**Expanding electoral coalitions:**

**Conservative Parties in Argentina and Mexico**

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My research in Argentina and Mexico this summer focused on analyzing how conservative political parties expand their electoral coalitions by attracting new groups. In particular, given that these parties have traditionally been voted into office by the upper and upper-middle classes, I analyze how they attract low-income voters. For this, I analyzed survey data, party platforms and conducted qualitative interviews with prominent party leaders, academics and journalists in Argentina and Mexico.

In Argentina I spent most of the time collecting and analyzing data on electoral surveys and party documents both from Argentina and Mexico. In particular, I focused on data since the transition to democracy, and I created a database that traces the electoral evolution of the main Argentinean and Mexican political parties. For that I contacted different experts on electoral surveys in order to access past electoral surveys. With this database, I aim to analyze the evolution of which specific groups in society voted for each party and how that changed over time. In addition, I collected historic party documents as well as secondary literature on the main political parties in Argentina and Mexico in order to better understand how these parties evolved over time.

The second main task of my fieldwork during the 2012 summer was to conduct interviews with prominent top politicians, academics, and journalists in Mexico. For that, I spent three weeks conducting in-depth interviews with key decision-makers from the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) and with well-known experts (both academics and journalists). The interviews with prominent politicians of PAN (mainly politicians with top positions within the National Executive Committee of the party) allowed me to test the relevance of some of my independent variables. PAN politicians carefully explained the main electoral strategies used for different groups and how they specifically tried to reach out to new groups. Both experts and journalists helped me to confirm some of these strategies and gave detailed information about the evolution of the PAN over time. In addition, journalists were particularly useful to help me contact several key politicians as well as finding who within the party would know best about my research topic.

Overall, the trip both to Mexico and Argentina was particularly useful for my research. I was able to collect the data I needed in order to proceed with my research, as well as conducting interviews. I will use the sources collected while in Buenos Aires and Mexico DF for an upcoming paper on conservative parties in Latin America. In order to complete my research I plan to add a third case to my study: Chile. I plan to be able to finish this article in the 2012-2013 academic year. In addition, this research constitutes a solid base for my dissertation, which will focus on both conservative and labor-based parties and their strategies to attract noncore constituencies.