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# Buying, Expropriating, and Stealing Votes

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## Keywords

clientelism, voter intimidation, brokers, elections, democratization, ballot  
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## Abstract

In elections around the world, large numbers of voters are influenced by promises or threats that are contingent on how they vote. Recently, the political science literature has made considerable progress in disaggregating clientelism along two dimensions: first, in recognizing the diversity of actors working as brokers, and second, in conceptualizing and disaggregating types of clientelism based on positive and negative inducements of different forms. In this review, we discuss recent findings explaining variation in the mix of clientelistic strategies across countries, regions, and individuals and identify a few areas for future progress, particularly in explaining variation in targeting of inducements by politicians on different types of voters.

## INTRODUCTION

In elections around the world, voters are influenced by threats, promises, or both. Throughout Africa, for example, 48% of voters surveyed in 33 countries during the fifth round of the Afrobarometer survey reported fearing violence during elections, and 16% reported being offered money or goods in exchange for their vote during the last election. Across Latin America, 15% of voters surveyed during the 2010 and 2012 rounds of the Americas Barometer reported that they had been offered something in exchange for their vote. These private inducements infringe on the rights of individuals and have substantial negative effects on the ability of elections to hold elected politicians accountable to citizens. Clientelism has been studied extensively by political scientists since the 1970s. Recently, however, scholars have made progress on several outstanding questions examining when clientelism is used and how it works.

Our review addresses two main areas of recent progress. First, there has been an increasing focus on understanding brokers, the actors who mediate in the relationship between candidates and voters. As a result, we now know more about who brokers are, how they exert power over voters, and what incentives they respond to. This progress has been driven by an increase in theory focusing on the relationship between brokers and their politician principals (Larreguy 2012, Stokes et al. 2013), as well as new data from surveys and qualitative interviews with brokers and the politicians who employ them (Finan & Schechter 2012).

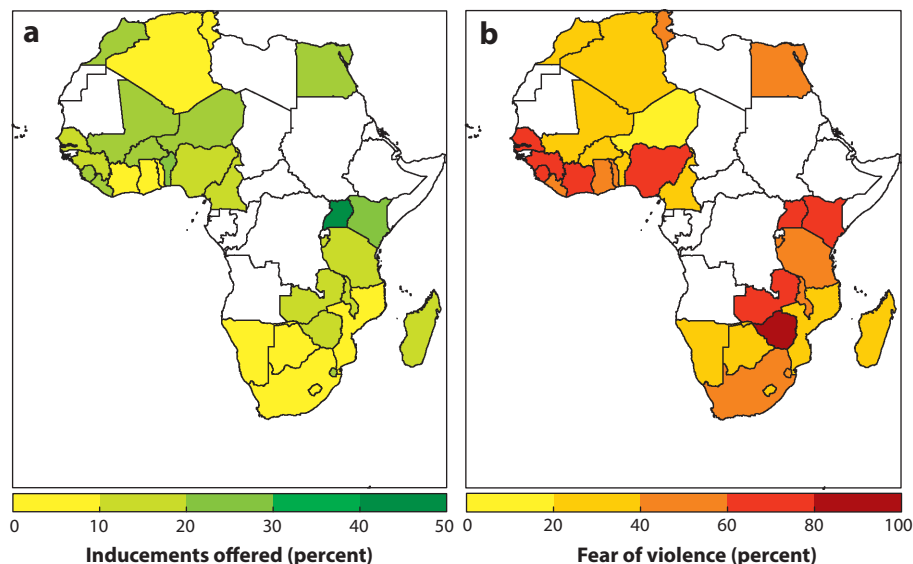
Second, after a long period of focus on only vote buying, there has been a renewed interest in the variety of forms of clientelism. In recent years, studies have examined the use of coercive strategies that include threats of physical and economic sanctions. Recent studies have also paid significant attention to differentiating among the goods that are exchanged as part of clientelistic strategies, as well as distinguishing one-off payments from offers of more durable goods, such as land or access to long-term entitlements. There is increasing evidence and theoretical clarity around the heterogeneity of strategies that play a role in electoral mobilization. Explaining how politicians substitute between different forms of clientelism will remain an important area of methodological and theoretical innovation.

In this article, we review the recent literature that explains the mix of clientelistic strategies, and particularly the mix between positive and negative strategies. We begin by conceptualizing the difference between positive and negative strategies. Next, we discuss the electoral strategies that are captured under the term electoral clientelism with the aim of illustrating the variation in types of strategies and brokers.

To motivate this discussion, we begin by presenting a few empirical facts on the distribution of positive and negative strategies during elections, using Afrobarometer data. The maps in **Figure 1** show the proportion of citizens surveyed by country who reported (*a*) being offered a good or favor in exchange for their vote or (*b*) being afraid of violence during elections.

Two trends are apparent from these maps. First, much larger proportions of respondents report fear of negative inducements than offers of positive inducements. Second, although there is an overall positive correlation between the proportion of respondents who report being exposed to positive and negative inducements ( $r = 0.26$ ), it is not strong, and in the West African region it is actually negative ( $r = -0.28$ ). The literature has only begun to explore the heterogeneity in the use of these and other positive and negative electoral inducements.

We analyze two primary questions posed by the recent literature examining factors that influence the mix of clientelistic strategies. The first question pertains to the extent to which variation in context, particularly institutional frameworks and economic conditions, leads to different mixes of clientelistic strategies. There is growing evidence that electoral rules, such as the level of ballot secrecy, the punishment structure for different illicit strategies, and whether a



**Figure 1**

The maps plot responses (by country) to two Afrobarometer questions about the use of positive and negative inducements in elections. (a) “During the last national election, how often, if ever did a candidate or someone from a political party offer you something, like food or a gift or money, in return for your vote?” The color on the map represents the proportion of respondents who responded that they had been offered an inducement at least once in intervals of 10%, with yellow representing <10%, light green 10–20%, green 20–30%, dark green 30–40%, and the darkest green 40–50% (in Uganda, the country with the most reported positive inducements, 41% of respondents reported being offered a gift or money). (b) “During election campaigns in this country, how much do you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence?” The colors represent the proportion of respondents who reported being afraid of violence during elections in intervals of 20%, with yellow representing <20% of respondents, orange 20–40%, dark orange 40–60%, light red 60–80%, and dark red >80%.

system is majoritarian or proportional representation (PR), are related to variation in the overall level of clientelism and in whether positive or negative strategies are used.

A second question pertains to the characteristics of voters that increase their likelihood of experiencing or responding to illicit strategies. Such individual-level variables include not only socioeconomic status and gender, but also norms and psychological factors such as reciprocity and emotions. Such factors may decrease the cost of a citizen’s vote or increase the probability of her responding to threats with submission. Studies have identified factors that make it more likely that different types of citizens experience various strategies, and some studies have begun to empirically test which types of strategies are more effective with which types of citizens.

## DEFINITIONS

We begin by clarifying our definition of clientelism. We are talking about elections where politicians work, typically through brokers, to give voters individual incentives to vote in a particular way. This definition excludes promises of benefits that do not depend on how an individual or a small group of individuals personally vote. It also excludes fraud, which involves circumventing rather than influencing voters’ choices. Ultimately, we draw on Hicken’s (2011) definition of

clientelism as chains of dyadic relationships between politicians, brokers, and voters. Behavior in clientelistic relationships is contingent or “quid pro quo”—a contract for an exchange of electoral support by an agent for some agreed behavior by the principal.

Most past scholars of clientelism have not differentiated between the use of positive and negative inducements to motivate voters, although this distinction is critical. Positive inducements, a category that includes vote buying, involve offers of rewards such as money, goods, or favors. Negative inducements include the threat of economic or physical sanctions for an individual’s voting behavior. Such negative inducements include cutting voters off from benefits on which they depend, removing them from their land or residences, or violence, including assault and death.

Both positive and negative inducements are hard to measure. Both are usually illicit. In the case of positive inducements, both parties have an incentive to hide the transaction, particularly where vote buying or selling is a criminal offense. In the case of negative inducements, there is also a negative relationship between effectiveness and visibility that obscures true patterns of electoral coercion. The most effective threats never result in actual punishments because they convince voters to change their behavior and the threatened punishments never need to be meted out. This implies that a situation in which no one is punished could be totally noncoercive or totally coercive, and the level of coercion can only be discerned through the beliefs of voters about what would have happened if they had voted differently.

Voter expectations or beliefs also matter for distinguishing between positive and negative strategies. If a voter does not expect to receive a sack of grain in the week before an election, and then he does receive it in exchange for a promise to vote for a specific party, the grain serves as a positive inducement. However, if he expects to receive it or feels entitled to it, then an effort to use the grain to incentivize his vote would take the form of a negative inducement, a threat to withhold the grain if he votes for the principal’s nonpreferred party. Although this difference is quite subtle (and again hard to measure without relying on micro-level measures of voters’ beliefs and expectations), it may impact behavior. There is significant evidence that individuals think about gains and losses in very different ways. Being in the domain of gains (positive inducements) rather than losses (negative inducements) has implications for how individuals think about risk and how much utility they derive from various options (Kahneman & Tversky 1979), including on political issues such as taxation (Martin 2014).

In general, the clientelism literature has elided the distinction between positive and negative electoral strategies. In the case of access to entitlements or assets such as welfare transfers, jobs, or land, a deeper understanding of voters’ expectations or reference points could explain why these are such effective patronage tools. Threatening to take away a job that a voter expects to keep for years may be a much more powerful inducement than offering to give him the same job. To date, jobs and welfare have typically been conceptualized as positive inducements that voters can take or leave.<sup>1</sup>

Another fundamental difference between positive and negative strategies may be in whether the incentive worsens a voter’s baseline condition, that is, his condition if he rejects the offer of the broker. When a broker offers a vote-buying proposal—“If you vote for me, you get X, and if you don’t, you get nothing”—a voter can either accept it or turn it down. The voter’s status quo is not affected by turning down the offer. Coercion, however, can be used to push a voter into accepting a deal to which he would not otherwise consent (Wertheimer 1987). For example, threatening to

<sup>1</sup>The work of Robinson & Verdier (2013) is an important exception. They analyze jobs as a clientelistic transfer that helps overcome commitment problems between patrons and clients because it generates rents over time and is selective and reversible. However, they still consider the potential loss of a client’s job not as a punishment but simply as the termination of a positive inducement.

**Table 1** Variation in clientelistic strategies depending on types of brokers and types of strategies

Type of broker	Type of inducement		Examples
	Positive	Negative	
Partisan brokers	Money, goods, or favors	Violence	Stokes et al. 2013
State employees	Administrative favors	Administrative obstruction and punishment	Weitz-Shapiro 2012, Oliveros 2013, Mares & Young 2015, Larreguy et al. 2014
Civil society and religious organizations	Social benefits, goods and services	Social exclusion, exclusion from benefits	Holland & Palmer-Rubin 2015, Sperber 2014, O'Brien 1975
Private actors (employers)	Monetary transfers and selective benefits, loans	Layoffs and exclusion from benefits	Mares 2015, Mares et al. 2015, Hertel-Fernandez 2015
Ethnic leaders	Communitarian ethos ("deference patterns" in Lemarchand 1972), access to social insurance	Social exclusion, violence	Lemarchand 1972, van de Walle 2007, Koter 2013, Baldwin 2014
Gangs and militias	Money	Violence	Anderson 2002, LeBas 2013, Acemoglu et al. 2013, Garcia-Sanchez et al. 2015

beat up citizens who fail to turn out to vote (regardless of whether or not those citizens consented to be clients of the party) can be conceptualized as reducing the attractiveness of the status quo, or outside options, of those voters. Strategies premised on coercion therefore have more severe normative implications than consensual exchanges of positive inducements for votes.

## THE MULTIDIMENSIONALITY OF CLIENTELISM: VARIETY OF BROKERS AND STRATEGIES

In its first iterations, the literature on electoral clientelism established conceptual differences between programmatic competition—in which candidates vie for votes on the basis of programmatic appeals—and clientelistic competition, which is characterized by offers of goods, money or votes (Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007). "Electoral clientelism" remains, however, a highly aggregated category. More recent studies examining clientelistic exchanges have disaggregated the middlemen deployed by candidates, as well as the strategies with which these candidates appeal to voters. We begin by considering the conceptual differentiation proposed by recent studies.

**Table 1** classifies the clientelistic practices that have been documented in recent research. We disaggregate electoral clientelism along two dimensions. On the horizontal dimension, we distinguish between positive and negative inducements. The vertical axis in **Table 1** disaggregates the brokers deployed by politicians.

A large proportion of the foundational and recent literature on electoral clientelism has examined the provision of positive inducements by partisan brokers (Gingerich & Medina 2013, Gingerich 2013, Krishna 2007, Stokes et al. 2013, Szwarcberg 2012a,b, Zarazaga 2014a,b). Stokes (2013, p. 100) defines partisan brokers as "locally embedded *agents of the machine* [who] command the knowledge of voter preferences and *partisan inclinations* needed" (emphasis added). Finan & Schechter (2012, p. 867) describe these political operatives as "village leaders, professionals in politics and the backbone of the election campaign [...] who know their fellow villagers well."

State employees comprise an important type of broker that can be mobilized by candidates. Although earlier studies of electoral clientelism have neglected their importance, state employees

occupy a central role in recent studies of political clientelism. Examples of state employees who can be deployed at election time include policemen, tax collectors, and employees of the local social policy administration. These brokers can influence the electoral choices of voters through either positive or negative inducements. They can provide favors, including assistance with administrative matters such as certificates of land ownership or various business licenses. Administrators of social policy programs (such as income support and housing assistance) can threaten to cut off benefits if the recipients make the incorrect electoral choice, and law-enforcement officers can threaten to investigate and punish infractions or offer to look the other way.

The re-examination of the experience of electoral clientelism in first-wave democratizers during the 19th century and recent studies of electoral clientelism in Eastern Europe have shown that in these contexts the incidence of clientelistic exchanges mediated by state brokers is higher than the offer of money or goods by partisan-mediated brokers. The most entrenched electoral problems in 19th-century France were patronage and the intimidation of voters by state employees, or *pression gouvernementale* (Mares 2015). Several studies using list experiments to measure the incidence of various clientelistic strategies in three Eastern European countries—Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria—find a high reliance on state-mediated brokers (Mares & Young 2015, Mares et al. 2014a,b, Mares & Muntean 2015). This is in line with evidence from Latin America suggesting that state employees, including mayors and even teachers, are involved in pressuring or influencing voters (Weitz-Shapiro 2012, Larreguy et al. 2012).

In a recent study, Holland & Palmer-Rubin (2015) add to the repertoire of political brokers by considering brokers who are linked to interest associations. These authors distinguish between “organizational brokers,” who represent the collective interests of voters in interest associations and renegotiate ties to political parties between election cycles, and “hybrid brokers,” who split their loyalties between an interest association and a single political party. Holland & Palmer-Rubin illustrate the operation of these alternative broker types through case studies of street-vending organizations in an uninstitutionalized party system (Colombia) and peasant organizations in an institutionalized party system (Mexico).

Firms are another type of political broker candidates can deploy during elections (Mares & Zhu 2015). Firms can either mobilize voters by bringing them to the polls or attempt to reduce electoral turnout by preventing their employees from voting. Managers or foremen within the firm can use their control over the wages, work conditions, and even employment for political influence. Baland & Robinson (2008), for instance, argue that in Chile, “the threat of being cast out into the subproletariat of migratory workers was the most powerful weapon at the landowner’s disposal. Most *inquilinos* families undoubtedly judged their welfare on the estate superior to life outside or in the nitrate fields of the northern desert” (Bauer 1995, p. 28, quoted in Baland & Robinson 2008, p. 1,748). Intimidation by employers was a pervasive form of electoral intimidation in many first-wave democratizers, particularly Imperial Germany (Mares 2015). Yet such “private intimidation” is not a historical phenomenon. Recent studies have found evidence of private economic intimidation, both in postcommunist settings including Romania, Bulgaria, and Russia, and in more advanced democracies such as the United States (Mares et al. 2014a,b, Frye et al. 2014, Hertel-Fernandez 2015).

Several studies have highlighted candidates’ reliance on local leaders as political brokers (Baldwin 2013, Koter 2013). Examples of these local leaders include traditional chiefs, religious dignitaries, and leaders of ethnic communities. These brokers control access to goods and services that are valued by voters and can use this control to influence voters’ behavior. As Koter (2013, p. 193) has argued, “the relationship between local leaders and their followers is complex in that it can be based both on reciprocity and on some degree of exploitation. Voters can trust and rely on their leaders but also feel trapped in their subordinate position.”

Finally, a number of studies have pointed to the role of criminal organizations and militias during elections. Such organizations are typically considered to be specialists in violence, and politicians can reward them by allowing them to operate more easily in illegal activities. For example, Acemoglu et al. (2013) argue that right-wing paramilitaries in Colombia were rewarded for delivering votes to politicians with an amnesty deal. In an analysis of clientelistic strategies present during the 2014 parliamentary election in Colombia, Garcia Sanchez et al. (2015) discuss a range of clientelistic strategies perpetuated by military groups operating alongside local politicians. These include offers of money (which often originates in illegal drug activities), offers of access to state favors (if local politicians are co-opted by military groups) and intimidation. Vigilante groups involved in a range of criminal activities are also implicated in electoral malfeasance in cities in Kenya and Nigeria (Anderson 2002, LeBas 2013).

This relatively recent literature presents a rich picture of ongoing clientelistic practices with an increasingly extensive menu of possible brokers. What are the most important factors that account for this variation? Does the mix of brokers deployed in elections vary systematically across countries? Does it vary across localities? A new set of studies examining the historical, institutional, and economic factors that determine where brokers are available and desirable has just started to answer these questions.

One factor that this literature has identified as important for the functioning of brokers is the ability of politician principals to monitor their performance. There is ample qualitative evidence to suggest that monitoring brokers is not a trivial task for politician principals. Stokes et al. (2013) partially credit monitoring difficulties with the demise of clientelism in the United States and Europe in the late 19th century. According to one historical account, US politicians who had previously relied on brokers voted for the secret ballot because “the local machine was a source of insubordination and untrustworthiness—an increasingly expensive and unwieldy instrument for carrying out the will of the true party organization” (Reynolds & McCormick 1986, p. 851, quoted in Stokes et al. 2013, pp. 205–6). Larreguy (2012) shows, using data from Mexico, that when it is harder to monitor the performance of brokers who use land to incentivize voters, the party that controls those brokers loses electoral support. Developing a better understanding of how monitoring capacity affects not only the level and effectiveness of clientelism but also the type of brokers deployed by politicians is an exciting future research agenda.

In the remainder of this article, we discuss results that address two types of variation in clientelistic strategies. First, we examine the findings of studies linking national or regional political and economic conditions to the incidence of clientelistic strategies. In this section, we highlight five explanations for the level and type of clientelism: ballot secrecy, monitoring and legal frameworks to detect and punish malfeasance, electoral systems, local institutions, and economic conditions. Second, we explore studies that probe which voters are targeted with what strategies. We focus on how voters’ partisan preferences, socioeconomic status, and psychological characteristics influence the incidence and effectiveness of inducements.

## EXPLAINING MIXES IN CLIENTELISM: THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

In this section, we explore how contextual factors, particularly the design and control of institutions as well as the structure of the economy, explain the mix of clientelistic strategies used in a country or locality. We focus on several explanations that recent research has highlighted as predictive of the level and type of clientelism.

First, do institutional variables affect the mixes of clientelistic strategies? If so, what institutions and policies affect this variation? Studies examining the relationship between institutional variables



and the use of different clientelistic strategies have yielded mixed results. Some of the most robust findings pertain to the relationship between ballot secrecy and the mix of electoral irregularities. Other studies have highlighted that micro regulations of electoral laws—more specifically the asymmetric punishment of different irregularities—have an important effect on mixes in clientelistic strategies. By contrast, studies examining the relationship between different electoral systems and mixes of clientelistic strategies have yielded inconclusive results. Second, numerous studies have identified the control of local political and social institutions as an important factor shaping the level and type of clientelism. Last, there is evidence that economic conditions shape the strategies that are available and desirable to politicians who want to influence voters.

## Voting Secrecy

One robust finding of the literature examining clientelism in both historical and contemporary settings is that the protection of voter secrecy affects clientelistic strategies. Threats of postelectoral punishments of voters are extremely powerful if electoral secrecy is imperfectly protected (Mares 2015). This suggests that the use of strategies of intimidation should be higher when electoral secrecy is insufficiently protected but that their use should decline after legislation protecting voter secrecy is adopted.

Changes in electoral legislation can improve protection of voter secrecy. Examples include changes in ballot design, such as adoption of the Australian ballot, and changes in voting technology, such as the design of the electoral urn. Some recent studies have examined the consequences of changes in electoral legislation for electoral competition and the mixes of clientelistic strategies. Such studies have examined both the direct effects of these electoral reforms and the heterogeneous effects for different districts that varied in their permissiveness of electoral intimidation.

Cox & Kousser (1981) examine the consequences of the adoption of the secret ballot in the state of New York during the period between 1879 and 1900 and find that this change in electoral law contributed to a change in the strategies pursued by parties. Prior to the adoption of the secret ballot, electoral strategies of parties were “inflationary,” attempting to increase voter turnout. After the secret ballot reform, the strategies of parties were “deflationary” and consisted of efforts to convince voters to stay home on election day. In a recent study examining the production of electoral irregularities in US elections during the period between 1860 and 1930, Kuo & Teorell (2013) find that the adoption of the Australian ballot reduced vote buying and intimidation. Examining the consequences of electoral reforms adopting the Australian ballot in Chile in 1958, Baland & Robinson (2008) find that secret ballot reforms reduced the vote share of right-wing conservative parties by reducing the influence of landowners over their workers and subsequently the benefits that landowners received in exchange (Baland & Robinson 2012).

Mares (2015) examines how the 1903 German legislation that introduced ballot envelopes and isolating spaces affected the strength of support for the Social Democratic Party, the major antisystem party in Germany. Prior to the introduction of this legislation, support for the party had been suppressed through intimidation by employers and state employees. The legislation protecting voter secrecy gave voters the opportunity to support the opposition party without fearing layoffs.

The new literature examining the consequences of changes in legislation protecting electoral secrecy for electoral irregularities recognizes, however, that this legislation may also create incentives for actors to substitute into less costly electoral irregularities. The Cox & Kousser (1981) finding discussed above is precisely about substitution between illicit tactics. Several recent studies have documented substitutions following the adoption of reforms protecting voters against intimidation. Lehoucq & Molina’s (2002, p. 21) study of electoral irregularities in Costa Rica found



that voting secrecy reduced the use of vote buying or intimidation, but encouraged parties to turn to ballot stuffing. Similarly, Kuo & Teorell (2013) find that the adoption of the Australian ballot in the United States was followed by an increase in the use of other electoral irregularities, such as ballot stuffing and registration fraud.

Although substitution between clientelism and fraud has been considered as a possible consequence of increases in ballot secrecy, there has been less inquiry into substitution between clientelistic strategies. The change in the mix between vote buying and coercion is an example. When the probability that a voter would be caught breaking his commitment to a broker is very low due to ballot secrecy, loss aversion may imply that voters' utility is more sensitive to the small probability of a large punishment than to an equal gain. This suggests that brokers might substitute positive with negative inducements as ballot secrecy increases. Changes in ballot secrecy may also change the incentives of candidates and brokers to target different types of voters. For example, the more secret the ballot, the harder it is for brokers to monitor the contracts that they make with voters, which may diminish the attractiveness of contracts with swing voters relative to contracts with core supporters who may be easier to monitor (Gans-Morse et al. 2014, Mares & Young 2015).

### **Monitoring and Punishment of Malfeasance**

A number of studies have estimated the impact of changes or variation in the severity or probability of punishment on a range of electoral malfeasances. In addition to showing that in most cases monitoring reduces malfeasance, these studies have provided some of the best evidence of how politicians substitute between strategies or areas when the likelihood of punishment increases. The political experience of European countries during the decades following the expansion of suffrage raises fascinating puzzles for the study of electoral clientelism. One such puzzle is the significant cross-national variation in the mix of electoral irregularities. The relative prevalence of vote buying, intimidation, and ballot stuffing differed significantly across countries during the period after the adoption of voter secrecy. One also encounters significant variation in the types of brokers deployed by candidates in different countries. Whereas practices of vote buying and treating were pervasive in British elections, such practices were virtually unknown in German national elections during the Second Empire (Klein 2003, Mares 2015). Patronage and the politics of extensive favors provided by mayors on behalf of candidates were a widespread electoral evil in France, but absent in 19th-century Germany. Intimidation and harassment by employees of the state were frequent in 19th-century Germany and France but remarkably absent in Britain. And although one encounters intimidation by employers in all countries, this irregularity is particularly pervasive in German elections.

One factor affecting cross-national differences in mixes among different electoral irregularities are the provisions of the electoral laws. Electoral rules in 19th-century Europe punished different electoral irregularities with various levels of stringency, which created incentives for politicians to use electoral strategies that carried lower costs. This differential punishment structure also affected the incentives of possible brokers to exert effort on behalf of candidates during elections. Consider a few examples of this logic. German election law imposed very strict consequences for vote buying, which was placed under the jurisdiction of the penal code and could be punished with imprisonment. By contrast, intimidation by employees of the state was punished less stringently, and electoral intervention by employers was virtually unpenalized. Differential punishment for these irregularities created incentives for German politicians to avoid strategies premised on vote buying, but to rely on intimidation by employees of the state, such as policemen, or by employers. In contrast, British electoral laws did not single out vote buying as a particularly pernicious strategy.

Politicians had incentives to use vote buying and treating alongside other illicit strategies, such as intimidation (Mares 2015).

Scholars of irregularities in developing countries have also invoked differential punishment structure as a factor accounting for cross-national differences in levels of electoral irregularities. In contrast to the historical literature, these studies operate with a broader definition of the punishment structure as the strength of a range of rule-of-law institutions. Hafner-Burton et al. (2014) argue that in countries where institutions to punish electoral malfeasance are weak, including the judiciary, media, and civil society, candidates should face fewer constraints on using coercive strategies. Similarly, Lindberg & van Ham (2015) argue that because democratic institutions punish more visible malfeasance such as fraud and intimidation, democratization leads parties to substitute fraud and violence with consensual vote buying. However, in both of these studies, it is difficult to identify the direction of causality.

Last, the literature on election monitors provides insight into how parties and candidates respond to increases in the probability of punishment. The central conjecture in this literature is that the presence of international or domestic election monitors increases the likelihood that an illicit strategy will be discovered and punished. Much of this literature has exploited natural experiments such as arbitrary selection of polling stations for monitoring by an international organization (Hyde 2007) or actual random assignment of observers (Hyde 2010, Ichino & Schundeln 2012, Asunka et al. 2014) to provide causal estimates of the impact of monitoring.

Although most studies of monitoring find that it decreases some types of electoral malfeasance (Hyde 2010 is an exception), these studies have also begun to amass evidence of spatial displacement and substitution between illicit strategies. There is convincing evidence that monitors cause spatial displacement of illicit strategies to neighboring polling stations (Ichino & Schundeln 2012, Asunka et al. 2014), although in some cases these spillovers have also *reduced* the use of illicit strategies in neighboring polling stations (Callen & Long 2015). Sjoberg (2014) shows that the presence of web cameras in polling stations during the 2008 election in Azerbaijan reduced officially reported turnout (which he interprets as ballot stuffing) by 7%, while also causing increases in fraud during the counting process, which is not as easily caught on camera.

There is little knowledge, however, of how the presence of monitors changes the timing of brokers' pressure on voters. Most election-monitoring interventions focus their resources on having a large number of observers present on the day of the polls, engaging in very limited observation during the weeks or months prior to an election. It is possible that politicians and brokers who anticipate monitors may shift their efforts toward strategies of electoral intimidation and repression, rather than ballot stuffing. We believe that such temporal displacement should be an important consideration in future research. The existence of these strategies of substitution may account for the cross-national results reported by Simpser & Donno (2012), who argue that international election monitoring is associated with decreases in the quality of bureaucracy, media freedom, and law and order.

## Electoral Systems and Irregularities

A third direction of active scholarship examines whether the electoral system affects the mix of electoral irregularities. A growing recent literature has examined the relationship between electoral systems and levels of electoral corruption. The results are inconclusive. Some studies argue that PR systems are associated with higher levels of electoral corruption than plurality systems (Persson & Tabellini 2003), whereas others find no relationship between PR and electoral malfeasance (Birch 2007). In an effort to reconcile these findings, some scholars have suggested that the relationship between electoral system and corruption is conditional on district magnitude (Chang & Golden

2007). A large and significant disagreement exists as to whether electoral systems with opened or closed rules for the selection of candidates lead to higher levels of electoral corruption (Carey & Shugart 1995, Kunicova & Rose Ackerman 2005, Gingerich 2013).

One fruitful direction of further comparative investigation is whether differences in electoral systems exert a systematic effect on the mix of clientelistic strategies. Our theoretical conjecture is that the costs of all clientelistic strategies are higher in PR countries than in countries with majoritarian electoral rules, owing to the higher district magnitudes of the latter. To the extent that different strategies vary in the cost per vote—for example, if vote buying is more expensive than the threat of cutting voters off from state benefits—we might expect less expensive strategies to be more prevalent in PR systems.

Pellicer & Wegner (2013) argue that clientelistic parties do worse under PR systems because they depend on personal relationships between patrons and clients. The authors' regression discontinuity design exploits a provision of the electoral law in Morocco that stipulates a population threshold below which the system is majoritarian (and above which it is PR). The study shows that once the threshold of proportionality is passed, the number of seats of clientelistic parties falls by 50% while the seat share of programmatic parties doubles.

### **Control of Local Institutions: Incumbency and Traditional Leaders**

The degree of control that political parties have over institutions, particularly local institutions, is also important in explaining the level and distribution of clientelism. Of particular importance is the presence of local leaders, including incumbent mayors and traditional leaders, who are willing to influence voters for either economic or ideological reasons. Long-term incumbency affects the ability of candidates to access the resources of the state at times of elections. As a vast literature on bureaucracies has established, longer political incumbency allows mayors to appoint a higher number of loyal partisan activists in the local administration. These activists can become an important political resource during campaigns and be used as state brokers at times of elections. This implies that candidates who can establish contacts to long-term mayors are more likely to deploy state resources at elections.

Recent studies have found significant differences in the use of clientelistic strategies that involve state employees as brokers, such as the provision of administrative favors. Mares & Petrova (2014) document the existence of these differences in a comparison of a small number of Bulgarian localities. In a larger sample of 85 rural communities, Mares & Muntean (2015) demonstrate differences in the use of welfare coercion by state employees between localities with long-term incumbents and localities that experienced political turnover.

The high reliance on state employees as brokers is not a characteristic of postcommunist countries alone. Garcia Sanchez et al. (2015) document the existence of this clientelistic strategy in recent Colombian elections. Similarly to the Romanian results, Garcia Sanchez et al. find evidence of a higher reliance on state employees as brokers in localities with long-term mayors than in more competitive localities.

Other types of local elites function similarly to incumbents. Callen & Long (2015) find that candidates with connections to local electoral officials in Afghanistan are more likely to benefit from fraud at the polling stations that those officials oversee. Traditional leadership structures in Africa are also used by modern states as a way of extending government structures to the local level. These structures may affect variation in clientelistic strategies by shaping the strength and availability of local leaders who command the moral authority and resources to influence the electoral behavior of voters. In a comparison of Senegal and Benin, Koter (2013) argues that the availability of strong traditional leaders in Senegal enables modern parties to effectively implement

a clientelistic strategy. Similarly, de Kadt & Larreguy (2015) find that traditional leaders in ethnic enclaves in South Africa influence voters on behalf of their favored parties, most likely through the use of positive and negative inducements.

## **Economic Conditions**

In addition to state employees and partisan activists, employers can serve as brokers who can be mobilized by candidates during elections. Recent studies have documented practices of economic intimidation by employers in both historical and contemporary political settings (Baland & Robinson 2008, 2012; Mares 2015). Employers' electoral influence is the result of their control over important dimensions affecting the welfare of workers, such as their wages, levels of employment, or access to social policy benefits that are privately provided.

Both the demand of candidates for electoral support from employers and the willingness of employers to provide political services to candidates vary, however, across districts. The provision of intimidation may be costly to firms. The literature has identified two variables that may affect the willingness of employers to engage in electoral intimidation. The first is the economic heterogeneity of a district. Several studies examining the incidence of economic intimidation in both historical and contemporary settings have found that employer political pressure is higher in economically concentrated localities or districts where one firm controls employment and output and lower in economically fragmented localities (Mares & Zhu 2015, Mares et al. 2015). Three factors lower the costs of economic intimidation in localities with high levels of concentration. First, owing to their scale, larger firms incur lower costs in carrying out political activities, such as control of electoral turnout or the distribution of political material on behalf of a particular candidate. Second, in concentrated localities, workers have fewer employment opportunities outside the firm. Finally, the concentration of employment in the hands of a small number of actors reduces the possible coordination problems faced by employers in punishing workers with "dangerous" political views by denying them employment opportunities.

The willingness of employers to engage in electoral intimidation is also affected by labor market conditions such as labor scarcity. Labor scarcity increases both the costs of electoral intimidation by employers and the willingness of voters to take economic risks and support opposition candidates. Ardanaz & Mares (2014) test this proposition by examining the consequences of a transition from labor abundance to labor scarcity in rural Prussian districts during the period between 1870 and 1912. Using panel data that measure the scarcity of agricultural workers in Prussian communes over this period, the authors document that labor scarcity reduced the capacity of rural landlords to mobilize voters. As such, labor scarcity lowered the vote share for conservative candidates and increased the support for Social Democratic candidates.

## **VOTER CHARACTERISTICS**

There is also compelling evidence that brokers and parties use different strategies against voters with different characteristics. Studies have developed three families of explanations about individual characteristics and the likelihood that voters are targeted. These explanations refer to voters' partisan preferences, socioeconomic status, and psychological attributes.

### **Policy or Partisan Preferences**

Much of the formal theory explaining who gets offered positive inducements during elections focuses on the role of voters' preferences over parties or policies that determine the utility that

voters get from voting for each party. The central question in this literature is whether core or swing voters are the focus of private inducements by parties.

Most formal theory on this topic has predicted that, under most conditions, parties should target inducements on voters with weak ideological affiliations (Lindbeck & Weibull 1987, Stokes 2005, Stokes et al. 2013). Stokes et al. (2013, p. 36) make this point clearly: “[T]he main thrust of theories of distributive politics is that swing voters, or ones who are weakly opposed to the party machine, are its main targets.” However, most evidence shows that parties aim inducements at core supporters rather than swing voters in countries including Argentina (Nichter 2008), Chile (Calvo & Murillo 2013), Venezuela (Albertus 2015), Mexico, India (Stokes et al. 2013), Kenya (Gutierrez-Romero 2014), and Nigeria (Bratton 2008).<sup>2</sup>

A major focus of recent research has been the attempt to reconcile the theoretical predictions and the empirical findings. In this effort, increased attention to the organization of clientelism has provided significant traction. Some scholars have argued that core supporters are easier to target efficiently because they are embedded in partisan networks (Dixit & Londregan 1996, Calvo & Murillo 2013). Others have made a distinction between inducements that seek to change vote choice and inducements that seek to affect turnout (Nichter 2008, Gans-Morse et al. 2014). Finally, Stokes et al. (2013) propose a “broker-mediated” theory of targeting in which politicians prefer to buy the votes of swing voters, but brokers who are imperfectly monitored end up mobilizing core supporters in order to capture rents.

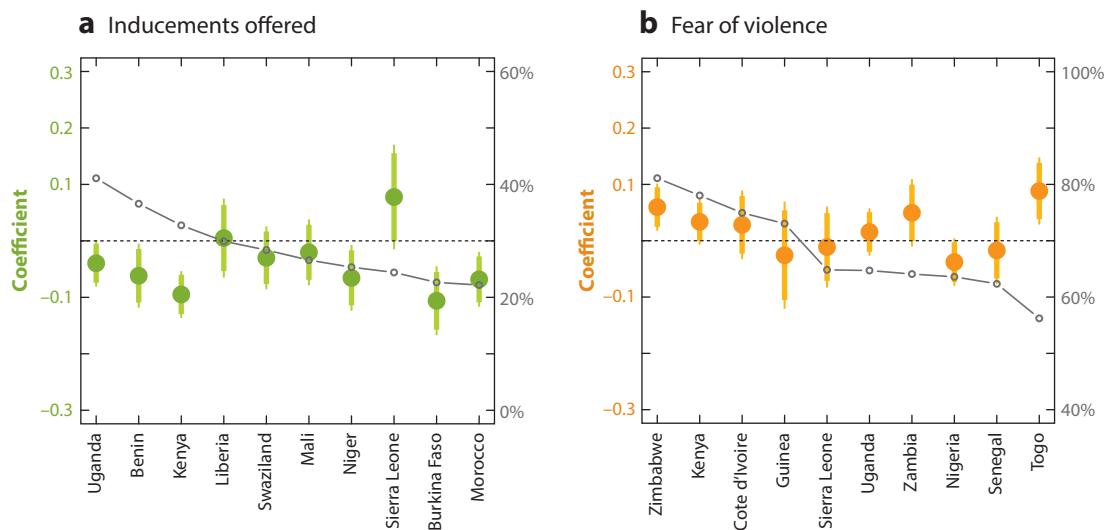
Some formal models of electoral intimidation have taken the opportunity to consider how parties substitute between vote buying, violence, and in some cases, fraud. What happens when parties can use not only positive but also negative inducements like threats? Many formal models point to swing voters as the most likely targets of violence. Robinson & Torvik (2009) argue that parties should substitute violence for threats against swing voters because they are the most expensive to buy off if multiple parties are bidding for their votes—a finding that is taken as an assumption by Collier & Vicente (2012).

However, the empirical evidence that swing voters are more likely to face intimidation is also weak. In Nigeria, where violence is typically controlled by the ruling party, people who are targeted with violence are less likely to vote for the ruling party (Bratton 2008). Parties competing in Kenya in 2007 were most likely to use violence against the core supporters of their opponents living in their own stronghold areas (Gutierrez-Romero 2014). Other qualitative and quantitative studies similarly note that violence is used in Kenyan elections to remove the supporters of opposing parties from areas that the violent party has a chance of winning (Klopp 2001, Kasara 2014).

Negative strategies based on economic rather than physical coercion may even be targeted on one’s own core supporters. Although electoral violence is concentrated in a relatively small number of cases, threats to take away entitlements from voters—including land, employment, or welfare benefits—are common across a much wider range of cases. Throughout Eastern Europe, threats to cut voters off from welfare benefits depending on how they vote are a powerful negative inducement wielded primarily by local officials such as mayors, or brokers known as the mayor’s men (Mares & Muntean 2015, Mares & Young 2015). Boone (2011) similarly shows that threats to remove entitlements to land are used as an electoral strategy to mobilize mainly coethnic supporters in Kenya.

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<sup>2</sup>Bratton (2008, p. 627) finds a positive correlation between offers of vote buying and the choice of the incumbent party in the 2007 Nigerian election. His interpretation is that vote buying causes people to vote for the ruling party, but it is more likely that the ruling party focuses its vote-buying efforts on people who are already planning to vote for it.



**Figure 2**

This figure plots the coefficients on being a swing voter from country-level regressions of exposure to positive and negative inducements during elections on a list of individual-level covariates and district fixed effects. The 10 coefficients represent the relationship between being a swing voter and experiencing (a) vote-buying offers or (b) fear of electoral violence in each of the 10 countries with the highest reported prevalence of those strategies. The explanatory variable that is plotted is based on the question “Do you feel close to any particular political party?” (a) The outcome variable is the response to the question “During the last national election, how often, if ever, did a candidate or someone from a political party offer you something, like food or a gift or money, in return for your vote?”, which takes a value of 0 to 3 representing never to often experiencing offers of vote buying. (b) The outcome variable is the response to the question “During election campaigns in this country, how much do you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence?”, which takes a value of 0 to 3 representing “not at all” to “a lot.” In both (a) and (b), all variables are standardized, and controls include gender, age, a poverty index, urban–rural status, education, membership in community groups, and a district fixed effect. The y-axis on the left indicates the magnitude of the plotted coefficients. The grey line indicates the proportion of the Afrobarometer respondents by country who indicated that they (a) experienced vote buying offers or (b) fear violence during elections.

Because many of the studies exploring which voters are targeted with violence at the individual level draw on data from only a single country, the Afrobarometer data again provide an opportunity to assess whether there is empirical support for predictions that vote buying and violence are focused on core or swing voters. **Figure 2** plots the coefficients from a series of regressions from the ten countries in Africa with the highest proportions of citizens reporting that they have been offered money or goods in exchange for their vote (**Figure 2a**) or that they are afraid of violence during elections (**Figure 2b**).

For positive strategies, the Afrobarometer data show a negative and statistically significant relationship between being a swing voter and receiving a vote-buying offer in six of the ten cases in Africa where vote buying is most prevalent. This provides suggestive evidence from important cases that parties are more likely to offer positive inducements to their own core supporters, assuming that parties are not trying to buy the votes of the core supporters of their opponents.

On negative strategies, there is little evidence of any targeting based on the strength of voters’ party identifications. This runs counter to the theoretical prediction that swing voters should be singled out for violence. Respondents who report being unaffiliated with any party are more likely to fear violence in only two of the ten countries where fear of electoral violence is most widespread. Furthermore, in Zimbabwe, where there is a positive correlation between respondents revealing that they are swing voters and reporting fear of electoral violence, several recent studies



have argued that respondents who are exposed to violence are actually more likely to hide their political preferences for the opposition in the Afrobarometer survey, which could lead to a spurious negative correlation (Garcia-Ponce & Pasquale 2014, Young 2015a).

In short, there is compelling evidence that in many cases, parties focus positive inducements and economic coercion on their own supporters. These trends are likely linked: Giving core supporters access to entitlements or rents creates opportunities to threaten to take them away, which may be a particularly powerful incentive. The threat of electoral violence, however, does not appear to be strongly targeted on the basis of voters' partisan preferences; other factors may play a bigger role in explaining heterogeneity in exposure to physical threats.

## Socioeconomic Status

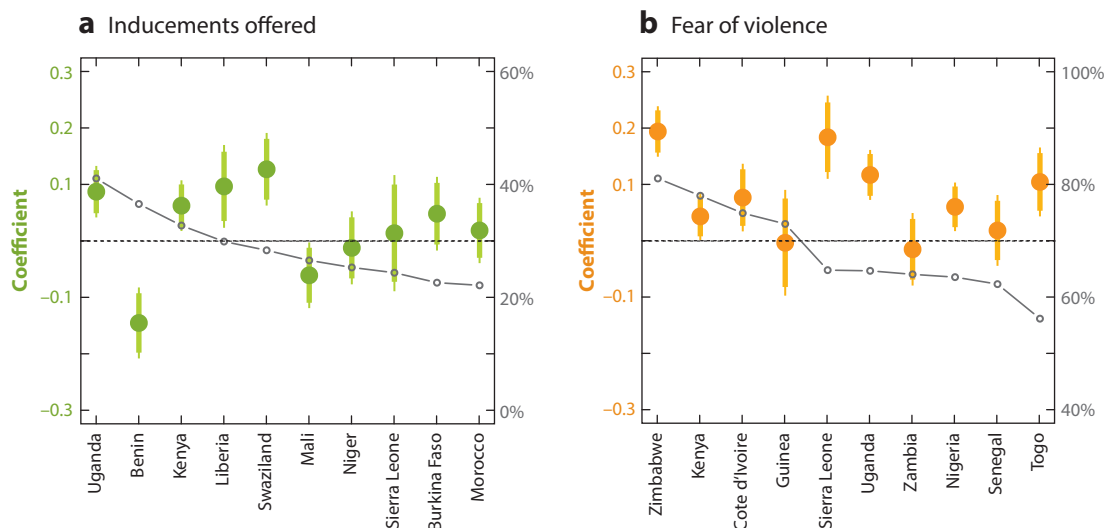
It is also likely that economic factors such as income play an important role in determining whether voters are targeted with both positive and negative inducements. Many have argued that positive inducements should have a greater impact on the voting behavior of the poor because the marginal utility of income of low-income voters is higher (Dixit & Londregan 1996, Calvo & Murillo 2004, Stokes 2005, Stokes et al. 2013). The evidence that vote buying is principally aimed at the poor is virtually uncontested. In cases ranging from Lebanon (Corstange 2011) to Nigeria (Bratton 2008) and Argentina (Stokes 2005), studies find that politicians target poor voters with positive inducements, such as gifts and offers of food or money.

The predictions about the relationship between poverty and the use of coercive strategies or violence are less clear. If vote buying and violence are substitutes, then we might expect that parties would be less likely to use violence against poorer voters because vote buying is more effective. However, low-income voters may also be the most vulnerable to violence, as they are least capable of investing in security (e.g., buying weapons, building strong defense systems, fleeing). For this reason, we might expect that targeting of poorer voters with strategies of violence would have a higher payoff, and therefore candidates and their brokers would direct violence against low-income voters.

There is surprisingly little evidence on whether electoral violence is aimed at those who are economically vulnerable, and the evidence is largely inconclusive. Gutierrez-Romero's (2014) analysis of targeting of violence in Kenya provides some evidence that wealthier voters are more likely to be targeted with threats and to have heard about violence. Bratton (2008) finds no relationship between poverty and the experience of violent threats in Nigeria, and Young (2015a) similarly finds that voters in poor parts of Zimbabwe were not more likely to experience violence than were voters in wealthier constituencies during the first few years in which violence was systematically used against voters. However, voters in poor parts of Zimbabwe are more likely to not vote for the opposition or hide their support for the opposition on an opinion survey after they are exposed to ruling-party violence (Young 2015a).

Again, the Afrobarometer data provide an opportunity to test predictions about targeting. Using the same methodology described in the section "Policy or Partisan Preferences," we tested whether voters with lower socioeconomic status are more or less likely to be offered positive and negative inducements in exchange for their votes. **Figure 3** plots the coefficients from a regression of exposure to vote-buying offers (**Figure 3a**) and fear of electoral violence (**Figure 3b**) on an individual-level measure of poverty.

Interestingly, the relationship between poverty and exposure to inducements in the Afrobarometer data is also not fully consistent with the predictions of many theories. There is a positive and significant relationship between poverty and exposure to vote buying in four of ten cases, but in two cases (Benin and Mali), poorer voters are significantly less likely to be targeted with vote-buying



**Figure 3**

This figure plots the coefficients on a poverty index from country-level regressions of exposure to positive and negative inducements during elections on a list of individual-level covariates and district fixed effects. The 10 coefficients represent the relationship between poverty and experiencing (a) vote-buying offers or (b) fear of electoral violence in each of the 10 countries with the highest reported prevalence of those strategies. The explanatory variable that is plotted is based on the average frequency with which the respondent goes without food and a cash income. (a) The outcome variable is the response to the question “During the last national election, how often, if ever, did a candidate or someone from a political party offer you something, like food or a gift or money, in return for your vote?”, which takes a value of 0 to 3 representing never to often experiencing offers of vote buying. (b) The outcome variable is the response to the question “During election campaigns in this country, how much do you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence?”, which takes a value of 0 to 3 representing “not at all” to “a lot.” In both (a) and (b), all variables are standardized, and controls include gender, age, a dummy indicating swing voter status, urban–rural status, education, membership in community groups, and a district fixed effect. The y-axis on the left indicates the magnitude of the plotted coefficients. The grey line indicates the proportion of the Afrobarometer respondents by country who indicated that they (a) experienced vote buying offers or (b) fear violence during elections.

offers. Other studies, however, find that poverty is significantly associated with experiencing vote-buying (Stokes et al. 2013, Jensen & Justesen 2014).

On violence, however, there is a very clear pattern in the Afrobarometer data. Poorer voters are consistently more likely to be afraid of electoral violence in seven out of ten of the African countries with the most fear of electoral violence. Given that individual-level poverty has been the focus of relatively few studies of electoral violence, this is a relationship that future research should explore.

## Psychological Factors

One of the major puzzles in the literature on electoral inducements is how brokers enforce contracts with voters despite the existence of the secret ballot. To address this puzzle, recent theory has highlighted the importance of norms of reciprocity as factors that sustain vote-buying strategies. Other explanations have drawn on psychological theories to understand the factors that increase the cost of illicit strategies and determine whether citizens submit or resist in the face of threats.

First, several studies have suggested novel ways in which reciprocity might facilitate clientelistic contracts between brokers and voters despite the secret ballot. Using data from both surveys or voters and local operatives in Paraguay, Finan & Schechter (2012) show that brokers leverage social

preferences when selecting which voters to target with vote-buying offers. Specifically, locally embedded brokers in Paraguay select voters whom they know to be highly reciprocal because these voters are more likely to honor their promise to vote for a certain party after receiving a gift. Reciprocal voters, Finan & Schechter argue, can be paid less because the receipt of money will engender in them a desire to reciprocate. Lawson & Greene (2014) use evidence from a series of survey experiments conducted in Mexico to come to a similar conclusion that receiving gifts from politicians creates feelings of obligation that are related to higher levels of support for clientelist candidates from reciprocal voters.

Another recent body of research has focused on the role of beliefs about the acceptability of vote buying and coercion in shaping the costs that parties face when using inducements to win votes. A survey experiment conducted in several Latin American countries shows that vote buying is more stigmatized when the client is better off and less ideologically close to the party buying her vote (Gonzalez-Ocantos et al. 2012). Bratton (2008, p. 623) also shows that the poorest quintile of voters is half as likely as the richest to think that selling votes is “wrong and punishable.” Using opinion data from Kenya, Rosenzweig (2015) argues that electoral violence reduces voter preference for the candidates that use it. This body of evidence suggests that voters who consent to sell their votes may face some disutility due to guilt or shame, but also that parties may lose supporters who are not the targets of violence but have normative preferences against illicit strategies.

Experimental evidence also shows that norms against illicit strategies can be strengthened, and that such efforts make those strategies less effective in producing votes. An education campaign against vote buying that urged citizens to vote “in good conscience” in São Tomé and Príncipe decreased the perceived influence of vote buying, increased voting “according to your conscience,” and may have decreased electoral irregularities (Vicente 2014). Similarly, a campaign encouraging voters to “vote against violent politicians” in Nigeria had significant and substantively large negative effects on perceived political violence, as well as some effect on actual experienced violence (Collier & Vicente 2014). These effects also spread through social networks, particularly kinship networks (Fafchamps & Vicente 2013). Although the mechanisms driving these effects are not explicitly tested, one interpretation could be that they increased the psychological cost of voting for a party that buys votes or intimidates voters.

Last, there is some evidence that emotions shape citizens’ reactions to the threat of repression. Young (2015c) finds that emotions have a causal effect on how citizens perceive the threat of electoral violence. This research uses lab experimental methods to show that the emotion of fear—whether or not it originates from a political context—makes opposition supporters more pessimistic about the risk of repression and actions of other opposition supporters, as well as more risk averse. Emotions can also be invoked, however, by opposition organizers to increase participation. Young (2015b) finds that campaign ads shared by an opposition party in a repressive environment cause more pro-opposition political speech when they appeal to anger rather than enthusiasm, and that this effect is particularly strong among voters in higher-income areas. Taken together, these results suggest that citizens vary in their psychological propensity to feel mobilizing or demobilizing emotions in response to the threat of electoral violence that help explain how effective violence is from the perspective of the regime.

## CONCLUSION

In recent years, a vibrant literature has made significant advances in the study of clientelistic practices. Although the trade-off between programmatic and clientelistic mobilization was at the center of an early literature on electoral clientelism, many recent studies have attempted to disaggregate the types of clientelistic exchanges and distinguish among the different brokers

that mediate the relationship between candidates and voters. Our review has surveyed two broad questions that have informed this recent literature. First, what are the most salient variables that explain variation across countries, regions, and localities in the mix of clientelistic strategies? Second, who are the voters targeted by different clientelistic strategies?

Our review points to several avenues for further research. The study of variation in the mix of brokers deployed at elections is only beginning. There is increasingly robust evidence that local elites such as incumbents and traditional leaders are important brokers during elections, and that changing the cost of their involvement through monitoring and punishment schemes can reduce their influence. However, it is less understood whether politicians' choice of other brokers—such as ethnic brokers, priests, or union leaders—is affected by historical, political, or economic variables that impact the ability of these brokers to influence voters, and the ability of politicians to monitor brokers. Furthermore, when multiple brokers are available, how do politicians choose which to deploy? Identifying these trade-offs is methodologically challenging but has the potential to shed light on the determinants of different types of clientelism and also provide insight into how it might be prevented.

Second, although there has been increasing conceptual clarity to the distinction between positive and negative strategies, more work should be done to understand how voters perceive the provision of entitlements contingent on political support. When do voters perceive these contingent relationships as gifts that they can take or leave, and when do they perceive their loss as a threat? Do politicians manipulate expectations in order to make voters more sensitive to changes in their material situations? These questions harken back to the earlier views of patron–client relationships as both mutually advantageous and coercive (Lemarchand 1972), but with new micro foundations from behavioral economics and psychology in mind.

Third, the literature has begun to benefit from studies that have looked beyond rational choice models to examine how psychological factors such as reciprocity and emotions influence the effectiveness of different illicit strategies. Are certain types of voters less costly to monitor or more likely to respond to threats? Particularly in the case of violent threats, it is likely that real decision making deviates in meaningful and predictable ways from the cost-benefit analysis that is often assumed to study individual decision making. The experimental evidence showing that education campaigns to strengthen norms against illicit strategies can reduce the effectiveness of vote buying and coercion is promising, particularly given that such norms seem to spread through social networks. More work should also be done to build on the initial evidence that psychological characteristics such as reciprocity or susceptibility to fear may shape the effectiveness of threats and promises to voters.

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