6

Requesting Benefits

As explored thus far, the vulnerability of many citizens to adverse shocks motivates their purposive actions to sustain relational clientelism, which by definition provides contingent benefits that extend beyond election campaigns. Although incomes in many countries have risen substantially in recent decades, much of the world's population continues to be threatened by illness, unemployment, drought, and other shocks. In contexts where the state provides an incomplete safety net, many citizens depend on ongoing exchange relationships with politicians to cope with various risks. Yet the stability of such relational clientelism rests on the credibility of promises between politicians and citizens. The preceding chapter, which tested the logic of declared support in the Brazilian context, examined only one direction of the dual credibility problem inherent in relational clientelism. Citizens' declarations mitigate politicians' concerns about whether they will actually follow through with vote promises, but do not address citizens' concerns about *politician* credibility. How can a voter know whether to trust a politician who vows to help when severe drought or illness strikes? Such concerns are often justified. Many politicians make a broad range of promises about help they will supposedly provide to individuals, only to renege once elected. Building on the theoretical logic in Chapter 3, the present chapter investigates how many Brazilians undertake an important action – requesting benefits – that reveals information about politician credibility and thus helps to sustain relational clientelism.

If citizen requests are a rare phenomenon, then their potential role in relational clientelism would be rather limited. But a vast number of people across the globe ask politicians for benefits, a point emphasized in Chapter 7. Although few researchers would deny that many citizens initiate requests, the logic and implications of these demands are largely unexplored in the literature on clientelism. Most studies focus squarely on the supply side of clientelism, examining how and why politicians target citizens when offering handouts.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316998014.006 Published online by Cambridge University Press

By contrast, this chapter focuses on citizen demands and how they can enhance the survival of relational clientelism. As Chapter 3 elaborated, citizens in ongoing exchange relationships not only elicit assistance through their requests, but also glean valuable information about whether their politicians' promises are trustworthy. By observing whether entrusted politicians fulfill their own requests over time, citizens can draw inferences about and screen against candidates whose promises of assistance are not credible.

As explored in this chapter, qualitative and quantitative evidence from Brazil favors this theoretical argument. First, many Brazilians request private benefits from politicians. Even in rural Northeast Brazil – a region often depicted as having a paucity of autonomous voters – citizens are not merely passive recipients of handouts. Second, vulnerability often motivates citizens to demand benefits: most requests pertain to life necessities, and they are more prevalent when adversity strikes. Moreover, in a collaborative field experiment in which our team randomized the construction of water cisterns, we found that reducing citizens' vulnerability to droughts reduces a broad array of demands from politicians. Third, politicians are responsive to many citizen demands in a manner consistent with relational clientelism. Requesters are more likely than non-requesters to receive benefits during both election and non-election periods – countering the possibility that politicians are either entirely unresponsive to citizen demands or are only responsive during campaigns. Furthermore, citizens who declared support for victorious candidates disproportionately receive benefits through requests – belying the possibility that this phenomenon merely reflects constituency service. And fourth, citizens often draw inferences about and screen against politicians, based on whether those politicians fulfill their requests. Analyses of hypothetical trust games and direct survey questions, as well as interviews, reveal a robust link between politicians' responsiveness and citizens' beliefs and behavior. Citizens with unfulfilled requests have worse perceptions of their politicians and are more likely to switch their votes away from candidates they have supported in the past.

Overall, evidence from Brazil corroborates the argument that requesting benefits is an important mechanism by which citizens fortify relational clientelism. Within the context of ongoing exchange relationships, voters screen against politicians with poor track records of fulfilling requests, and thereby alleviate their own concerns about opportunistic defection.

6.1 PREVALENCE OF CITIZEN REQUESTS

Across the world, many citizens make requests to politicians. This section establishes the prevalence of citizen requests; later sections demonstrate that many of these requests are fundamentally clientelistic in nature. A 2012 survey by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) suggests that over 13.9 percent of approximately 28,000 citizens in the Americas requested assistance

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316998014.006 Published online by Cambridge University Press

TABLE 6.1 *Share of Brazilians requesting help from politicians (1988–2014)*

	1988 PNAD	1996 PME	2007 LAPOP	2008 LAPOP	2010 LAPOP	2012 LAPOP	2014 LAPOP
Capital cities	3.5% (69,190)	3.8% (110,496)	10.2% (334)	11.9% (378)	6.3% (938)	9.9% (463)	2.9% (35)
Large cities	–	–	13.8% (167)	15.3% (281)	15.7% (515)	8.4% (83)	9.8% (479)
Medium cities	–	–	14.5% (207)	17.2% (233)	12.2% (263)	9.0% (424)	14.3% (468)
Small towns	–	–	10.7% (253)	22.0% (304)	13.4% (388)	14.6% (323)	18.0% (312)
Rural areas	5.0% (35,343)	–	13.9% (202)	19.4% (279)	15.7% (343)	14.7% (204)	18.6% (204)
Overall survey	4.3% (171,289)	3.8% (110,496)	12.2% (1,163)	16.9% (1,475)	11.4% (2,447)	11.2% (1,497)	14.0% (1,498)

Note: Table shows percentage of respondents requesting help from politicians, with number of observations in parentheses. Surveys in 1988 and 1996 asked if respondents made a personal request of any politician "by letter or telephone" in the last year. Surveys in 2007–2014 asked if respondents had "sought assistance from or presented a request to any office, official or councilperson of the municipality within the past 12 months." Overall survey total for 1988 PNAD includes 66,756 respondents in urban areas outside of capitals (population unspecified).
Source: PNAD 1988 (IBGE national household surveys); PME April 1996 (IBGE monthly employment survey in six state capitals); Latin American Public Opinion Project (2007–2014).

of local officials in the past year, with figures exceeding 22 percent in El Salvador and Guatemala.[1] In Brazil, five LAPOP surveys conducted between 2007 and 2014 indicate that between 11.2 and 16.9 percent of respondents had requested such assistance. Table 6.1 shows that citizen requests in Brazil tend to be most prevalent in small towns and rural areas, but are also substantial in metropolitan areas. Historical data on requests, while limited, demonstrate that citizen requests are not a new phenomenon. The census bureau's 1988 household surveys asked over 171,000 citizens across Brazil whether they made a personal request of any politician "by letter or telephone" in the last year. About 4.3 percent of respondents had made such requests, with a somewhat greater prevalence in rural areas than in capital cities (5.0 versus 3.5 percent). Eight years later, the census bureau repeated the question in the April 1996 Monthly Employment Survey of over 110,000 citizens in six state capitals, and found that 3.8 percent of respondents had made such requests of politicians. While this historical prevalence of requests is lower than figures in the more recent LAPOP surveys, they are not directly comparable as the earlier data only include requests by "letter and telephone."

[1] See question wording in caption of Table 6.1.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316998014.006 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The Rural Clientelism Survey in Northeast Brazil provides deeper insights about citizen requests and is the primary data source employed in this chapter.[2] In 2013, a non-election year, over 7.7 percent of respondents requested private help from a mayor or councilor.[3] Given that an individual may request assistance on behalf of his or her family, it is also revealing to consider whether *any* respondent in each surveyed household had made a request.[4] Using this measure, 12.9 percent of surveyed households had requested help from local politicians in 2013. Citizens are more likely to request benefits from councilors, who are relatively more numerous and accessible than the mayor. Of respondents who requested help, 70.7 percent asked a councilor, 19.2 percent asked the mayor, and 10.1 percent asked both. Because the majority of councilors typically serve as part of the mayor's coalition, councilors also play an intermediary role in helping citizens to obtain benefits from the mayor.

Although requesting assistance from politicians does not inherently constitute clientelism, the fact that citizen requests swell during election years suggests that many Brazilians perceive a link between such requests and the provision of political support. Politicians overwhelmingly point to a surge in requests, such as a councilor who explained: "Right now it's election time … it's the time that voters ask the most."[5] According to the Rural Clientelism Survey, 21.5 percent of respondents requested private benefits from a mayoral or councilor candidate during the 2012 municipal election year.[6] Again, the number of requests is even more striking when aggregating at the household level: in 37.5 percent of households in our sample, at least one surveyed individual had made a request of a candidate. Over three-fourths of requests in 2012 were directed at incumbents and challengers vying for the position of councilor rather than those vying for mayor.

The composition of handouts in Northeast Brazil draws attention to the role of citizen demands, as it is rather implausible that a politician would otherwise choose such a varied assortment of goods and services, especially if distributing a narrower list would yield economies of scale. Most requests fall in three broad categories: health care, water, and construction. In the 2012 and 2013 waves of the Rural Clientelism Survey, approximately one-third of private requests of politicians involved health care. When citizens ask the mayor or a councilor for such assistance, about half of requests involve medicine and half involve

[2] Appendix B provides details about this panel survey collected by Gustavo Bobonis, Paul Gertler, Marco Gonzalez-Navarro, and Simeon Nichter.

[3] Section 6.3 also includes a discussion of collective benefits; in 2013, 1.3 percent of respondents requested such benefits. Of course, some collective benefits may be distributed in contingent exchange for political support, and not all particularistic benefits involve clientelism (e.g., Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007).

[4] The 2012 wave of the Rural Clientelism Survey had 3,685 respondents. The 2013 wave had 3,761 respondents.

[5] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 10,000 citizens (November 26, 2008).

[6] In 2012, 3.1 percent of respondents requested community benefits. The 2012 wave asked about requests to candidates, and followed up to inquire whether the candidate was an incumbent. Of requests to councilor (mayoral) candidates, 58.6 (53.5) percent were of an incumbent.

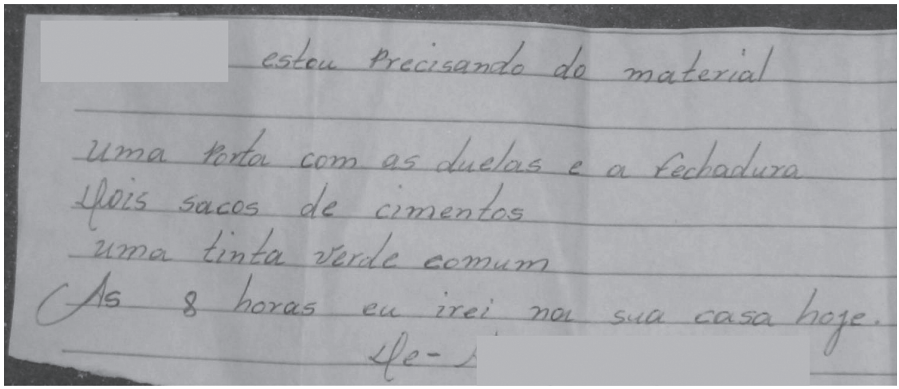

FIGURE 6.1 Example of citizen's request to councilor
Note: This note was shown by an interviewed councilor as he complained about the number of requests received during his 2008 reelection campaign. Without prompting, the councilor's supporter had slipped the note under his home's front door. It reads: "I need material. One door with hinges and a lock. Two sacks of cement. Plain green paint. At 8 o'clock I will go to your house today."
Source: Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 10,000 citizens (September 26, 2008).

medical services. According to survey respondents, these services span various needs, such as eyeglasses, dentures, tooth extraction, ultrasounds, pediatric visits, female sterilization, MRIs, electrocardiograms, knee and gallbladder surgeries, and transportation to distant medical appointments. Another quarter of private requests directed towards politicians involve water. Examples include delivering water, constructing a cistern, digging a well, or installing household water pipes. Furthermore, a quarter of private requests of politicians involve other construction, such as asking for cement, bricks, tiles, bathroom construction, or tractor usage. While health care, water, and construction account for over three-fourths of all private requests, citizens also asked for a wide gamut of other benefits. As one councilor remarked, "there are requests for tires, requests for medicine, requests for food baskets. There are requests for everything."[7] Examples of other requests from survey responses include help with official documents, funeral assistance, food, gas (for cooking and driving), bicycle and motorcycle tires, automotive repairs, refrigerator repairs, beds, and soccer cleats. Overall, both the prevalence and varied composition of citizen requests suggest that this phenomenon warrants further investigation.

6.2 REQUESTS AND VULNERABILITY

The broader argument of this book is that vulnerability motivates many citizens to undertake purposive actions – such as requesting benefits and declaring

[7] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 10,000 citizens (November 24, 2008).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316998014.006 Published online by Cambridge University Press

support – that help to sustain relational clientelism. Before examining the link between requests and clientelism, it is important to confirm the premise that vulnerability motivates citizens to ask for help.

Evidence suggests that the substantial vulnerability to life risks documented in Chapter 4 underlies many citizen requests in Brazil. One indication is the composition of benefits demanded: as just described, over half of requests involved health care and water, and many construction requests involved improving dilapidated homes. Numerous elites in Bahia explained that a lack of basic public services drives many citizens to ask politicians for such help. As a vice-mayor explained, "Since the state doesn't give you what you deserve, what you need, and there is no other way, what's the way you're going to seek it? It's the politician."[8] With respect to health care, a councilor elsewhere in Bahia argued that the "failure of the state" contributes to "the habit of requesting." This "habit" is so ingrained, he contended, that sometimes a citizen who obtains a doctor's prescription doesn't "even want to have the work of going to check if the medicine is available. He already knows there is a politician he can seek out, and the politician will try to resolve his problem, and he prefers to go to the politician."[9] A mayor further clarified why citizens often depend on politicians to supplement the public health system: "There are medicines we don't have in the public pharmacy. So they don't take the medicine, they don't resolve the problem for which they had a consultation. So they turn to us."[10] Raising an issue considered extensively in the present chapter, the mayor added that citizens often emphasize their political support when asking for medicine – they frequently insist: "Oh mayor, I voted for you, you have to give it to me." Such qualitative evidence, when considered in conjunction with the fact that most citizen demands involve necessities, suggests that the incomplete provision of public services contributes to many citizen requests directed towards politicians.

Hypothetical scenarios provide further evidence that citizens turn to politicians when facing adversity. Given that not all citizens experience shocks such as serious illness and drought in a particular year, the Rural Clientelism Survey included questions about whom respondents would turn to in three adverse situations. During the 2012 election year, about a quarter of respondents indicated they would ask a local politician for help before turning to any other source (including family, friends, and official channels): more specifically, 23.4 percent when out of water, 28.3 percent when in need of a medical treatment provided in the distant state capital, and 23.5 percent when in need of a medicine unavailable in the subsidized public pharmacy and public health clinic. The share that would first turn to a politician declined in 2013 but remained significant: 10.0 percent for the water scenario, 18.0 percent for

[8] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 80,000 citizens (November 19, 2008).
[9] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 80,000 citizens (November 21, 2008).
[10] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 30,000 citizens (December 1, 2008).

the medical treatment scenario, and 11.0 percent for the medicine scenario.[11] These hypothetical scenarios – which had been experienced by a substantial share of respondents[12] – suggest that a large number of rural Brazilians turn to politicians as their first source of help when adversity strikes. The greater reliance on politicians during an election year points to an important issue explored later. For electoral purposes, many politicians fulfill requests during campaigns and also promise to provide future assistance. However, only a subset of these politicians actually help citizens after Election Day. Given that campaigns only represent a small share of the time that citizens are vulnerable to shocks, many Brazilians in ongoing exchange relationships are keen to ensure that such promises from their entrusted politicians are credible.

More rigorous evidence suggests that adverse shocks, in particular droughts, render citizens especially likely to turn to politicians for help. To explore this relationship, the Rural Clientelism Survey annexed satellite data on municipal precipitation to investigate whether survey respondents had recently experienced negative rainfall shocks. As described in Chapter 4, rainfall data were standardized to account for municipalities' rainfall patterns over the past quarter century. According to analyses conducted jointly with Gustavo Bobonis, Paul Gertler, and Marco Gonzalez-Navarro (2018), a one standard deviation decrease in rainfall between January and September of 2012 – before that year's municipal elections in October – resulted in a 3.9 percentage point increase in citizen requests of politicians over the course of 2012 (significant at the 1 percent level). Excluding requests for water, the negative rainfall shock increased requests by 2.0 percentage points (significant at the 5 percent level). Likewise, a one standard deviation decrease in rainfall during the municipal campaign led to an increase in overall citizen requests, a finding significant at the 1 percent level.[13] Overall, this evidence points to a link between adverse shocks and citizen requests.

In addition, our collaborative study shows that reducing citizens' vulnerability to adverse shocks reduces their demands of politicians (Bobonis et al., 2018). As discussed more extensively in Chapter 8, we randomized the construction of water cisterns, which reduce households' exposure to droughts by collecting and storing rainwater. More specifically, our team randomly selected households in our sample to receive 16,000 liter concrete water

[11] In 2012, the modal response in the medical treatment / medicine / water scenarios was turning first to a politician / family member / friend or neighbor. In 2013, the modal response in all scenarios was turning first to a family member. In all scenarios, under 1 percent indicated they would first ask associations, community leaders, or churches.

[12] The following percentages of respondents had previously experienced the scenarios: water (40.9 percent), medical treatment (24.1 percent), and medicine (44.8 percent).

[13] However, unlike the earlier period, the effect of drought on non-water requests during the campaign, while positive, was not statistically significant. Based on monthly rainfall data from July, August, and September 2012.

cisterns (valued at about $1,000 each); with respect to baseline characteristics, members of these households were statistically indistinguishable from control households. Receiving a cistern led to a significant overall decline in various requests of politicians in both the 2012 election year and the 2013 non-election year. When examining heterogeneity, this effect was only significant among citizens with established relationships with politicians, as defined by those who conversed at least monthly with them before the 2012 election campaign began. As explained in Chapter 8, these experimental findings are consistent with the logic that requesting benefits – an important mechanism of relational clientelism – is undercut when citizens' vulnerability declines.

Evidence thus far reveals that citizens frequently ask for help from politicians in Brazil, and these demands are often motivated by citizens' vulnerability to adverse shocks. The theoretical mechanism elaborated in Chapter 3 suggests that citizen requests help to sustain relational clientelism by revealing information about politician credibility. By definition, relational clientelism involves promises of post-election benefits, raising the threat of opportunistic defection by politicians. When a citizen asks a politician for help, she not only potentially receives a material benefit but also elicits information about the trustworthiness of that politician's promises to provide help reliably during times of need. Citizens screen politicians based on their track record of fulfilling requests, thereby alleviating the problem of politician credibility that threatens relational clientelism. The remainder of this chapter examines whether data from the Rural Clientelism Survey are consistent with the theoretical mechanism in Chapter 3. First, it examines whether an empirical link actually exists between citizen requests and relational clientelism. Then, it investigates whether citizens screen against politicians who deny their requests.

6.3 REQUESTS AND RELATIONAL CLIENTELISM

The theoretical mechanism elaborated in Chapter 3 would be inapplicable if Brazilian politicians simply ignored all of their constituents' requests. But the present section shows that is decidedly not the case. Moreover, this section suggests that obtaining benefits through requests is inherently political: for example, declared supporters are more likely to be recipients. And of fundamental importance, this section demonstrates that politicians' responsiveness to requests extends beyond election campaigns, indicating that many requests are part of ongoing clientelistic relationships rather than just electoral clientelism.

Qualitative evidence is explored extensively later, but it should be emphasized at the outset that many interviewees in Bahia conveyed a strong connection between citizen demands and handouts. For example, a mayor explained that "who requests is the voter. It's not the candidate who offers."[14]

[14] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 50,000 citizens (January 14, 2009).

He attributed this pattern to how years of clientelist exchanges have shaped citizens' expectations, referring to a local idiom: "The habit of smoking a pipe leaves the mouth contorted." In another municipality, a councilor admitted to fulfilling requests – even during campaigns when doing so is illegal – but insisted that he never *offered* any benefits. Raising an issue investigated in the present chapter, he emphasized the pressure faced when supporters demand help: "You're between a rock and a hard place: Will I have to give? If I don't give, I won't get the vote."[15] Many citizens also noted a connection between requests and handouts. As a housekeeper remarked, "they aren't going to offer help to anyone. … Really, if you want help, go to the local campaign office (*comitê*) and ask for help."[16]

The Rural Clientelism Survey provides evidence of politicians' responsiveness to many – though by no means all – requests during both election and non-election years. Overall, 59.4 percent of requests were fulfilled in 2012, as were 59.9 percent of requests in 2013. Another observation is that in both years, requests for fundamental necessities were far more likely to be fulfilled than other demands. For example, roughly two-thirds of requests for medicine, medical treatments and water were granted, versus just one-fifth of requests for building materials. As explored later, these figures alone do not provide a complete picture of politicians' responsiveness, in part due to self-selection with respect to who requests benefits. Nevertheless, they counter the notion that politicians might simply ignore all requests. The figures not only reveal politicians' responsiveness to many requests, but also point to considerable unmet demands. Unfulfilled requests often involve politicians' overt refusals to help, such as those described in the preceding chapter. In addition, numerous interviewees described an indirect approach by which politicians turn down requests: giving the runaround. For instance, one citizen complained that politicians "say they will help – 'come tomorow, come later' … and one day passes, and another day passes, and you never obtain it."[17]

If politicians are responsive to many citizen demands, then one would also expect requesters to be more likely to receive help than non-requesters (*ceteris paribus*). The Rural Clientelism Survey reveals this pattern. In 2013, 41.6 percent of requesters received help, compared to just 1.8 percent of non-requesters. And during the 2012 municipal election year, 19.5 percent of requesters received help, compared to just 2.4 percent of non-requesters.[18] Moreover, politicians' fulfillment of requests represented a disproportionate share of handouts distributed. In 2013, requesters comprised nearly two-thirds of all recipients of particularistic benefits – even though just 7.7 percent of

[15] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 30,000 citizens (December 3, 2008).
[16] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 60,000 citizens (November 5, 2008).
[17] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 10,000 citizens (October 2, 2008). The survey did not ask whether requests were overtly denied, or how long requests took to be fulfilled.
[18] Unlike questions about whether requests were fulfilled, these separate questions ask if respondents received benefits from any politicians (see Figures 5.1 and 5.3).

citizens requested help. And in 2012, requesters comprised over two-thirds of recipients – even though just 21.5 percent of citizens requested help. While these findings are suggestive of politicians' responsiveness to citizen requests, an important concern is that they do not control for various factors that could affect results if associated with both requests and the receipt of benefits.

Regression analyses tackle this concern and suggest that the link between requests and benefits holds up to closer scrutiny, thereby providing additional evidence of politicians' responsiveness to citizen demands. Given that the provision of assistance beyond electoral campaigns is a defining attribute of relational clientelism, this section first considers requests and benefits in 2013, a non-election year. Figure 6.2 shows results for five outcome variables, each indicating whether a respondent received the specified benefit. Coefficients and confidence intervals are reported for a key explanatory variable: whether a respondent requested private assistance of a local politician at any point during the year. Appendix E provides full results for these specifications. The top row of Figure 6.2 indicates that a citizen who requested assistance from the mayor or councilor in 2013 had a 39.8 percentage point greater probability of receiving a benefit from a politician that year when compared to a non-requester.[19] This finding remains significant at the 1 percent level, with the point estimate falling slightly to 38.4 percentage points, when controlling for the over twenty variables included in analyses in Chapter 5. Recall that these variables are described in Appendix B and include respondents' socioeconomic factors (age, education, gender and household wealth), political characteristics (turnout, mayoral vote choice, preferences for the PT, PMDB, PSDB or DEM parties, and frequency of conversations with politicians), horizontal linkages (association membership and collaborative efforts with neighbors), water availability (piped water, own cistern, and access to shared cistern), and behavioral attributes measured by experimental games (reciprocity, risk aversion, time preference, and public goods contribution). In addition, controls are included for whether the respondent declared support for a victorious or defeated candidate in 2012. The finding in the top row of Figure 6.2 is also robust to the inclusion of municipal fixed effects, which control for unobserved differences across municipalities that do not vary among citizens in a given municipality. With both controls and municipal fixed effects, requesters had a 37.7 percentage point greater probability of receiving a post-election benefit than a non-requester (significant at the 1 percent level).

Similar patterns of politician responsiveness to citizen demands are observed with other post-election outcome variables. The second row of Figure 6.2 examines help from the municipal government, which is important because politicians may respond to demands by helping requesters to acquire a benefit

[19] This bivariate coefficient corresponds to the difference in probabilities mentioned in the previous paragraph.

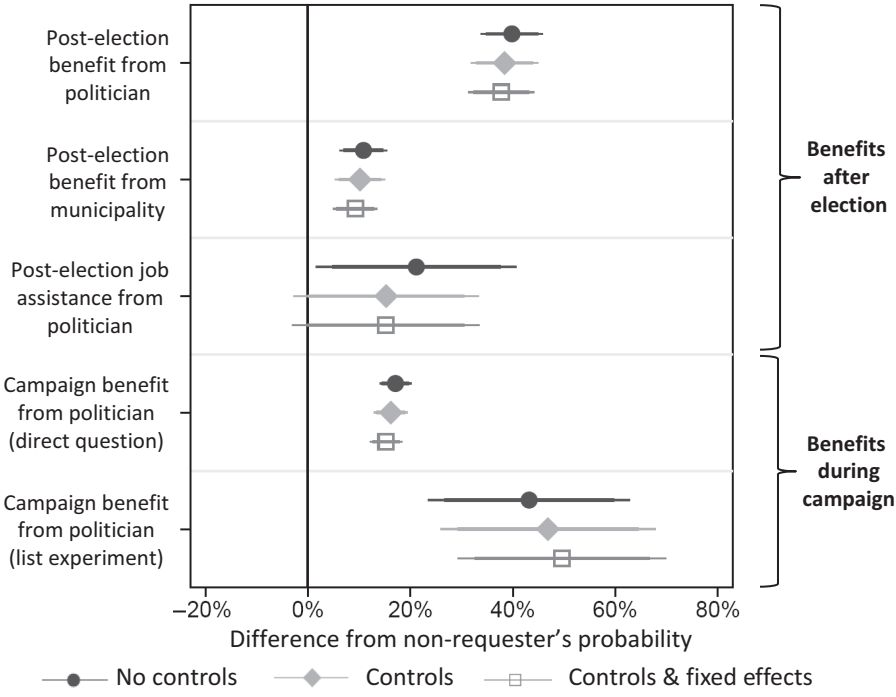

FIGURE 6.2 Citizen requests and private benefits, rural Northeast Brazil (2012–2013)

Note: Figure summarizes regressions in which each outcome variable is listed on the left axis, and the explanatory variable is whether the respondent requested a private benefit from a politician. Outcome variables coded 1 if the respondent received the specified benefit; 0 otherwise. Markers correspond to regression coefficients for the explanatory variable coded 1 if citizen requested a private benefit from a politician in 2013 (Rows 1–3) or 2012 (Rows 4–5). Circles shown for bivariate regressions, diamonds with controls, and squares with controls and municipal fixed effects. Thin whiskers on confidence intervals indicate 95 percent level; thicker lines indicate 90 percent level. Confidence intervals based on standard errors clustered at neighborhood level. Appendix E reports regression tables. Linear probability models are employed for the first four outcome variables; results are robust using logit specifications. Appendix Table E.4 describes analysis of the list experiment. Appendix B describes controls, which are: declared support for winner (loser), age, education, gender, household wealth, turnout, mayoral vote choice, political preferences (dummies for PT, PMDB, PSDB, and DEM parties), frequency of conversations with politicians, association membership, collaborative efforts with neighbors, has piped water, has own cistern, has access to shared cistern, reciprocity, risk aversion, time preference, and public goods contribution. Number of observations for the most inclusive specifications are 3,195 (Row 1), 3,223 (Row 2), 3,220 (Row 3), 2,720 (Row 4), and 3,085 (Row 5).

Source: Author's analysis of the Rural Clientelism Survey. Data collected by Gustavo Bobonis, Paul Gertler, Marco Gonzalez-Navarro, and Simeon Nichter.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316998014.006 Published online by Cambridge University Press

from a municipal office rather than doling out resources themselves. As shown, a citizen who requests assistance from the mayor or councilor had a 10.9 percentage point greater probability of receiving a benefit from the municipality in 2013, compared to a non-requester. This finding remains significant at the 1 percent level with the inclusion of controls, as well as with the inclusion of both controls and municipal fixed effects (with point estimates of 10.2 and 9.2 percentage points, respectively). The third row of Figure 6.2 investigates politician responsiveness to requests for employment assistance. In the bivariate specification, a citizen who asked the mayor or a councilor for a job was 21.2 percentage points more likely to report employment assistance from an elected politician in 2013 than a non-requester (significant at the 5 percent level). When including controls, significance falls to the 10 percent level, and when including controls and municipal fixed effects, it falls just shy of that threshold (the point estimate for both specifications is 15.2 percentage points). The sensitivity of results for this indicator is not completely surprising, given that asking for a job and receiving post-election job assistance are both low-probability events in the sample.

Evidence about the first three outcome variables suggests politician responsiveness to citizen requests during a non-election year, as one would expect with relational clientelism. If responsiveness reflects ongoing exchange relationships, requesters should also disproportionately receive benefits during campaigns. The fourth row of Figure 6.2 reports that requesters also disproportionately received benefits during the 2012 municipal campaign. In the bivariate specification, a citizen who requested assistance from a mayoral or councilor candidate was 17.1 percentage points more likely to receive a campaign handout than a non-requester. This finding continues to be significant at the 1 percent level when including controls, as well as when including both controls and municipal fixed effects (point estimates are 16.2 and 15.3 percentage points, respectively). Results for this fourth outcome variable are consistent with relational clientelism, but provide only collateral evidence: unlike politicians fulfilling requests during non-election years, responsiveness during campaigns may reflect electoral clientelism (see Nichter and Peress, 2016). As underscored in Chapter 1, a campaign handout may comprise electoral or relational clientelism, depending on whether a citizen's receipt of contingent benefits extends beyond campaigns.

Given the illegality of campaign handouts in Brazil (see Chapter 2), sensitivity bias is a heightened concern with the fourth outcome variable just discussed. Citizens may not want to admit their involvement in an exchange that is prohibited during campaigns, and systematic bias may influence results (Gonzalez-Ocantos et al., 2012). Allaying this concern, similar patterns are observed even when using a less obtrusive measure designed to address sensitivity bias. Requesters were still far more likely to receive help in 2012 as measured by a list experiment, which involves an indirect approach comparing the responses of respondents randomly assigned to treatment and control groups. The control

group was asked how many of four innocuous statements were true, such as whether politicians had radio advertisements or distributed stickers during the campaign. The treatment group was asked how many of five statements were true – the same four innocuous statements, as well as the additional statement that they had received help from a politician during the campaign. As shown in the bottom row of Figure 6.2, the list experiment estimated that requesters were approximately 43.2 percentage points more likely than non-requesters to have received a campaign benefit. This difference between requesters and non-requesters is 46.9 percentage points when including controls, and 49.6 percentage points when including controls and municipal fixed effects (both significant at the 1 percent level).[20] These results suggest that the relationship between requests and campaign handouts – which is indicative of politician responsiveness to requests – is not merely an artifact of sensitivity bias.[21]

Findings thus far belie the possibility that Brazilian politicians simply ignore all of their constituents' requests. Much to the contrary, local politicians are responsive to citizen demands during both non-election and election years. This pattern is consistent with relational clientelism, but it remains important to ascertain whether such responsiveness stems exclusively from constituency service, in which benefits are distributed without favoritism to specific citizens. For example, analyses in Appendix E suggest that politicians were also responsive to some citizen requests for club goods, which may or may not involve clientelism (as discussed in Chapter 5).[22] However, evidence suggests that in many instances, obtaining benefits through requests is inherently political. For example, when considering control variables in Figure 6.2, declared supporters are significantly more likely to be recipients of private benefits. Recall from Chapter 3 and 5 that declared support is an important mechanism of relational clientelism, in which citizens signal the credibility of their vote promises. In all specifications in the first three rows, citizens who had declared support for a victorious candidate during the 2012 campaign were significantly more likely (at the 1 or 5 percent level) – in the year after the election – to receive private benefits from a politician, private benefits from the municipality, and job assistance from a politician.[23] In addition, citizens who declared support for any candidate were significantly more likely (at the 5 percent level) to

[20] Analysis of the list experiment follows the method applied by Gonzalez-Ocantos et al. (2012), which employs OLS regressions and reports coefficients interacted with the treatment variable. Results are robust when following the methodology of Blair and Imai (2012).

[21] The Rural Clientelism Survey did not employ list experiments to examine benefits distributed in 2013. Sensitivity bias is arguably less of a concern with assistance given during non-election years, as it is not generally prohibited in Brazil.

[22] As shown in the most inclusive specifications, citizens who asked politicians for club goods were 22.1 percentage points more likely to receive them (significant at the 1 percent level).

[23] As reported in Appendix E, point estimates for the most inclusive specifications are 4.2, 3.5 and 2.8 percentage points, respectively. These specifications are similar to the declared support results presented in Chapter 5, but also include an explanatory variable about requests.

receive a campaign handout before the 2012 election;[24] however, this finding does not hold when using the list experiment. Moreover, in the hypothetical scenarios described in Section 6.1, declared supporters were significantly more likely to indicate that they would first turn to politicians when in need of help (not shown). The finding that declared supporters are more likely to receive benefits during both election and non-election periods points towards relational clientelism and suggests that constituency service cannot fully account for politicians' responsiveness to requests.

This pattern is also observed when the outcome variable is narrowed to benefits received by request. This alternative approach hones in on benefits involving citizens' demands, unlike the aforementioned outcome variables in Figure 6.2, which included both solicited and unsolicited benefits. Respondents are coded as receiving a benefit by request if they reported asking for help from a politician, and in an immediate follow-up question, reported receiving that help.[25] Consistent with relational clientelism, Figure 6.3 suggests that citizens who declared support were significantly more likely to receive benefits in this manner (regression tables are included in Appendix E). The left side of Row 1 reports that citizens who had declared support for a victorious mayoral or councilor candidate in the 2012 election were 4.6 percentage points more likely than non-declarers to receive a benefit by request in 2013 (significant at the 1 percent level). This estimate, which includes controls and municipal fixed effects, is substantial given that only 4.6 percent of all citizens received a benefit by request in 2013.[26] By contrast, citizens who had declared support for a defeated candidate in 2012 were not significantly more (or less) likely than non-declarers to receive a benefit by request.[27] Another indicator – whether a respondent frequently talks to a politician – provides further evidence of a link between responsiveness and ongoing relationships.[28] The right side of Row 1 estimates that in 2013, citizens who talked to a politician at least monthly were 11.9 percentage points more likely to receive a benefit by request than citizens who did not have such conversations; this finding is significant at the 1 percent level and includes controls and municipal fixed effects. Effects are similar but smaller in magnitude when examining handouts distributed during the 2012 election year (Row 3). Citizens who had declared support for any candidate were 3.5 percentage points more likely than non-declarers to receive a benefit

[24] The point estimate is 2 percentage points (see Appendix E). Specifications for 2012 examine declaration for *any* candidate because benefits were delivered before a winner was elected.

[25] By contrast, specifications earlier in this chapter examined the association between: (a) this first question about requests, and (b) questions in different part of the survey about whether respondents had received any benefits from politicians.

[26] Recall that 7.7 percent of all respondents requested benefits in 2013, and 59.9 percent of these requests were fulfilled.

[27] Result shown in Appendix E.

[28] This variable is included in all specifications with controls reported in Chapters 5 and 6.

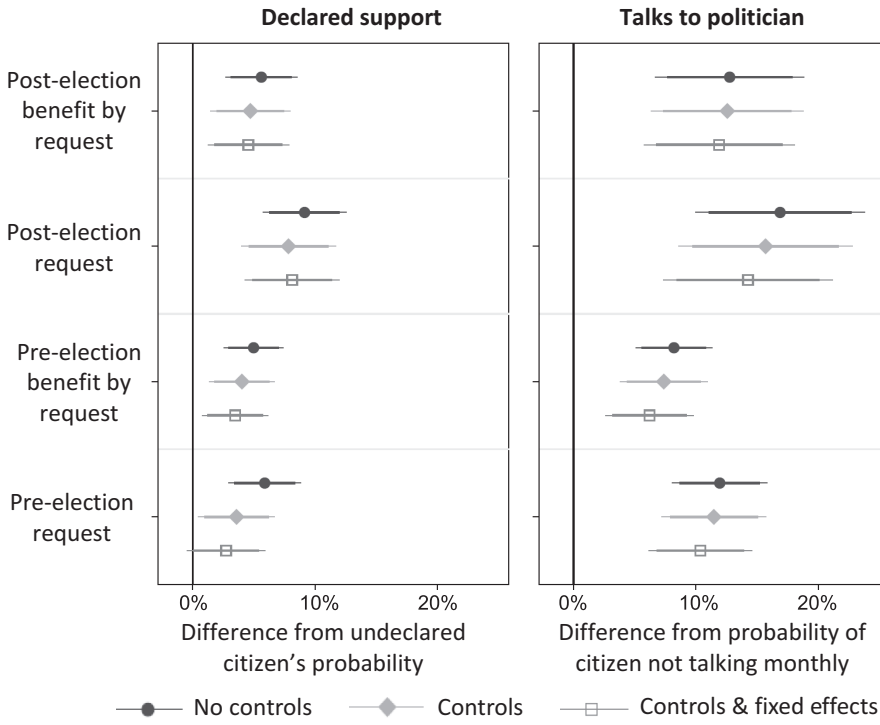

FIGURE 6.3 Citizen requests and relational clientelism, rural Northeast Brazil (2012–2013)

Note: Figure summarizes regression specifications in which outcome variables are listed on the left axis, and explanatory variables are listed on the top axis. With respect to outcome variables, "Post- (pre-) election benefit by request" coded 1 if the respondent reported asking for help from a politician in 2013 (2012), and in an immediate follow-up question, reported receiving that help; 0 otherwise. "Post- (pre-) election request" coded 1 if the respondent reported asking for help from a politician in 2013 (2012); 0 otherwise. With respect to explanatory variables, for Rows 1 and 2, "Declared support" coded 1 if declared for any victorious candidate during the 2012 campaign, and "Talks to politician" coded 1 if conversed with politician at least monthly in 2013; 0 otherwise. For Rows 3 and 4, "Declared support" coded 1 if declared for any candidate during the 2012 campaign, and "Talks to politician" coded 1 if conversed with politician at least monthly in pre-campaign period (January–June 2012). Markers correspond to regression coefficients for each listed explanatory variable. Circles shown for bivariate regressions, diamonds with controls, and squares with controls and municipal fixed effects. Thin whiskers on confidence intervals indicate 95 percent level; thicker lines indicate 90 percent level. Confidence intervals based on standard errors clustered at neighborhood level. Linear probability models are employed; results are robust using logit specifications. Appendix E reports regression tables. See Figure 6.2 for a list of included control variables. Number of observations for the most inclusive specifications are 3,225 (Row 1), 3,224 (Row 2), 3,111 (Row 3), and 3,111 (Row 4).

Source: Author's analysis of the Rural Clientelism Survey. Data collected by Gustavo Bobonis, Paul Gertler, Marco Gonzalez-Navarro, and Simeon Nichter.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316998014.006 Published online by Cambridge University Press

by request in 2012.[29] In addition, citizens who talked to a politician at least monthly before the campaign began were 6.2 percentage points more likely to receive a benefit by request in 2012, when compared to citizens without such conversations. These estimates include controls and municipal fixed effects, and are significant at the 5 and 1 percent level, respectively. Overall, these findings are again consistent with relational clientelism. Even though some citizens without ongoing exchange relationships have requests fulfilled by politicians – suggesting the coexistence of some constituency service – the key point is that citizens in such relationships are substantially more likely to receive a benefit through bottom-up demands. Among citizens who both declared support *and* frequently conversed with politicians, the probability of receiving such benefits was 19.8 percent during both years. By contrast, among citizens who met neither criteria, this probability was only 10.5 percent in the 2012 election year, and just 3.3 percent in the 2013 non-election year.[30]

A key reason why such citizens are more likely to receive benefits by request is that they are more likely to demand assistance from politicians. Indeed, qualitative evidence discussed later reveals why some interviewees refrain from asking the mayor or a councilor for help: they expect their requests to be denied because they had not supported the candidacy of an election winner. The Rural Clientelism Survey similarly provides evidence consistent with such self-selection, as declared supporters and citizens who converse with politicians are more likely to initiate requests. Row 2 in Figure 6.3 suggests that citizens who had declared support for a victorious candidate in the 2012 election were 8.1 percentage points more likely than non-declarers to request private assistance from a politician in 2013 (significant at the 1 percent level). This estimate, which includes controls and municipal fixed effects, is substantial given that only 7.7 percent of all citizens made such a request in 2013. Turning to another variable in the same specification, Row 2 also shows that citizens who talked to a politician at least monthly were 14.3 percentage points more likely to request help in 2013, when compared to citizens without such conversations (significant at the 1 percent level). Similar patterns are observed during the 2012 election year. Citizens who had declared support for any candidate were 5.9 percentage points more likely than non-declarers to request help in 2012 (significant at the 1 percent level). Row 4 reports that the significance of this relationship falls to the 5 percent level when adjusting for control variables and to the 10 percent level when also including municipal fixed effects (with point estimates of 3.6 and 2.7 percentage points, respectively). In this most inclusive specification, citizens who talked to a politician at least monthly before the campaign began were 10.4 percentage points more likely to receive a benefit

[29] The substantive effect is smaller, as 12.8 percent of all citizens received a benefit by request in 2012. The 2012 analysis examines benefits distributed before the election, so declaration for any candidate is included.

[30] Predicted probabilities employ the most inclusive specifications in Rows 1 and 3 of Figure 6.3. The 2012 (2013) specification refers to declaration for any (victorious) candidates.

by request in 2012, when compared to citizens without such conversations (significant at the 1 percent level). These findings are consistent with self-selection and provide an important reason why citizens who declare support or converse frequently with politicians disproportionately receive benefits through requests.

Interviews provide further insight about why self-selection affects citizen requests in a context with relational clientelism. Numerous Bahians attributed their aversion to requesting help to the belief that elite responsiveness is conditional on political support. For example, a homemaker complained that citizens who declared against politicians in the prior campaign are especially discriminated against. Such citizens "can't ask," she explained, because politicians will retort: "Oh you didn't vote for me, so go ask your candidate that you voted for, didn't he lose? They sneer in your face."[31] In another interview described in Chapter 5, a maid relayed a vivid example of her own traumatic experience. She had fallen while pregnant and visited the public hospital in pain. She was told no ultrasound machine was available, so checking her injury would involve traveling to a nearby larger town and paying out of pocket for an ultrasound at a private clinic. Then, she recounted: "I went to the councilor and asked for help, and he said that he couldn't help me because I hadn't voted for him." By working, she earned money to pay for the ultrasound on her own.[32] Overall, various citizens insisted there was no point of asking a politician for help unless one had clearly supported his or her candidacy. "Get this in your head," one interviewee carped, "if I didn't vote for the other side – what do I have to ask something from the other side? … I'm not going to! I'm not going to!"[33] Despite such interview evidence, however, it is important to emphasize that analyses of the Rural Clientelism Survey find no bias with respect to politicians' fulfillment of the requests they receive. For example, declared supporters are no more (or less) likely to have their requests fulfilled than undeclared citizens or declared opposers. Instead, the reason declared supporters are more likely to receive benefits through bottom-up demands is that they are far more likely to ask politicians for help. Self-selection provides an explanation for this result: citizens who expect to face discrimination do not initiate requests of politicians, so the bias is not explicitly observed.[34]

Another pattern involving citizen requests also points toward relational clientelism, thereby countering the possibility that politicians' responsiveness exclusively reflects constituency service. The vast majority of citizens with requests fulfilled by politicians report a history of supporting those politicians. More specifically, citizens who reported a fulfilled request in 2013 were asked if

[31] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 15,000 citizens (January 13, 2009).
[32] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 10,000 citizens (October 14, 2008).
[33] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 10,000 citizens (October 2, 2008).
[34] Analogously, Mares and Young (2016) discuss how negative inducements can be effective without observing punishments if citizens vote for a politician because they believe they will be punished otherwise.

they had previously voted – in the prior municipal elections of 2008 and 2012 – for the politician who recently fulfilled their request.[35] Nearly 84.5 percent of citizens with requests fulfilled by their mayor in 2013 indicated they had voted for that politician in 2012, and 82.1 percent reported voting for him or her in 2008 (if the politician had run).[36] Moreover, 80.3 percent of citizens with requests fulfilled by councilors in 2013 indicated they had voted for them in 2012, and 79.7 percent reported voting for those councilors in 2008 (if they had run).[37] These figures should be interpreted cautiously: vote choices may be hard to recall, the number of observations is relatively small, and responses may be influenced by benefits received. Notwithstanding these concerns, such findings are again consistent with relational clientelism.

In sum, requesters are significantly more likely to receive benefits during both election and non-election years – countering the possibility that politicians are either entirely unresponsive to citizen demands or are only responsive during campaigns. Furthermore, citizens who declared support for victorious candidates, or who frequently converse with politicians, disproportionately receive benefits through requests – belying the possibility that this phenomenon merely reflects constituency service. Although not explored in this chapter, additional survey evidence also points to such patterns more broadly across Brazil.[38] Despite a preponderance of qualitative and quantitative evidence that is suggestive of relational clientelism, it warrants emphasis that these regressions do not establish causality. While they control for various factors and municipal fixed effects, omitted variables bias and reverse causality cannot be ruled out. In fact, some degree of endogeneity is expected with relational clientelism because it involves a mutually reinforcing cycle: the ongoing fulfillment of citizen requests reinforces established relationships (which may originate from various sources).

This overall evidence indicates a strong empirical link between citizen requests and relational clientelism, consistent with the theoretical mechanism of screening elaborated in Chapter 3. To test the underlying logic of that mechanism, I now investigate whether citizens screen against politicians who deny their requests.

6.4 REQUESTS AND SCREENING

Both qualitative and quantitative evidence comports with the theoretical mechanism presented in Chapter 3, in which requesting benefits enables citizens

[35] Only the 2013 wave asked this question.

[36] Number of observations is 58 and 28, respectively.

[37] Number of observations is 127 and 69, respectively.

[38] Using LAPOP data, Figure 7.2 shows that Brazilians who request help are more likely to experience clientelism during campaigns. Moreover, analyses of the Online Clientelism Survey suggest requesters are more likely to receive assistance from politicians during both election and non-election years, with declared supporters as more likely recipients (not shown).

to assess the credibility of politicians' promises, thereby helping to sustain relational clientelism. In line with its logic, many Brazilians draw inferences about and screen politicians, based on whether those individuals fulfill or deny their requests.

6.4.1 Qualitative Evidence of Screening

Interviews in Bahia provide insight about how a politician's reputation for fulfilling requests often serves as a screening device. As now explored, many local politicians promise to provide assistance during future times of need, but citizens encounter both trustworthy and untrustworthy types of politicians. Given uncertainty about politicians' trustworthiness, citizens frequently screen them by refusing to vote for those who have denied their requests. This screening mechanism in turn motivates politicians to fulfill clients' requests, so as not to tarnish their reputations and lose political support.

Interviewees often provided two dramatically different characterizations of politicians, which I refer to as "trustworthy" and "untrustworthy" types. Turning first to the untrustworthy type, many citizens described skepticism toward politicians because so many make empty promises to provide help reliably during bouts of adversity. For example, one farmer claimed that "everything they promise is a lie," while another explained that "[m]any in politics promise heaven and earth and do nothing!"[39] Such distrust is consistent with a national study mentioned in Chapter 1, in which 82 percent of Brazilians reported that most candidates do not fulfill promises they make during campaigns.[40] When evaluating whether politicians will reliably fulfill requests during future times of need, leery citizens strive to avoid such untrustworthy types who "promise, promise and never fulfill."[41]

Despite expressing vitriol toward such politicians, many citizens also described trustworthy types: those who follow through on promises to fulfill requests during times of need.[42] When describing such politicians, citizens overwhelmingly focused on long-standing relationships with politicians who developed reputations for reliably helping them whenever they sought assistance. For instance, a homemaker emphasized the importance of a candidate helping for a long time and explained: "I'll always be able to count on him … I can trust in him and I am certain that he will help me."[43] She described

[39] Author's interviews, municipality in Bahia with 50,000 citizens (November 11, 2008, and November 14, 2008).

[40] National survey of 1,502 Brazilians conducted in July 2008 by research firm Vox Populi on behalf of the Associação dos Magistrados Brasileiros.

[41] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 10,000 citizens (October 2, 2008).

[42] While many interviewees described both types of politicians, some described only untrustworthy types. To provide a breadth of perspectives, each quote describing types is from a distinct respondent.

[43] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 15,000 citizens (January 13, 2009).

the "loyal" councilor for whom she voted as follows: "When you need him, you go there, speak with him, and he's there ready to help you. Like if your son is sick, and you're unable to buy the medicine … 'Here's my prescription, I'd like you to help me with the medicine, can you?' And he gave you the medicine." Politicians also recognized the link between a reputation for fulfilling a citizen's requests and trust, though they tended to focus on citizens' trust in them rather than on their own trustworthiness. For example, a mayor explained that a pattern of fulfilled requests, such as transporting one's child to the doctor or providing a coffin for a funeral, creates a "bond of trust." In turn, a citizen "stays loyal" to a politician who repeatedly fulfilled requests because "when you create a real relationship of trust with a certain candidate – a councilor or mayor – you think that he resolves all of your problems."[44]

Developing a reputation for fulfilling a citizen's requests, or more broadly for helping a citizen, typically requires ongoing interactions extending beyond an electoral campaign. Citizens tend to prefer politicians who have helped them for longer durations, often attributing this preference to a greater expectation that such politicians will help them in the future. To investigate this pattern observed during my interviews, the Rural Clientelism Survey asked citizens to choose between two hypothetical mayoral candidates who had given them the same overall amount of particularistic help but over different time spans: (1) João had provided a large amount of help to the citizen during the political campaign, and (2) Francisco had provided small amounts of help repeatedly for more time. Enumerators presented a graphic when asking this question, illustrating that both hypothetical candidates had provided the same amount of cumulative help. Respondents overwhelmingly preferred the candidate with the longer track record of more modest help: 80.2 percent chose Francisco, 17.8 percent chose João, and 2 percent indicated they would choose neither candidate. Using the same question during qualitative research, interviewees in Bahia often explained they preferred Francisco (who provided assistance for a longer duration) because he was deemed more likely to help them in the future. In a typical response, a maid explained that Francisco "is a person who I'll be certain that I can count on at any time, independent of being a campaign or not."[45] A bartender explained that Francisco "has always and he will always help you, because he has. And [João], tomorrow … he won't help you."[46] Furthermore, many citizens expressed incredulity about the promises of candidates like João who only provide help during the campaign, even if that help is substantial. For example, a fireman explained that João "forgets you" and treats you "like a dog" once elected.[47] Aside from this hypothetical vignette, other comments during various interviews similarly expressed skepticism about promises from

[44] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 30,000 citizens (December 1, 2008).
[45] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 100,000 citizens (December 22, 2008).
[46] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 10,000 citizens (October 1, 2008).
[47] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 10,000 citizens (October 4, 2008).

politicians who only start to help during a campaign. In the words of a housekeeper: "Why only during the campaign? I think that if somebody is concerned, has the goal of helping us, I think help before, not just now. … I will never trust these people. Never! My vote? I don't give it!"[48] The same interviewee explained that she chooses her mayoral candidate on the basis of being helpful for years, conveying the example of how her candidate fulfilled a transportation request when her son fractured his arm.

Interviews reveal not only how reputations are developed, but also how reputations are employed as a screening device. Citizens frequently screen politicians by refusing to vote for those who have denied their requests. For example, the bartender just mentioned explained how he would cut off support if his politician were to deny a request: "If he says no, I will already jump to the other side – 'I won't vote for you any more, I'm going to campaign for you to lose because you didn't fulfill your promise … you're a liar.'"[49] Politicians were even more direct about how citizens sever their support for politicians who fail to fulfill requests. As one councilor explained:

> "If you had 200 votes, then your family becomes 200 people. You have an obligation to serve those people, because the day that you stop serving one of those people, you've lost that vote. … If he asks for medicine, you have to give it. If he asks for food, you have to give it. If you don't give it, then you've lost that voter."[50]

Consistent with the screening logic, interviewees suggest that citizens with denied requests even turn against politicians who had helped them for years. A mayor illustrated this point by discussing a candidate who had previously given a supporter a new bicycle. Just two weeks before the election, the candidate refused to replace its flat tire. The supporter became disgruntled and then voted for a competitor who had fulfilled the tire request. More broadly, he warned that "if you make a visit, and you say to a voter that you aren't able to give, he no longer votes for you."[51] Given that politicians understand the role of citizen requests as a screening mechanism, this threat of losing support is often implicit. However, some politicians also provided examples of requesters overtly threatening to withhold support if denied. For instance, a councilor reported that "I had various voters who pressured me – 'If you don't give me, then I won't vote for you.'"[52]

Given that many citizens screen politicians based on their responsiveness to past requests, politicians often have an incentive to help those who turn to them for assistance. As discussed, developing a favorable reputation in the eyes of a voter often requires a long-term investment in which a politician helps the citizen over an extended period. By fulfilling a citizen's request, a politician

[48] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 10,000 citizens (September 25, 2008).
[49] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 10,000 citizens (October 1, 2008).
[50] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 10,000 citizens (November 24, 2008).
[51] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 15,000 citizens (January 14, 2009).
[52] Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 50,000 citizens (November 11, 2008).

protects this reputation and prevents losses in political support. A councilor explained how the risk of losing a loyal supporter contributed to his decision to fulfill a medicine request:

"If a sick person arrived … and I know this person always helped me, how could I not help? I'd say, 'Look, I'll give you the medicine, here is the money, don't tell that I gave it to you, because this is prohibited by the Electoral Court. … I knew that if I didn't give I would lose the family's vote. I had to give something."[53]

Politicians warn that even declared supporters may turn against them if their requests are denied. For example, another councilor explained that a politician can be confident she will receive votes from "quiet" declared supporters who do not request help. But if a hypothetical declared supporter named Marcelo "starts to request, then [a politician] has to help Marcelo – if not, Marcelo may switch."[54] Overall, the threat of losing political support applies pressure on many politicians to fulfill requests, so much so that several even complained of being held "hostage" by citizen requests.[55]

In sum, qualitative evidence from Bahia comports with the logic of screening elaborated in Chapter 3. Within clientelist relationships, an important function of requesting benefits is acquiring information about whether politicians are trustworthy, even though their primary purpose is typically obtaining help amidst adversity. When citizens vote, they typically lack complete information about whether a given politician is a "trustworthy" type who will follow through on promises to provide assistance during shocks. However, citizens can mitigate this information asymmetry by screening against politicians with tarnished reputations – that is, refusing to vote for those who have denied their own requests in the past. In this way, citizen requests help to alleviate the problem of politician credibility that threatens the stability of relational clientelism.

6.4.2 Quantitative Evidence of Screening

Quantitative evidence is also consistent with the screening logic, which yields several predictions about how requests affect the beliefs and actions of citizens in contexts with relational clientelism. With respect to beliefs, if politicians' responsiveness transmits information about their hidden characteristics, one would expect citizens to have worse perceptions of mayors and councilors who deny their requests. In line with this prediction, analyses show that citizens with unfulfilled requests perceive that their politicians will return less money to others in hypothetical trust games. Moreover, citizens with unfulfilled requests have worse perceptions of incumbents when asked directly in survey questions.

53 Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 50,000 citizens (November 13, 2008).
54 Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 30,000 citizens (December 3, 2008).
55 For example: Author's interview, municipality in Bahia with 10,000 citizens (November 5, 2008).

With respect to actions, if citizen requests serve a screening function, one would expect citizens whose requests are not fulfilled to be more likely to turn against politicians they had supported in the past. Consistent with this prediction, analyses suggest that citizens with unfulfilled requests are less likely to vote for politicians they voted for in a previous election. While it is important to recognize that these analyses do not establish causality, systematic differences in citizens' perceptions and behavior comport with predictions of the screening mechanism.

First, consider citizens' perceptions about politicians. In both hypothetical trust games and direct questions, citizens whose requests had been fulfilled by politicians (during election or non-election years) exhibited more positive perceptions about their politicians. In 2013, one year after Brazil's municipal elections, the Rural Clientelism Survey asked respondents how they expected the councilor for whom they voted in 2012 to behave in a series of hypothetical trust games. In each trust game, an unidentified random citizen ("Ana," for ease of exposition) from the municipality was paired with the respondent's councilor. To paraphrase, each respondent was asked: "If Ana sends your councilor R$2, and we triple that money so your councilor receives R$6, how much would your councilor send back to Ana?" As shown in Figure 6.4, the amount of money respondents expected their councilors to return differed significantly between citizens with fulfilled and unfulfilled requests. Citizens whose requests for private assistance from local politicians had been fulfilled in 2013 expected their councilor to return R$1.58, versus just R$1.17 for citizens whose requests had not been fulfilled (a difference significant at the 5 percent level). As with all analyses in this section, a limitation is that the Rural Clientelism Survey did not probe about which specific politician respondents had asked for help, as that line of inquiry was considered relatively sensitive. However, qualitative evidence about self-selection discussed earlier suggests that citizens tend to direct requests to politicians they supported in the past.

This striking difference is similarly observed when repeating the hypothetical trust games with higher values. If their councilor was sent R$4 (tripled to R$12), respondents with fulfilled requests in 2013 expected their councilor to return R$2.87, versus R$2.12 for respondents with unfulfilled requests. If their councilor was sent R$6 (tripled to R$18), respondents with fulfilled requests predicted their councilor would return R$3.80, versus R$2.91 for respondents with unfulfilled requests. And finally, if their councilor was sent R$8 (tripled to R$24), respondents with fulfilled requests predicted their councilor would return R$4.75, versus R$3.95 for respondents with unfulfilled requests. These substantial differences between citizens with fulfilled and unfulfilled requests are significant at the 5 percent level when the councilor was sent R$2, R$4, or R$6 (but not R$8).

One might be concerned that citizens with fulfilled requests systematically differ from those with unfulfilled requests, and such characteristics account for the trust game results shown in Figure 6.4. This possibility cannot be entirely

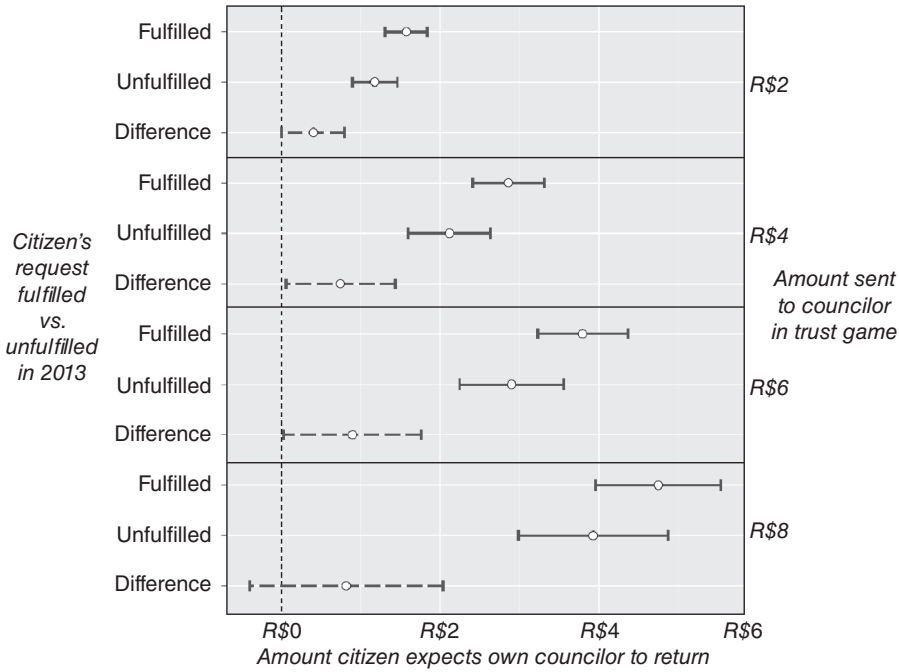

FIGURE 6.4 Perception of councilor in trust game, by fulfilled vs. unfulfilled request, rural Northeast Brazil, 2013

Note: Figure shows how much respondents expect the councilor they voted for in 2012 to return in four hypothetical trust games. Each game, with initial sent values on the right axis, paired an unidentified random citizen ("Ana," for ease of exposition) in the municipality with the respondent's councilor. To paraphrase, the first game asked: "If Ana sends your councilor R$2, and we triple that money so your councilor receives R$6, how much would your councilor send back to Ana?" "Fulfilled" indicates the mean response for the subset of respondents who had requested *and* received private assistance in 2013 from an elected politician in their municipality. "Unfulfilled" indicates the mean response for those who had requested such private assistance but *did not* receive it. "Difference" shows the difference in means (*t*-test) between "Fulfilled" and "Unfulfilled." Confidence intervals shown at 95 percent level. Analysis excludes respondents without requests in 2013. Regression tables in Appendix E show robustness to various controls and municipal fixed effects.

Source: Author's analysis of the Rural Clientelism Survey. Data collected by Gustavo Bobonis, Paul Gertler, Marco Gonzalez-Navarro, and Simeon Nichter.

ruled out; for instance, the analysis does not involve an experiment that randomly assigned whose requests were fulfilled and denied. However, regressions in Appendix E partially address this concern by confirming that citizens with unfulfilled requests expect their councilors to return significantly less money (at the 5 percent level) when controlling for various political and socioeconomic

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316998014.006 Published online by Cambridge University Press

variables as well as municipal fixed effects. Moreover, the inclusion of these controls provides additional evidence consistent with the mechanism elaborated in Chapter 5: citizens who declared support for a councilor in the prior year's municipal campaign expect their councilor to return more money (significant at the 1 percent level, except in specifications with fixed effects). More important for the present analysis, results from these hypothetical trust games are consistent with the theoretical prediction that citizens update their perceptions of politicians based on whether their requests are fulfilled.

Beyond trust games, direct questions in the Rural Clientelism Survey also provide evidence about the informational role of citizen requests. As described in Chapter 5, the 2012 wave asked respondents about several characteristics of that year's mayoral candidates.[56] Regression analyses suggest that citizens with unfulfilled requests for private assistance from incumbents perceived the incumbent mayor to be significantly less competent than those with fulfilled requests (not shown).[57] This result is important to the extent that respondents consider the performance of delivering clientelist benefits in their assessment of a politician's competence. On a four-point scale, citizens whose requests had not been fulfilled rated the incumbent mayor 0.33 points lower on competence. This finding, which includes municipal fixed effects to compare perceptions across the same mayor, is significant at the 5 percent level. One might be concerned that this relationship runs in the reverse direction, in that mayors refuse to fulfill requests of citizens who think poorly of them. To some extent mitigating this concern, the result remains significant when including various controls, including ex-ante level of satisfaction with the mayor (provided by household heads in the 2011 baseline survey).[58] The finding is also robust and comparable in magnitude when examining perceptions of the incumbent party's mayoral candidate, rather than just perceptions of the incumbent mayoral candidate. This approach expands the sample, as not all mayors were eligible or chose to run for reelection in 2012. With respect to other perceptions captured by the survey (accessibility, experience and honesty), findings are similarly negative and significant in some specifications, but are less robust. While these specifications cannot entirely rule out the influence of unobserved factors, findings nevertheless lend empirical support to the argument that citizens update their perceptions based on politicians' responsiveness to requests.

[56] Higher values indicate more favorable assessments on a four-point scale ("very good," "good," "bad" or "very bad").

[57] Requests of incumbents include those of the mayor and of city councilors. Recall that most requests are channeled to councilors, who often serve as intermediaries for the mayor. This finding is also significant if excluding requests of councilors. The survey did not ask about perceptions of councilors.

[58] Mayoral satisfaction in 2011 is unavailable at the individual level as only household heads were interviewed at baseline. Data from 2012 show a substantial correlation between views of household heads and average responses of their household members; e.g., a correlation coefficient of 0.51 for perceptions of incumbent competence (significant at the 1 percent level).

The logic of screening described earlier not only involves citizens learning about politicians' underlying characteristics through requests, but also predicts refusals to vote for politicians who denied their requests. In line with this theoretical prediction, citizens with unfulfilled requests are far more likely to switch their votes than those with fulfilled requests. The 2013 wave of the Rural Clientelism Survey asked respondents which mayoral candidate they had voted for during the 2008 and 2012 elections. To assess the prediction, consider all respondents who both requested assistance from incumbents and could have switched in 2012 – that is, those having voted for a mayoral candidate in 2008 who ran for mayor again in 2012.[59] Among this subset, only 28.8 percent of those with fulfilled requests voted against their prior choice, versus 50 percent of those with unfulfilled requests (difference significant at the 5 percent level). Figure 6.5 summarizes regression results in Appendix E, which include various controls and municipal fixed effects. As shown in the most inclusive specification, citizens with unfulfilled requests were 26.5 percentage points less likely to vote again for the same candidate (significant at the 5 percent level). In the bottom row of Figure 6.5, observe that findings are similar when examining whether respondents voted again for either the same candidate or the same party. This latter specification reveals citizens' voting consistency when their 2008 vote choice did not personally run again (e.g., second-term mayors);[60] the point estimate is 20 percentage points when including controls and municipal fixed effects ($p = 0.056$). It should be noted that endogeneity remains a possibility, even though the more inclusive specifications in Figure 6.5 include a wide range of controls and municipal fixed effects. For example, a politician may deny a request if she senses a given citizen is no longer a supporter and will thus likely switch. Although results in Figure 6.5 are not dispositive, they once again provide additional evidence consonant with the argument that citizens screen against politicians who have denied their requests.

As with interviews, quantitative evidence from rural Northeast Brazil is thus consistent with the screening logic elaborated in Chapter 3. Beyond providing sustenance, a politician's responsiveness to citizen requests transmits information about the credibility of his or her promises to help in the future. Both hypothetical trust games and direct questions reveal a robust association between politicians' responsiveness and citizens' beliefs and behavior. While causality has not been established, evidence corroborates the argument that citizens use information garnered from requests to screen untrustworthy politicians. Citizens with denied requests have worse perceptions of their politicians and are more likely to switch their votes away from candidates they have

[59] For 43.2 percent of respondents, their 2008 candidate ran again in 2012 (either as an incumbent or as a defeated candidate).

[60] For 65.3 percent of respondents, their 2008 candidate or party ran again in 2012.

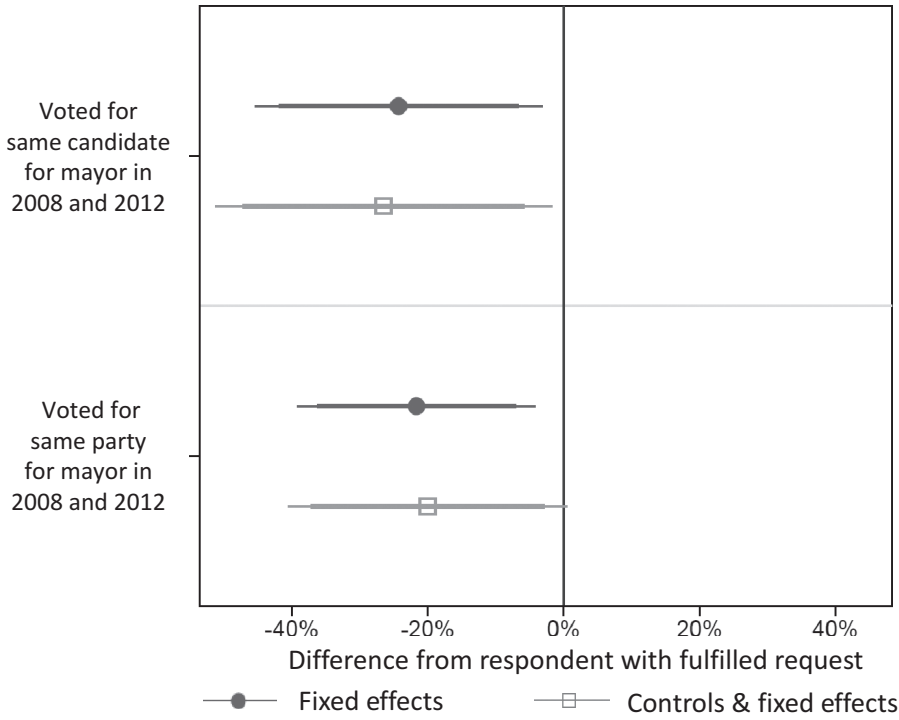

FIGURE 6.5 Consistency of voting, by unfulfilled vs fulfilled request, rural Northeast Brazil, 2012

Note: Figure summarizes regression specifications in which outcome variables are listed on the left axis. Markers correspond to regression coefficients for an explanatory variable that is coded 1 if citizen's request for private assistance of an incumbent politician was unfulfilled; 0 if it was fulfilled. Outcome variable in Row 1 (2) is coded 1 if the respondent voted for the same candidate (candidate or party) in 2008 and 2012; 0 if the respondent voted otherwise or did not vote. Analysis in Row 1 (2) excludes respondents whose chosen candidate (candidate and party) in 2008 did not re-run in 2012, as well as those who did not request assistance from incumbents. Thin whiskers on confidence intervals indicate 95 percent level; thicker whiskers indicate 90 percent level. Confidence intervals based on standard errors clustered at the neighborhood level. Linear probability models are employed; results are robust using logit specifications. Appendix E reports regression tables. Control variables, which are described in Appendix B, are: Declared support, talks with politicians, association membership, age, party supporter (DEM, PMDB, PSDB and PT dummies), gender, education, wealth, risk aversion, reciprocity, time preference, has piped water, has own cistern, and has access to other's cistern. Number of observations for the most inclusive specifications are 101 (Row 1) and 146 (Row 2).

Source: Author's analysis of the Rural Clientelism Survey. Data collected by Gustavo Bobonis, Paul Gertler, Marco Gonzalez-Navarro, and Simeon Nichter.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316998014.006 Published online by Cambridge University Press

supported in the past. By alleviating an important information asymmetry, citizen requests tackle the problem of politician credibility that threatens relational clientelism.

6.5 SUMMARY

Given their substantial vulnerability, many citizens are motivated to buttress the stability of ongoing exchange relationships, and requesting benefits serves as a key mechanism in this regard. As elaborated in Chapter 3, citizens not only procure sustenance, but also glean information about politicians' credibility when they demand help. Politicians who vow to provide assistance, only to deny requests when adversity strikes, reveal that their promises are untrustworthy. By screening against politicians who have poor track records of fulfilling their requests, citizens can thus alleviate their own concerns about opportunistic defection in ongoing exchange relationships.

Evidence from Brazil corroborates this theoretical mechanism. Although most studies focus on the supply side of clientelism, many Brazilians are not merely passive recipients of handouts. Even in Northeast Brazil, a region often depicted as having a paucity of autonomous voters, the majority of citizens who received benefits had *asked* for help, often motivated by their vulnerability. Most requests pertain to life necessities, such as water and medicine, and they spike when adversity strikes. Consistent with relational clientelism, requesters disproportionately receive help during both election and non-election years, with declared supporters as more likely recipients. Moreover, many Brazilians draw inferences and screen against politicians, based on whether they fulfilled their requests. Interviews provide insight about the screening role of requests in clientelist relationships, and regressions show that survey respondents often espouse negative perceptions of politicians who deny their requests and refuse to vote for them.

More broadly, requesting benefits is a purposive action that alleviates one side of the dual credibility problem that threatens ongoing exchange relationships. Just as declared support tackles the issue of whether citizens' promises of support are credible, requesting benefits addresses the issue of whether politicians' promises of assistance are credible. Both mechanisms reveal how citizens – who are often motivated by vulnerability in contexts with inadequate welfare states – play an instrumental role in the survival of relational clientelism.