond to different modes of electoral mobilization. Current expenditures are mostly for personnel, and local employment is often cited as the kind of individualistic payoff typical of clientelism. Capital expenditures, by contrast, are on collective goods.<sup>11</sup> Hence if the clientelism hypothesis is to be supported, we expect poor people to be more responsive to current expenditures than to capital ones, and more responsive to current expenditures than are their better-off neighbors. Yet the models reported in tables 5-8 fail to support this hypothesis. Capital expenditures per capita by Peronist mayors in 1994 (PERONCAP) drove up poor people's support for Peronists in the elections of the following year (table 5A) somewhat more strongly than did local expenditures on public employment (PERONEMPLOY, table 5B). Capital expenditures per capita by Peronist mayors in 1994 also drove up wealthier people's support for Peronists in the elections of the following year (table 6A), as did these mayors' expenditures on public employment (table 6B); as with the poor, the latter effect was

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support for candidates in municipal (rather than provincial) elections as a function of municipal fiscal behavior. Given very high correlations between the two, we don't expect big changes in our results.

<sup>11</sup> In some cases municipalities hire local residents for capital projects. However, according to experts in local government in the province whom we consulted, capital projects generally provide employment for outside companies; their main effect on the local electorate is to provide public goods. *[En realidad las opiniones no son tan concluyentes en este sentido. Mario Navarro sostiene firmemente que el trabajo público se usa para hacer clientelismo. Mario Giorda no es tan concluyente, pero deja abierta la posibilidad. En apoyo de su opinión, Mario Navarro nos envió la desagregación de los gastos en trabajos públicos (que te reenvió). Como verás, las partidas contemplan gastos en personal permanente y en personal transitorio. Esto por supuesto no es una prueba. Yo sigo creyendo que si tuviéramos los números veríamos que los gastos en personal para obra pública serían mínimos. Pero es algo que deberemos chequear en entrevistas y en cuentas de algunas municipalidades.]*

attenuated. The magnitude of the effect of public goods (capital) expenditures by Peronist mayors on the poor was somewhat larger than the effect on wealthier voters; the magnitude of the effect of public employment was slightly larger on the non-poor than on the poor. In all cases the effect of Radical mayors' expenditures was to drive down support for Peronists, whether the voters were poor or non-poor, and whether expenditures were in employment or public goods. Never was the effect strong.

Next we studied the effect of choices local governments made about allocating their budgets between private and public goods on subsequent electoral support. We did so by examining not per capita expenditures but proportions devoted to private and public goods (tables 7 and 8). The results do not change, although the magnitude of the effects increases. Both the poor and their better-housed neighbors supported Peronists who favored capital projects; both poor and the non-poor punished Peronist candidates when Radicals administrations spent a lot on capital goods. In both cases the latter effect was weaker than the former. Yet lest this last fact appear as an anomaly, we found that, in a variety of specifications, both poor and wealthier voters supported Radical mayors significantly more when these mayors spent more, either on public goods or on employment.

We repeated all of these analyses with budget data from 1998 and election returns from 1999. The results were basically the same.

The bottom line, then, is that poor voters in Córdoba employed a calculus of support not substantially different from their better-off neighbors. And whatever the differences in Peronists' versus Radical Parties' strategies of mobilization, we find no evidence that voters looked to one party for individualized payoffs, to the other for public goods.

## Discussion

Much remains to be understood about the strategies of electoral mobilization of Argentine political parties and the responses of voters to these strategies. We pretend no exhaustive account, but rather some suggestive results from a new database that we have constructed in a data-poor environment. It remains possible that political parties in effect take advantage of poor voters by offering them private rewards in exchange for their votes, rewards that would not be worth enough to sway the non-poor. But our evidence has in general failed to support this proposition. We found that poor voters' electoral choices tended to be more, not less, volatile from election to election than were those of wealthier voters; they seemed to weigh the performance of governments in providing collective goods in their subsequent electoral choices; they were also responsive to expenditures in public employment; and in no case were their calculi of support very different from those of the better off. We look forward to exploring these issues more deeply with survey and interview data.

Our hunch is that, archaic voting technologies and networks of personal dependence notwithstanding, politics is just too competitive in contemporary Argentina, and the leverage mechanisms available to patrons just too weak, for clientelism to make a big difference in how poor people vote. (The evidentiary basis that this paper provides for our hunch is obviously exceedingly narrow; we look forward to broadening it with data from more provinces, more elections, and with other kinds of data.) We don't doubt the claims of authors such as Levitsky, Auyero, and others, that party organizations, from the perspective of poor citizens, take the form of networks of personal assistance. But when a

government stumbles, economic crisis hits, leaders are caught stealing, or a particularly compelling candidate appears on the scene, in most settings patrons lack the leverage to impose a choice on poor voters whose preferences would lead them in another direction. If we are right, there is a curious lack of fit between compelling descriptions of clientelist mobilizational *efforts by parties*, and the relative impotence of these efforts to *affect voters' choices*. Perhaps Argentina is in a transition period, where parties still try to use clientelism but may in the future increasingly choose to deploy scarce mobilizational resources in other ways, once they have learned that personalized assistance is a gamble with uncertain payoffs.

Poor people's enduring support of Peronists may be explained by factors that have little to do with clientelism. The neoliberal era has certainly imposed great hardships. But we believe that some scholars underestimate the value that poor voters, like many other Argentines, attached to the achievement by the Menem administration in the early 1990s of macroeconomic stability after years of extremely high inflation. This achievement undoubtedly won the Peronists the retrospective approbation of many poor voters. Perhaps more important, the transformation of the country's economic model, a transformation that caused much hardship for poor Argentines, has seldom been profoundly challenged by other parties. As we hinted earlier, alternative programs have merely offered to soften the blow. This absence of a profound programmatic challenge would add to the credibility of Peronist organizers' implicit claim, well described by Auyero, that if not for us things would be even worse. Poor people would get basically the same public policies, but, without strong networks of personal assistance, the policies would be accompanied by neglect.

If our findings hold up under more research, they may provide some reassurance to critics of new democracies. Consider three models of democracy: programmatic, retrospective, and clientelist. In the programmatic model, parties propose programs for the future, broad options for collective life, people consider and are educated by the competitive debate over these programs, they elect one party over another, and this party carries out its program.<sup>12</sup> In the retrospective model, people observe the actions of government and, if it rises above some standard, they reelect it (see Key 1966, Fiorina 1981). In the clientelist model, as we have seen, people trade their ability to make forward-looking choices over programs or backward-looking judgments of policies for individual payoffs. Our findings argue against the contention that poor Argentines succumb mainly to a clientelist model of mobilization. To this extent the critics may be reassured.

Yet we have been able to get little sense of the responsiveness of poor voters to programmatic appeals, only of their responsiveness to the local provision of public goods and public employment. The fear of the critics is that Argentina, like many of the world's new democracies, has faced deeply important decision since the return to democracy, decisions about the role of the state in production, about the state's responsibilities in ameliorating social hardships, and about how the country should respond to frequent economic crises and pressures from the world economy. If the reality of which we have scratched the surface is one in which poor Argentines do not sell their vote for a bag of rice or a handout of medicines, but offer it to incumbents who have vigorously pursued community development, this is a good thing. But we have no evidence one way or another

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<sup>12</sup> The programmatic model is akin to the mandate model as defined by Manin, Przeworski, and Stokes, 1999.

as to whether poor voters (or their wealthier neighbors) use their vote to participate in national decisions of great import for all. If they do not, then an important vision of democracy is not actualized. If poor voters do so less than the better off, then economic disadvantage continues to limit the value of democracy for poor citizens.

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Table 1

Aggregate percentage of poor and non-poor voters supporting parties in elections for provincial legislatures, Córdoba and Misiones, various years<sup>a</sup>

Election	Percentage poor voting Peronist	Percentage non-Poor voting Peronist	Percentage poor voting Radical	Percentage non-poor voting Radical
Córdoba 1991	50.81	29.28	48.97	43.43
Córdoba 1995	60.80	31.31	44.00	37.95
Córdoba 1999	54.16	28.14	35.14	25.85
Misiones 1991	54.99	43.61	37.30	47.15
Misiones 1995	55.68	38.56	36.58	51.45
Misiones 1997	52.08	40.10	35.18	56.30

<sup>a</sup>Poor defined as people living in “type B” housing: lacks running water, sewage discharge connection, or has floors made of dirt or some other low-quality material. See Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, República de Argentina, 1991.

Proportions calculated with *EzI* : *A(n Easy) Program for Ecological Inference*, by Kenneth Benoit and Gary King, 1998. Available through Gary King’s website: <http://GKing.Harvard.Edu>.

Figure 1 Tomography plot, Córdoba, 1991. Each line represents possible combinations of poor and non-poor supporting Peronists in each municipality. The contour lines are the truncated normal distribution of these same proportions. See King, 1997.

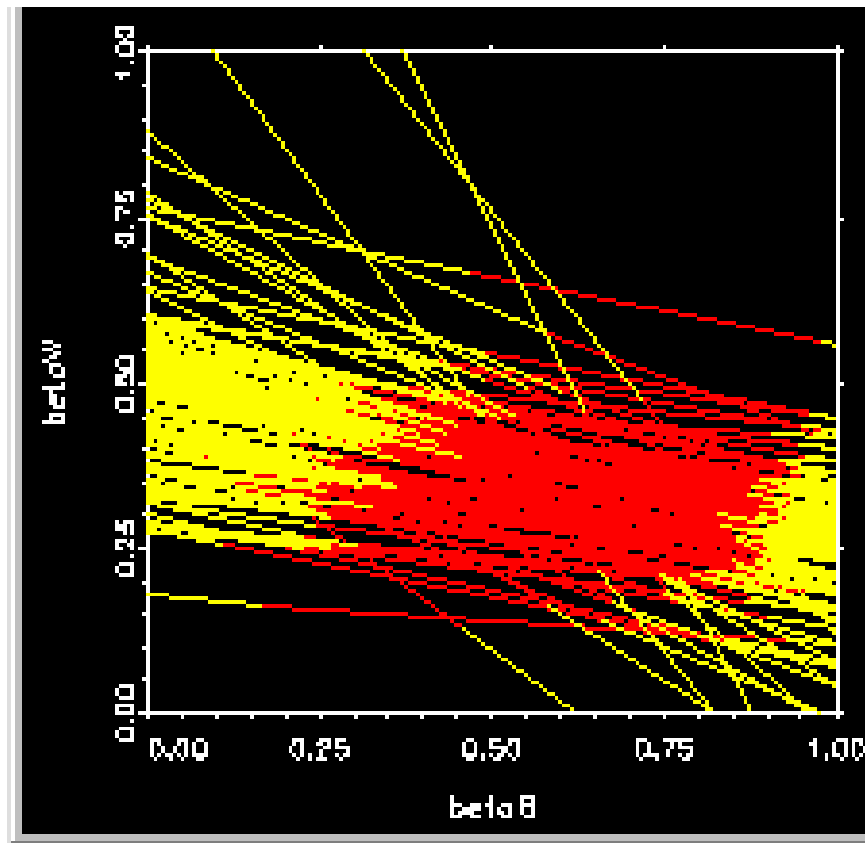


Figure 2. Tomography plot, Misiones, 1991. Each line represents possible combinations of poor and non-poor supporting Peronists in each municipality. The contour lines are the truncated normal distribution of these same proportions. See King, 1997.

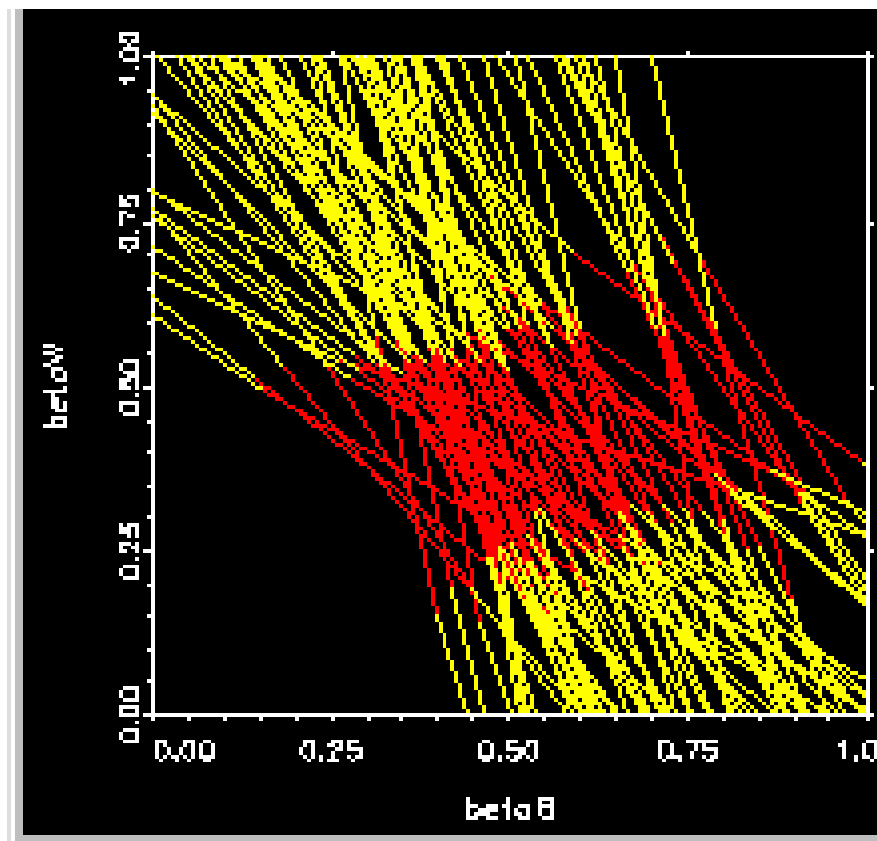


Table 2

Volatility of the vote: Average change in the percentage of poor and non-poor voters supporting parties in pairs of elections for provincial legislatures, municipal-level data, Córdoba and Misiones, various years<sup>a</sup>

Pair of elections	Average change in percentage of poor voting Peronists (abs. value) <sup>b</sup>	Average change in percentage of non-poor voting Peronist (abs. value) <sup>b</sup>	Average change in percentage of poor voting Radical (abs. value) <sup>b</sup>	Average change in percentage of non-poor voting Radical (abs. value) <sup>b</sup>
Córdoba 91-95	12.09 >	4.09	10.26 >	7.45
Córdoba 95-99	9.00 >	5.86	10.45	12.72
Córdoba 91-99	6.41	6.97	15.47	19.20
Misiones 91-95	5.96 >	4.07	6.18 >	3.09
Misiones 95-97	10.28	10.56	10.34 >	6.81
Misiones 91-97	10.52 >	7.98	11.20 >	7.79

<sup>a</sup>Number of municipalities: Córdoba = 135, Misiones, 1991-95 and 1995-99 = 74, 1991-99 = 75. Poor defined as occupying type B housing, see note to Table 1.

<sup>b</sup>Proportions of poor and non-poor votes were calculated for each municipality in each election, using Benoit and King's *Ezi* software (see footnote to Table 1). Absolute values of the differences in proportions for each municipality were calculated between pairs of election, and the average of these differences were then calculated. These averages are reported in cell entries.

Table 3

OLS regression estimate of PROPORTION OF POOR VOTERS SUPPORTING PERONISTS in 1995, Córdoba, 124 municipalities

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t	P>t
PJBUDGET <sup>a</sup>	0.00001	0.00002	4.003	0.000
UCRBUDGET <sup>b</sup>	-0.00001	0.00002	-0.497	0.620
CONSTANT	0.620	0.118	55.512	0.000

F(2, 121) = 13.59

Prob > F = 0.0000

Adjusted R-squared = 0.1699

<sup>a</sup>Expenditures per capita in 1994 by local Peronist mayor.

<sup>b</sup>Expenditures per capita in 1994 by local Radical mayor.

Table 4

OLS regression estimate of PROPORTION OF NON-POOR VOTERS SUPPORTING PERONISTS, 1995, Córdoba, 124 municipalities

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t	P>t
PJBUDGET <sup>a</sup>	0.0001	0.00002	5.824	0.000
UCRBUDGET <sup>b</sup>	-5.25e-06	0.00002	-0.283	0.777
CONSTANT	0.313	0.009	33.357	0.000

F(2, 121) = 26.32

Prob > F = 0.0000

Adjusted R-squared = 0.2916

<sup>a</sup>Expenditures per capita in 1994 by local Peronist mayor.

<sup>b</sup>Expenditures per capita in 1994 by local Radical mayor.

Table 5A

OLS regression estimate of PROPORTION OF POOR VOTERS SUPPORTING PERONISTS, 1995, Córdoba, 124 municipalities

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t	P>t
PERONCAP <sup>a</sup>	0.002	0.00007	3.749	0.000
RADCAP <sup>b</sup>	-0.0001	0.00007	-1.780	0.078
CONSTANT	0.632	0.009	67.201	0.000

F(2, 121) = 14.23

Prob > F = 0.000

Adjusted R-squared = 0.1904

<sup>a</sup>Capital expenditures per capita in 1994 by Peronist mayor.

<sup>b</sup>Capital expenditures per capita in 1994 by Radical mayor.

Table 5B

OLS regression estimate of PROPORTION OF POOR VOTERS SUPPORTING PERONISTS, 1995, Córdoba, 124 municipalities

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t	P>t
PERONEMPLOY <sup>a</sup>	0.00005	0.00003	1.573	0.118
RADEMPLOY <sup>b</sup>	-0.00008	0.00005	-1.602	0.112
CONSTANT	0.640	0.009	62.296	0.000

F(2, 121) = 3.98

Prob > F = 0.0213

Adjusted R-squared = 0.0617

<sup>a</sup>Current expenditures (mostly employment) per capita in 1994 by Peronist mayor.

<sup>b</sup>Current expenditures (mostly employment) per capita in 1994 by Radical mayor.



Table 6A

OLS regression estimate of PROPORTION OF NON-POOR VOTERS SUPPORTING PERONISTS, 1995, Córdoba, 124 municipalities

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t	P>t
PERONCAP <sup>a</sup>	0.0003	0.00006	5.012	0.000
RADCAP <sup>b</sup>	-0.0001	0.00006	-1.671	0.097
CONSTANT	0.326	0.008	40.060	0.000

F(2, 121) = 21.75

Prob > F = 0.000

Adjusted R-squared = 0.2644

<sup>a</sup>Capital expenditures per capita in 1994 by Peronist mayor.

<sup>b</sup>Capital expenditures per capita in 1994 by Radical mayor.

Table 6B

OLS regression estimate of PROPORTION OF NON-POOR VOTERS SUPPORTING PERONISTS, 1995, Córdoba, 124 municipalities

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t	P>t
PERONEMPLOY <sup>a</sup>	0.00007	0.000036	2.506	0.014
RADEMPLOY <sup>b</sup>	-0.00008	0.00004	-1.989	0.049
CONSTANT	0.337	0.008	40.78	0.000

F(2, 121) = 8.02

Prob > F = 0.0005

Adjusted R-squared = 0.1170

<sup>a</sup>Current expenditures (mostly employment) per capita in 1994 by Peronist mayor.

<sup>b</sup>Current expenditures (mostly employment) per capita in 1994 by Radical mayor.

Table 7

OLS regression estimate of PROPORTION OF POOR VOTERS SUPPORTING PERONISTS, 1995, Córdoba, 125 municipalities

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t	P>t
PERONWORKS <sup>a</sup>	0.147	0.059	2.481	0.014
RADWORKS <sup>b</sup>	-0.101	0.055	-1.833	0.069
CONSTANT	0.635	0.014	46.851	0.000

F(2, 122) = 15.05

Prob > F = 0.0000

Adjusted R-squared = 0.1848

<sup>a</sup>Proportion of capital expenditures in total budget, 1994, by Peronist mayor.

<sup>b</sup>Proportion of capital expenditures in total budget, 1994, by Radical mayor.

Table 8

OLS regression estimate of PROPORTION OF NON-POOR VOTERS SUPPORTING PERONISTS, 1995, Córdoba, 125 municipalities

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t	P>t
PERONWORKS <sup>a</sup>	0.200	0.052	3.846	0.000
RADWORKS <sup>b</sup>	-0.047	0.048	-0.970	0.334
CONSTANT	0.320	0.012	26.925	0.000

F(2, 122) = 19.91

Prob > F = 0.0000

Adjusted R-squared = 0.2337

<sup>a</sup>Proportion of capital expenditures in total budget, 1994, by Peronist mayor.

<sup>b</sup>Proportion of capital expenditures in total budget, 1994, by Radical mayor.