

Votes for Survival

Across the world, many politicians deliver benefits to citizens in direct exchange for their votes. Scholars often predict the demise of this phenomenon, as it is threatened by economic development, ballot secrecy, and other daunting challenges. To explain its resilience, this book shifts attention to the demand side of exchanges. Nichter contends that citizens play a crucial but underappreciated role in the survival of *relational clientelism* – ongoing exchange relationships that extend beyond election campaigns. Citizens often undertake key actions, including declared support and requesting benefits, to sustain these relationships. As most of the world's population remains vulnerable to adverse shocks, citizens often depend on such relationships when the state fails to provide an adequate social safety net. Nichter demonstrates the critical role of citizens with fieldwork and original surveys in Brazil, as well as with comparative evidence from Argentina, Mexico, and other continents.

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Votes for Survival

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