

Municipal Governments and the Subnational Resilience of Partisanship in Latin America

Cameron Sells

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Abstract

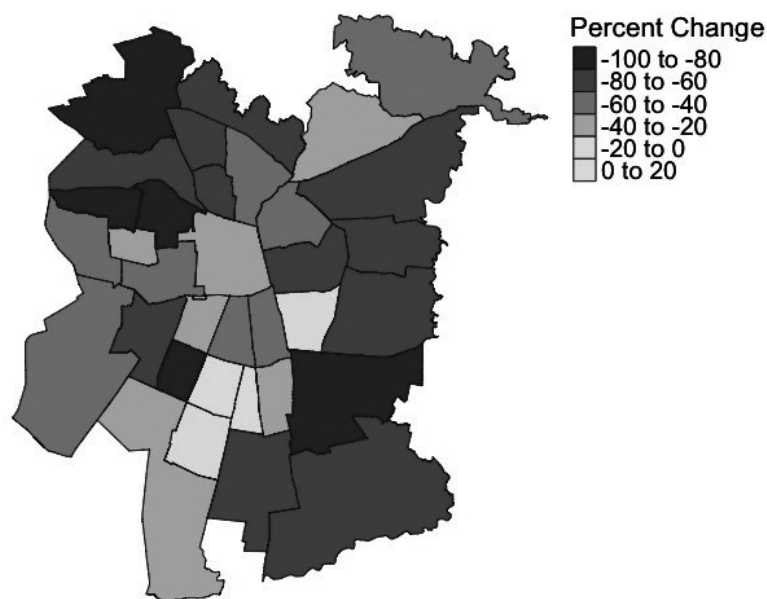
Many Latin American voters have ceased identifying with their political parties over the last few decades. Yet the speed and severity of declines in party identification have often varied widely across different parts of the same country. I argue that this subnational variation is the result of the uneven progress of state reform. Civil service reforms at the national level have deprived parties of patronage resources and weakened the grassroots party organizations that traditionally reinforced mass partisanship in Latin America. However, these reforms often remained incomplete at the local level, and parties can use the patronage resources of municipal governments to maintain both their local party organizations and their mass partisan support in municipalities where they hold executive office. Using a variety of individual-level data from Chile, Brazil, and Mexico and a difference-in-differences design, I show that patronage is more prevalent at the municipal level compared to the national level, that governing a municipality enables a party to recruit and maintain larger numbers of low-level activists, and that mass party identification with a given party is more resilient in the municipalities that it governs.

Over the last few decades, voters across Latin America have ceased identifying with political parties. Traditional parties that had dominated their countries' politics for generations and had successfully weathered civil wars, coups, military dictatorships, and economic crises suddenly lost the vast majority of their partisan supporters in just a matter of years. In recent years, newer parties such as the PT in Brazil and the PRD in Mexico have experienced similar collapses in party identification, despite their initial successes at forging mass partisan support in the 1990s and 2000s. These trends have had a destabilizing effect on Latin American democracy. In addition to aggravating the region's political crises and party system fractionalization, collapses of party identification with Latin American traditional parties have fueled the rise of populist outsider candidates and likely contributed to the breakdowns of democracy in Peru and Venezuela in the 1990s (Seawright 2012; Lupu 2016).

Previous explanations for declines in party identification have focused on explanatory variables at the country level and the party level. One approach emphasizes the role played by structural changes in Western societies, such as improvements in education that have made heuristics like party labels less useful to voters (Dalton 2000; Sánchez 2007). A second approach attributes declines in party identification in Latin America to the parties' own ideological inconsistency and their tendency to abandon their platforms once in office, which has blurred the ideological distinctions between opposing parties and diluted the parties' brands (Roberts 2014; Lupu 2016). A third and related approach blames the declines in party identification on poor economic performance and corruption scandals and that have tarnished the parties' reputations (Seawright 2012; Winters and Weitz-Shapiro 2015; Baker, Sokhey, Ames, and Renno 2015; Samuels and Zucco 2018).

An under-appreciated feature of this wave of partisan dealignment in Latin America is that the speed and severity of collapses in party identification often vary widely across different parts of the same country. Figure 1 shows Multi-Level Regression and Poststratification (MRP) estimates of the percent change in party identification with Chile's center-left alliance, the *Concertación*, in the Santiago metropolitan area between 2000 and 2010, based on survey data from the *Centro de Estudios Públicos*. This figure shows that *Concertación* partisans have nearly vanished in some

Figure 1: Percent Change in Party Identification with the *Concertación* from 2000 to 2010, by Commune of Santiago



communes, while partisan attachments to this alliance have held steady in others during the same period. This subnational variation is puzzling from the standpoint of previous explanations for declines in partisanship. Unless different localities have vastly different exposure to modernization or sensitivity to parties' ideological inconsistency and corruption scandals, we should expect that the effects of these national-level changes and shocks would be largely constant across a country, at least after controlling for the locality's socioeconomic conditions. If social change or party brand crises are responsible for triggering collapses of party identification, this subnational pattern suggests that features of a locality may dampen the effects of these shocks. A better understanding of why partisanship is more resilient in some localities compared to others may hold insight into what parties can do to slow or even reverse this exodus of partisans from Latin American parties.

In this paper, I argue that this subnational variation in the decline of party identification is the result of the countervailing effects of state reform and decentralization on local party organizations. Grassroots party organizations and the low-level activists who operated them have traditionally played a vital role in forging and reinforcing mass partisan identities in Latin America.

Throughout most of the 20th century, “clientelistic” and “programmatic” parties alike financed these party organizations through patronage, or the politicized distribution of public-sector jobs to party activists and members. However, economic and state reforms in the 1980s and 1990s destabilized Latin American party organizations by reducing the supply of patronage resources in national-level governments and by transferring state resources from the national level to the local level. Control over the patronage resources in subnational governments has become critical for many parties’ organizational and partisan survival. Parties that hold executive power at the local level can use the resources of the local state to keep their activist networks intact, and this helps stabilize the party’s partisan attachments among the broader electorate in the locality. Parties face greater difficulties in sustaining their local organizations where they are in the opposition at the local level, and the demobilization of the traditional parties’ activist networks in these localities makes mass partisanship more vulnerable to national-level shocks to the party’s reputation.

I analyze the consequences of municipal incumbency for a party’s use of patronage, the health of its local party organization, and the size of its mass partisan base in Chile, Brazil, and Mexico. I isolate the effect of holding mayoral office using a difference-in-differences design and matching, and I also exploit an unusual feature of Chile’s former electoral system that weakened the relationship between municipal voteshares and mayoral electoral outcomes and led to exogenous variation in treatment status. I show that patronage is more prevalent at the municipal level compared to the national level, that holding a mayorship enables a party to mobilize and maintain greater numbers of local party activists, and that municipal incumbency strengthens mass party loyalties to the incumbent party. Together, these findings suggest that even after decades of state reform, municipal governments continue to offer parties patronage resources that they can use to strengthen their local organizations and reinforce their mass support.

Patronage and Partisanship in Latin America

Political scientists have long understood that patronage plays a critical organizational role in political parties, in addition to its electoral function (Sorauf 1960; Conway and Feigert 1968; Panebianco 1988; Kopecký and Mair 2012). Governing parties frequently use their discretion over public sector appointments to incentivize and reward their low-level activists. By securing public sector employment for their activists, the party can compensate them for their party work, offer them the opportunity to develop the experience and political connections that make them valuable clientelistic brokers, and encourage them to dedicate themselves to party work on a full-time basis (Panebianco 1988; Geddes 1994; Scherlis 2010). Public sector employment also gives the party leverage over its activists, and it gives the the activists a direct, material stake in the party's electoral success (Oliveros 2013). Even when the party's activists are motivated by ideological and expressive incentives as well (Whitely and Seyd 2002), patronage can help the party broaden its base and incorporate lower class activists who otherwise would not be able to afford to dedicate a significant amount of time to party work.

Party activists are not the only type of broker that parties use to mobilize electoral support. Parties can delegate brokerage responsibilities to the politicians themselves or outsource them to non-party actors such as local elites, labor unions, neighborhood associations, parish priests, and shantytown leaders can deliver a large bloc of votes in a single, one-off transaction (Novaes 2015; Holland and Palmer-Rubin 2015; Alvarez 2017). Compared to these alternatives, activist-based brokerage is a fairly inefficient clientelistic strategy. As Holland and Palmer-Rubin (2015) argue, activist brokers who are members of the same community as their clients may develop divided loyalties that make them unreliable agents of their party in clientelistic transactions. The activist brokerage model also locks the party in a long-term relationship that reduces its flexibility, and it is usually quite labor-intensive compared to other brokerage models.

However, each of these features makes activist brokers uniquely effective at forging and maintaining partisan loyalties between the party and its mass supporters. Partisanship is a type of social identity that is rooted in voters' "image" of the party and their beliefs about whether they person-

ally resemble the party's "typical partisan" (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; Lupu 2016). Under the activist brokerage model, the face of the party that most voters interact with on a regular basis consists of low-level activists who are the voters' neighbors, relatives and co-workers, and this makes it easier for voters to see themselves in the party. This is in stark contrast to the politician-based brokerage model, under which the relationship between the voter and the broker is profoundly asymmetric and unequal (Nichter 2018). Moreover, the long-term nature of the party-activist relationship means that the activist's clients are likely to vote for the same party election after election, and this habitual support for the same party encourages identity-formation and reinforces partisan attachments (Dinas 2014). Finally, because the labor-intensive activist brokerage model requires parties to field large armies of mass activists in each town and neighborhood, many voters are likely to have personal or familial ties to the party's activists that make the party appear less-distant and more-relevant to the voters' own communities.

Despite the electoral inefficiencies of the activist brokerage model, it was nevertheless rational for Latin American parties to rely heavily on low-level activist brokers throughout most of the 20th century. Import Substitution Industrialization had expanded the size of the state and increased the supply of patronage resources in the central government that parties could use to employ activists at little direct cost to themselves. Traditional parties founded by elites in the 19th century, such as the Colorado Party of Uruguay, the Radical Civic Union of Argentina, and the Liberal Party of Colombia, leveraged their control over public sector appointments to construct vast networks of low-level activists throughout their countries. In addition to helping the party mobilize votes on election day, these patronage-based activist networks also socialized recently-enfranchised voters into the party's traditions and reinforced the party's ties to its supporters (Rock 1975; Horowitz 2008; Luna 2014; Martz 2017). Patronage played a similar role in supporting the party organizations of newer and more-ideological parties, such as the Communist and Socialist parties of Chile and Democratic Action of Venezuela (Martz 1966; Valenzuela 1976; Drake 1978).

The economic reforms of the 1980s and 1990s changed the parties' calculus by decreasing the supply of the patronage positions that sustained their activist networks. The privatization of

state-owned enterprises reduced the number of public sector positions over all, while a wave of civil service reforms established meritocratic rules for appointments and dismissals in the national bureaucracy and severed the parties' grip on many of the civil service positions that remained (Panizza and Philip 2005). Meanwhile, the expansion and depoliticization of social spending in many Latin American countries broke the parties' monopoly on public resources and made voters less-dependent on the types of brokerage services that partisan civil servants could provide (Pribble 2013). Without secure access to public sector patronage, activist brokerage ceased to be a cost-effective way for parties to mobilize mass electoral support. In response to these changes, several Latin American parties demobilized their activist networks and relied more heavily on short-term transactions with non-partisan brokers who could mobilize more votes at a lower cost (Holland and Palmer-Rubin 2015; Alvarez 2017). Other parties retreated from clientelism altogether and embraced the media-intensive, electoral-professional model (Panebianco 1988; Pribble 2013). While these substitutes were often quite successful at maintaining the party's electoral support, the collapse of the parties' grassroots strength made party identification increasingly vulnerable to shocks to the party's national image.

However, these trends were mitigated in particular areas by the countervailing effects of decentralization. Just as patronage resources were drying up at the national level, subnational governments gained unprecedented autonomy and control over state resources (Eaton 2004a; Falletti 2010). Moreover, these subnational governments were often less affected by the civil service reforms that occurred at the national level. Brollo, Forquesato and Gozzi (2017) and Colonnelli, Teso and Prem (2017) find that while Brazil's civil service is among the most meritocratic and professional in the region, mayors are still able to use some positions in the municipal civil service for patronage purposes. Similarly, Scherlis (2010) and Oliveros (2013) find that Argentina's major political machines are sustained mostly by patronage in municipal and provincial-level governments, rather than at the national level. By tapping into the patronage resources of local governments, parties can maintain their activist networks and party organizations in the localities that they govern. This, in turn, can help bolster their mass partisan support in these localities.

These mitigating effects of subnational office can be broken up into several testable implications. First, we should expect to observe greater politicization of public sector employment at the local level compared to the national level. The politicization of hiring and firing decisions is usually impossible to measure at the individual level, but it can be measured at the aggregate level by examining whether electoral outcomes affect the likelihood that party activists are employed by the government after the election (Brollo, Forquesato and Gozzi 2017; Colonnelli, Teso and Prem 2017). In a completely non-politicized bureaucracy, activists would have the same chance of gaining public sector employment regardless of whether they were on the winning side in the election, while in a politicized bureaucracy, activists from the winning party will have a higher probability of gaining employment.

H1a: Party activists whose party wins a municipal election are more likely to be employed by the municipal government compared to activists whose party loses

H1b: National electoral outcomes have no effect on the likelihood that the activist will have a job in the national civil service after the election

A related hypothesis concerns the primary beneficiaries of public sector patronage. Under the activist brokerage model, parties reserve high-value patronage positions for activists who contribute considerable time and energy to the party, while they use lower-value material resources such as small gifts, cash payments, or favors for electoral clientelism. This suggests that the public sector employment of party activists should be more-sensitive to electoral outcomes than the employment of lower-intensity supporters of the party.

H1c: Municipal victory will have a greater effect on the public sector employment of party activists compared to other supporters of the party

Another implication is that municipal incumbency will strengthen the local party organization of the governing party. The party can use the patronage resources in the subnational government to mobilize new activists into the party organization and retain the activists that it already has. Even if the activists also have non-material motives for working for the party, these patronage positions

can increase participation at the margins by compensating the activists for their time and by giving them a stake in the party's electoral success in the municipality.

H2: Parties are able to recruit and maintain larger shares of activists in municipalities that they govern, compared to those that they do not

One of the advantages of maintaining strong activist networks is that the party activists can strengthen the partisan loyalties of the broader electorate by shaping the way that voters see the party (Samuels and Zucco 2018). By strengthening the party's local activist networks, municipal incumbency can also have downstream effects on mass party identification with the governing party. Even if the party restricts patronage jobs to its activists, these party activists may stabilize and buffer the partisan attachments of the party's broader group of supporters in the municipality by representing the party in their communities and improving the party's "brand" or "image" in the eyes of its supporters. In localities where party identification is reinforced by dense activist networks, mass partisan attachments are likely to be less vulnerable to elite-driven shocks to the party's national reputation such as corruption scandals and policy-switching. This suggests that when a party faces a brand crisis at the national level, partisan attachments to that party will decline less quickly in places where the party holds local-level executive office.

H3: Mass partisan attachments to a given party will be more durable in municipalities that the party governs, compared to those that it does not

An assumption behind all of these hypotheses is that the party depends on the resources of local governments in order to recruit activists. However, some parties in Latin America still have other sources of organizational resources. State reform was milder in some parts of the region, and national-level governments continue to be an abundant source of patronage in countries like Paraguay and the Dominican Republic (Molinas, Perez Liñan and Saiegh 2004; Benito 2010). Other parties gain a large share of their resources from private actors, such as labor unions and businesses (LeBas 2011; Loxton 2016). When a party has alternative sources of funding, it is often able to maintain its activist networks even in municipalities where it is in the opposition,

and this should lessen the effect of municipal electoral outcomes on the health of the local party organization.

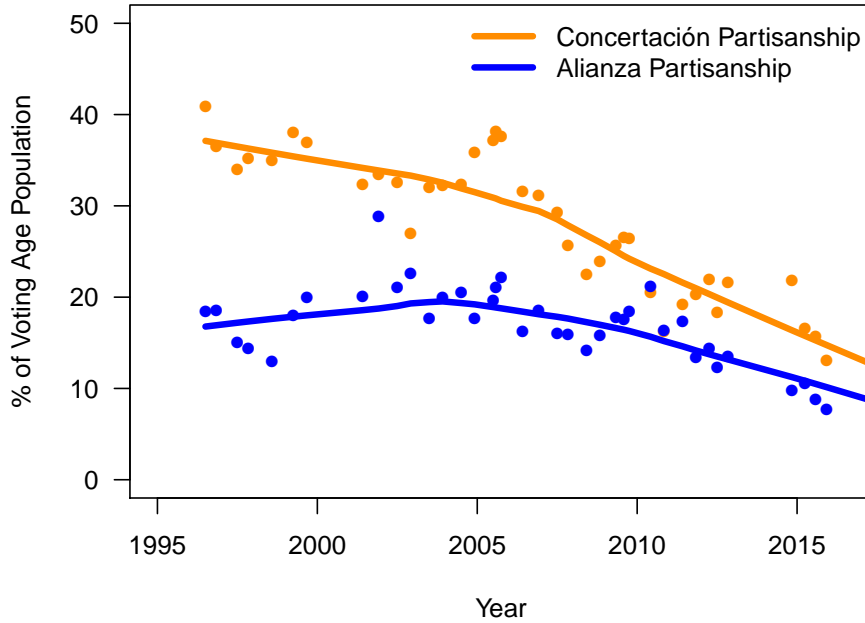
H4: Municipal incumbency will have a smaller effect on party activism and mass party identification if the party has alternative sources of organizational resources

The Breakdown and Survival of Party Organizations in Chile

I test these hypotheses by analyzing changes in party organization and party identification in Chile. In order to show that these patterns have broader relevance outside of Chile, I then extend the analysis to parties in Brazil and Mexico. Between 1988 and 2017, Chilean politics was organized into two ideological and highly-stable multi-party alliances. The dominant alliance was the center-left *Concertación*, which was founded by over a dozen parties that supported Chile's transition to democracy in the late 1980s and was led by the Christian Democratic Party, the Socialist Party, the Radical Party, and the newer Party for Democracy (PPD). Its main competitor was the right-wing *Alianza*, which was led by two parties that were founded in order to protect the legacy of the Pinochet dictatorship, National Renovation and the Independent Democratic Union (UDI). By the late 1990s, these opposing alliances had replaced their constituent parties as the primary objects of party identification in Chile (Gonzalez et al. 2008), and my analysis will focus on partisanship at the alliance level.

Figure 2 shows party identification with the *Concertación* has fallen steadily since mid-2000s, while partisan attachments to the *Alianza* were generally stable until the 2010s. The decline of *Concertación* partisanship is puzzling from the standpoint of previous theories of partisan decline. During the years after the transition to democracy, the *Concertación* had been held up as a poster child for programmatic politics and good governance. While the Socialist Party distanced itself from its Marxist roots and all four of the leading parties in the coalition embraced the free market model established by the Pinochet dictatorship, the *Concertación* has remained ideologically consistent and ideologically distinct from the *Alianza* since the transition (Alemán and Saiegh 2007).

Figure 2: Alliance Identification in Chile, 1996-2016



Source: Public opinion surveys from the Centro de Estudios Públicos

During its uninterrupted twenty years in power from 1990 to 2010, the *Concertación* navigated Chile through one of the region’s most difficult transitions to democracy and presided over steep reductions in poverty and the country’s ascension to “developed economy” status. Although political corruption is a salient issue in Chilean politics, Chile’s corruption scandals have been fairly mild compared to its neighbors, and they were concentrated in the mid-2010s, a decade after the *Concertación*’s partisan support began to collapse.

The decline in party identification with the *Concertación* followed a severe deterioration in the strength of its grassroots party organizations during the 1990s and early 2000s. After a brief resurgence during the transition to democracy, the parties’ neighborhood-level organizations and activist networks gradually demobilized as the parties within the *Concertación* transitioned to an “electoral-professional” model (Pribble 2013; Luna 2014). As a Socialist leader described the state of her party,

In theory, the structure of my party, established in the party statutes, is based on a territorial system of base units in each neighborhood, commune, and region. But it stopped working that way in practice long ago. Our party has ceased to be a territorial party. We are a purely bureaucratic party now. We focus on the administration of power and governance, but we no longer have a presence in the neighborhoods or the *poblaciones* like we once did. (Personal interview, November 23, 2017)

This hollowing-out of the *Concertación's* party organizations was partly self-inflicted by party leaders who were nervous that their activists would destabilize Chile's transition to democracy (Posner 2005). However, these changes were aggravated by the disappearance of patronage resources in the national government. In the mid-20th century, patronage had helped hold Chile's political parties together. The Radical governments in the 1940s, the Christian Democratic government in the 1960s, and the Socialist-led government in the early 1970s all used public sector appointments to reward their activists (Grindle 2012), and complex party networks between copartisan national politicians, party activists and local brokers mediated the distribution of resources between the state and voters (Valenzuela 1976). These organizational strategies were no longer a viable option for Chilean parties by the time of the transition to democracy in the late 1980s. Privatizations under the military dictatorship had drastically reduced the size of the Chilean state, and this trend continued after the return to civilian rule, as a series of civil service reforms under *Concertación* governments in the 1990s and early 2000s depoliticized low-level civil service appointments and curtailed parties' discretion over appointments to senior positions (Grindle 2012).

These changes have forced Chilean parties to look elsewhere for the resources that sustain local party organizations. Municipal governments have become a critical source of patronage resources, especially for the parties in the *Concertación*. Chilean mayors were already key clientelistic brokers in the 1960s and 1970s (Valenzuela 1976), and they gained more autonomy and political relevance through the decentralization reforms of the 1980s and 1990s (Eaton 2004b; Luna 2014). Mayors face relatively little oversight from city councils and the central government, and they frequently use public resources including appointments to positions in the municipal government to

reward allies and maintain their party's local activist networks. However, these municipal political machines have a limited territorial reach, and local party organizations often struggle to sustain themselves in municipalities where they are in the opposition. As an activist from the Socialist Party explained, a party's failure to win a municipal election can have devastating effects on the local party organization:

It was a disaster for my party when we lost the mayorship to the Right. It was a disaster for us, and for all of the parties of the *Concertación* in this commune. The new mayor used his position to put together a powerful network of community leaders from across the commune, including many Socialists who had been with us for years. He bought off our activists with jobs, and that has left us so weak in this commune that we are no longer capable of winning back the mayorship (Personal interview, November 7, 2017)

While *Alianza* mayors use their appointment powers for political purposes as well, municipal patronage is relatively less important for the health of the *Alianza's* party organizations because a large share of their resources comes from private-sector donations from their upper class "core supporters." The right-wing Independent Democratic Union (UDI) is one of the few Chilean parties that has made effective use of electoral clientelism since the transition to democracy. Yet unlike the parties within the *Concertación*, the UDI's hierarchical structure and high party discipline has enabled it to construct a national political machine that transcends municipal boundaries and channels both resources and activist brokers from affluent communes to poor ones (Luna 2014). As a result, the UDI is able to operate clientelistic networks even in poor communes where it is in the opposition at the local level. Because of this asymmetry in the alliances' organizational strategies, we should expect that the *Alianza's* party organizations and local partisan base will be less-affected by municipal electoral outcomes compared to the *Concertación*.

Data

The main independent variable in each of the following analyses is whether a given alliance controls the mayorship of a municipality. In the first analysis, I test whether party activists are more likely to gain or retain public employment in the municipal government if their alliance wins the mayoral election. I measure patronage using individual-level public employment data and campaign participation data from Chile. Government agencies at both the national and local level in Chile are required to report their full list of employees each month, including temporary and contract employees. Similarly, electoral campaigns for all offices are required to report their campaign donations and expenditures after the election. Under Chilean electoral law, a party activist's voluntary campaign work such as canvassing or staffing a party booth on a plaza is considered a type of campaign donation, and these donation registries enable me to identify which voters did campaign work for the winning and losing mayoral candidates. I merge these two datasets together by linking them to Chile's electoral registry and matching on the individual's full name and region of residence.

My second dependent variable is the size of a party's activist base in a municipality. I employ two different measures of activist participation in a party. First, I use a survey-based measure of mass respondents' self-reported campaign work. Because the survey question does not ask the respondents to identify the party that they worked for, I restrict the sample to self-identified partisans of Chile's two major political alliances, the *Concertación* and the *Alianza*, and I assume that partisans in Chile's polarized party system are unlikely to do campaign work for their alliance's opponent. Second, I use a behavioral measure based on voters' formal affiliation with a political party. In Chile, formal party membership entails several duties and obligations to the party, including the payment of dues or membership fees and participation in party activities and campaigns. These obligations deter most voters from joining a party, and formal members are generally a party's most active supporters (Dosek 2016). One challenge in studying changes in party membership is that parties often have incentives to inflate their membership rolls or keep inactive members on the registry. I overcome these problems by exploiting a shock to the membership registries caused by

a 2015 law that forced Chile's traditional parties to cancel the affiliations of all of their members simultaneously and re-inscribe their members individually. Before the electoral court relaxed the re-affiliation rules in February, 2017, members who wished to retain their affiliations had to fill out a hard-copy form before a notary public or apply in person at the Civil Registry for a personal code that would allow them to complete the procedure online. The simultaneous cancellation of affiliations and the onerousness of the re-affiliation procedure offers a convenient way to separate out committed party members who were willing to take the time to go to a notary public or the Civil Registry from inactive members and casual members who preferred to let their affiliations lapse. I analyze the re-affiliations of members of the Party for Democracy (PPD), which released copies of its youth membership registry¹ in late 2014, approximately a year before the affiliations were canceled, and again in January 2017, just before the electoral court relaxed the re-affiliation rules. I examine whether youth members were more likely to re-affiliate if the PPD governed their commune of residence.

I measure my third dependent variable, party identification, using repeated cross-sectional survey data, pooled across multiple surveys conducted by the same organization at similar points in time. The survey data for Chile comes from the Centro de Estudios Públicos (CEP), which has carried out nationally-representative surveys two to six times a year since Chile's transition to democracy in 1989. Although each survey sample contained a different set of respondents, this type of data can still be used to study changes in *average* party identification in a locality over time, as long as the same localities are sampled both before and after the intervention. I analyze changes in party identification at the commune level between the late 1990s and the early 2010s. During this interval, the aggregate party identification rate in Chile fell from around 80% of the voting-age population to just over 30%. I focus on partisan identification with the two multi-party

¹Under the party's statutes, youth members are simply normal party members who are younger than 30. In the PPD and other parties in the *Concertación*, these youth members supply much of the manpower for the party's campaigns.

alliances, the *Concertación* and the *Alianza*. I also extend this analysis to parties in Brazil and Mexico using surveys from *Datafolha* and ISA, respectively.

Empirical Strategy

I study the effect of governing a commune or municipality using a difference-in-differences design and matching at the commune level. I also take advantage of a unique feature of Chile's former municipal electoral system that significantly weakened the relationship between alliance voteshares and mayoral electoral outcomes and led to exogenous variation in treatment status. I estimate the difference-in-differences model

$$Y_{i,c} = \beta After_i + \delta After_i * Incumbent_c + \mu_c + \varepsilon_{i,c}$$

where $Y_{i,c}$ is the dependent variable measured at the individual-level, $After_i$ indicates that the observation comes from the post-treatment period (after an elected mayor has assumed office), $Incumbent_c$ indicates that the alliance won the commune's mayoral election, and μ_c are commune fixed-effects that control for time-invariant characteristics of the commune that might affect the outcomes of interest. The coefficient δ on the interaction term represents the treatment of municipal incumbency on changes in the outcome. This model holds the commune constant and compares outcomes within the same commune between the periods before and after the new mayor assumed office. I cluster the standard errors at the commune level.

The internal validity of differences-in-differences analyses hinges on the "parallel trends" assumption that outcomes in the treatment and control communes would have changed at the same rate in the absence of treatment. This assumption is often problematic in analyses of the effects of incumbency in two-party systems and two-alliance systems because the municipalities that a party or alliance wins are usually systematically different from the ones that it loses, and these differences may affect the rate at which the party's popularity changes over time. I address this concern by matching communes on the alliances' baseline electoral support in the commune. This solution

Table 1: 2000 Municipal Election Results in La Serena and Valparaíso

La Serena					Valparaíso				
Candidate	Pact	Cand. Vote	Pact Vote	Office	Candidate	Pact	Cand. Vote	Pact Vote	Office
Saldivar	Conc.	23.8	56.9	Council	Pinto	Conc.	43.2	55.8	Mayor
Riveros	Conc.	19.7	56.9	Council	Paniagua	Conc.	2.7	55.8	Council
Olivares	Conc.	6.5	56.9	Council	Trincado	Conc.	2.6	55.8	Council
Jacob	Conc.	3.7	56.9		Debernardi	Conc.	1.9	55.8	
Peñafiel	Alianza	27.2	32.4	Mayor	Castro	Alianza	25.9	35.3	Council
Ortiz	Alianza	3.1	32.4	Council	Gonzalez	Alianza	6.1	35.3	Council
Supulveda	Alianza	1.1	32.4		Sanchez	Alianza	2.2	35.3	

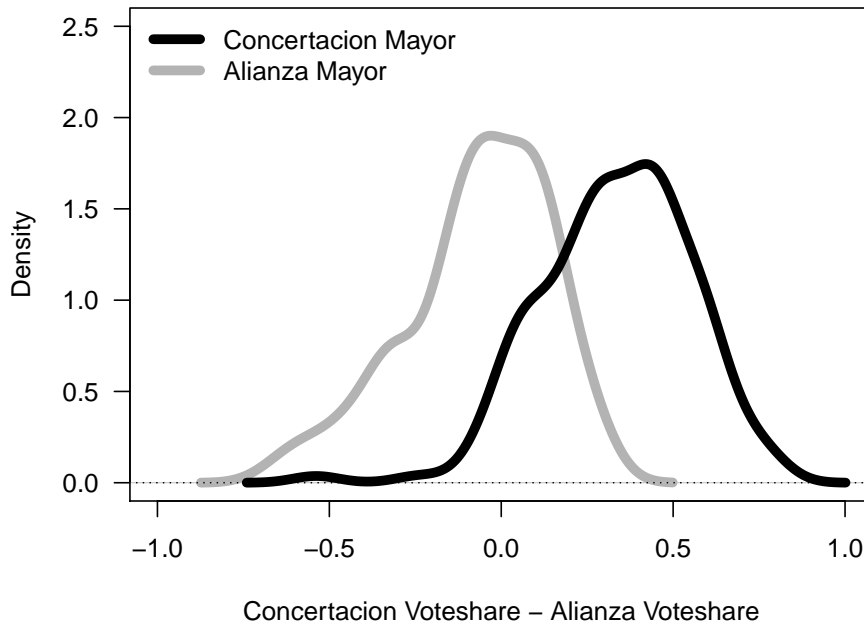
Note: Several candidates who received small voteshares are not included in these tables.

would be impractical in a country that has a pure two-party system and uses plurality rules for municipal elections because the treatment and control groups would lack common support, which means that there would be no overlap between the two groups. However, the unusual municipal electoral system used in Chile in 1996 and 2000 weakened the relationship between an alliance's municipal voteshare and led to considerable overlap between the treatment and control groups.

Under this electoral system, elections for city council and mayor were combined into a single voting decision. City council seats were allocated to alliances through open-list proportional representation rules, and council votes pooled at three different levels: the party, the sub-alliance, and the alliance. The mayorship went to the city council candidate who won the most preference votes, regardless of which alliance won the most votes as a whole.² This strange combination of PR and plurality rules in a single voting decision meant that an alliance could easily win the vast majority of the votes in a commune but still lose the mayorship if it spread its votes across too many city

²The mayor's alliance also had to clear at 30% electoral threshold, and different electoral rules applied if the candidate who won the most preference votes came from an alliance that won less than 30% of the vote across all of its candidates. In order to ensure that I am comparing communes whose mayoral elections were decided under the same electoral rules, I drop the minority of communes in which one or both of the alliances failed to clear the 30% threshold.

Figure 3: Mayoral Election Outcomes and Alliance Voteshares in 2000



council candidates. Table 1 illustrates this possibility in the case of the 2000 municipal elections in the cities of La Serena and Valparaíso. Although the alliances had very similar voteshares in both communes and the *Concertación* won a comfortable majority of the vote in both cases, the *Alianza* candidate Peñafiel won the mayorship in La Serena because the *Concertación* vote was split between Saldívar and Riveros. Figure 3 shows that in the 2000 election, there was only a weak relationship between an alliance’s voteshare and whether it won the mayorship. In fact, over 40% of the mayorships that the *Alianza* won were in communes where the *Concertación* won more votes than the *Alianza*. This makes it possible to find communes that differ in treatment status but otherwise have similar baseline voteshares for the two alliances.

Whether matching yields equivalent groups depends on its ability to account for all of the relevant factors that explain selection into treatment. In this case, treatment status was determined solely by the interaction of four factors: the municipal voteshare of the *Concertación*, the municipal

voteshare of the *Alianza*, the concentration of the *Concertación* vote on a single candidate, and the concentration of the *Alianza* vote. More formally, in communes where both alliances cleared the electoral threshold, the *Concertación* won the mayorship if and only if

$$(Voteshare_C)(Concentration_C) > (Voteshare_A)(Concentration_A)$$

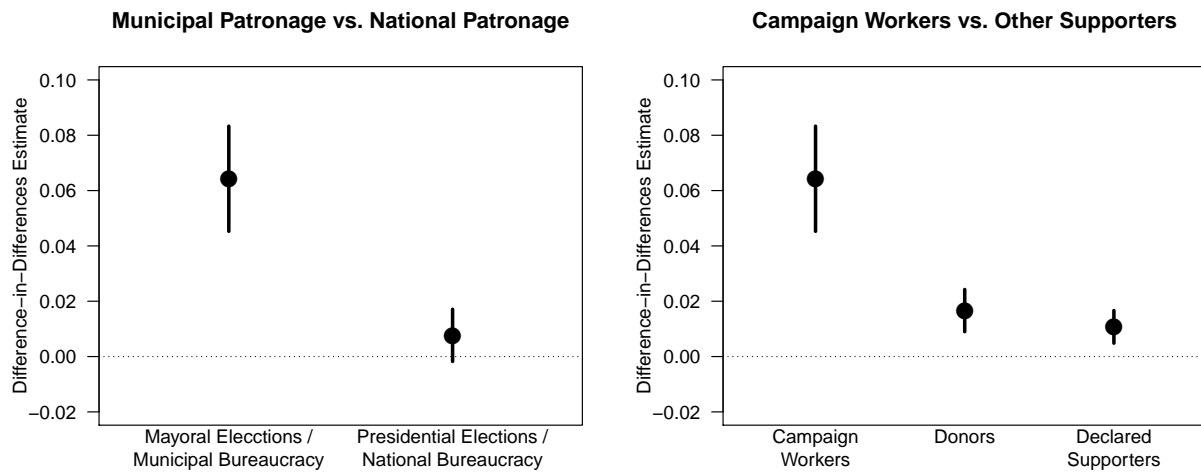
where $Concentration_C$ and $Concentration_A$ are the proportions of each alliance's vote won by the candidate in the alliance who won the most preference votes. I match on the *Concertación* and *Alianza* voteshares, the concentration of *Alianza* vote, and the partisanship of the mayor during the previous term. I argue that conditional on incumbency status during the previous term, the concentration of the *Concertación* vote was largely arbitrary and unrelated to any of the characteristics of the municipality that might exert an independent effect on the strength of the party organizations or partisanship.

An alliance's optimal strategy for winning mayorships was to concentrate *all* of its votes on a single city council candidate. However, because city council votes pooled at the party level, a party that instructed its supporters to vote for a candidate from a different party within the same alliance would give up its chance to win city council seats. This made cooperation between parties and candidates inherently unstable, as each party in the alliance had an incentive to defect and run a strong city council candidate of its own. In the 2000 municipal election, the ideologically-homogeneous right-wing *Alianza* tried to coordinate its vote on a single viable candidate in each commune through an agreement between senior party leaders that divvied up Chile's communes between its two similarly-sized parties and designated specific city council candidates to serve as the alliance's "mayoral candidate" in the commune. This type of coordination at the top was impractical for the larger and more-heterogeneous *Concertación*, and the *Concertación's* leadership made no effort to mitigate its voters' coordination problem. The parties' commune-level organizations had even stronger disincentives to coordinate on a single candidate from a single party because local party activists were one of the types of party actors who would be the most harmed

by their party's failure to win city council seats, and party rivalries were still quite strong among these base activists at the time. *Concertación* supporters could sometimes coordinate on a single candidate if they had a clear focal point, such a popular incumbent *Concertación* mayor, but this sort of strategic voting was difficult in most communes because voters typically had five or more *Concertación* candidates to choose from, including two to four incumbent city council candidates who often had their own popular followings.

Due to the *Concertación's* failure to coordinate on a single candidate after municipal candidates were selected, the concentration of the *Concertación* vote was driven by candidate-selection decisions that were made independently by each of the alliance's four parties. By the late 1990s, candidate-selection within these parties was highly centralized in the hands of the parties' national leaderships. While local party organizations could make nominations recommendations, the senior party leaders were notorious for overriding the will of their local activists and imposing their preferred candidates (Posner 2005). Because of this centralized candidate-selection process, the local political context of the commune had little influence on the number or relative quality of candidates that each alliance nominated. Instead, these nomination decisions were made by three to four separate sets of national-level party actors who were not coordinating with each other, had limited local knowledge, had hundreds of candidate slates to get through, and were focused on placating incumbents, rewarding allies, and maximizing their own party's share of city council seats. Because these candidate-selection decisions were arbitrary from the standpoint of the communes, the concentration of the *Concertación* vote was also independent of the local conditions in the commune. I show in the online appendix that there is no relationship between the concentration of the *Concertación* vote and various social, economic, and political characteristics of the commune, including the commune's level of development, pre-treatment electoral trends, and the strength of local party organizations. This arbitrariness from the standpoint of the communes is a useful source of exogenous variation in mayoral electoral outcomes. By taking into account the alliances' voteshares, the concentration of the *Alianza* vote, and the partisanship of the mayor during the previous term, I am able to isolate treatment and control groups that are highly similar on all local

Figure 4: Effect of Electoral Victory on Public-Sector Employment of Campaign Activists (Difference-in-Differences Estimates)



characteristics except for treatment status.

Results

Municipal Governments and Patronage

If parties use civil service employment to reward their activists, an activist's employment prospects in the municipal government after the election should depend on whether their party won or lost the mayoral election. The left panel of Figure 4 shows differences-in-differences estimates of the effect of electoral outcomes on the employment of campaign workers in the municipal and national governments. Being on the winning side had a large effect on the probability that an activist was employed in the municipal government, but it had a small and statistically insignificant effect on their likelihood of employment in the national government. This pattern supports the hypothesis that municipal governments in Chile continue to offer parties ample patronage resources, and that they have been relatively less affected by the civil service reforms that have drained pa-

tronage resources from the national governments.

Because public sector jobs are a scarce and valuable resource, parties that allocate these positions strategically are more likely to grant them to the subset of supporters who do the most work for the party. This suggests that party activists who worked on the winning party's campaign will be the primary beneficiaries of these positions, while the party will rely on other resources such as brokerage services or cash payments to purchase votes or reward lower-intensity supporters. I use the donations registries to identify two additional types of party supporters: donors who made a financial contribution to the party, and "declared supporters" who put up signs supporting the candidate or party outside their home or business. In much of Latin America, declaring one's support for a candidate in this way serves as a costly signal of the voter's credibility that increases the likelihood that the voter will receive clientelistic benefits from the party (Nichter 2018). The right panel of Figure 4 compares the differences-in-differences estimates of victory on employment of each type of party supporter. Although the effects are positive and significant across each of these categories, the magnitude of the effect is much larger for the campaign workers.

Municipal Governments and Party Activists

To the extent that parties use the patronage resources of municipal governments to motivate and reward their activists, they should be able to maintain larger bases of activists in the municipalities that they govern compared to municipalities where they are in the opposition. Figure 5 shows the effect of having a copartisan mayor on the campaign participation of self-identified *Concertación* and *Alianza* partisans. Municipal electoral outcomes had a large and significant effect on the subsequent campaign participation of *Concertación* partisans. 10% of *Concertación* partisans who lived in a commune governed by the *Concertación* between 1996 and 2000 reported participating in either the 1997 congressional election or the 2000 presidential election campaigns, compared to only 3% in communes governed by the opposition. The effect of municipal outcomes on participation of *Alianza* partisans is small and statistically insignificant. This null result for the *Alianza* is not surprising given that the parties within this alliance gain a large share of their organizational

Figure 5: Effect of Electoral Victory on Campaign Participation of Partisans

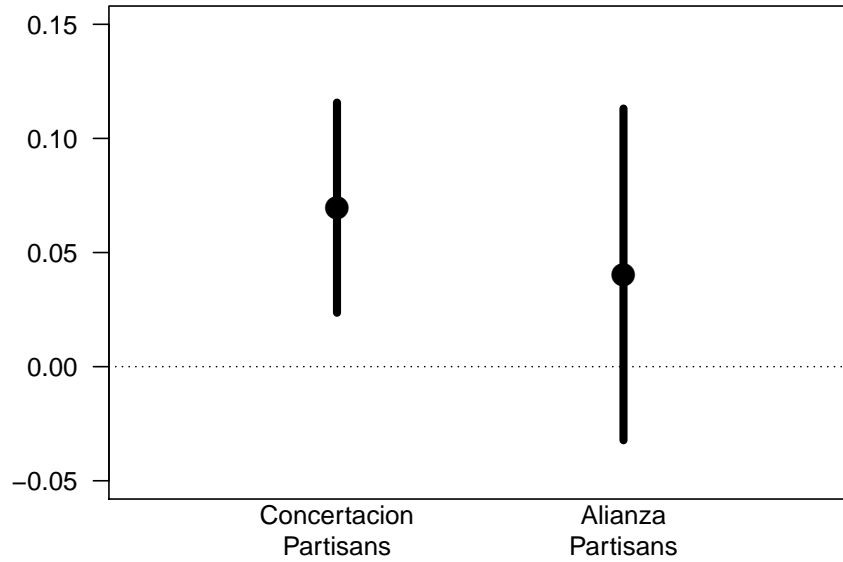
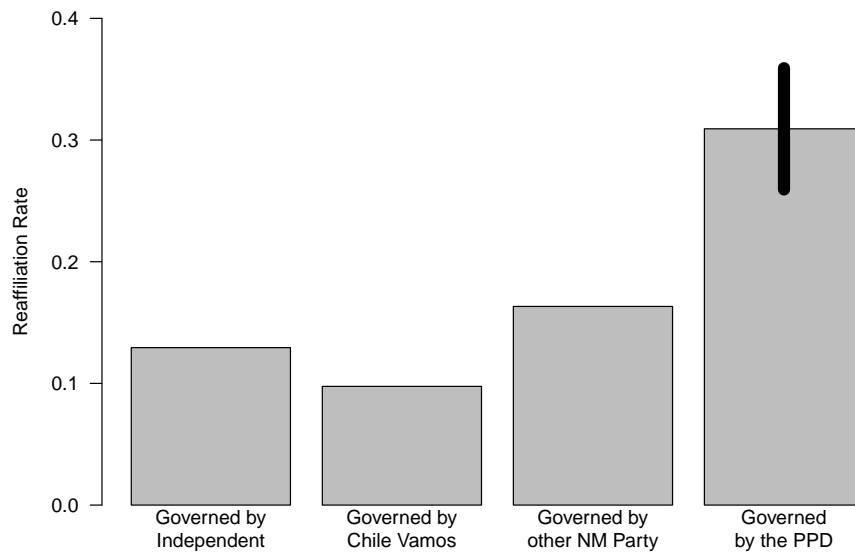


Figure 6: Reaffiliation of PPD Members in Chile, by Municipal-Level Governing Status



resources from private donors and are less dependent on the resources of municipal governments.

A second way to test the relationship between municipal control and party activism is by examining the membership re-affiliations with the Party for Democracy (PPD) in 2016. If the resources of municipal governments help parties retain their activists, we should expect to observe higher re-affiliation rates among PPD members in communes governed by a PPD mayor. Figure 6 shows the proportion of PPD members who re-joined the party after their affiliations were canceled, and it breaks down the re-affiliation rates by the party affiliation of the mayor who governed the member's commune from 2012 to 2016. One third of PPD members chose to remain in the party in communes that had a PPD mayor, but this rate fell to just 15% in communes governed by one of the PPD's allies in the *Nueva Mayoría* (the successor of the *Concertación*), and below 10% in communes governed by the right-wing alliance *Chile Vamos* (the successor of the *Alianza*). This suggests that controlling the mayorship greatly enhanced the party's capacity to hold onto its members.

Municipal Governments and Partisans

A party's control over a municipal government can also have downstream effects on the partisan attachments of the party's non-activist supporters. Figure 7 reports differences-in-differences estimates of the effect of mayoral electoral outcomes in 2000 on the change in party identification during the 2000s. Municipal incumbency had a positive and substantively large effect on *Concertación* partisanship across each specification of the model, and it was statistically significant for all but one of the specifications. The *Concertación* retained the partisan loyalties of an additional ten percent of the electorate in communes where it won the mayorship in the 2000 election, compared to highly similar communes where it lost the mayorship. However, there is no evidence that controlling the mayorship led to higher *Alianza* partisanship in the commune. The estimates for the *Alianza* are small and statistically insignificant across each specification of the model.

Figure 8 displays the temporal trend in *Concertación* partisanship based on whether the *Concertación* or the *Alianza* won the mayorship in 2000. This figure shows that *Concertación* parti-

Figure 7: Effect of Municipal Victory on Partisanship (Difference-in-Differences Estimates)

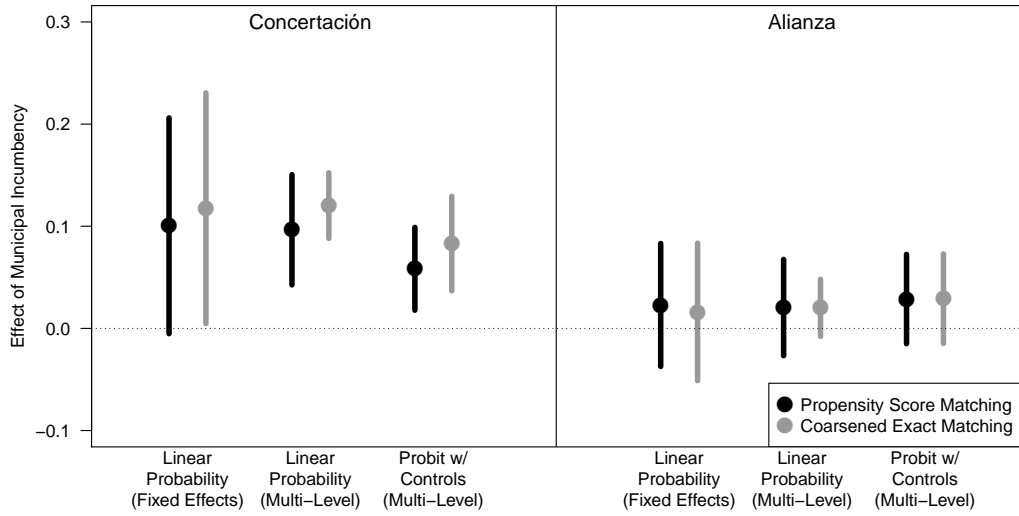
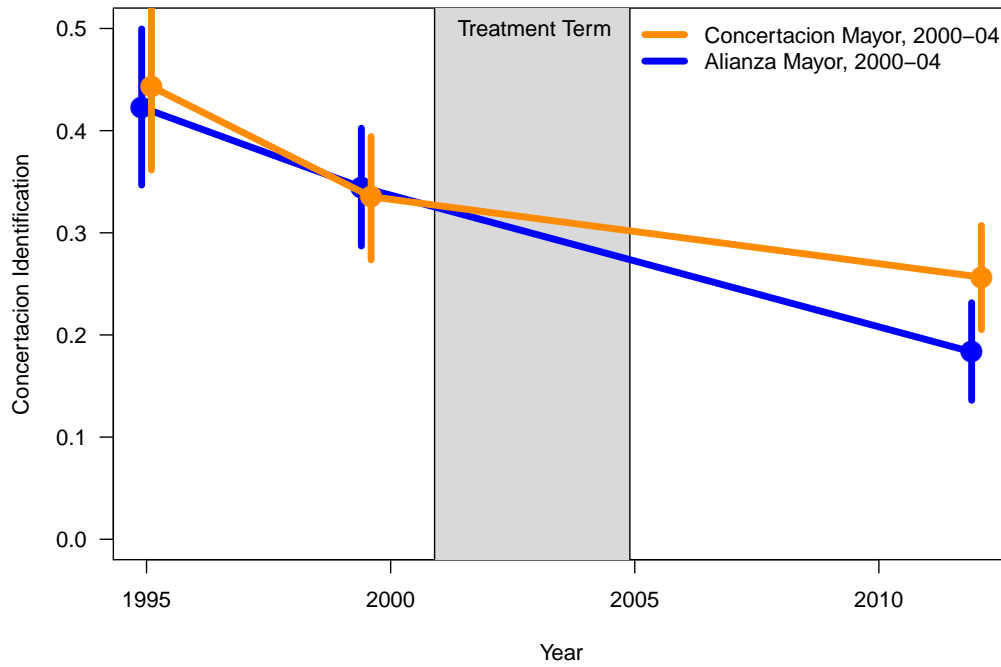


Figure 8: Concertación Partisanship in Treatment and Control Communes



sanship was declining at a very similar rate on average in these two groups of communes prior to the 2000 election. The *Concertación* lost the partisan loyalties of around 10% of the voting-age population in both the treatment and control communes during the five years prior to treatment. This similarity in pre-treatment time trends lends credibility to the parallel trends assumption. This figure also indicates that the *Concertación* partisanship diverged in the treatment and control groups during the post-treatment period. While around 35% of the population identified with the *Concertación* in both the treatment and control groups on the eve of the 2000 election, this rate fell to just 18% in communes that elected an *Alianza* mayor, compared to 28% in communes that had a *Concertación* mayor. The *Concertación* lost partisans in both types of communes, but the decline in party identification was much less severe in communes that had a *Concertación* mayor during the 2000-2004 term.

Alternative Mechanisms

While the evidence presented so far is consistent with my argument, there may be other mechanisms through which a party's control over the municipal government affects a commune's partisanship. One alternative explanation is that mayors are buying voters' partisan loyalties through direct clientelistic exchanges between the mayor and the voters. I examine this possibility using the distributive expectations survey conducted by Calvo and Murillo (2012) and self-reported clientelism in the CEP survey in 2010 and 2012. In order for direct clientelism to be the mechanism that links municipal electoral outcomes to *Concertación* party identification, it would have to be the case that Chilean parties are more likely to offer clientelistic benefits to their supporters in the communes that they govern. Figure 9 reports the difference in means of expected and self-reported clientelism between respondents whose party governed the commune and those whose party was in the opposition. Clientelistic expectations were measured on a ten-point scale that was normalized to range between 0 and 1, while self-reported clientelism is a binary variable. The effects of the respondents' partisan alignment with the mayor's party or alliance are substantively and statistically insignificant. This indicates that Chilean voters are not any more likely to receive clientelistic

Figure 9: Effect of Municipal Victory on Clientelism

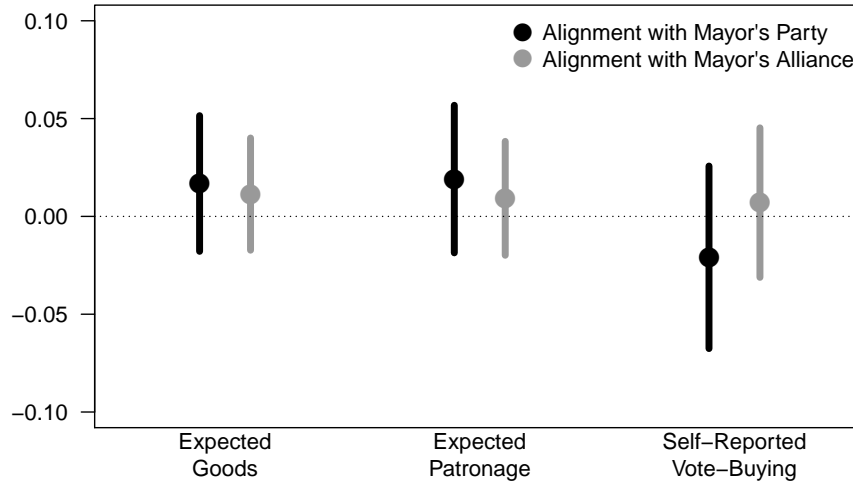
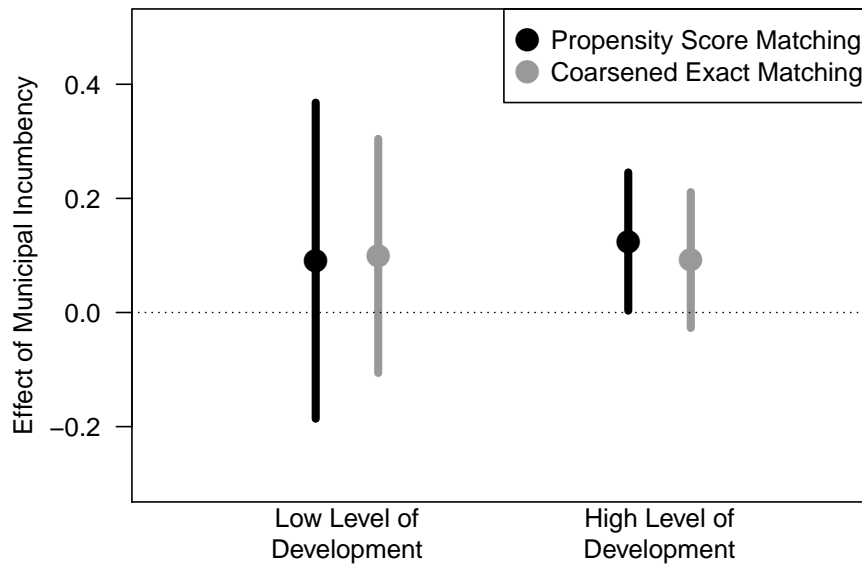


Figure 10: Effect of Municipal Victory on Partisanship, By Commune's Level of Development

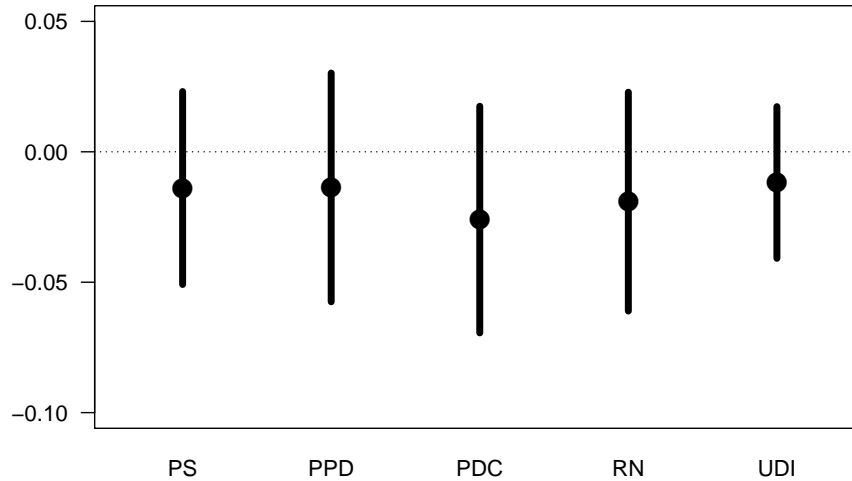


benefits in communes that their party governs.

Another way to assess whether clientelism is the main mechanism behind these results is by testing whether the effect of mayoral incumbency on partisanship is conditional on the commune's level of development. Both electoral and relational clientelism are most common in poor areas and they are usually quite rare in wealthy ones (Stokes et al. 2013, Nichter 2018). If we observe that incumbency has the same, positive effect even in high-income communes, that would suggest that clientelism is not the primary mechanism. I repeat the difference-in-differences analysis of the effect of incumbency on *Concertación* partisanship, but prior to matching, I partition the sample on the median of the communes' human development index in the early 2000s. Figure 10 shows the difference-in-differences estimates on the partitioned samples. There is no evidence that the effect of incumbency is greater in the poorer communes, and the point estimates of the effect are slightly higher in communes that had a higher level of development. Together, these results indicate that clientelism is unlikely to be the main mechanism behind the stability of *Concertación* partisanship.

A second alternative explanation is that the mayor's own popularity or personal appeal is leading voters' to identify with his party at greater rate by improving their opinion of the party as a whole. Holding the mayorship gives a party the opportunity to develop an independent local governing record that is potentially untainted by the party's failures and scandals at the national level. A positive local governing record may distract voters from the party's national-level mistakes and enable the party to retain more of its partisans in the communes that it governs. This mechanism would not be able to account for the heterogeneous effects between the *Concertación* and the *Alianza* unless *Concertación* mayors were significantly more popular or competent on average than *Alianza* mayors, which is implausible. The lack of data on Chilean mayors' approval rates makes it difficult to evaluate this mechanism at the municipal level, but it is possible to assess the extent to which a politician's personal appeal affects the partisanship of his or her constituents by analyzing the effect of national congressional outcomes on subsequent changes in party identification. Like mayors, members of Chile's Chamber of Deputies often have strong personal reputations and they invest considerable time and energy in constituency service work in their relatively small and

Figure 11: Effect of Congressional Victory on Partisanship, By Party



low-magnitude congressional districts.³ Unlike mayors, Deputies no longer have much influence over public sector appointments, and to the extent that they rely on clientelistic networks, they tend to construct these networks outside of the formal party organization (Luna 2014). If the mayor's personal appeal is driving the increases in partisanship with the mayor's party, we should expect to observe a similar effect for deputies. I repeat the differences-in-differences analysis shown in Figure 7, except now the treatment is whether either of the respondent's congressional representatives belong to a given party. Figure 11 reports the estimated difference-in-differences estimates for

³Prior to 2017, each of Chile's sixty lower-house congressional districts elected exactly two members of congress through a variant of an open-list proportional representation system known as the binomial system. These districts contained fewer than six communes on average, and a few districts contained only a single commune. The combination of small districts, low district magnitude, and candidate-centered electoral rules transformed Deputies into highly-visible brokers who exerted a strong influence over both local and national politics in their districts.

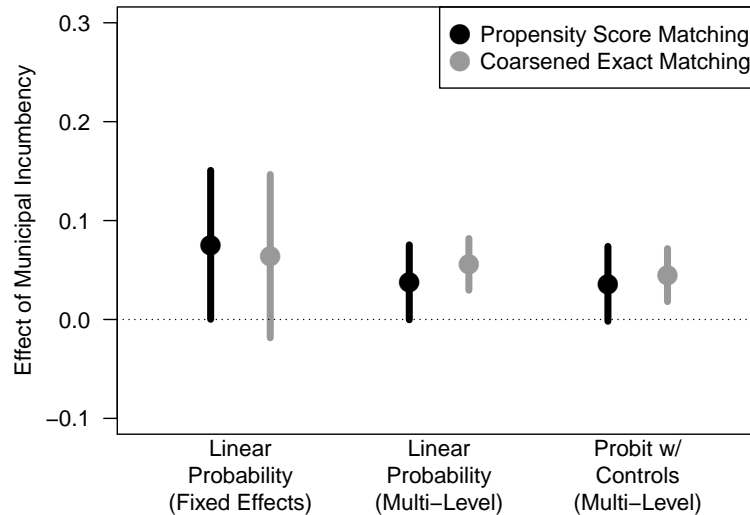
each of Chile's five major parties. There is no evidence that a party's control over congressional seats increases its party identification rate in the district, and the estimates are insignificant and slightly negative across each party.

Municipal Incumbency and Partisanship Beyond Chile

Although they have discretion over municipal public sector appointments, Chilean mayors are relatively weak and dependent on the central government compared to their counterparts in most other Latin American countries. If the relationship between municipal incumbency and partisanship is part of a broader pattern rather than something unique to Chilean politics, we should expect to observe similar results in countries where mayors have even greater control over resources in their municipalities. Brazil and Mexico are fitting comparison cases because their mayors are among the most powerful in Latin America, and like Chile, they are also countries where civil service reforms have reduced the supply of public sector patronage in the national government while patronage remains quite prevalent at the subnational level (Brollo, Forquesato and Gozzi 2017; Colonnelli, Teso and Prem 2017; Arias 2018).

For the Brazilian case, I examine the effect of having a Workers' Party (PT) mayor on changes in PT partisanship in the mid-2000s. The PT is Brazil's most-institutionalized party, and it was the only Brazilian party that had gained the partisan loyalties of a significant share of the electorate by the early 2000s (Samuels and Zucco 2018). However, half-way into the PT's first presidential term, the party was implicated in several corruption scandals that damaged its reputation and led to a deep but ephemeral decline in the proportion of Brazilian voters who identified with the PT. I focus on the 2005-2008 mayoral term, which began just a few months before the wave of 2005 scandals broke. I measure PT party identification using repeated cross-sectional survey data from *Datafolha* from the beginning of the term (before the scandals) and the end of the term. I estimate a difference-in-differences model similar to the one that I estimated on the Chilean data, where the treatment is whether the respondent's mayor was from the PT. Figure 12 reports the difference-in-

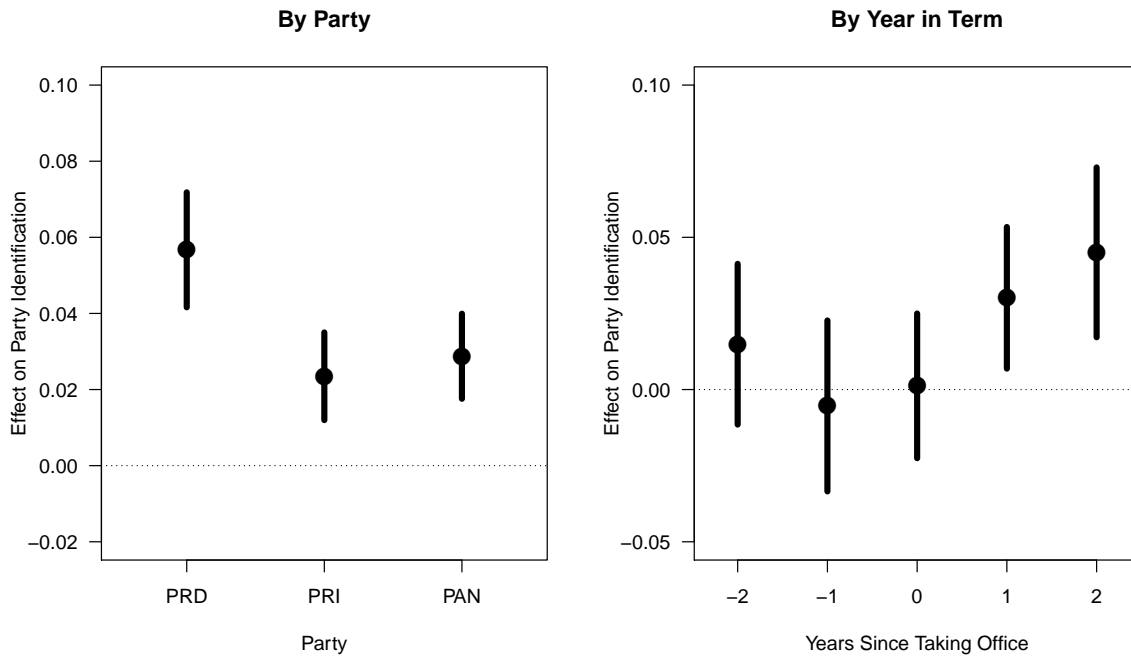
Figure 12: Effect of a PT Mayor on PT Partisanship in Brazil (Difference-in-Differences Estimates)



differences estimates. The results in this figure suggest that having a PT mayor in the municipality mitigated the adverse effects of the scandals on PT partisanship. While the estimates were only marginally significant for some of the specifications, for each specification of the model the change in PT partisanship was around 5 to 8 percentage points more positive in the municipalities that the PT governed. During this period, PT experienced a 6 percentage point decline in its party identification rate nation-wide, but PT party identification barely changed in municipalities that had a PT mayor.

I analyze the effect of municipal incumbency on party identification with Mexico’s three major parties in the 2000s using data from ISA spanning multiple mayoral terms between 2003 and 2015. The greater data availability for Mexico allows me to estimate a more-general difference-in-differences model that leverages multiple terms for each municipality and compares outcomes within the same municipality between terms when the party held the mayorship and terms in which

Figure 13: Effect of Municipal Victory on Partisanship in Mexico (Difference-in-Differences Estimates)



it was the opposition. I estimate the model

$$PartyID_{m,i} = IncumbentMayor_{m,i} + \mu_m + \tau_i + \varepsilon_{m,i}$$

where $IncumbentMayor_{m,i} = 1$ if the party governed the respondent's municipality at the time of the survey, and μ_m and τ_i are municipality and survey fixed-effects, respectively. I cluster the standard errors on the municipality.

Figure 13 reports these difference-in-differences estimates. The left panel shows that governing a municipality had a positive and significant effect on party identification with each of Mexico's three major parties. This effect was especially strong for the left-wing PRD, which gained or retained the partisan loyalties of an additional 5.7% of the electorate during the terms that it governed the municipality. The right panel shows the effect of incumbency on partisanship by the year in the municipal electoral cycle. The effects of incumbency were small and statistically insignificant dur-

ing the years before the new mayor assumed office, which suggests that partisanship was changing at a similar rate in treatment and control municipalities prior to treatment. The effect was also insignificant during the first year in the new term (year 0 in this figure), but it grew increasingly positive and significant during the second and third year of the three-year mayoral term. This temporal lag suggests that rather than leading to an immediate boost in partisanship, it may take a few years for municipal incumbency to translate into a higher party identification rate.

Conclusion

Over the last thirty years, the Latin American state has undergone a profound transformation that has made it harder for parties to use public sector appointments for organizational purposes and has forced them to turn to alternative strategies for mobilizing mass support. However, the speed and extent of these changes often varied in different parts of the same country, and at different levels of governance. The results of this paper suggest that municipal governments are still a source of patronage resources that parties can channel into their local organizations, even in countries like Chile, Brazil, and Mexico, which had led the way on Latin America's wave of state reforms in the 1990s and 2000s. I showed that appointments to positions in municipal governments in Chile are still quite politicized compared to national-level appointments, and that a party's activists and campaign workers are among the greatest beneficiaries of these patronage jobs. I also showed that parties are able to mobilize and retain a larger share of low-level activists in the municipalities that it governs. Finally, I showed that governing a municipality reinforces mass party identification with the party, and declines in partisan attachments with a particular party are considerably milder in places where the party is in power at the local level.

This paper advances our understanding of the relationship between parties and the state in several ways. First, it helps explain why declines in party identification often occur more gradually in some parts of a country compared to others. During the mid-20th century, Latin American voters were embedded in a series of brokerage, friendship, and neighborhood networks with low-level

party activists, and these networks stabilized mass partisan identities and extended the reach of traditional parties into all segments of the electorate. The networks fell into decline as parties lost access to the public-sector patronage that sustained them, but the findings of this paper suggest that parties could leverage their control over municipal executive office to maintain both the activist-based organizational model and their mass partisan base in the municipalities that they governed.

This argument does not deny the important role that factors such as modernization, policy-switching, and corruption scandals played in triggering collapses of party identification, but it does suggest that municipal incumbency and activist networks can mitigate the effects of these shocks on party identification. This argument also helps resolve other puzzles concerning the recent wave of partisan decline in Latin America, such as why partisan attachments to Argentina's Peronist party have been relatively resilient despite the party's policy-switching and corruption scandals, while the partisan collapses suffered by parties such as Argentina's Radical Civic Union, Venezuela's Democratic Action or Peru's APRA have been so severe and permanent. The Peronists retained control over most provincial and municipal governments, and they used the resources in these governments not only to buy votes, but also to maintain their local party organizations and networks (Levitsky 2003; Scherlis 2010; Oliveros 2013). Other parties in the region were less successful at maintaining their grip on subnational office, and *re*centralization under authoritarian governments in Peru in the 1990s and Venezuela in the 2000s has reduced the organizational value of subnational governments (Eaton 2013; Muñoz and Dargent 2016).

These findings also contribute to a growing literature on the effects of municipal incumbency on the health of political parties. Recent research on incumbency effects has focused mainly on the way that subnational politicians affect electoral outcomes at other levels, and at least in the Latin American context, these incumbency effects are often interpreted as evidence of clientelism (Lucardi 2016; Novaes 2018). However, this paper highlights additional mechanisms through which local incumbency can strengthen parties in a locality. In addition to giving parties the means to buy votes, controlling a municipal government also offers parties organizational resources that shore up their activist networks and help them maintain their local partisan support. A consequence

of this organizational mechanism is that incumbency can expand the party's mass support even in contexts like contemporary Chile, where electoral clientelism is relatively rare.

What lessons should political parties and policymakers draw from these findings? This paper calls attention to the endurance of patronage-based organizational models even after decades of state reform. Several Latin American countries have made remarkable progress at professionalizing their national civil service and depoliticizing appointments to the central bureaucracy. But rather than spelling an end for patronage politics, this wave of reforms has often simply transferred public-sector patronage resources to other levels of government. This paper also shows that patronage can still play an important role in strengthening parties at the local level, and this can affect not only the political participation of the direct beneficiaries of patronage positions, but also the party identification of the broader local electorate. This does not mean that countries should preserve municipal patronage for the sake of their parties, but it does suggest that continued attempts to stamp out patronage at all levels can have a destabilizing effect on political parties that might aggravate rather than alleviate the political crises that many Latin American countries have faced over the last decade. A return to the 20th century-style patronage system is neither desirable nor politically acceptable in Latin America today. Fortunately for political parties, public sector patronage is hardly the only tool that they can use to motivate their activists, and recent research suggests that factors such as internal rules that given activists a voice in party decision-making may be just as effective at mobilizing activist participation (Pérez, Piñeiro, and Rosenblatt 2018). If Latin American parties continue to lose access to patronage resources over the coming years, these alternatives may become even more important for their organizational and partisan survival.

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