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Citizens and Relational Clientelism

Although a recent wave of research focuses centrally on electoral clientelism – a phenomenon that exclusively distributes benefits during campaigns – this fixation contrasts sharply with most traditional literature on the topic. Generations of scholars depicted clientelism not as episodic or time-bound transactions, but rather as enduring relationships providing material benefits well beyond election periods. The remainder of this book refocuses attention on these ongoing exchange relationships – which I term "relational clientelism" – and argues that citizens often play a fundamental role in their survival. As explored in this chapter, relational clientelism is relatively resilient to numerous challenges that often undercut electoral clientelism, including those discussed in the preceding chapter. Nevertheless, the viability of long-term relationships is threatened by the possibility that citizens or politicians may engage in opportunistic defection: citizens may renege on their vote promises, and politicians may renege on their promises of material benefits. Across the world, citizens often undertake purposive actions to mitigate this dual credibility problem, and thereby buttress the stability of relational clientelism. Vulnerability frequently motivates clients to do so, as ongoing exchange relationships provide an important form of informal insurance when the state fails to provide an adequate social safety net. Despite widespread efforts to develop and expand social programs, many citizens remain vulnerable to shocks such as illness, unemployment, and drought, and they often rely on clientelist relationships with politicians who render assistance when adversity strikes.

To elaborate this argument, the present chapter distills the logic and mechanisms by which citizens fortify relational clientelism. Subsequent chapters in Part II flesh out and test the argument, building on empirical materials from Brazil. Chapter 4 reveals why vulnerability provides a powerful motivation for Brazilians to reinforce ongoing exchange relationships: many citizens are vulnerable to adverse shocks, and local politicians have both

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316998014.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

resources and discretion to provide preferential assistance to clients during times of need. After establishing their motivation, the following two chapters demonstrate how voters' choices alleviate credibility issues in relational clientelism. Chapter 5 examines how Brazilians *declare support* to signal their own credibility, and Chapter 6 investigates how they *request benefits* to screen politician credibility. As explored in Part III, these two mechanisms – by which citizens help to sustain relational clientelism – are also observed in various other countries.

3.1 DEFINITION OF RELATIONAL CLIENTELISM

Before elaborating how and why citizens sustain relational clientelism, it is essential to clarify the concept. As discussed more extensively in Chapter 1, relational clientelism has two key defining attributes: (1) it involves contingent exchange; and (2) its benefits extend beyond election campaigns. With regards to the first attribute, all forms of clientelism involve contingent exchange (Hicken 2011, 291–292; Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007, 10–11, 22) in which a citizen promises that he or she will provide (or has provided) political support. Various other modes of distributive politics, including programmatic politics, pork and constituency service, lack such contingency. With regards to the second attribute, relational clientelism delivers at least some of its material benefits during non-election periods. This timing of benefits contrasts with electoral clientelism, which distributes benefits *exclusively* during election campaigns. Two points raised in Chapter 1 regarding the second attribute deserve emphasis. First, relational clientelism need not suspend assistance to clients during campaigns. As such, to ascertain whether a campaign handout involves electoral or relational clientelism, it is necessary to investigate whether the citizen also receives contingent benefits outside of campaigns. Second, relational clientelism often involves periodic claims of assistance during adverse shocks rather than a continuous flow of benefits. Although understudied in the contemporary literature, a wide range of analyses in this book reveal patterns of relational clientelism, in which contingent benefits extend beyond campaigns.

3.2 RESILIENCE OF RELATIONAL CLIENTELISM

This book argues that citizens play an important role in the resilience of relational clientelism, because they mitigate severe threats to its survival. As described in Chapter 1, the phenomenon faces major challenges pertaining to the trustworthiness of promises, which stem from the fact that its contingent exchanges extend beyond campaigns. Both citizens and politicians in ongoing exchange relationships make promises to each other: citizens promise to provide political support, and politicians promise to help when adversity strikes. The viability of relational clientelism depends on whether these promises

are trustworthy, raising bilateral concerns about the threat of opportunistic defection. More specifically, a dual credibility problem ensues: politicians may be concerned about whether citizens' vote promises are credible, and citizens may be concerned about whether politicians will follow through on promises of assistance after they cast their votes. As explored in the present chapter, citizens in long-term exchange relationships often undertake actions that alleviate these credibility issues.

Citizens' actions are fundamental to the survival of relational clientelism, because the credibility issues just mentioned are especially complex. By comparison, electoral clientelism involves only a unilateral risk of opportunistic defection. Although politicians who engage in strategies such as vote buying may be concerned about whether citizens' vote promises are credible, citizens need not be concerned about whether politicians will follow through on their side of the exchange. The reason is that recipients receive rewards *before* they cast their ballots; by definition, electoral clientelism provides no benefits beyond campaigns. Aside from these credibility issues – which citizens help to surmount – relational clientelism is relatively resilient to numerous threats that often undercut electoral clientelism. The phenomenon is often able to withstand four broad threats to clientelism presented in Chapter 1: structural changes, institutional reforms, legal enforcement, and partisan strategies.

First, relational clientelism is relatively robust to a major structural change that has undermined electoral clientelism in recent years: economic development. Despite rising incomes in much of the world, continued vulnerability often leaves citizens reliant on ongoing exchange relationships to overcome adverse shocks. With respect to Brazil, the next chapter shows that although higher income reduces citizens' willingness to accept vote-buying offers, much of the population remains unprotected from illness, unemployment, and drought. Many residents are unable to self-insure against such shocks, and thus depend on relationships with politicians and other elites to cope with their vulnerability. Beyond Brazil, Chapter 7 examines how much of the world remains exposed to dire risks, even in countries where the standard of living has improved markedly. Although relational clientelism is not entirely immune to rising incomes, it helps citizens cope with this continued vulnerability and thus withstands pressure from economic development, a factor often corrosive for clientelism.

Second, relational clientelism is relatively resilient to institutional reforms – such as the secret ballot and compulsory voting – that have undercut electoral clientelism in many countries. As explored in Chapter 2, rigorous ballot secrecy hinders vote buying in Brazil, especially after the advent of electronic voting. But unlike many vote-buying transactions, relational clientelism does not hinge on monitoring vote choices to enforce compliance. Instead, it is often sustained in part by declared support, a mechanism in which citizens publicly display political paraphernalia during campaigns. With this action, clients transmit a costly signal that they will vote for a politician, thereby helping politicians

distinguish whose promises of political support are credible. By observing declarations, politicians who provide their clienteles with long-term assistance during adverse shocks can be more confident that these citizens are indeed delivering their promised votes. Relational clientelism is also insulated from compulsory voting, an institution that undermines turnout buying and abstention buying, because ongoing exchange relationships can flourish even where few nonvoters exist or where it is difficult to induce abstention. Moreover, the phenomenon is robust to institutional reforms that protect electoral rolls, including digitization and audits in Brazil. While such reforms inhibit voter buying, relational clientelism remains resilient because it does not employ rewards to distort voter registration.

Third, relational clientelism is able to withstand the heightened enforcement of anti-clientelism laws, which have undercut electoral clientelism in various countries. Whereas such laws typically focus on election campaigns, much of relational clientelism occurs once the campaign season is over. With respect to Brazil, the preceding chapter explored how Law 9840 led to a dramatic surge in legal enforcement against campaign handouts, with continuing reverberations after the ouster of over a thousand politicians. But regulations imposed by that legislation only take effect during election campaigns. Thus, while Law 9840 always hinders electoral clientelism (which is exclusively a campaign phenomenon), it hinders relational clientelism (which extends beyond campaigns) only a fraction of the time. Around the world, another reason for the relative resilience of relational clientelism is that it channels benefits to supporters. Citizens in ongoing exchange relationships with politicians tend to prefer that their benefactors win. Hence, unlike forms of electoral clientelism that target opposers, relational clientelism involves less risk that recipients will turn in politicians who transgress anti-clientelism laws by providing them benefits.

Fourth, relational clientelism can remain robust even if partisan strategies involve a shift towards programmatic politics. In the case of Brazil, Hagopian (2014) argues that the PT and PSDB heightened programmatic competition at the national level and adopted major reforms that reduced the supply of resources for patronage. When considering potential effects on clientelism in municipal politics, it is important to recognize that the PT and PSDB jointly constitute less than a quarter of mayors – and less than one-fifth of city councilors – across Brazil.[1] The PT won mayoral races in 11.8 percent of Brazil's municipalities in 2012, falling to just 4.6 percent in 2016 in the wake of Dilma Rousseff's impeachment and major corruption scandals (most prominently, Operação Lava Jato, or Operation Car Wash). The PSDB won just 12.9 and 14.2 percent of mayoral races in 2012 and 2016, respectively.[2]

[1] As mentioned in Chapter 1, councilors serve on the city council, the municipality's legislative branch. Each municipality has between nine and fifty-five city councilors, depending on population. Councilor and mayor elections are concurrent.

[2] Data on Brazil's municipal elections from David Fleischer's "Brazil Focus" (October 3, 2016).

And while less pork from federal and state governments might arguably reduce the pot of funds available to dole out during campaigns, relational clientelism thrives on scarcity. As discussed in the next chapter, local politicians often have substantial discretion over resources. If a mayor can only afford to provide coffins to a fraction of indigent families instead of all of them, the issue of preferential access becomes all the more salient. In line with this point, Chubb (1982, 5–6) found that the Christian Democratic machine in Palermo, Italy, continued to thrive despite resource scarcity, in large part because it distributed limited public resources to supporters in a discretionary manner. As explored in the present book, relational clientelism is alive and well in many contexts with scarce resources.

In sum, relational clientelism is relatively resilient to numerous fundamental challenges facing electoral clientelism. However, the viability of ongoing exchange relationships is threatened by a dual credibility problem, as both citizens and politicians are concerned about whether each other's promises are trustworthy. As discussed next, vulnerability motivates many citizens to undertake two important actions – declared support and requesting benefits – that alleviate these issues and thereby buttress the stability of relational clientelism.

3.3 VULNERABILITY AND RELATIONAL CLIENTELISM

Vulnerability afflicts much of the world's population, providing many citizens a powerful motivation to sustain long-term clientelist relationships that help them cope with adversity. This book's focus on vulnerability – a concept that encompasses both poverty and risk – emphasizes that both low average income and high uncertainty are detrimental to a citizen's welfare (Ligon and Schechter, 2003). Despite substantial improvements in the standard of living observed in most nations, the majority of citizens across the globe continue to face pronounced uncertainty as they remain susceptible to various adverse shocks including illness, unemployment and drought. Notwithstanding efforts to introduce and expand social insurance in many countries, programs rarely shield residents adequately from all sources of risk. A common problem is that a significant share of citizens, including informal and self-employed workers, is often excluded altogether from coverage. Furthermore, the delivery of social policy benefits frequently falls far short of what is enshrined in law, for reasons ranging from administrative constraints to political targeting (Mares and Carnes, 2009, 94). In contexts where the state fails to protect its population from adverse shocks, many citizens rely on ongoing exchange relationships with politicians as a risk-coping mechanism. In return for their political support, these relationships provide favored access to material benefits during bouts of acute deprivation. Because relational clientelism mitigates their vulnerability, these citizens are often motivated to undertake actions that bolster the survival of their long-term relationships with politicians.

To explore this important point, the next chapter focuses on vulnerability in Brazil. As a lens into the broader phenomenon of vulnerability, it examines the specific domains of healthcare, employment, and water. Many Brazilians experience shocks including catastrophic health expenditures, involuntary job loss, and recurring droughts. While the nation has expanded programs to tackle these sources of insecurity, most of the population continues to be inadequately protected from risk. To cope with vulnerability, many citizens rely on ongoing exchange relationships with local politicians, who often have resources and discretion to provide selective benefits to their clients when adversity strikes. For this reason, vulnerability often motivates Brazilians to buttress the stability of relational clientelism. As explored in Chapter 7, this pattern is by no means limited to Brazil. Across the world, many citizens experience pronounced vulnerability, and are thus similarly motivated to sustain ongoing exchange relationships.

Given that vulnerability motivates many citizens to shore up their long-term clientelist relationships, how can they achieve this objective? The present book argues that they undertake two key actions to mitigate the dual credibility problem faced by relational clientelism: citizens *declare support* to signal the trustworthiness of their own vote promises, and they *request benefits* to screen the trustworthiness of politicians' promises to help during adverse shocks. Both mechanisms are discussed in the present chapter and tested extensively in the remainder of the book. Further emphasizing the link between vulnerability and these mechanisms, Chapters 5 and 6 also show that citizens are more likely to engage in both actions when exposed to adverse shocks.

3.4 DECLARED SUPPORT

Citizens in ongoing exchange relationships often publicly declare support for politicians, and thereby alleviate an important threat to the survival of relational clientelism. These relationships involve contingent exchange, in which citizens promise to provide political support in exchange for material benefits. A crucial concern emerges: how do politicians know whether to trust citizens' vote promises, given that nearly all countries employ the secret ballot? Declared support is a key mechanism by which citizens mitigate this fundamental concern. They recognize that clientelist politicians are unlikely to provide preferential assistance during adverse shocks unless their vote promises are credible. While clients can pledge their votes privately during campaign visits, this communication may be deemed as cheap talk. After all, untrustworthy voters can make such promises insincerely to one or more candidates, even as they cast ballots for competitors. By contrast, public declarations of support enable citizens in ongoing exchange relationships to signal the credibility of their vote promises. Such declarations include placing campaign posters and flags on their homes, wearing political paraphernalia, and holding signs at rallies. To be sure, citizens who prefer that a competitor

wins also have an incentive to feign trustworthiness by declaring support. But for these citizens, who are relatively unlikely to fulfill their vote promises, declaration is often too costly: beyond any material costs, declaring publicly against one's preferences involves expressive costs, and might even undesirably influence the election. To clarify why declared support transmits meaningful information to politicians – and thus mitigates a substantial challenge to the viability of relational clientelism – this section provides the intuition behind a signaling model developed in Appendix C. With reasonable assumptions, its game-theoretical analysis demonstrates the conditions under which public declarations reveal the trustworthiness of citizens' promises of political support.

Before elaborating this mechanism, it deserves emphasis that the logic of declared support in no way suggests that all citizens who display political paraphernalia are involved in clientelism. To be sure, many citizens across the world are motivated to express political preferences for purely non-clientelist reasons; for instance, voters with strong programmatic preferences may wish to provide free advertising on behalf of their candidates. Moreover, various studies of American politics have explored how actions such as displaying campaign posters and lawn signs are important forms of democratic participation, allowing voters to convey preferences and possibly influence election outcomes (e.g., Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1995; Verba, Nie, and Kim, 1978). But for a substantial share of the population in many countries, relational clientelism provides an additional motivation, as declarations enable citizens to signal the credibility of their vote promises. Given that this section aims to elaborate the logic by which declared support reinforces ongoing exchange relationships, it focuses squarely on citizens who are in such relationships with politicians. For brevity, such citizens are referred to as "promisers"; by definition, they promise to vote for a politician in exchange for future benefits.

Asymmetric information fuels politicians' concerns about whether to trust these promises. Within the context of long-term clientelist relationships, citizens are privy to their own political preferences and vote choices, whereas politicians have inferior knowledge about these aspects of their clients. To simplify the discussion, assume there are two types of citizens involved in relational clientelism: *supporting promisers* and *opposing promisers*. Both types promise to vote for politician P in an upcoming election, in exchange for future benefits if she wins. But whereas supporting promisers prefer to vote for P, opposing promisers prefer to vote against her. These preferences may stem from some combination of partisanship, programmatic appeals, gratitude toward help received in the past, and other factors. As discussed extensively in Chapter 6, citizens in ongoing exchange relationships often prefer politicians who have longstanding track records of providing them help during bouts of adversity. In the context of Brazil, the weight of partisanship should not be overstated when examining municipal-level politics, especially given that only a minority of citizens express a preference for any party and that local groups are often

deemed more important.[3] The present analysis brackets such considerations, as it does not require identifying the nature of underlying preferences of citizens who promise votes in exchange for clientelist benefits.

To evaluate the logic of declared support, the signaling model in Appendix C makes several assumptions. Politician *P* cannot observe a citizen's vote choices and preferences, but she can observe whether the citizen publicly declares support for her during the campaign. As discussed later, extensive networks of political operatives are often employed to monitor declarations. The citizen receives expressive utility from declaring support publicly in accordance with his preferences. That is, he gains utility by declaring for his preferred candidate, but loses utility by declaring for a candidate he disfavors. By assumption, the citizen's declaration has no effect on the election outcome.[4] He incurs a material cost if he declares support. This cost includes both expenses (e.g., transportation and childcare) and opportunity costs (e.g., foregone wages) incurred when traveling to obtain declaration materials from campaign offices or to display paraphernalia at rallies. Moreover, it includes any costs of placing or removing displays of support from his residence or mode of transportation.[5] On Election Day, the citizen votes in accordance with his type. By assumption, the citizen receives expressive utility from voting, but his vote does not affect the election outcome.[6] If elected, politician *P* chooses whether to provide benefits to the citizen in exchange for having declared support for her during the campaign. It is assumed that she only has resources to provide these benefits if she wins the election. Although the logic of declared support does not require the existence of punishments, the analysis considers an additional possibility: if politician *P* loses, the elected opposition candidate punishes citizens who declared for *P* during the campaign.

Given these assumptions, the signaling model suggests that under reasonable conditions, declared support provides meaningful information about whether

[3] A third of respondents expressed a preference for any party in the Brazil 2010 Panel Study, as did one-tenth of citizens in the Rural Clientelism Survey. Most politicians I interviewed in the interior of Bahia indicated their party was not important to them; the vast majority said they received no help from their party during municipal campaigns, with many saying they simply needed a party label to run and did not know about their party's ideology. The PT was an exception but, as noted earlier, won just 4.6 percent of mayoral seats across Brazil in 2016.

[4] As with expressive utility, such an election influence would increase the cost of declaring against one's preferences. While only expressive utility is examined formally, both factors can render declaration a more informative signal.

[5] For example, a computer technician in Bahia explained he avoided attending or declaring at rallies because "my time is sacred," and a temporary worker noted difficulties in removing campaign bumper stickers and repainting his home's wall. Author's interviews, municipalities in Bahia with 80,000 and 10,000 citizens, respectively (November 20, 2008, and October 22, 2008).

[6] This assumption follows other models of clientelism (e.g., Gans-Morse et al., 2014; Morgan and Várdy, 2012; Nichter, 2008; Stokes, 2005). Morgan and Várdy (2012) provide a formal defense of focusing only on expressive utility. Relaxing this assumption yields a similar logic of declared support with added complexity.

a citizen in an ongoing exchange relationship will fulfill his vote promises. More specifically, it reveals the contextual conditions needed for "separating equilibria," in which only promisers who actually prefer that politician *P* wins will declare support. The underlying intuition is that for declarations to play an effective signaling role, supporting promisers should declare and opposing promisers should *not* declare. A supporting promiser will declare for politician *P* if the utility of declaring (in which case *P* provides a reward if elected) is weakly greater than the utility of not declaring (in which case *P* does not provide a reward). In addition, an opposing promiser will decide *not* to declare for *P* if the utility of not declaring is weakly greater than the utility of declaring. In such settings, declarers' vote promises are credible – even with rigorous ballot secrecy – whereas non-declarers' vote promises are not.

Beyond showing how declared support can transmit information about the trustworthiness of vote promises, the signaling model also unpacks effects of several factors. First, it shows that citizens' political preferences drive the separation between types: whereas declaring for politician *P* yields expressive utility for a supporting promiser, it yields expressive disutility for an opposing promiser. Furthermore, it suggests when declaration is a more informative signal. If the politician observes a citizen declaring, more information is conveyed about the citizen's type when the clientelist reward is small, when the declaration cost is large, when the politician's probability of victory is small, and when any clientelist punishments are large. Overall, the game-theoretic analysis in Appendix C reveals the conditions under which declared support enables citizens to signal the credibility of their vote promises, thereby mitigating a key threat to the viability of relational clientelism.[7] As discussed earlier, these declarations serve as a costly signal: citizens lose utility by declaring for candidates they disfavor, they incur expenses and opportunity costs, and in some settings they may undesirably affect the election or face punishments if their declared candidate is defeated.

This book examines the logic of declared support extensively, building on empirical materials from various countries. Chapter 5 focuses on the mechanism in Brazil, where many interviewed politicians expressed concerns about the credibility of citizens' vote promises. Declarations enable many Brazilians in long-term clientelist relationships to assuage such concerns. Consistent with the signaling model, qualitative and quantitative evidence suggests that declared support conveys meaningful information, as Brazilians overwhelmingly vote and hold perceptions in accordance with their declarations. Furthermore, analyses show a robust link between declared support and relational clientelism: for example, citizens who display support publicly for victorious candidates are significantly more likely to receive benefits during

[7] The model also reveals that the mechanism is ineffective if the conditions just described are too extreme, as a "pooling" equilibrium is expected in which nobody declares. It would also be uninformative in a pooling equilibrium in which all citizen types declare.

both election and non-election years. Evidence from Brazil also sheds light on the dense networks of operatives that facilitate the monitoring of citizens' public displays of political paraphernalia. In the Rural Clientelism Survey, citizens received an average of 4.6 visits to their homes by politicians and their representatives during the 2012 municipal campaign, with 81.3 percent of respondents receiving at least one such visit.[8] Candidates for city council, who tend to have especially frequent interactions with voters, often monitor declarations on behalf of allied mayoral candidates. Overall, nearly two-thirds of survey respondents believed others would remember who declared support with flags during the 2012 campaign – as did almost three-fourths of citizens who declared support in that manner.[9] In Chapter 7, further evidence from Argentina, Mexico, Ghana, Lebanon, and Yemen suggest that the mechanism of declared support is observed well beyond Brazil.

The signaling logic of declared support just described is an important mechanism by which many citizens help to sustain relational clientelism. Another important consideration is the influence of numerous factors, including politicians' monitoring ability and likelihood of electoral victory, on citizens' choices to declare support. To explore such effects, I developed a complementary model in collaboration with Salvatore Nunnari. Unlike the signaling model's use of game theory to investigate asymmetric information, Nichter and Nunnari (2017) employ decision theory with perfect information to analyze the effects of various factors. Our model assumes that voters' declaration choices are based on expected utility, which is shaped by: their political preferences towards the victorious candidate; any post-election rewards or punishments for declaring; material and social costs of declaring; expressive utility from declaring; and any effect of declarations on the election outcome.[10] Given such assumptions, formal analysis yields predictions about when more citizens will choose to declare support for clientelist politicians; for example, when such politicians offer larger material rewards, can monitor declarations effectively, and are preferred on programmatic or ideological grounds. These conditions also decrease the number of citizens who remain undeclared or declare support for non-clientelist candidates. The model also offers various other predictions regarding electoral competition, competitive clientelism, and punishments. For example, more citizens are expected to declare for a clientelist candidate who is heavily favored to win the election.[11] As discussed in Chapter 5, evidence not only corroborates the signaling logic presented earlier but is also largely

[8] $N = 3{,}107$.

[9] $N = 3{,}476$ for overall citizens.

[10] Theoretical predictions in Nichter and Nunnari (2017) are identical if declarations have no effect on the election outcome.

[11] With this factor, effects on non-declarations and declarations for non-clientelist candidates depend on parameter values. As with signaling, the complementary model suggests that under specific conditions, some declarations would not represent genuine political preferences (e.g., if a clientelist candidate is heavily favored to win or provides very large post-election rewards).

consistent with this complementary model's predictions about how numerous contextual factors affect declared support.

While voters' choices are thus multifaceted, the overarching point is that declared support is a citizen mechanism that helps to sustain relational clientelism. Even with rigorous ballot secrecy, citizens can signal the credibility of their vote promises through public displays of political support. By declaring support, citizens who rely on ongoing exchange relationships to cope with vulnerability mitigate politicians' concerns about their trustworthiness.

3.5 REQUESTING BENEFITS

Beyond declared support, citizens in ongoing exchange relationships also request benefits, an action that mitigates another fundamental threat to the survival of relational clientelism. Within these long-term relationships, politicians vow to their clients that they will provide help during bouts of hardship, and thereby alleviate their vulnerability. But such promises of post-election benefits raise the specter of opportunistic defection, as unscrupulous politicians can renege after citizens cast their votes. How do voters in clientelist relationships know whether to trust politicians' promises to provide assistance during adverse shocks? Citizen requests are a key mechanism to alleviate such concerns about politician credibility. Voters in ongoing exchange relationships glean valuable information by observing whether entrusted politicians fulfill their own requests. Given that these politicians had vowed to provide assistance, denying clients' requests conveys that such promises are untrustworthy. Within relational clientelism, citizens thus observe politicians' responsiveness to their own demands and terminate relationships with those who reveal – through denied requests – that they are unlikely to help when adverse shocks strike. In other words, citizens screen politicians based on their track record of fulfilling requests.

This focus on citizen requests warrants discussion, as it contrasts starkly with the literature's predominant focus on elite offers of clientelist benefits. As examined in Chapter 1, increased voter autonomy in much of the world has heightened citizens' ability to influence clientelism, with many contingent exchanges now initiated by bottom-up demands. Even in rural Northeast Brazil, an area not traditionally known for substantial voter autonomy, Chapter 6 shows that the majority of citizens who receive handouts had *asked* politicians for help. And citizen requests are widely observed across the world, as explored in Chapter 7. Although relatively understudied, this book argues that such demands have important consequences because citizen requests alleviate the problem of politician credibility that otherwise threatens the viability of relational clientelism.

Citizens' concerns about politician credibility are fueled by an important information asymmetry inherent in ongoing exchange relationships. Politicians are more informed than citizens about whether they are the "type" of politician

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316998014.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

who will fulfill requests reliably. An established literature demonstrates how individuals or firms can learn about the qualities of others in contexts with such asymmetric information (e.g., Spence, 1973; Stiglitz, 1975). Whereas signaling (e.g., through declared support) involves an informed party as the first mover, citizen requests involve screening in which an uninformed party moves first. In the present discussion, the citizen is referred to as "uninformed" because he lacks information about the politician's type, which the politician herself knows. The uninformed citizen can acquire private information and combat adverse selection by employing a "screening device," which sorts politicians of different qualities because they respond in distinct ways (Stiglitz, 1975, 283).

At the outset, it deserves emphasis that while screening politicians is an important function of citizen requests, it is by no means their exclusive function. When a citizen asks a politician for medicine for a sick child or for water during a drought, acquiring information can hardly be considered the primary objective. Nevertheless, the politician's response transmits information to the requester; that is, requests play a screening role as a "by-product" of their principal activity of obtaining needed goods and services. The logic is analogous to Stiglitz's (1975, 294) argument about the screening role of education: it reveals characteristics of citizens that affect productivity, as "a natural by-product" of its principal activity of teaching and guiding students.

The present discussion of citizen requests builds on existing formal work, which suggests that *reputation* can serve as a screening device in a variety of contexts ranging from credit to employment (Stiglitz and Weiss, 1983; Weigelt and Camerer, 1988).[12] When an uninformed party moves first, it can screen others by refusing to participate with individuals who have poor reputations.[13] For example, a bank does not know whether an entrepreneur is an honest type who repays debts, but it can refuse credit to borrowers who previously reneged on its loans. In turn, this threat that misbehavior will terminate a relationship motivates borrowers to repay their loans (Stiglitz and Weiss, 1983, 912; Weigelt and Camerer, 1988, 451; Hoff and Stiglitz, 1990, 240).

The logic of reputation as a screening device also extends to citizen requests, which provide (imperfect) information about politicians' hidden characteristics. Consider an ongoing exchange relationship in which a politician promises to provide assistance to her client during adverse shocks. As mentioned, an information asymmetry arises because the politician has private information about whether she will reliably fulfill that promise. First, the politician has superior information about discretionary resources available to assist clients, which may stem from both official and unofficial sources. Second, she is

[12] An individual's reputation can be defined formally as "the probability that she has a certain privately observed type or will take a certain action" and can be inferred from previous actions (Camerer, 2003, 445; Weigelt and Camerer, 1988, 443).

[13] Weigelt and Camerer (1988) expound on how reputations can serve as a screening mechanism. Their work builds on Stiglitz and Weiss (1983), which focuses primarily on identical types of agents but emphasizes findings are strengthened when examining different types.

more knowledgeable about what share of these available discretionary funds she will allocate to providing such assistance, as opposed to alternative uses including her own consumption. And third, the politician is more informed about the number of citizens she has promised to help after the election. For sake of exposition, assume there is a "trustworthy" type of politician, who only promises as much future assistance as she can reliably fulfill, and an "untrustworthy" type of politician, who makes empty promises of future help in order to attract political support. Although the politician knows her own type, the citizen is uncertain about this private information. Adverse selection is a concern because untrustworthy types are especially likely to promise future assistance, given that they do so without considering the feasibility of fulfilling promises. Despite a politician's hidden characteristics, she may have a reputation for acting "trustworthy" in the eyes of a particular citizen if she always fulfills that citizen's requests – and in turn, the citizen may infer her type based on this history of actions (Weigelt and Camerer, 1988, 444). Part of a politician's reputation is specific to a given citizen, as it is established through years of providing private help during shocks, often in a discreet manner given scarce resources and the risk of stoking others' demands. In addition, there is also a collective element of a politician's reputation, given that voters may report to their family and friends about help they receive during times of need.

Within the context of ongoing exchange relationships, citizens screen politicians based on their reputations for fulfilling requests. More specifically, they terminate their relationships with politicians who have tarnished reputations, by refusing to vote for them. Citizens deem such politicians to be untrustworthy types, as they reneged on past promises to provide assistance during adverse shocks. In light of the asymmetric information described earlier, citizens use a politician's reputation for fulfilling requests as a screening device to differentiate between trustworthy and untrustworthy types. In turn, the threat of losing political support induces politicians to fulfill requests of citizens with whom they have ongoing relationships. This form of screening can be understood as an analogue to reputation screening in credit markets, by which some lenders "use the threat of cutting off credit to induce desired borrower behavior ... borrowers want to avoid defaulting on loans because to do so tarnishes their reputation and curtails their access to future loans" (Hoff and Stiglitz, 1990, 240; see also Stiglitz and Weiss, 1983).

This important screening role of requests is observed over the course of long-term clientelist relationships. Requests are common when clients experience adverse shocks, such as unemployment, illness, or drought, which can strike at any moment. During such bouts of acute deprivation, politicians who fulfill their clients' requests provide crucial sustenance and also transmit valuable information about their own credibility. In the absence of shocks, citizens involved in relational clientelism typically refrain from making clientelist requests. A key reason is that politicians have limited resources, so even trustworthy types are constrained in their cumulative responsiveness to each client's

demands. Voters thus face intertemporal tradeoffs between clientelist assistance received in the present and in the future. By conserving requests until they experience shocks, citizens heighten the extent to which relational clientelism can mitigate their vulnerability in situations of dire need. However, if citizens in clientelist relationships do not request help for years, they face a countervailing incentive to initiate demands more promptly. Their confidence in politicians' responsiveness gradually erodes, as reputations for fulfilling requests decay over time if no demands are made. For screening purposes, clients in such circumstances are thus motivated to test the continued responsiveness of their politicians, especially at times when they are expected to provide political support. As such, some citizens in ongoing exchange relationships demand small favors during electoral campaigns, even in the absence of adverse shocks.

The screening logic of citizen requests also provides an explanation for an intriguing paradox discussed in Chapter 1. If clientelism is merely a top-down phenomenon involving elite targeting, as most studies suggest, then why do politicians expend scarce resources to target citizens who are already persuaded and mobilized? The present book argues that voting supporters often receive benefits not because they are targeted, but instead because they demand them. As described earlier, politicians who employ relational clientelism face pressure to fulfill clients' requests – during both election and non-election periods – because otherwise these citizens will terminate the relationship and refuse to vote for them. Within the context of relational clientelism, denying supporters' requests tarnishes a politician's reputation, and thereby undermines ongoing exchange relationships that take years to cultivate.

A complementary model that I developed with Michael Peress provides further insight into why clientelist politicians are especially responsive to their own supporters' requests. While the model adopts a distinct focus and different assumptions, its key predictions are consistent with the logic of screening. Unlike the discussion earlier, Nichter and Peress (2016) focus exclusively on campaigns, assume perfect information, and assume without elaboration that citizens vote against politicians who deny their requests. Instead, we examine a two-stage model: citizens first request benefits from a clientelist politician, who then decides which requests to fulfill. Using backward induction, the analysis first evaluates how the politician responds to requests. Given limited resources, fulfilling the cheapest requests secures the most votes. Foreseeing this logic, citizens recognize that the politician will fulfill demands that are sufficiently small. The politician's supporters thereby submit relatively small requests because they are easily placated, whereas opposers are unwilling to vote for the politician unless their larger demands are met. As a consequence, our model predicts that the clientelist politician will predominantly fulfill her own supporters' demands. This key prediction accords with the screening logic elaborated in the present chapter, which provides an underlying explanation for the responsiveness of clientelist politicians to supporters' requests. In addition, Nichter and Peress (2016) predict that politicians fulfill more requests when

citizens place greater weight on handouts relative to ideological preferences, which may be especially likely in contexts with substantial vulnerability.[14]

Stepping back, requesting benefits provides another important mechanism by which citizens buttress the stability of relational clientelism. Citizens involved in ongoing exchange relationships are often concerned about the trustworthiness of their politicians' promises to help during adverse shocks. Clients' demands not only solicit crucial sustenance, but also provide valuable information about politicians' responsiveness. Politicians who promise to provide assistance, only to deny requests when adversity strikes, tarnish their own reputations. Clients often sever ties with such politicians and refuse to vote for them. By screening out those with poor track records of fulfilling their requests, citizens alleviate concerns about whether their political patrons will follow through on promises to provide benefits during future shocks.

3.6 SUMMARY

Citizens play a crucial role in the survival of relational clientelism. Unlike vote buying and other forms of electoral clientelism, these ongoing exchange relationships provide contingent benefits that extend beyond campaigns. The remainder of this book expounds on how and why citizens help to sustain relational clientelism, fleshing out and testing the logic and mechanisms distilled in this chapter. To this end, the next three chapters of Part II analyze evidence from Brazil. Chapter 4 examines why vulnerability motivates many Brazilians to undertake actions to fortify their long-term clientelist relationships. Much of the nation's population remains exposed to various adverse shocks, and many local politicians have substantial resources and discretion to smooth these shocks by providing selective benefits to clients. Having established citizens' motivation, Chapter 5 then explores declared support, an important mechanism by which clients in ongoing exchange relationships alleviate concerns about whether their own vote promises are trustworthy. Next, Chapter 6 investigates citizen requests, a key mechanism by which many Brazilians mitigate their own concerns about whether to trust politicians' promises to help during adverse shocks. This important role of citizens in the survival of relational clientelism is by no means limited to Brazil. As shown in Part III, vulnerability is dire across most of the world, and many citizens in various countries engage in both of these mechanisms that bolster ongoing exchange relationships. The book's concluding chapter emphasizes that relational clientelism is an inferior substitute for an adequate welfare state, and underscores that citizens' purposive actions to sustain the phenomenon have important implications for both democracy and development.

[14] The model also predicts that clientelist politicians with larger budgets fulfill more requests.