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‘¿La seguridad? ¡Es un negocio!’: Persisting Insecurity in Argentine Football

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‘¿La seguridad? ¡Es un negocio!’: Persisting Insecurity in Argentine Football

Abstract

Despite many social and political initiatives aiming to battle violence in and around stadiums, insecurity in Argentine football persists. Many scholars have assessed a distinctive set of causes of insecurity in the context of Argentine football, but few have assessed the persistent characteristic of it. Building upon a conceptual framework of political clientelism, this research aims to develop an understanding of the reproduction of insecurity in Argentine football. Through a political, economic and cultural dimension, this research concludes that political clientelist networks constitute to an intermediating factor between causes of violence and the reproduction of insecurity.

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Introduction

'Football is a trustworthy reflection of a nation's society'.[1] It is beyond doubt that football is more than just a sport in society. How the sport is set up and experienced, reflects on the organization of a society and essentially its political and sociological characteristics. It is needless to say that football in Argentina reflects on many challenging issues in society. Violence in and around stadiums constitutes to a persistent problem. Besides, corruption related to football clubs is widespread and the football culture reflects on issues of for example masculinity, which is deeply rooted in Argentine society. Notorious incidents such as the attack on CA Independiente President Javier Cantero in 2013, tear gas incidents during the Copa Libertadores in 2015 and the infamous attack on the Boca Juniors bus before the final of the Copa Libertadores in 2018 underline this persistency in recent years.

Several political initiatives have been launched to battle the insecurity around football in Argentina. The administration of Cristina Kirchner prohibited the away fans in Argentine football in almost all occasions, while under the government of Mauricio Macri, the Minister of Security Patricia Bullrich sought to introduce a law against the violent football hooligan groups in Argentina, the so-called *barras bravas*. Yet, little progress has been made until today. This standstill fuels the question what contributes to the persistence of insecurity in Argentine football, despite societal and political efforts to battle it. By taking the concept of political clientelism as a mediating factor in the structures of insecurity in Argentine football, this research aims to develop a broader framework in which tendencies of persistence of insecurity can be explained.

The academic field has produced a rich pallet of studies on insecurity and violence in Argentine football, which provide a broad perspective on both the causes and consequences of insecurity in Argentine football. Although this has resulted in many strands of literature on the topic, the state of the art seems to lack such a broader framework in which the societal incapacity to successfully encounter insecurity can be understood. In light of this observation, it is valuable to set out the current state of the art on political clientelism, insecurity and Argentine football.

Violence and insecurity in Argentine football have raised wide academic attention. Scholars have sought to understand this 'ritual of violence', as Archetti (1994) has characterized it, through distinctive perspectives. Economic, anthropological, sociological and political frameworks have all been set up in order to move towards an understanding of insecurity in

[1] Interview: Valentin Matteuci, August 5.

Argentine football. Although these perspectives represent different approaches, many causes and explanations for insecurity have been brought forward. Apart from the broader focus on insecurity in Argentine football, a fair strand of the academic focus on insecurity has specifically emerged on the persistent characteristic in Argentine football (Murzi & Trejo 2018; Archetti 2007). Consequently, various scholars have examined the public policies installed by the Argentine government to battle this persistence of violence (Murzi 2019; Branz et al. 2020). Some of these contributions have even extensively focused on the efforts of specific presidencies (Rosa 2020, Murzi 2020, Rosa 2018). However, these contributions build upon persistency, but the theoretical explanation of it is limited.

The focus on persistence of insecurity and public policies on football violence has mainly been directed on specific causes over the range of distinctive perspectives in the academic literature on insecurity in Argentine football. Several scholars have focused on cultural causes of insecurity. These contributions often provide a central place for the *hinchada* (football fans) in the analysis. In this light, several scholars have connected the arguably Argentine concept of *aguante* to violence (Moreira 2008, Alabarces et al 2008; Alabarces 2021). *Aguante* often provides a cultural logic in which scholars have analysed the role of stadium songs (Alabarces 2015). Subsequently, these songs often represent forms of identity, masculinity and consequently the normalization of violence. Scholars have broadly analysed the consequences of these songs for insecurity in Argentine football. Huddleston (2021) has indicated violence in Argentine football as an internally deriving force from the game, legitimized through football songs and socialization (Huddleston 2021). Besides the legitimizing force of football songs and *aguante*, other academic contributions have focused on the participatory and contagious dimension of *aguante*. Through the participatory function of *aguante* and football songs, masculinity and violence find their ways in larger crowds (Herrera 2018).

The social identity deriving from cultural factors as *aguante* and masculinity, has proven to be highly eligible for employment of the concept for political gains. As a result, causes of insecurity in Argentine football have been sought in political spheres as well. The academic literature on Argentine football has had a broad focus on the connection between football and politics. Several scholars have analysed the relationship of *Peronism*o with football from a historical perspective (Rein 1998). Others have formed a framework in which *Peronismo* shaped a cultural identity, which essentially leads towards a deep association between football and *peronismo* (O'Brien 2017; O'Brien 2021). Yet, the relationship between *peronismo* and football should not be perceived as a direct driver of insecurity in Argentine football. Rather, it

should be understood as a means of politics, which reflects on the connection between politics, irrespective of ideology, and football in Argentina. This touches upon two major reflections of the link between Argentine football and politics, which have been outlined in the literature.

First, the link between football and politics in Argentine reflects on a manner of political organization. Politicians across the entire Latin American region have recognized the political possibilities in football (Mason 1995). Other than in other countries, Argentine football clubs are generally social institutions, which often include a democratic system which is upheld by the votes of the *socio*. In this regard, scholars have emphasized the niche opportunity that football clubs provide in order to construct political support and prominence in Argentina. Rein and Brenman have set out the political dynamics within the *barra brava* group of Chacarita Juniors (Rein & Brenman 2021). Paradiso (2016) has outlined a similar stance in his account on political clientelism in Club Atlético Atlanta in Villa Crespo, Buenos Aires. These accounts form an interesting strand of literature on how football as emerged as a means through which politics can emerge and organize in groups of *barras bravas* and specific clubs. Although these accounts recognize the constant factor of violence throughout Argentine football, insecurity is not recognized as a product of this political organization, but rather as a means to keep this political organization in place. This is an important perspective of the current literature to emphasize.

Second, the connection demonstrates the power of populism within football in Argentina, which finds its roots in the earlier described cultural forces constituting to a common identity in Argentine football. Scholars have outlined how football as a cultural activity could boost national and cultural identities (Ibid.; Rein 2020; Spaaij 2008). Politicians can build upon these identities, by using or abusing the popular sentiments which emerge in it (Lladós 2021). Rein (1998) sets out how the promotion and appropriation of sports under Perón in sports provides an important pillar under the construction of political support for his politics (Rein 1998). Other scholars have focused on populist public policies aiming to gain national support, such as the *Fútbol para Todos* programmes of Cristina Kirchner or the *campeonatos Evita* (Bar-on & De Gaetano 2017; Brinkerhoff 2021).

In the latter described causes, the literature has recognized the important role of groups of violent football fans in the construction of cultural legitimization and political support, as they are the main drivers of expressions of *aguante* and passion. Ultimately, they intermediate between politicians and general football fans. The notions that football in Argentina provides a fruitful soil for populism and a specific political organization, brings forth the role of political

clientelism and its relation towards insecurity. Scholars on populism and clientelism in Argentina have pointed out how populist strategies through clientelism can result in violence (Muno 2019). In addition, Paradiso (2016) has extensively focused on the role of political clientelism in Argentine football. In an anthropological account on the social issues in Argentine football, political clientelism is presented as yet another driver of violence in Argentina (Paradiso 2016). Altogether, contributions on political clientelism have mainly focused on the existence of political clientelism as a cause of insecurity.

In a nutshell, the academic literature on football has presented many causes of insecurity in Argentine football. Yet, most contributions have separately developed frameworks in which a cause of violence is understood. As emphasized, such accounts do not reflect on the persistent aspects of insecurity in Argentine football. In focusing on the connections in politics in relation to football, the literature provided a framework in which political clientelism constitutes to a factor in violence in Argentine football. These understandings of politics in football do help us to understand the political organizational and identity-building power of football, but like the earlier and separate accounts on causes of violence in Argentine football they do not reflect on the persistence of political clientelism. Moreover, though the key role of violence is recognized in political clientelism, it is mostly presented as a means to maintain this form of political organization, rather than the product of it.

This is remarkable, since the political clientelist networks seem to suggest otherwise. Therefore, this research shall aim to move towards a broader perspective in which insecurity in Argentine football and society can be understood. It will seek to merge the political, cultural and economic causes of insecurity in a framework which explains how insecurity persists. Political clientelism will take a central role in this understanding, through directing the concept in-between causes and the eventual insecurity in Argentine football. In line with this alternative approach, this research takes the following research question: 'Which structures explain the persistence of insecurity in Argentine football and prevent other outcomes as pursued by political and social initiatives?'.

In moving towards a framework for understanding the persistence of insecurity in Argentine football, this research has developed a mixed-method research framework. It builds upon semi-structured interviews with distinctive actors from the field, such as (former) football directors, politicians, fans and club representatives and journalists.[2] In addition, this research has

[2] See appendix for information on conducted interviews.

conducted a broad survey amongst more than 250 football fans across Argentina, randomly sampled upon the premise of being a football fan[3]. In moving towards an analysis of the proposed relation, this research will adhere to the following structure. Chapter 1 will focus on the theoretical framework beyond the alternative perspective on political clientelism towards violence in Argentina. Subsequently, chapter 2 will move towards an historical embedding of political clientelism in Argentine football, to demonstrate the current state of art in the field. Chapter 3 will outline the role of political clientelism in the persistence of insecurity in Argentine football through a mixed-methods research, consisting of a political, cultural and economic dimension.

[3] See appendix for information on conducted data.

Chapter 1. Insecurity and Political Clientelism

This section will develop a theoretical framework of the concept of political clientelism in relation to the issue of insecurity in Argentine football. The aim is to set out the main characteristics of respectively political clientelism and insecurity in Argentine football. Political clientelism will be conceptualized, after which it will be embedded in respectively a political, economic and cultural dimension. These dimensions serve to develop a framework through which the persistence of insecurity in Argentine football can be explained.

1.1. Political clientelism

In her account of clientelism in the Oxford Handbook of Political Science, Stokes (2011) defines political clientelism as the 'proffering of material goods in return for electoral support, where the criterion of distribution that the patron uses is simply: did you (will you) support me?' (Stokes 2011: 649). Equal definitions speak of 'the distribution of resources, by political office holders or candidates in exchange for political support' (Gay 1990: 649). These definitions of political clientelism implicate a relation between patron and client as a default feature of political clientelism. This default feature has already been brought forward in early theorizations of political clientelism. Generally, these academic accounts have focused on the so-called dyadic relation between patron and client (Landé 1977). This reflects on a vertical relation between a powerful and a less powerful actor (Ibid.). Moreover, it seems to suggest that there is a face-to-face relation between patron and client.

In contrast, other scholars have moved towards a broader definition of the relation within political clientelism, which focuses on 'the exchange between a public job for political support' as a definition (Stokes 2011: 650). Such definitions are merely characterized as the concept of patronage (Ibid.; Robinson & Verdier 2013). Although patronage closely relates to political clientelism, the concepts should be perceived as two worlds apart. The concept of political clientelism has the ability to reflect on more complex networks of clientelism, consisting of different levels and actors. This characterization separates political clientelism from general clientelism. In this regard, academics have defined the concept of political clientelism as a form of political organization on which these networks are the key form of political interaction. Kettering (1988) describes political clientelism as a system of patron-broker-client relations and networks which are the key in the political system and government in a country (Kettering 1988: 419).

In political clientelist networks the existence of brokers is important to explain the ability of political clientelism to evolve in complex networks. Brokers (referred to as *punteros* in

Argentina) should be characterized as agents who mediate between their bosses and clients (Zarazaga 2014: 27). Essentially, they gather the political support for the political office holders or candidates and redistribute the resources which are made available by the patron to the clients. Brokers operate within a hierarchical structure and thus uphold the pyramid of the network, ultimately resulting in a single patron or group of patrons (Ibid.). Within this definition, political scholars have highlighted the necessity of knowledge or a form of integration in the case of the clients to perform and run the network efficiently (Idem: 29; Dixit & Londregan 1996).

Apart from the complex multilevel system through which political clientelism operates, scholars have characterized the conditions on which political clientelist networks can survive. The organizational capacity of political clientelist networks has the ability to fragment the electoral and popular groups (Auyero 2000: 57). Through political clientelism, political parties and political actors develop the ability to coerce specific groups of voters to their cause. In this way, they successfully separate these coherent groups from other social groups. Subsequently, a capacity to bypass the conventional democratic practices emerges. Multiple scholars have observed such patterns in the *Partido Justicialista* in Argentina. In such systems, local politicians maintain a team of brokers, who redistribute food packages or other supplies to poor people in slums (Ibid.; Zarazaga 2014; Szwarcberg 2015). This kind of distribution of goods or money has been characterized as a problem-solving network in the academic literature (Auyero 2000: 57). Ultimately, these brokers successfully bind the voters within the network, resulting in a bypass of the traditional campaigning methods in conventional democracies. In this practice, political clientelism can be perceived as a captive system which evolves towards a system of control, where voters are captured in top-down created dependencies. It is these dependencies upon which political clientelist networks build.

Taken the latter definitions of political clientelism into account, the concept can be perceived as a socio-political phenomenon, which may take different outcomes in different societal environments (Albertazzi 2014: 313). Moreover, academic accounts of political clientelism have underlined the importance of the historical development of political clientelism (Kettering 1988). As a result, political clientelism can be characterized as a phenomenon which adapts and originates in its environment. The phenomenon of political clientelism in Latin America and in Argentine football specifically, has received an vast amount of academic attention, resulting in a broad set of conceptual specifications which have been observed and attached to political clientelist networks.

Given the notion that political clientelism is a concept that adapts to its environment, it is valuable to move towards an practical application of political clientelism in Argentine football. As earlier mentioned, Argentine football clubs are organized as social institutions, which are democratically organized. Subsequently, participating actors experience a symbiotic relation. Popular support is required in order to get elected, but once being elected the popular support could boost a political career towards higher levels. Office holders or candidates for offices in football clubs are therefore eligible to develop patron-like features, implicating the personification of the top of the pyramid. This patron needs to possess goods, power or other important belongings which are eligible to redistribute to those who may or may not vote for the (candidate) president. Regardless of the type of goods, the redistribution will need to be carried out by a group of loyal brokers, below the top of the pyramid. In the case of Argentine football, these brokers are likely to be represented in the top of supporters organizations. This implicates two important features. First, these brokers are well-informed on the environment of football in which they are acting. Second, they have a large coverage over the possible clients, thus football supporters of the specific football club. This results in the complex patron-broker-client relations which are theorized in earlier parts of this section.

These political clientelist networks in Argentine football hold the power to separate coherent groups from other groups, thus bypassing conventional electoral processes upheld in football clubs. Paradiso (2016) has exemplified this in the formation of violent groups of football fans. The captive nature of the problem-solving network has become clear in the 1960s for the first time at Boca Juniors, where President Armando set up a clientelist network involving popular groups of fans in exchange for money (Paradiso 2016: 484). Such groups evolve in coherent groups who conditionally support the office holder or candidate. This overrules the power of the democratic electoral system of the club. The resources, received through the leaders of groups of *barras bravas*, form the solutions of various problems for ordinary fans and poor clients: matchday tickets, transport to games or support materials.

Building upon the previous theoretical indications, this paper proposes the following definition of political clientelism in the environment of Argentine football: Political clientelism in the context of Argentine football consists of complex networks, in which office holders or candidates for such offices of football clubs uphold a captive and coherent pyramid through leaders of supporters groups, the brokers, in which ultimately conditional groups of clients are formed with the ability to bypass the electoral system of the democratic organized clubs. Having formulated this basic practical definition of political clientelism in Argentine football, this

theoretical framework moves forward by zooming in on three separate dimensions of political clientelism in Argentine football. Respectively, a political, an economic and a cultural dimension will be set out. In doing so, this research allows to expand the general definition of political clientelism with the aim to develop a broader explanatory framework for understanding the persistence of insecurity in Argentine football.

1.2. Political Clientelism: Economic Dimension

1.2.1. Transactions and dependencies

Given the formulated definition of political clientelism in the context of football, this section seeks to close in on the economic dimension. Surely, the proposed definition on club presidents or candidates upholding a pyramid which ultimately distributes a flow of money or goods towards their clients, implicates an economic relation between two or more groups. In the complex networks as sketched in earlier sections, these economic relations are shaped between patrons, brokers and ultimately the clients.

It is essential to characterize these economic relations as conditional. Both the loyalty of brokers and clients depend on a conditionalities. As for the clients, scholars have described the subject of exchange in different manners. In his account on Peronist clientelist networks in Argentina, Auyero (2000) refers to goods and services. More broadly, Szwarcberg (2012) describes this as material or non-material goods and Stokes (2007) includes non-physical factors such as threatening. At last, Scott (1972: 91-92) includes benefits and protection. Hence, it is important to emphasize that the notion of 'material goods' is not necessarily in the positive form of money or goods, it can include the form of violence, protection and threatening as well. This is particularly relevant in the case of football, where violence is already overrepresented in normal day habitat. Therefore, this research follows a broader definition of the economic subject of the exchange.

Notwithstanding the subject of the transactions, they constitute to a top-down web of dependencies. The brokers play an important role in upholding these dependencies. In political electoral environments, scholars have brought forward two main issues in the loyalty of brokers: predation and defection (Aspinall 2014). Predation oversees the cases where brokers mislead the higher levels of the pyramid through appropriating transactions to themselves instead of clients, defection focuses on the cases where a broker chooses another patron over his original upward pyramid (Ibid.). Both conceptual disloyalties within the pyramids are driven by the amount of the transaction and the future prospects of serving under the patron. Translated towards the world of football in Argentina, this would implicate that leaders of groups of

violent football fans, serving as brokers, would depend their loyalty in terms of predation and defection to a club president or candidate in the following terms. Depending on the height of the transactions provided by the club president or candidate and the future prospects under that presidency are leading for the loyalty of leaders of fan groups.

In addition, the literature on political clientelist networks in Argentine football recognized an important distinction of the client groups in football compared to conventional political clientelism. As Paradiso have rightfully brought forward (2016: 481), organized fan groups possess a power to negotiate. This underlines the importance of loyalty of brokers in the network, as brokers have the function of redistributing the gains of the transaction towards the clients. Considering this larger power to negotiate, mostly based upon the threat of violence, the power of these groups towards the office holder or president is bigger. Consequently, predation and defection are easier tools for brokers than in other contexts. In other words, dependencies do not only flow top-down but also bottom up, as the president is dependent on the broker to handle the power of negotiation by fan groups.

1.2.2. Socioeconomic status and targeting

In building a stable pyramid of political clientelist networks, not only the loyalty of the broker is essential, but as well the status of the clients. As earlier conceptually set out, political clientelism has the ability to fragmentate bigger groups towards a coherent group. From the perspective of the patron, it may be difficult to select such groups. This underlines once again the importance of brokers, who are expected to be integrated in their environment to such an extent that they are able to target the material or non-material goods to the right individuals (Zarazaga 2014: 24). This retains loyalty and provides the fundament of loyalty under the political clientelist networks.

Auyero has already demonstrated the typical profile of clients, who are mostly formed out of vulnerable, poor groups in society (2000). This part of the population often lives in slums in the outskirts of larger cities in Argentina. Broader scholars have confirmed this idea that poor voters are often more susceptible for clientelism (Brusco et al. 2004: 74). This emphasizes the socioeconomic aspect of political clientelist networks. Networks are built upon lower classes in society, existing of people and families with little economic prospects for the future. This still leaves the question why clients would seek the resources or goods provided by the political clientelist network. Scholars have indicated that clientelism works as a two-way street: under circumstances, clients benefit from clientelism as well (Hilgers 2009). In the perception of clients, participating in networks provides them the basic needs to survive (ibid.; Auyero 2000).

In a nutshell, the loyalty to political clientelist networks from lower *socio*economic classes not only functions as a top-down dependency but also as a bottom-up strategy of survival.

However, once again the power of negotiation should be included in conceptually analysing these groups of clients. To this extent, the economic conceptualization of clients within political clientelist networks in this research moves beyond contributions of Auyero (2000). Groups of *barras bravas* in Argentina have proven to possess an ability to protect its direct influence and interests through violence. The specific cultural and historical aspects in the formations of these groups, on which later will be reflected, have constituted to this ability of negotiation. Despite their socioeconomic class, the characteristics of conventional groups of clients in regular politics are often less homogenous compared to client groups in football. Therefore, brokers in political clientelist networks in Argentine football should not only be able to select the right population which is susceptible for clientelism on socioeconomic grounds, but also control these groups through some form of loyalty.

As already pointed out, brokers should possess sufficient information on the context in which clientelist networks are upheld (Zarazaga 2014: 24-25). This seems even more important for the relation between brokers and football fan groups. Without sufficient knowledge on the population of clients, redistribution cannot be targeted successfully by the broker. This closely relates to the academic notion that clientelism negatively relates to economic development (Hicken 2011: 300). As Hicken notes: ‘Clientelism also diverts scarce resources that might otherwise be used to further economic development and generates incentives for keeping constituents poor and dependent’ (Hicken 2011). Essentially, brokers and patrons benefit from the absence of economic development of their clients, as this downgrades their ability to negotiate and increases loyalty through dependency. Consequently, brokers can maintain the status-quo of the political clientelist networks.

1.3. Political Clientelism: Cultural Dimension

1.3.1. Cultural foundations

Having defined a basic conceptualization of political clientelism in Argentine football, it is valuable to outline the cultural foundations on which such political clientelist networks are built. Surely, both from the perspective of the patrons and the groups of clients, cultural factors play a significant role in the constitution and consolidation of the pyramid of networks. Hence, to understand how political clientelism is a mediating factor between distinctive kind of causes of violence in football and the persistent character of insecurity in Argentina, understanding these cultural foundations is essential.

The academic literature on political clientelism has acknowledged this importance of cultural factors in political clientelist networks. In an anthropological account on political clientelism in relation to media, Roudakova (2008) formulates political clientelism as a form of social and political organization where, powerful patrons control public resources and deliver these to less powerful clients (Roudakova 2008: 42). Within this definition, two essential features can be recognized. First, this definition explicitly divides two groups on the basis of power. This implies a relation between distinctive social classes. Second, political clientelism represents a system where patrons and clients develop a parallel social and political organization. Roudakova emphasizes both notions by claiming that political clientelism possesses a cultural feature, which includes a belief that formal, universalistic rules are less important than personal connections (Idem: 42-43). This emphasis on cultural factors underlines the capacity of political clientelism to create its own cultural reality. Patrons and brokers have the ability to constitute to a system where personal relations are perceived as more important than conventional rules and systems. The question remains how such a parallel reality is shaped and consolidated.

A broader set of scholars have focused on cultural features of political clientelist networks. Auyero has separated inside-outside perspectives on political clientelism (Auyero 2001). What from the outside may be perceived as vote-buying, patronage or corruption, can be perceived completely different from the inside of the system (Auyero 1999: 305). This leads to situations where outsiders of a parallel political clientelist networks perceive the exchange of goods as manipulative, while insiders consider it in positive terms (Ibid.). Clients refer to the exchange of goods as friendly and caring acts of a patron, neglecting the possible interests of a patron or broker to distribute the goods (Idem: 307). In addition, given the earlier set out observation that groups of clients are generally formed by lower socioeconomic classes, many clients are dependent on clientelism for daily survival. As a result, from the inside these groups do not so much refer to clientelism as abuse of power or hierarchical relation, but rather as a means of survival.

This emphasis of the importance of personal connections and insider perspectives within political clientelist networks, constitutes to the idea that cultural aspects can contribute to an internal normalization of these networks. Political clientelist networks are not necessarily perceived with a negative connotation, at least not from within the networks. As for political clientelist networks in Argentine football, this means that from the perspective of groups of violent football fans, club presidents or the leaders of *barras bravas*, respectively acting as patron and brokers, the pyramid alike relations are not perceived as manipulative or

hierarchical. Rather, such relations are based upon personal relations in which exchange of goods are acts of caring and friendship. Common love for the club, as widely appreciated in football environments, may play an important role in this cultural reality.

1.3.2. Networks as cultural dominance

The latter described cultural aspects within political clientelist networks do not only constitute to an internal normalization of cultural factors which drive political clientelism. Cultural aspects of clientelist networks also constitute to an environment in which the choice to participate in networks of political clientelism becomes natural. In this regard, one may refer to the notion of political clientelism as cultural dominance in a specific environment. Auyero referred to it as: ‘’Political clientelism is undoubtedly a form of social and political control as well as a form of cultural domination’’ (Auyero 2000: 58).

Sociological scholars have set out how the choice to participate in a political clientelist network may derive from a clientelist habitus (Auyero & Benzecry 2017). In this regard, the outcomes of client actions should not be understood from either rational or normative considerations. Rather, the loyalty and actions from the client derive from a dispositional practice which is reproduced on a daily basis (Idem: 181). It is the routine face-to-face interaction between brokers and clients that shape the loyalty of the clients within political clientelism. This results in a situation where – besides the objective reality of economic exchanges, a subjective reality is formed. In other words: the routine clientelist reality in which actors find themselves, shapes this set of dispositions. Ultimately this creates a culturally dominant system of clientelism, also to be referred to as a clientelist habitus, from which the actions of actors can be understood (Idem: 184).

The latter indication of clientelist habitus explains the endurance of the political clientelist networks and ultimately its dominant cultural features which influence the actions of actors. This clientelist habitus is highly relevant for the environment of Argentine football. In contrast of conventional political settings, Argentine football clubs can be seen as a micro-environment where actors, including directors, leaders of groups of *barras bravas* and fans interact on a frequent and intense way. After all, the environment is simply smaller, the actors encounter on a frequent basis through regular club activities and all actions derive from what within the insider-perspective would be called loyalty to the club. This environment has the capabilities to reinforce this dominance of a clientelist habitus, where a set of dispositions from where football fans and *barras bravas* act upon within the political clientelist networks.

Theoretically touching upon this club loyalty within political clientelist networks is essential within political clientelism in the context of Argentine football. This difference with political clientelism in conventional politics reflects on a broader set of cultural concepts which are highly important in understanding political clientelism in Argentine football. Throughout the complete narrative around politics in Argentine football, club loyalty and the love for the colours are leading for the actions of the actors. Several cultural concepts in football can be linked to this leading narrative. *Aguante, carnaval* and the verb of '*alentar'* can be connected to this narrative. It is clear that the environment of Argentine football is heavily influenced by club loyalty and its accompanying concepts. This leads towards a strong narrative around the cultural foundations of political clientelism. This narrative can theoretically be employed as an external normalization of political clientelist networks.

1.4. Political Clientelism: Political Dimension

1.4.1. Political instrumentalization

The general conceptualization for political clientelism in Argentine football which has been set out by this theoretical framework, already touched upon the captive character of political clientelism. In this section, it is therefore valuable to focus on the theoretical foundations of political instrumentalization of political clientelist networks in the context of Argentine football.

Political instrumentalization generally focuses on the political interests of patrons and brokers. As Auyero outlines in the political functionality of political clientelist networks in his account of routine politics in Argentina: 'Brokers direct flows of goods, information and services from their political patrons to their clients and flows of political support (in the form of attendance at rallies, participation in party activities and sometimes votes from their clients to their patrons)' (Auyero 2007: 60). As mentioned in the economic and cultural accounts on the main definition of political clientelism, for clients the networks often foresee in daily needs. However, this is different for patrons. In this regard, the academic literature has referred to political clientelism as the synthesis of daily life and politics (ibid.). Where clients mainly participate in the political clientelist networks to survive, political patrons mainly employ the networks for political gains.

In his account on the Peronist *Partido Justicialista* in Argentina, Levitsky demonstrated how the captive characteristic of political clientelism can drive a political party towards machine politics (Levitsky 2003: 11). When political interests drive politicians towards incentives for political clientelism, patterns of vote-buying, patronage and networks of political clientelist

emerge. In these cases, politicians use their political networks in order to mobilize groups of voters for their own political interests. This mobilization can be linked to elections, but as well to political manifestations and other political expressions. This results in what has been characterized as machine politics in the academic literature (Szwarcberg 2015; Auyero 2000). In other words, political clientelist networks can evolve in political machines, which are employed by patrons in order to serve their political interests.

However, the latter synthesis between everyday life and political instrumentalization by political patrons, does not tell us much about the political position of the brokers. In this respect, it is valuable to shape an understanding of this position, since there might be cases where the loyalty based upon economic incentives do not provide us a full understanding of the complete motives of brokerage. Politically, possible success of the patron can lift the position of a broker in two ways. Either the broker steps up in the political patronage machine, through ultimately being rewarded for loyalty. Second, loyalty may be rewarded through the guarantee of the maintenance of the position in the political clientelist network which safeguards individual economic gains from the political clientelist networks. In this regard, economic and political motives are convertible. Both reasons are especially relevant for the context of Argentine football. Members of groups of *barras bravas* are often employed by football clubs and dependent on the patron on moving up the ladder of the political network, as Paradiso has pointed out (2016). Moreover, the groups of *barras bravas* have individual economic interests which can be protected through loyalty to the political machine.

In a nutshell, the captive character of the political machines which are employed by football directors shapes the political incentives for both brokers and patrons. Patrons' interests can be secured through the mobilization of groups of voters, offered by the political machine. Brokers stay loyal given their political incentives to maintain their political dependency on the position in the political machine on the one hand and the protection of their individual economic gains in the network on the other hand.

1.4.2. Alternative politics

As mentioned and implicated through the term of machine politics, political clientelist networks have the ability to develop towards alternative or parallel politics. Levitsky (1998) described how the basis of political clientelist networks in Argentina, the *unidades básicas* (subject of research by Auyero (2000)) move towards an informal routinization. Through the social interaction, this routinization is institutionalized. Through this institutionalization of political clientelism in political organs, a system emerges where political patrons control their political

machines and politically rely on the institutionalized system of political clientelism. These forms of institutionalized political clientelism leads towards issues of accountability. In cases where voters do not follow the line of the political machines – thus support or vote for opponents of the machine, sanctions often follow. This has been characterized as perverse accountability (Stokes 2005). In other words, democratic accountability is undermined through a system where support does not emerge from political rationality but rather from conditional relationships. This structure has been emphasized in broader accounts on political clientelism. The concept fosters situations where leaders stay in power of the chain, since their political networks undermines the ability of clients to hold the same leader responsible (Hicken 2011).

These forms of institutionalization and perverse accountability explain the political reproduction and persistence of political clientelist networks in both the Argentine domestic political environment as well as the environment of football. Through the emergence of a parallel system, machine politics is institutionalized and voters are retained in an inability to hold political leaders accountable for their actions. On the one hand, this form of alternative politics applies to the football clubs itself, since within their democratic organization alternative politics can emerge. Football directors maintain a system where groups of loyal *socios* can maintain both their political and economic position. Once captured in the system, an inability to hold the director democratically accountable emerges, leading towards a consolidation of the existing division of power within the club. However, this development is applicable in a broader sense to national political clientelist networks as well. Football fans – and groups of *barras bravas* specifically, can be captured in a system of political clientelism, where perverse accountability and political or economic incentives to escape the system maintains political machines.

1.5. Political Clientelism as a mediating factor

Having formulated a definition of political clientelism in the context of Argentine football clubs, the previous sections have enhanced this definition through developing a framework which includes a political, economic and cultural dimension of political clientelist networks. Through the understanding of political clientelism, this section seeks to outline the general theoretical hypothesis of this research.

This research aims to understand persisting insecurity in the context of Argentine football. As outlined, the academic literature has brought forward many causes which distinctly or jointly impact the concept of insecurity in Argentine football. Amongst others; masculinity, football

culture driven by the concept of *aguante*, socioeconomic factors and populism all constitute to a framework of understanding for insecurity in Argentine football. The value of these separate causes should therefore not be disregarded. However, as brought forward in section two, these causes do not explain the persistent character of insecurity in this specific context. The cultural, political and economic dimensions have demonstrated that political clientelist networks can shape a replicating system of political clientelism, characterized by its captive feature through which is difficult to steer clear of it. Subsequently, political clientelism not simply functions as a cause of violence, as some scholars have argued. Rather, the concept creates an economic, cultural and political reality through which the persistent system of insecurity in Argentina can be explained.

This explanation can be hypothetically brought forward in the following manner. Political clientelist networks constitute to a reality in which a closed system is reproduced, resulting in continuities of inaction towards major issues in Argentine football. Economically, politically nor culturally this reality produces incentives for actors to effectively battle causes of insecurity. Economically, political clientelism consists of a pyramid which is shaped by dependencies. These dependencies are mostly targeted at low socioeconomic groups through brokers and even create incentives for maintaining groups poor. Culturally, networks achieve dominant position, through which it legitimizes itself towards both insiders and outsiders. Finally, politically, instrumentalized networks by patron evolve towards an alternative political system where accountability is cut off and incentives for brokers and clients to leave the pyramid are diminished on political and economic grounds. In other words, one would expect that this reality constitutes to a mediating factor, which allows us to understand the reproduction and persistent character of violence in Argentine football.

Building upon this framework of political clientelism, this research will seek to outline the patterns of inaction which result from political clientelist networks. To this extent, once again the political, economic and cultural dimensions will be employed. In each dimension, building upon the explanatory framework set out in this theoretical framework, structures of inaction will be drawn. The analysis primarily builds upon qualitative material, consisting of semi-structured interviews. To support the arguments made in the separate dimensions, quantitative material is employed. The data derives from a survey amongst 250 Argentine football fans. Before moving towards the analysis of this qualitative and quantitative data, the historical emergence of the current status-quo of violence in Argentine football will be set forth.

Chapter 2. Emerging networks in Argentine football

2.1. Historical roots of football culture in Argentina

Like in many other countries, football emerged in Argentina through the presence of the British community. In the second half of the 19th century, the local British elite of Buenos Aires introduced the new sport. Football has been imported in the country through three main means. First, the sport had been introduced by British seamen, in consequence of the tight trade relations between Argentina and the United Kingdom. Second, the sport has been introduced inland through British rail-workers[4], as a result of the rapid development of the Argentine railway system. Third, the sport made its way to the younger Argentine generations through English-styled schools, where physical labour had been propagated intensively (Duke & Crolley 2001: 96).

2.1.1. Towards '*La Nuestra'*

In the early years, football in Argentina has been strongly characterized by British manners. It was only until 1912 that Spanish had been introduced as an official language in the sport, as a result of a breakaway of the initial Argentina Football Association (AFA). In English customs, football was meant as a means of social gatherings. Moreover, it underlined the importance of physical training in terms of healthiness. This British dominance is reflected in the early way of playing football in Argentina, in which the British emphasized the importance of fair-play in the sport (Frydenberg et al 2013: 1676). However, football found its way to other segments of the early Argentine population through the *criollos*, the products of European migration to the Latin American continent. Simultaneously to the British founding of the first cultural and sport clubs, the *criollos* found their first football clubs in the later 1880s at elite schools, such as for example *Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima de Buenos Aires* (1880) (Ibid.). In line with this development, dominance of English players in Argentine football teams started to decrease. In 1913, Racing Club became the second *criollo* club to win a championship after Quilmes AC, though Racing Club did so with only three players of English roots, an unicum. While the adoption of football under Spanish and Italian immigrations rose, these social groups began to find their proper football clubs, independent of the initial British dominance of the sport in Argentina. Archetti (1999) has historically indicated this development as the first Argentine style of football, as 'what is ours' (Archetti 1999: 65).

[4] It is no coincidence that the main Argentine football clubs, both in Buenos Aires and land inwards, are founded close to railway stations (Examples are: Ferrocarril Oeste, Quilmes AC and Rosario Central).

In contrast to many other football clubs in Latin America, Argentine football clubs, especially in Buenos Aires, codeveloped with the barrio identity. Whereas in Peru, Chile and Brazil football clubs were found upon societal features such as trade unions or the identity of foreign communities, Argentine football clubs mostly reflected on ethnically diverse social groups (Horowitz 2014: 561). Migration therefore plays a major role in the cultural foundations of these clubs. In the shadow of the key developments when it comes to football in the first half of 1900, the population of Buenos Aires doubled between 1909 and 1936 (Idem: 564). While the city grew extensively, the barrios developed themselves towards sub entities, in which football clubs hold a key position in the identity of the barrio. Football developed itself towards a mass spectacle in the 1920s and 1930s and the barrio's football team fostered this sense of community in the neighbourhood (Ibid.). It has been these factors which have constituted to football in the Argentine way as '*la nuestra'*.

2.1.2. Development of fan culture

The development of football alongside the barrios can be appointed as an essential condition for the development of Argentine fan culture. Historically, the first forms of rivalries, support and club identities can be related to this barrio identity. The neighbourhood identity created the first forms of violence in the 1930s and 1940s. Rivalries existed between several clubs from the same barrio (CA Independiente – Racing Club from Avellaneda), adjacent barrios (San Lorenzo de Almagro – CA Huracán from respectively Boedo and Almagro) or from the same city in other provinces of Argentina (Newell's Old Boys – Rosario Central) (Duke & Crolley 1996: 276; Alabarces et al. 2018). But beyond violence, the support of the teams highly relates to the barrio origins. The pride of the fans of a football team not only relates to the club as an institution, but as well to the pride of the barrio.

This support and pride in Argentine fan culture is highly boosted by the existence of several central concepts which developed over time. The foremost concept of these is *aguante*. The term *aguante* derives from the early 1980s in Argentina. Historically, the concept developed towards an abstract term, which in reality can reflect on multiple issues. The term is reflected in even the oldest songs in the Argentine stadiums, which underline the central role of the concept in the identity and expressions of the fans, essentially reflecting on the love for the club.

‘*Esta es tu hinchada la que tiene aguante*
la que te sigue siempre a todas partes
y la que nunca te va a abandonar.’[5]

The term of *aguante* can refer to both sentimental and physical topics (Alabarces et al. 2018: 478). In its sentimental frame, it can refer to the loyalty, support or fidelity to a football club. In the physical sense, it might reflect on bravery, courage and stamina, mostly related to violence (Ibid.). Either way, both meanings relate to a historical cultural frame which has evolved alongside the development of football in Argentina. Groups of violent football fans have appropriated an important role in this football culture. These groups of *barras bravas* made their entrance in Argentine football around the 1960s. Over the years, the *barras bravas* have acquired two faces. On the one hand, *barras bravas* are highly politicized and economic driven groups. On the other hand – and relevant for this section, *barras bravas* historically acquired a central place in the fan experience in Argentine football. In this regard, the groups can be compared to the European versions of football fanatism, such as hooligan culture in England and ultra-culture in Italy.

The *barras bravas* groups evolved as the centre of what can be indicated as the *banda*. In other words, the *barra* hold a central place in the support of the football teams during games. The sentimental side of *aguante* is translated audibly into music through *bombos* and *trompetas* and visually into the *banderas.*[6] These manners of support are highly subject of pride. Besides football, the *locura* or *carnaval* which is produced by the stadium is a broad topic of a culture of *cargadas*, the bullying of other teams for their weak fanbase[7]. Although the groups of violent football fans play a central role in these expressions, the latter described is not exclusive to them. Historically, this culture developed towards a nation-wide fan culture, which distinct Argentina from both European and other Latin American football cultures. Consequently, football chants normalizing violence, masculinity and drugs are widely sung by full stadiums in Argentina.

[5] Stadium song at among others CA Independiente & CA River Plate, which directly translates as: ‘This is your fanbase with *aguante*, the one that will follow you everywhere, and will never leave you’.
[66] Although *banderas* are widespread in stadiums and common fan collectives (*peñas*) are represented through their flags as well, the characteristic *trapos* on the short stands are claimed by the *barras bravas*.
[7] Such *cargadas* often reflect on barrio identity as well, where opponents from other *barrios* are insulted as weak, bastards or runners.

2.2. Growing economic relevance of football

As football emerged as a mass spectacle over the world, economic relevance of football as a sport grew naturally. Beside the major impact on the professionalization of football as a sport, such economic growth has impacted the role of football clubs in Argentine society. Political clientelist networks build upon a relation between patrons, brokers and clients. Subject of these relations are economic transactions. Regardless of the form of such transactions, they provide the incentive for participation of clients and loyalty of brokers. This section discusses the emerging economic opportunities in Argentine football and its relevance for existing political clientelist networks.

2.2.1. Economic opportunities in football

The economic dimension of football in Argentina is expressed in multiple ways. The organization of civil associations of football clubs in Argentina provides the central self-sustaining mechanism for the clubs. A significant part of the incomes of clubs derives from the money brought in by members. Over history, the number of *socios* increased significantly. Already in the 1950s, both River Plate and Boca Juniors had over 50.000 paying members. The numbers of members and hence the heights of incomes, translated itself in sportive outcomes as well. It is through this economic power on which the 'Great Five'[8] of Buenos Aires acquired sportive dominance in Argentina. Important to notice is, that Argentine football clubs historically gave substance to their form of civil associations. Though originally found as football clubs, the clubs adopted a broad number of other sports within their institutional framework (Frydenburg et al. 2013: 1679). An important example is Ferro Carril Oeste, a club which has a broad range of sports contemplated in its institution. It is through this process of sportive broadening as well, by which clubs expanded their institutions and economic clout.

Yet, this growth of economic importance of clubs mainly reflects on the institutionalization and professionalization of governance of larger football clubs. Nevertheless, economic opportunities around the spectacle of football are still widespread. As football developed increasingly towards an event as such, surrounding business flourished as well. Tickets are resold at the gates, away games often include paid bus trips organized by *peñas*. Around the stadiums in the barrio *choripan*, merchandise and other relevant products are sold. In this regard, niche-entrepreneurs even developed the remarkable practice of *trapitos* during

[8] The Great Five respectively exists of: Boca Juniors, CA Independiente, CA San Lorenzo, CA River Plate and Racing Club.

matchdays[9]. On the first sight, economic activity around matchdays seems regular and similar to other countries. However, once collectively organized, this economic activity constitutes to a major web of economic activities and opportunities.

2.2.2. The engine of political clientelist networks

Gaining control over the side-business on football matchdays, provides a beneficial bargaining position for club directors. This position can be used for transactions establishing political clientelist networks. In this way, these side-business incomes reflect on the motor of the clientelist networks, as they have the ability to constitute to a pyramid with dependencies all the way up to the patron. The question is how the club directors maintain control on this shadow economy in a collective sense. This control has often derived historically through two major aspects: the role of groups of violent football fans and the relation with the local and national authorities.

First, groups of violent football fans constitute to this practice. Academic literature recognizes that already in the early 1960s, groups of fans were employed in order to increase political power in the club. Boca Juniors president Alberto Armando was the first in the 1960s to embrace political clientelist networks in order to gain power at the club (Paradiso 2016). While running again for the presidency in the 1980, Armando approached the violent fans once again[10]. Through concluding a deal with José Barritta on buses, free matchday tickets and control of the shadow economy at matchdays, Armando acquired the support of the *barra* '*La Doce'* (Grabia 2011). Such an arrangement between presidential candidates and groups of *hinchas*, have been able to persist over history given the historical context in which *barras bravas* evolved. Alabarces argues that the *barras bravas* have been characterized and shaped by a context of privatization of violence (Alabarces 2004). This privatization of violence refers to violence employed by groups, unrestrained and sometimes even legitimized by the central authorities (Paradiso 2009; Alabarces 2004). Paradiso rightly emphasizes the context of political violence of the 1970s under Isabel Perón and later the military regime. In this political environment, where violent groups seemingly could act without being held accountable by the central government, the first *barras bravas* emerged. This explains the emergence of the means through which *barras bravas* are able to maintain control over the shadow economy on matchdays: intimidation and violence.

[9] In this practice, public parking spots are to be leased at the *trapito* by those who wish to park their car. Incompliance with this practice results in damage on the car.
[10] José Barritta (nicknamed: *El Abuelo*) is arguably the most powerful Barra in Argentine history.

Image 1. José Barritta at the Boca Juniors stands (second of left)

However, as outlined, effective control is only possible without effective central law enforcement. Surely, should the police effectively control the *barrios*, phenomena as *trapitos* would not be possible. In this respect, the historical development of corruption within the Argentine police apparatus plays an important role in the economic motor of political clientelist networks. Since the 1990s, corruption as a means of power politics in relation to public authorities increased in Argentina (Weyland 2006). Practice has demonstrated that police officers often close deals with *barras bravas* to withhold their patrols on certain parts of the barrio. This often results in neglections from the side of the police towards illegal (economic) activities carried out. In this regard, leaders of *barras bravas* have emerged as the perfect brokers in the pyramid of political clientelism. They protect the economic primacy of the pyramid of the patron and flow the transactions towards clients.

2.3. Argentina: Merging politics and football

It is historically evident that sports and politics cannot be seen apart from each other. From the political abuse of the 1936 Olympics by the Nazis towards the emerging political cleavages in Irish football (Paradiso 2009: 71), sports possess the ability to (re)produce and foster social conflicts between groups in society. The case of Argentina is no exemption in this historical continuity. Instead, from the '*Revolución Libertadora'* of Juan Domingo Perón to the '*Proceso de Reorganización Nacional'* of the military junta of Videla, football has been employed for political goals frequently and consistently in Argentina. Moreover, politically motivated individuals as local politicians or members of parliament have been involved in football-related activities. This section discusses the historical establishment of the tight relations between

football and politics in Argentina, ultimately leading to incentives for political clientelism and the emergence of political clientelist networks.

2.3.1. Interaction between politics and sports

To understand the relationship between politics and football, it is essential to briefly touch upon the organization of football in Argentina. As most Argentine football clubs are found in the first two decades of the 1900s, the founding of these clubs preceded the democratization of the Argentine political system. Before the reformation of the political system, most football clubs in Argentina were governed by the wealthy upper-class. However, the national process of democratization fostered the emergence of new political movements in Argentina (Duke & Crolley 2001: 100). Simultaneously, rapid economic development struck Argentina in the first decades of 1900, leading towards an emergence of a new working class and new suburbs in Buenos Aires. This simultaneous development of democratization and economic progress in Argentina had an important influence on football's organization in Argentina.

Football clubs in Argentina are private associations, implying that *socios* elect the club officials through democratic processes. The professionalization of football, coinciding with the democratization and economic wealth in Argentina, did not mean the upper-class disappeared from the stage. Rather, for upper-class aristocracy the development of football towards mass-spectacle implied a opportunity to run football as a manner of social control (Alabarces & Rodriguez 1999). Subsequently, democratic processes in football often coincided with national politics after Argentina's democratization. A noteworthy example is San Lorenzo's Pedro Bidegain, who was president of the football club San Lorenzo, but an important figure in the dominant political party *Unión Civica Radical* as well. In this reality, political sides often subverted in the democratic processes of football clubs, effectively merging football and politics. This is reflected in a broader historical development in Argentina, where the political elite adopted a reality where politics within civic culture existing of social associations (such as football clubs) coincides with ideological politics (De Privitellio & Romero 2005: 21).

For the case of football, the historical emergence of football clubs in barrios in Buenos Aires was highly important. Football clubs were embedded in the population of the barrios, essentially being critically important for the identity of the population of the neighbourhoods (Horowitz 2014: 564). Consequently, the barrio identity provided an important manner for leading figures in the barrios to rely on in a political sense. Through a web of communities, the elections of *presidentes* and *dirigentes* of football clubs highly depended on popularity in the barrio or important connections within the community (Ibid.). Until today, the barrio identity plays an

important role in the vote of the *socio* for a specific candidate. The employment of the barrio identity in recent years at San Lorenzo highly demonstrate this (D'Alessio 2014)[11].

2.3.2. Populist opportunities in football

The emergence of football as a mass-spectacle led towards a practice where football in Argentine society provides opportunities for political employment. For example, Perón utilized football to stabilize the political environment. Football generally served as a means to de-revolutionize people: cleavages should focus on sports rather than politics (Rein 1998). This would ensure a stable political culture for the Peron's politics. Apart from individual political ends, football has been employed to shape a national identity. Multiple actors in the history of Argentina have recognized football as a unifying factor amongst the working class. This national identity within Argentine football highly relates to the *criollo* rebirth of football in Argentina. Consequently, the Argentine way of football is often referred to as '*la nuestra'* (Guedes 2014: 154). This frame of Argentine football within the immigrant-driven society is typical for Argentine society and identity (Archetti 1995). It is a frame which has been consistently employed, from Perón in the 1950s to the 1978 World Cup under the military junta (Sibaja & Parrish 2014).

The collective identity which can be identified in Argentine football, sets the foundations for populist identity politics as a means of political instrumentalization of football. Historically, this has been expressed in multiple ways. From Menem to Macri, Argentine presidents have consistently employed their club preference for political ends, some even in tactical manners.[12] In more recent years, populist strategies in Argentine football have been frequently employed in public policies as well. One the most obvious examples is the '*Fútbol para Todos'* program, where football broadcasting was nationalized by the government of Cristina Kirchner in 2009 in order to maintain the sport accessible through television for the ordinary Argentinian (Bar-On & De Gaetano 2017).

[11] CA San Lorenzo has been forced to leave its barrio during the military junta. Ever since, the club has been battling to return to its roots, often reflected in political campaigns within the club ('*La vuelta para Boedo es mi obsesión*!').

[12] Carlos Menem's support of River Plate (nicknamed: Los Millionarios) is exemplary of his unification between the elite and working class; thus, justifying neoliberal policies within a Peronist populist framework.

2.3.3. Political interests and mobility in football

The historically important popular function in Argentina has fuelled the conditions for political instrumentalization of football clubs by individuals or political groups. The influence of barrio identity in football clubs, which creates personalized spheres in club elections and the populist opportunities which football provides through a national identity, pave the way for individual politicians to employ football for political interests. This has led towards the situation where national politicians are often involved in football clubs. Through the aligning political and sports identity of the football clubs in the barrios, clubs provide a vast basis of voters which can be employed. In this trend, CA Independiente is currently under control of Hugo Moyano,[13] former President Macri moved his way up the political ladder through his presidency at Boca Juniors (1995-2007) and current Minister of Tourism and Sports Matías Lammens has a presidential history at CA San Lorenzo.

This reality underlines the political mobility football can provide for individuals in Argentina, either famous or not. However, such prospects of political mobility, in combination with the personalized means of *barrio* politics within football clubs, provide incentives for developing political networks. Moreover, the national importance of football directors in Argentine football fuel incentives of loyalties for brokers. In other words, the political interests in Argentine football constitute to a tension with the political accountability in football clubs. This historical development has been highly visible in modern-day Argentine football. Trade unionist politics is closely involved in CA Chacarita Juniors through its *barras bravas* and the *barras bravas* of CA Atlanta remain closely involved through the board of directors by means of intimidation (Rein & Brenman 2021; Paradiso 2016). Political clientelist networks are broadly employed to maintain powerful positions in football clubs. This practice is wide and consistent. Often reinforced by *barras bravas* as brokers, gatekeepers of the pyramid or in some instances even on top of it. Exemplary is that even in the top of the AFA, former president Grondona built upon wide political clientelist networks for more than 35 years (Paradiso 2016).

[13] Hugo Moyano is President of the *Confederación General del Trabajo* (CGT), the most influential trade union in the country.

Chapter 3: Economic dominance, *Aguante* and Political Instrumentalization of Argentine Football

Through the specific Argentine historical context, complex relations between football directors, politicians, football fans and *barras bravas* have emerged. Building upon the conceptual framework on political clientelism, this section seeks to analyse how these political clientelist networks constitute to the persistent characterization of insecurity in Argentine football. In other words, this analysis will assess political clientelism as the intermediating factor between causes of violence and eventual insecurity. This analysis will build upon the similar three dimensions as employed earlier: the political, economic and cultural dimension.

3.1. Economic dominance in football

Through economic transactions within a web of dependencies, the actors within the field of Argentine football build upon an economic engine which ensures loyalty of both brokers and clients in the political clientelist networks. The question arises how this engine contributes to the reproduction and persistence of violence. This section will focus on an example of organization of football clubs and the illicit business interests around football matches.

3.1.1. Organization and favours at Rosario Central

Alejandra lives in Mar del Plata. However, Alejandra and her daughter are *hinchas* of CA Rosario Central, a club settled 700 kilometres away. To keep in touch with her beloved club, Alejandra runs a '*filial'* of Rosario Central in Mar del Plata. For the past ten years, she has been the president of the *filial*. Such *filiales* are not unusual. Larger clubs in Argentine have fans from all over the country. The organization of fans through *filiales* is beneficial for the clubs: it keeps them closely connected with the fans. Key for the *filiales* are of course the gatherings around matches of Central. Besides, many *asados*, *fiestas* and other social gatherings are organized. Moreover, the *filiales* have an important societal function as well, Alejandra explains. 'Each *filial* makes sure to provide social aid to their close environment.[14] In this way, the club does its part of social work, since our government does not help those who are in need'. The money which is necessary for the social help, is paid by the *cuotas* of *socios* and active help by the club. Through for example signed match shirts of the players of Central, Alejandra organizes lotteries in which money for the aid is collected. This social help is aimed for mostly *socios* and Central fans, as the economic crisis has pushed many Argentine families below the poverty rate.

[14] Alejandra's explanation in Spanish provides for a typical word choice: 'Nosotros apadrinamos a la gente que necesitan ayuda'.

But the filial does more than societal tasks. Alejandra organizes travels from Mar del Plata to games in Rosario or other games in Latin America.[15] Conventionally, the bus tickets are paid by the *socios* themselves, thus excluding those who can't afford the trip. However, many instances occur where the club actively assists the *filiales* in paying the trips as well. 'You see, sometimes the club does me a favour, I know the directive commission quite well. Once a week I meet through Zoom and I have daily contact with the President and Vice-President through WhatsApp. Although the club cannot do or undo regular flows of money towards *filiales* – as laid down in the statutes of the club, the *favores* Alejandra speaks of are not prohibited. 'Many *filiales* get free trips to Rosario. They use me as well. First, I am here already for ten years. Second, I am a woman[16]. But you see, I am fine with it. Why wouldn't I take it? It is only through this way that I can provide free travels for my *socios* who aren't economically in the position of buying a ticket to Rosario themselves'.[17]

The structure in which the *filial* system of Rosario Central in Mar del Plata is exemplary for the organization of football clubs in Argentina. Football fans are often organized well, in support collectives such as *filiales* or *peñas*. Differentiation can be rooted in the geographical spreading, as is the case of Alejandra, but also on social or other grounds. On itself, this is not special, as such fan organization is often established in countries like Germany and Spain as well. Although the statutes of the club Rosario Central do not necessarily provide room for clientelism, the personalized forms of politics within these rules of the game in Argentine football does, even when a *filial* is 700 kilometers away. Through this understanding, complex networks emerged in which economic transactions shape the organization of the club. The case of Alejandra reflects on how even conventional groups of supporters are effectively adopted in such a system. The practices between the local *filiales* and the *dirigencia* of CA Rosario Central reflect on an economic web of dependencies within the organizational structure of the club. Exemplary for political clientelism in the conceptualization of Auyero is the insider-perspective of Alejandra within this story. Though she realizes the political gains for herself and the *dirigencia*, she grasps the purpose of the transactions as mainly aimed to help society.

Notwithstanding insider-perspectives, these relations reflect on political clientelist networks, in the form of classic patron – broker – client relations based on dependency. The board of Rosario Central employs the organizational structure of the club to pursue personal gains, both

[15] Rosario Central has played multiple games in the Copa Sudamericana.
[16] Rosario Central has 63 *filiales* across Argentina, but only 3 of them have a female president.
[17] Interview: Alejandra Schamun, August 20.

politically and economically. Presidents of local *filiales* can share in this gains for their own purpose. In the case of Alejandra this means social activities and the binding of *socios* who normally are not able to pay for their tickets and trips towards Rosario. It requires no explanation that Alejandra's position is benefitted through this situation: her loyalty to the board depends on these benefits, as her own position of president is highly influenced by the same benefits. On the first sight, the *barras bravas* do not seem to play an important role in the story of Alejandra at Rosario Central. Yet, Alejandra does mention the importance of a good relationship with the *barras* at the club. Although she recognizes that the *barras bravas* of Rosario Central are widely involved in drug trafficking in Rosario, she underlines the good things they brought. 'You see, actually Andrés Bracamonte[18] did an important thing in bringing organization within the *barras*. This brought ease and intermediation with the *barra,* that is a good thing for all of us*'*.[19]

3.1.2. Practices of a shadow economy

The story of Alejandra reflects on how the organizational structure of a football clubs can be simultaneously employed to pursue personal interests. Important to note is that it only constitutes to a small part of the shadow business in Argentine football. Notably, the *barras bravas* were not directly involved in this example. Yet, they still play a major role, as Alejandra emphasized. This notion reflects on the complexity of the networks and the various influences by distinctive actors. This complexity derives from the practices in the shadow economy in Argentine football. While touching upon the shadow economy in Argentine football, once should distinct bigger clubs from smaller clubs.[20] It is mostly clubs from the Primera Division who attract large crowds at their stadiums. It is only with these large crowds in which a major shadow economy can emerge. Generally, three distinct sides of the shadow economy can be identified.

The first side of the shadow economy can be labelled as *barrio* activities. On matchdays, the *estacionamientos*, *carritos de choripan* and sales of merchandise around the stadium is managed by the *barras*. Moreover, *barras bravas* participate in small drug trafficking.[21] This part of the economy relates to two important notions of the shadow economy. First, these activities take place with implicit consent of the police. Sales activities take place behind

[18] Andrés "Pillín" Bracamonte is the chief of the *barras bravas* of Rosario Central. He is a well-known drug trafficker in Rosario and has been in prison since 2020.
[19] Interview: Alejandra Schamun, August 20.
[20] Interview: Pablo Podesta, September 20.
[21] Interview: Gaston Edul, August 3; Eugenio Paradiso, August 10; Alejandra Schamun, August 20.

security cordons by the police, which start approximately 500 meters around the stadiums. Similar consent counts for the *trapitos.*[22] Mostly, the role of the police even goes further, through receiving cuts of the earnings of these practices.[23] The second part of the economy is more focused on the relations between the board and the groups of fans and/or *barras bravas*. This oversees the example of Alejandra. Travels to home and away games are often subject of transactions. Large amounts of tickets are subject of transactions between directors and *barras bravas*. The third part of the economy is focused on obscurity in clandestine money which circulates in football. Broad examples of collaborations between *barras* and police can be pointed out. Violence by *barras* leads to game tags as high risk (‘*alto riesgo’),* an official reason for the police to commit higher police presence, which is paid by the clubs and state. Effectively, the police developed its proper employment mechanism (or: reality on paper), while for many of these games, police officers are not necessary and thus not deployed. At last, *barras bravas* often share in profits from transfer fees for sold players.[24]

3.1.3. Security: Undermined by business

The shadow economy reflects on multiple security issues in Argentine football. Intimidation and extorsion of players and directors by *barras bravas*, corruption within the police and illicit activities in the streets of the *barrio* at matchdays. This raises the question whether such individual issues cannot be tackled one-by-one through aimed actions by the national government. Should there be effective law enforcement, such causes of violence can be exempted from Argentine football. The issue is that economic interests deriving from the political clientelist networks, fuel stances of inaction towards causes of violence. Worse still, some of these economic interests even drive incentives for insecurity.

Argentine football has dealt repeatedly with corrupt issues directly related to the football clubs and their fan organization. These rules of the game, which have evolved alongside the organizational structure of the clubs, inherently fuel causes of violence in Argentine stadiums. Evidence of such violent outcomes are to be detected at River Plate. Through this economy linked to organizational structures, *barras bravas* illegally acquire tickets, regardless of possible stadium bans[25]. Moreover, democratic accountability within clubs as civil associations

[22] This can result in notorious situations of impunity, where *trapitos* ask money for parking, even though the car is stationed in front of a police office (personal experiences).
[23] Interview: Gaston Edul, August 3; Diego Murzi, August 2; Pablo Alabarces, August 29.
[24] Interview: Gaston Edul, August 3; Diego Murzi, August 2.
[25] Police forces dismantled ticketing machines, operated by *barras* within offices of the stadium of River Plate. The machine was dismantled just after the violent clashes around the 2018 Copa Libertadores final. See: *Clarin: ‘Sigue la polémica: Encontraron una oficina en el Monumental donde se habrían*

is poisoned. Consequently, illegit power struggles emerge, leading towards internal fights in and around stadiums. Although the organization of football clubs is not necessarily organized corrupt, the economic side system of *favores* linked to it inherently fuels the reproduction of violence. The patron, brokers nor clients have rational incentives to refrain from this system of *favores*.

The shadow economy during matchdays reflects on a similar pattern of (in)actions of the actors towards causes of insecurity. The economic activities around matchdays constitute to an economic web of activities under no effective law enforcement of the authorities. Illegal activities then constitute to insecurity around football stadium, as the law takes its own course. Yet, none of the actors have incentives to quit the constitution of this shadow economy. The political position of the club presidents is dependent on the economic engine of both *barras* and police, as this bargaining position upholds his political clientelist network. Brokers and clients are not attracted to act against these factors of insecurity as well, given their political and economic prospects. In other words, the shadow business around football stadiums, upheld by political clientelist networks, gets a free hand to reproduce insecurity around football stadiums.

Then at last, the question arises to which extent the national government has been able to battle such incentives of organizational *favores* and its constitution to shadow economies. Journalist Gaston Edul poses it simply and explicitly: 'It is not that the national government cannot act. It is that they do not want to act, because the security in football … well, it's a business.'[26] Diego Murzi, vice-president of NGO *Salvemos al Fútbol*, underlines this argumentation. Employing the economic perspective of political clientelist networks is something inherently linked with the political culture in Argentina; each national politician is at least aware of the system, but most simply employ it.[27] This structural inaction has trickled down to the trust of Argentine football fans in authorities which have to do with security around football matches (see table 1).[28]

impreso las entradas que tenía "Caverna" Godoy'. November 28, 2018; See: interview: Remi Lehman, September 10.

[26] Interview: Gaston Edul.August 3.

[27] Interview: Diego Murzi. August 2.

[28] See appendix for accountability of conducted data.

Table 1: Trust in security in relation to football in Argentina (Source: own conducted data, see appendix).

Variable	Question	Mean [1-10]
Trust in Argentine Football Association in relation to security	How do you value the efforts of the AFA to guarantee security in football? [1-10]	3.63
Trust in national politics in relation to security	How do you value the efforts of the national government to guarantee security in football? [1-10]	3.15
Trust in local authorities in relation to security	How do you value the efforts of the local authorities to guarantee security in football? [1-10]	3.47
Trust in police in relation to security	How do you value the efforts of the police to guarantee security in football? [1-10]	4.32

3.2. *Aguante*: A clientelist habitus

'La banda más loca de Argentina, la que se merece ser primero
yo no soy Gallina ni Bostero soy del Rojo hasta morir!
pero es difícil de explicarlo, si este amor con nada se compara,
por eso te juro que en las malas siempre te voy a seguir!

Vengo alentar de corazón, desde hace ya mucho tiempo,
y aunque no salgas campeón, yo no vendo el sentimiento;
borracho te voy a seguir, por las canchas de Argentina;
y te confieso que por vos, Rojo yo dejo la vida!'[29]

The latter text connotes a stadium song of fans of CA Independiente. With the drums and trumpets playing on the cumbia rhythm of '*La Vecina'* by Amar Azul, the song is catchy and

[29] *Cantito* of CA Independiente, on the rhythm of cumbia song *La Vecina*, Amar Azul. Translated: 'The craziest band of Argentina, the one that deserves the championship. I am not a 'Gallina' or 'Bostero' (read: fan of River or Boca), I am red till the death! But it is difficult to explain, since you cannot compare this love. That's why I swear that in the bad times, I will keep following you. I come to support you from the heart, for so much time already. And even if you don't become champion, I won't sell this feeling. Drunk as I am, I will follow you, to every stadium in Argentina, and I will confess to you: Reds, I would die for you.

invites to join in. The lyrics reflect on the passion of the Argentine fans on the stands of the stadium and in normal daily life. This section analyses the legitimization of the existence of a culture that constitutes to political clientelism in Argentine football. Ultimately, this subculture creates a clientelist habitus, which upholds the conditions for reproduction of insecurity.

3.2.1 *Socios* against *barras* at CA Independiente

Matías and Valentín are *hinchas* of CA Independiente, a club situated in Avellaneda, south of Buenos Aires. Citizens of Avellaneda are proud of the city. With both Racing Club and CA Independiente the city has two of the 'Great Five' originating from the barrio. This same pride goes for Matías and Valentín. They are not part of the *barras bravas*, just proud fans of CA Independiente. Whether the club plays at home, in the province for the Copa Argentina or elsewhere in Latin America for the regional cups, they follow the club with a group of friends. Irrespective of their economic situation, they help each other to be able to visit games and support.

When visiting games of Independiente, they buy tickets for the popular, the standing section of the stadium. It is the same section where the *barras bravas* are situated at football stadiums in Argentina. So, they share the stand with *Somos Nosotros*, the *barra brava* group of Independiente, led by Pablo Álvarez, alias '*El Bebote'*. *Somos Nosotros* has been one of the most powerful groups of *barras bravas* in Argentina since the 2000s. They control the typical shadow businesses during matchdays in Avellaneda, providing for fortunes for the leading figures. The *dirigencia* gives them merchandise to sell in the streets, the police in Avellaneda shares in the profits of their *trapitos* and most importantly, the *dirigencia* provides them with tickets for the *Popular Norte*, the standing section on the northside of the stadium during matches. Here, the *barras* bring their *aguante* to the matches, shared with regular fans as Valentín and Matías on the stands.

However, since 2011 things went a different course. The common fans went in revolt against president Comparada, posing a danger to the political reality at Independiente at the time. It led towards an escalation between the *socios* and the *barras* during the game between Independiente – San Martín de los Andes in 2011. From the *Popular Sur*, the fans sang towards the *barras*:

'*Si sos hincha del Rojo tenés que votar, Comparada, Comparada nunca más!*'[30]

'No tenés vergüenza … por la plata, no se alienta!'[31]

'De que cuadro sos, de que cuadro sos mercenario, de cuadro sos!'[32]

Cameras at the south stands were manually shut down. *Barras bravas* from the *Popular Norte* went up to the *Popular Sur*, armed with knives and reportedly guns. Fights emerged, *socios* fled and the *barras* restored 'order' at the stands.[33]

Yet, the normal fans did go out to vote. Consequently, the next president Javier Cantero, elected in 2013, had no intentions to cooperate with the *barras bravas* in political clientelist networks. He had the support of common fans, including Valentín and Matías. However, as immediately noted by Matías and Valentín: 'At some point you *have* to talk with the *barras*. You cannot govern the club without the power of the *barras*'.[34] In the battle against *Somos Nosotros,* Independiente hired Florencia Arrieto, who became the club's chief of security. The question whether she had been successful is caught up with the time. Already in 2012, *barras bravas* under guidance of *El Bebote* broke into the presidential office, to talk. Cantero would later admit that he was scared for his life.[35] Almost exactly a year later the *barras* violently attacked the General Assembly of Independiente, marking their hatred against Cantero. In 2014, Cantero left the club under that pressure.

Image 2. Cantero fleeing the General Assembly in 2013

[30] Translated: 'If you are a fan of Independiente, you have to go out to vote, Comparada, never again!
[31] Translated: 'You don't have any shame, if it wasn't for the money, you wouldn't support!'.
[32] Translated: 'Which block are you from, which block are you from mercenary?'.
[33] Interview: Valentín Matteuci, August 5.
[34] Interview: Valentín Matteuci, august 5, Matías Vallejos August 8.
[35] See: TyC Sports, 'Independiente: Javier Cantero contó por qué decidió renunciar'. October 2019.

Image 3. Somos Nosotros in the office of Javier Cantero in 2012. Álvarez on the left, dressed in white, talks to Cantero

The restoring of power, through violence against *socios* and the *dirigencia*, emphasizes the power of *barras bravas* in political clientelist networks in Argentine football clubs. Nowadays Independiente fans seem to have grown indifferent to the situation. But, Valentín is still critical on Arrieto. He explains: 'You see, I felt uncomfortable with her as *Jefe de Seguridad*. It is all right to go after the *barras*. But restricting all flags and other important support materials for us at the stadium went too far. She took on the normal fans as well when she did that'[36].

3.2.2. Prestige and *cargadas*

Prestige constitutes to an important factor in the fan culture of Argentine football, amongst all kinds of fans. Such pride has evolved from the history of the club and the identification of fans with the barrio. The concept of *aguante* reflects on the prestige of the club. This prestige is often subject of discussion in Argentine society. The culture of *cargadas*[37] is exemplary. Fans of other teams constantly seek to affect the prestige of another club. Examples range from simple facts of bullies and jokes about weak support to far-reaching and prepared actions by groups of *barras*. These actions of *cargadas* often veil an important lack of self-reflection within Argentine fan culture around football.

An important example of this veil can be found in the story of '*el Famoso Panadero'*.[38] Boca Juniors played River Plate at home in the semi-final of the Copa Libertadores, the most important and lucrative tournament of the year for South American football clubs. When the players sought to return to the field after half-time, the players of River Plate where attacked in

[36] Interview: Valentin Matteuci, August 5.
[37] Translation: Bullying, harassment.
[38] Translation: The famous baker

their tunnel towards the field with tear gas, which was poured into the tunnel by Adrian Napolitano. Adrian was on duty for his work, delivering bread for *choripan* to the food stands of *La Bombonera*. The players of River Plate were forced to enter the field in order to escape the gassed tunnel. When entering the pitch of the roaring stadium, though obviously not able to play, the fans made fools of them. Though obviously injured, the Boca fans sang insults on the cowardness of 'the chickens'.[39] To top it off, a drone carrying a ghost of relegation, characterized by the giant red 'B' flew above the heads of the recovering players.[40]

Image 4. The incident of the Famoso Panadero.

Image 5: The drone carrying 'el fantasma de la B'

3.2.3. Locura and *carnaval*: Passion blinds

Both the incidents at Boca Juniors and CA Independiente reflect on a different stance on the definition of a true Argentine football fan. At Independiente, the fans did go in revolt against the practices of political clientelist networks. Yet, on the other side, one should ask whether these revolts constitute to a larger revolution against political clientelist networks. The case of Boca Juniors clearly demonstrates how prestige plays a major role of unification between *barras bravas* and ordinary fans of football. This could already be signalled in Valentín's remarks on battling *barras bravas* at Independiente as well. There is no doubt that the culture of *aguante* leads to violence, as has been outlined in multiple scholars and in section 2 and 3 of this research. Yet, the question remains what the stances of regular *hinchas* as Valentín and Matías are towards the causes of such violence. If it is *aguante* which has a significant contribution to the insecurity in and around stadiums in Argentina, it is the relation between

[39] Fans of River Plate are nicknamed 'Las Gallinas'.
[40] The ghost of relegation refers to River Plate's descending in 2011. Ever since, Boca Juniors – the only remaining team in Argentina which had never relegated in its history, has bullied the club with its relegation.

this *aguante* and the regular *socios* and normal fans that becomes subject of analysing political clientelist networks.

Both Valentín and Matías argue to have agreed with the revolts of the regular *socios* against the *barras bravas*. Yet, they share the stands with the same group and passionately sing along with songs as the '*Rojo yo dejo la vida'* song.[41] Moreover, Valentín supported the special appointment of Florencia Arrietto in the battle against *barras bravas* and insecurity in the stadium of CA Independiente. The question then is, who is the *hincha de verdad*, the *hincha genuino*? Gaston Edul tells us that public sentiment towards the *barras bravas* is traditionally bad. 'The real fan, the real *socio – el hincha genuino,* knows that the *barras bravas* only have economic ties with the club. This is in strong contrast to the normal *socio genuino,* who has a bond of passion and love with the club. Therefore, *socios* naturally disrespect the *barras bravas'*[42].

However, as outlined Valentín noted that the efforts of Florencia Arrietto to battle insecurity does have a limit, namely the flags of the fans which constitute to the prestige of the club[43]. Besides, the incident of the *Famoso Panadero* seems to imply otherwise as well. Pablo Alabarces points out: 'it was only one man who intentionally caused the incident. It were probably twenty man who assisted him and later coordinated the drone. But, it is forty thousand who absolutely loved it'[44]. Both the situation of Independiente and Boca Juniors demonstrate the role of a legitimization of violent outcomes of *cargadas* and *aguante*. Public sentiment is fiercely against *barras bravas*, but the *aguante* of the *hinchada* is of significant importance for the football fans in Argentina. The conducted survey of this research supports these notions, see table 2[45].

[41] See chapter 3.
[42] Interview: Gaston Edul, August 3.
[43] Interview: Valentin Matteuci, August 5.
[44] Interview: Pablo Alabarces, August 29.
[45] See appendix for accountability of conducted data.

Table 2: Paradoxical means of variables 'role of aguante' and 'stance towards barras in stadiums' Source: own conducted data, see appendix)

Variable	Question	Mean [0-10]
Role *aguante* in sense prestige for fans.	How important is the atmosphere in the stadium for the prestige of your club?	8.66
Stance towards *barras* in stadiums	Groups of *barras bravas* should be exempted from football stadiums.	7.87

The latter numbers constitute to a paradox, which highly reflects on the role of passion and *aguante* in the legitimization of political clientelist networks in Argentina. The *barras bravas* have acquired a monopolist position within the atmosphere in a stadium, expressed in its *banda,* consisting of *banderas*, *trompetas* y *carnaval*. Although public opinion initially wants them out for its economic love to the club, prestige of the club requires *aguante*. Then, to speak in the words of Alabarces: ''*Y el aguante, lo tienen las barras''*.[46] In other words, the culture of *aguante* constitutes the situation where expressions of political clientelist networks are legitimized in a set of dispositions of the normal fan, shaped by the urge for prestige. *Aguante* constitutes to a form of a clientelist habitat, in which each actor is blindsided by the passion for the club. As a result, cultural factors which are captured by political clientelist networks uphold the persistence of violence in Argentine football.

3.3. Political instrumentalization of Argentine football

'Football in Argentina is a political game', explains Diego Murzi, vice-president of NGO *Salvemos al Fútbol*. Football often comes alongside politics, given the simultaneous historical development of politics and football in the barrios. Thus far, this development counts for national politicians as well, Murzi explains. 'Football is a way to work on your political profile. Building upon political clientelist networks to do so, is not so much a specific thing of football, it rather is a thing we see in syndicalism, political parties as well. Football is just the means'. This section analyses how this political dimension of clientelist networks constitutes to the persistence of insecurity in football.

[46] Interview: Pablo Alabarces, August 29.

3.3.1. Protecting political interests in Avellaneda

Valentín's best friend, Francisco is as well from Avellaneda. However, Francisco is a fan of Racing Club. Both Valentín and Francisco are active members of their clubs. Valentín has been active in multiple *peñas*. Francisco, as the son of Pablo Podesta, the former vice-president of Racing Club, has been active in political groups within Racing Club. Although the clubs are rivals – which makes Valentín and Francisco '*enemigos'*, they share the same experiences within the club.

'At one point, specifically in 2012, we established a new group within the club*: Compromiso Independiente*. Our story for the club was good, we wanted to make a difference. At the first meeting at the stadium, 20 people attended. At the second meeting 50 people attended and at the third 300. Our intention was to help the club based upon volunteering, possibly politically implementing this initiative in the whole club'. Valentín explains the purpose of the meetings and the initiative. Yet, at the fifth meeting some guys from the *barra* showed up. 'You cannot meet here *muchachos'*. Questions were senseless, understood Valentín immediately. The number of participants in our groups was a threat to the power of both the board and the *barras*. 'Returning was no option: the message was clear. The group ceased to exist'. Francisco was member of the political group of his father at Racing Club. But, after his father was out of Racing politics, Francisco and his groups had similar encounters with the *barras* of Racing. 'You see, threats and intimidations on meetings were common.[47]

3.3.2. An uncontrolled creation

How Francisco and Valentín experienced politics in their football clubs is exemplary for the political dimension of clientelist networks. Often in Argentine football, these networks are protected by the patrons and brokers through intimidation and threats by the *barras*, who serve as gatekeepers of the political system. In other words, violent practices are common practice when it comes to possible new political groups within football clubs. Yet, the case of Avellaneda demonstrates the lack of political incentives – or: political will, to battle such practices. The father of Francisco, Pablo Podesta has been involved in Racing Club as Vice-President and candidate for President. He explains us: 'as a member of the board you have one choice and two roads towards that choice. You cooperate directly, or you are made to cooperate. So you cooperate'[48]. Pablo Alabarces underlines this by stating: *No hay un solo presidente de*

[47] Interview: Francisco Podesta, September 2.
[48] Interview: Pablo Podesta, September 20.

un club que no maneja a su barra. No conducen a la barra, pero la usan. Pero a veces la sufren'.[49]

Some leading figures within football clubs lead the way towards political clientelist networks, intentionally employing *barras bravas* and other groups of fans within the clubs for the sake of their political gains. Diego Murzi underlines the political motives in club leaders might have to participate in these practices. 'Political mobilization is very important in Argentina. Filling political rallies with large crowds is an important indication of your public appearance and popularity. Employing leaders of *barras bravas* is then an easy thing to do, it gives you certainty to at least 300 to 400 attendees'.[50] Moreover, *barras bravas* can perfectly be used in cases of opposition. The situations of Valentín and Francisco highly reflect on this employment of *barras bravas* in possibly emerging political disputes.

Then on the other hand, there are leading figures in football who do not want to be part of these political clientelist networks. Nevertheless, in most instances they are forced to participate anyway. This is mostly a consequence of the reality which political clientelist networks have shaped over time from which political figures in football cannot escape. The position in which *barras bravas* find themselves reflects on an important conceptual difference between the political clientelism in Argentine football and the political clientelism as identified by Auyero (2000) in the poor slums in Buenos Aires. As rightfully pointed out in his essay and underlines in his interview, Paradiso emphasizes the power of negotiation of *barras bravas*. Given their strong economic organization, the clients and brokers within this form of political clientelism have the power to execute pressure on the patrons, given their strong organization.

This strongly reflects on the political position of the leaders of the *barras bravas* in Argentina. Their political loyalty depends on the conditionality of the economic transactions and the prospective of consistency of these relations. Should things take different forms, either loyalty is broken and other political initiatives are supported by the *barras*, or *dirigentes* are pressured to maintain the political clientelist networks through threats, violence and intimidation. Murzi underlines these two separate outcomes: 'The leading figure of the *barra bravas* in Argentina is a rational political actor. It weighs its options and chooses the best possible political outcome'.[51]

[49] Translation: 'There is no single director of a football club who does not handle his barra. They don't govern it, they use it. But sometimes, they suffer them as well'. Interview: Pablo Alabarces, August 29.
[50] Interview: Diego Murzi, August 2.
[51] Interview: Diego Murzi, August 2.

Yet, the political position of the leading figure of a *barra brava* as a broker is not always as obvious and straight-forward as it seems. This position as well experiences bottom-up pressures, reflected through the power of negotiation in groups of clients. As earlier outlined in the economic conceptualization of political clientelism, the broker should possess a high ability to distribute economic gains of the business of the *barra bravas*. If this distribution is poorly executed, internal struggles within groups of *barras bravas* emerge[52]. Though not directly connected, this explains the persistence of violence in stadiums after the prohibition of away fans in 2013. In fact, even more paradox, the pandemic initially fostered violence within groups of *barras bravas*. Should incomes of the *barras bravas* business fade, clients execute power and pressure on the brokers as well. Either the broker then loses its position as leader of the *barras bravas* as a result of internal power struggles or the broker pressures towards the patron, through threatening to give up loyalty or by violently demanding more economic and political traction.

3.3.3. Football and politics: A single heart

The question which emerges from the latter section, is which rational position provides political incentives to move beyond this political game. The political instrumentalization of *barras bravas* has led towards a carrousel in which none of the actors have profound reasons to step out of the game, regardless of goodwill. Consequently, no efforts are made to battle the roots of insecurity in Argentine football. Although violence in Argentine football results from many issues, no political incentives exist to face it. This counts for both bottom-up and top-down flows.

Patrons have little incentives to undermine the political clientelist networks through seizing to cooperate with police, groups of fans and *barras bravas*. As rightfully portrayed by former Vice-President of Racing Club Pablo Podesta, all roads lead to Rome, given its either cooperation for benefits or cooperation through coercion. Yet still, in most cases, football *dirigentes* in Argentina cannot march up to power without forming certain alliances. As leading a football club is a matter of public relations in Argentina, alliances with *barras bravas* are simply the easiest way to move up the ladder, characterized as a charismatic and powerful leader. Interesting in this regard are the characterizations of differences between former president Cantero and current President Moyano at CA Independiente. Cantero was characterized as a weak leader who was not able to handle the *barras* of Independiente by both

[52] Interview: Pablo Alabarces, August 29; Eugenio Paradiso, August 10.

reporters and fans.[53] In contrast, syndicalist Moyano is perceived as a strong leading figure who cleverly unified the *barras* behind his power. In other words, pragmatism is considered a strong capability in Argentine political climate, regardless of the negative side-effects.

Such pragmatism is even detectable on a national level. Pablo Alabarces points to the political (in)actions after the 2018 stoning of the Boca Juniors bus, during the final of the Copa Libertadores between Boca and archrival River Plate. Though the security around the 'match of the century' in River's *El Monumental* in Núñez constituted to a military operation, major policing blunders were made[54]. The events were regarded as a national shame. Although the Metropolitan Police of Buenos Aires were able to organize the G20 just a week later, football in Argentine proved itself complicated once again. Regardless of the question on the intentionality of the mistakes, which still constitutes to speculation in Argentina, political consequences were minimal for those who organized. 'Only one *diputado nacional* made accusations. The topic of security in football, specifically the issue of the *barras*, is the broadest problem in our criminal administration'[55]. In the same trend, Diego Murzi explains us: 'None of the politicians has an interest in bringing up this issue of *barras* in football; almost everybody in the political system has benefited from the system in some instance.[56] In other words, no fundamental change in a top-down manner are politically rational from both patrons and brokers.

Yet, no bottom-up change is to be expected. As has been demonstrated in section 4.1., confidence in authorities and politics to solve the resilience of security issues in Argentine football is generally low. Still, it is up to the insiders of the system, *socios*, politically active *socios* and employees/volunteers of the club to bring change in the dynamics of political clientelist networks in football clubs. Subsequently, if bottom-up forces to change this clientelist system would exist, we would expect these groups to have a lower probability to vote for a politician in a football club, compared to non-*socios*, politicians inactive *socios* and employees/volunteers.[57]

[53] Interviews: Gaston Edul, August 3; Valentin Matteuci, August 5.
[54] While direct entrance from the highway on to the back entrance of the Estadio Monumental was possible, the arriving bus of Boca Juniors was led through Avenida del Libertador, the main road through which River Plate fans have to enter the stadium. It led towards a chaotic situation, where fans stoned the bus, police threw military tear gas to the fans, whom at their turn threw that same tear gas through one of the windows of the bus, injuring the players of Boca Juniors (Interview: Remi Lehman, Pablo Alabarces). Eventually, the CONMEBOL ordered the final to be played in Madrid, Spain.
[55] Interview: Pablo Alabarces, August 29.
[56] Interview: Diego Murzi, August 2.
[57] See statistical hypothesis in appendix.

Table 3: Independent samples T-test: difference between active club workers and non-active club workers and their probability to vote for a politician as president of their club. (Source: own conducted data, see appendix)

T-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

	Socio	*Non-socio*
Mean	2,89	2,57
Std. Dev.	3,03	2,72
Observations (N)	99	132
df	198	
T-Stat	0,83	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0,20	
T Critical one-tail	1,65	

Table 4: Independent samples T-test: difference between politically active socios and non-politically active socios and their probability to vote for a politician as president of their club. (Source: own conducted data, see appendix)

T-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

	Politically active socio	*Non politically active socio*
Mean	2,50	2,99
std dev	2,88	3,06
Observations	14	84
df	18	
T-Stat	-0,58	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0,28	
T Critical one-tail	1,73	

Table 5: Independent variable T-test: difference between active club workers and non-active club workers and their probability to vote for a politician as president of their club. (Source: own conducted data, see appendix)

T-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

	Active club workers	*Non-active club workers*
Mean	2,79	2,95
Std. Dev.	3,10	3,03
Observations (N)	19	79
df	27	
T-Stat	-0,20	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0,42	
T Critical one-tail	1,70	

Looking at tables 3 and 4,[58] the difference between *socios* (M = 2.89; St. Dev. = 3.03) and non-*socios* (M = 2.57; St. Dev. = 2.72) in probability to vote for a politician as president of a football club is not significant (T (198) = 1,65; P one-tail (0.20) > 0.05)[59]. Nor is the difference between politically active *socios* (M = 2.50; Std. Dev. = 2.88) and non-politically active *socios* (M = 2.99; St. Dev. = 3.06) in their probability to vote for a politician as president of a football club ((T (18) = 1,73; P one-tail (0.28) > 0.05). In other words, the hypothesis that *socios* would have a lower probability to vote for a politician as a president of a football club compared to general football fans, is not significant. Even zooming in between politically active *socios* and non-politically active *socios*, there is no significant lower probability for politically active socios to vote for a politician as a president of the football club. The same trend can be observed in table 4. Here, it is demonstrated that active workers of the club, either volunteered or paid (M = 2.79, Std. Dev. = 3.10), compared to non-active club workers (M = 2.95, Std. Dev. = 3.03), do not have a significantly lower probability to vote for a politician as the president of a football club ((T (27) = 1,70; P one-tail (0.42) > 0.05).

Overall, the political dimension of political clientelist networks, demonstrate incentives for inaction towards insecurity in Argentine football. *Barras bravas* continue to reproduce their actions of intimidation towards regular fan groups and internal power struggles in the groups result in violence in football stadiums. From a top-down perspective, politicians in Argentina, often patrons in the political clientelist networks, have no incentives of battling these practices. Through either individual pragmatism or coercion by the *barras*, football directors are captured in the political clientelist networks, which undermines their possible efforts to battle insecurity in Argentine football. Yet, bottom-up action could be expected. As the case of Valentín and Francisco outlines, one would expect *socios* and more specifically politically active *socios* and club workers or volunteers to have a lower probability to vote for a politician as the possible president of a football club. After all, precisely these groups experience the practical outcomes for insecurity around football, as has been outlined by the experiences of the political initiatives of Valentín and Francisco. Yet, statistical evidence suggests otherwise, as no significant lower probability to vote for a politician as club president exists for these groups, compared to non-*socios*, non-politically active *socios* and non-active club workers. This may suggest that additional incentives to battle insecurity through political action for *socios*, politically active *socios* and club workers like Valentín and Francisco are absent.

[58] See appendix for accountability of conducted data..
[59] For hypothesis and elaboration on interpretation of the tables, see appendix.

Conclusion

In this study, multiple causes for insecurity in and around Argentine football stadiums have passed the venue. As set out in the literature review of this research, this research underlines and acknowledges this academic effort to understand insecurity in Argentine football. Yet, these causes do not automatically explain the persistence of this insecurity in Argentine football. More practically formulated: it does not explain the reproduction of insecurity over time in Argentine football, nor the political and societal inefficiency to ban violence from the environment of football. This research has sought to address this gap in the literature through the following research question: 'Which structures lead towards the persistence of insecurity in Argentine football and prevent other outcomes as pursued by political and social initiatives.'

To move towards a new framework of understanding persistence of insecurity in Argentine football, this research has built upon a multidimensional conceptual framework of political clientelism. The conceptualization of clientelist patron-client relation builds upon academic efforts on political clientelism in a political environment, rather than the environment of football. But, the clients in the environment of Argentine football, as pointed out by earlier scholars on clientelism in football as well, have a stronger power of negotiation than the classical poor clients in the conceptualization of political clientelism by Auyero (2000). Consequently, political clientelism in football constitutes to a far more complex networks with actors in multiple roles in distinctive situations. Throughout this research, this has been observed multiple times, as *barras bravas* can adopt to multiple roles in networks and groups of football fans constitute to more bottom-up power than classical clients.

It should be noted that the aim of this research was to explore explanations for the persistency of insecurity in Argentine football. This is reflected in both the methods of the research and in the conclusions that are to be drawn. The mixed methods employed in this research have provided wide and rich insights on the issues at hand. Nevertheless, the research conducted remains broad, which has been inevitable given the acknowledgement of earlier academically recognized causes of violence in Argentine football. Therefore, in-depth research alongside the specific dimensions of political clientelism in Argentine football remains desirable. Moreover, the data conducted in this research invites further statistical analysis on specifically the moderating role of political clientelism between causes of violence and insecurity. Until now, statistical forms of analyses in this field of research have been underrated. In this light, the main conclusions of this research reflect on the question whether the conceptual framework upon which this research builds to explain persistency in insecurity in Argentine football, holds.

Alongside the cultural dimension, this research has demonstrated how the concept of *aguante* constitutes to a clientelist habitus which legitimizes the existence of political clientelist networks for general football fans in Argentina. Through the cases at CA Independiente and Boca Juniors, it has been outlined how popular stances seem to reject *barras bravas* in football stadiums strongly, but the *aguante* they possess is essential for their sense of prestige. *Barras bravas* have acquired a monopolist position in terms of *aguante* through the political clientelist network. Although a strong public opinion exists against the *barras*, passion seems to blind regular *socios* and *hinchas* for violent outcomes of *aguante*. This contributes to the persistence of insecurity in Argentine football. Causes of violence are masked by the *aguante* of the barras bravas, which have monopolized this position alongside their part in the political clientelist networks. These networks have created a clientelist habitus in which inaction towards violent outcomes becomes the norm, even for those opposed to *barras bravas*.

Politically, both top-down and bottom-up, political clientelist networks have created a system where incentives for inaction towards insecurity, produced by *barras* exist. Even though football directors occasionally refuse to participate in political clientelist networks with *barras*, they are coerced to the practices by force. But, more importantly, political instrumentalization of football is widely employed by anyone seeking political influence in Argentina. Therefore many directors simply seek political influence through employing the political clientelist networks. Either coerced or benefited, the networks produce no incentives to battle insecurity which is caused by the corrupt practices. Popular initiatives from below, as Valentín and Francisco demonstrated, are effectively severed by this system. Yet, statistical evidence suggests that the highly involved groups have no lower probability to vote for politicians as club presidents than less involved groups. Both top-down and bottom-up politicians and clients are passengers in their own established uncontrolled creation, resulting in a reproductive system which upholds violence in the networks, constituting to the persistence of insecurity in Argentine football.

At last, economically a supplementary system of personalized favors has emerged alongside the organizations of football clubs. The system is upheld through economic interests from patron to broker, from broker to client. This has been outlined through the example of *filiales* at Rosario Central. The patterns identified in the case of Alejandra at Rosario Central, can be observed as well in the larger shadow economy around matchdays and generally football in Argentina. This shadow economy, which inherently produces violence, remains to exist as a consequence of tight political clientelist networks, including club *dirigencias*, the police and

barras bravas. Given the economic and political interests that derive from this shadow economy no rational incentives exist for actors, from patrons to clients to battle insecurity which derives from illicit businesses around football stadiums. Subsequently, public trust in authorities to organize football games secure, is undermined by business interests. Ultimately, insecurity in Argentine football persists through economic incentives for inaction by patrons and brokers.

Essentially, causes of violence are reproduced and persistent through political clientelist networks, which either fuel inaction or generate incentives for undermining security in Argentine football. In all three dimensions, these political clientelist networks have normalized and legitimized themselves towards such an extent that indifference is the outcome. Even though this research presented these structures separately, the interconnections between the political, economic and cultural dimensions should be emphasized. The clientelist habitat plays an important role within the economic incentives and economic factors determine political rational choices. In response to the research question posed, this research concludes that political clientelist networks fuel structures that are the main driver beyond the persistence of violence and insecurity. It may indeed produce the violence itself, but it most importantly forms the conditions for the survival of already existing causes of insecurity in Argentine football.

This conclusion explains why past public policies to battle insecurity in Argentine football failed. The banning of certain groups from stadiums, for example away fans in most cases, does not constitute to battling insecurity in Argentine football. This research has brought forward that such measures constitute to a misunderstanding of the issues at hand. Such methods disregard the complexity of the political clientelist networks which exist in Argentine football. Pablo Alabarces ironically – yet cynically, posed it in the following way: 'Actually, to this extent, the best measure against the insecurity in Argentine football, has been the Covid-19 pandemic'[60]. Of course, the Covid-19 pandemic did not stop violence at once, but it posed some hopeful visions for the long-term possibilities of security in Argentina. It established a situation where political, economic and cultural incentives for upholding political clientelist networks were undermined. The economic engine of insecurity, the clientelist habitus of *aguante* and political incentives for moving upstream through football all dried up. Yet, football in Argentina already returned and so did the full stadiums. It underlines the academic attention this topic requires. Not only for the sake of football in Argentina, but rather because football remains a trustworthy reflection of its society.

[60] Interview: Pablo Alabarces, August 29.

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Appendix

Interviewees

List of interviews conducted

Interviewed	Affiliation or role	Topics covered	Place and date	Time
Gaston Edul	Journalist at TYC Sports Argentina, CA Independiente watcher	Coverage of elections at CA Independiente; sindicalist influence at CA Independiente; insecurity around football matches in Argentina	Whatsapp call, August 3.	07.15PM CET
Valentin Matteuci	Socio of Independiente, politically active within club elections	Influence of peñas on elections and political life within football; influence and intimidation by Barras Bravas in political life at CA Independiente	Zoom call, August 5.	01.00 A.M. CET
Dr.Eugenio Paradiso	Anthropologist at Simon Fraser University (CAN)	Conceptualizations of Political Clientelism; influence of Barras Bravas on club directors.	Zoom call, August 10.	08.00 P.M. CET
Prof.Pablo Alabarces	Sociologist at Universidad de Buenos Aires (ARG)	Police surveillance at football matches. Corruption in national politics. National politics vs football politics.	Zoom call, August 29.	02.00 P.M. CET
Dr.Diego Murzi	Sociologist at Instituto de Altos Estudios Sociales (IDAES) de la Universidad de General San Martín (UNSAM). Vice-President of Salvemos al Futbol	Political clientelism in football clubs, government efforts, history of political clientelism and influence of Barras Bravas	Whatsapp call, August 2.	09.00 P.M. CET
Francesco Podesta	Socio of Racing Club, political active within club politics for Agrupación La Acadé.	Political elections within football clubs, influence of Barras Bravas within football clubs, organization of political movements within clubs.	Whatsapp call, September 2.	10.30 P.M. CET
Pablo Podesta	Ex Vice-President of Racing Club, ex Candidate for President of Racing Club	Political elections within Racing, relation between hincha and dirigencia.	Zoom call, September 20.	01.30 P.M. CET

Alejandra Schamun	President of Filial Mar del Plata, CA Rosario Central	Elections in suborganizations of club. Relations filiales to central club organization. Security in football stadiums	Whatsapp call, August 20.	11.00 P.M. CET
Veronica Stocco	Active socio de Estudiantes de la Plata	Violence in football stadiums,	Whatsapp call, September 1.	12.00 A.M. CET
Mattias Vallejos	Active socio de CA Independiente	Fan atmosphere in stadium, culture at 'Popular', current dirigencia of CA Independiente.	Whatsapp call, August 8.	09.00 P.M. CET
Sebastian Pelle	Hincha of Estudiantes de la Plata	Experience of attending football matches at Platea. Opinion on Barras Bravas and dirigencia.	Facebook call, August 25.	11.00 P.M. CET
Casper Sas	President of Boca en Holanda, consulate of Boca Juniors in the Netherlands	Organization of Boca Juniors beyond borders. Relations between consulates and dirigencia.	Amsterdam, July 27.	09.00 P.M. CEt
Gonza Corral	Active Socio of CA Independiente	Fan atmosphere in stadium. Culture at 'popular'. Influence Barras in game experience.	Whatsapp & zoom call, July 28.	08.00 P.M. CET
Remi Lehmann	Freelance journalist in Buenos Aires, political scientist, socio of CA River Plate	Security, barras bravas River Plate.	Whatsapp call, September 10.	08.00 P.M. CET

Conducted data

Basic information survey

Profile of surveyed	Argentinian nationality, eligible to vote in national elections, visits regularly football games at the stadium. Is not necessarily socio of a football club.
Total number of respondents	258
Place of conducting	Amsterdam, The Netherlands (Remote). Tool: Leiden University Qualtrics.
Period	August 15 – September 12

Descriptive statistics respondents

Gender	*Male*	*Female*	*X*
	198	44	0
Age	*< 18 y/o*	*19 – 35 y/o*	*36 -50 y/o*	*>50 y/o*
	3	99	57	85
Socios	*Yes*	*No*	
	103	140	
Politically affiliated	*Yes*	*No*	
	33	210	
Syndicalist affiliated	*Yes*	*No*	
	24	218	

Independent Samples T-Test

This research has employed Independent Samples T-tests in section 4.3.3. in order to statistically test whether a difference exists between groups on the probability to vote for a national politician as the president of the club. This test is employed in order to assess whether two separate means samples vary significantly. The latter variable has a scale from [0-10]. The independent samples t-tests are conducted for the groups: socio – not socio [1-2]; politically active socio – not politically active socio [1-2]; working for the club – not working for the club [1-2]. See the survey questions below:

- ¿Sos socio de tu club de fútbol?
  [Sí=1 – No =2]

- ¿Estás participando activamente en la política de tu club?
  [Sí=1 – No =2]

- ¿Realizas trabajos para tu club de fútbol?
  [Sí=1 – No =2]

- ¿Qué probabilidad tendrías de votar a un político nacional en la política de tu club?
  [0 = No es nada probable - . . . . . – 10 Muy probable]

Hypothesis – Independent Samples T-Test

The Independent Samples T-tests for the differences in probability to vote for a politician as a club president, between the groups socio – non-socio, politically active socio – non-politically active socio and club workers – non-club workers; are based upon the following hypothesis.

- H0 = There is no difference between socios and non-socios in the probability ot vote for a politician as president of a football club.
- H1 = There is a difference between socios and non-socios in the probability to vote for a politician as president of a football club.

Elaboration interpretation – Independent Samples T-Test

Please note that the hypothesis of these T-tests were focused on the expectation that *socios*, participating *socios* and working *socios* would have a lower probability to vote for politicians in football clubs than other groups. Therefore, these T-tests employed the one-tail T and P values in order to draw conclusions.