Reading Summary: “Whither Clientelism? Good Governance and Brazil’s *Bolsa Familia* Program” by Natasha Borges Sugiyama and Wendy Hunter

Nathan Jordan

Professor Katherine Bersch

POL 140

30 October 2018

Citation:

Sugiyama, Natasha B. and Wendy Hunter. 2013. “Whither Clientelism? Good Governance and Brazil’s ‘Bolsa Familia Program,” Comparative Politics, 46(1): 43–62.

Three Sentence Summary:

In developing areas of the world where social programs are rarely implemented free of clientelism and patronage politics, Brazil’s *Bolsa Familia* program stands out as a rare example of a social program independent from political manipulation. After polling Brazilian citizens in the poorest region of the country that should be the most prone to clientelism, Sugiyama and Hunter found that the majority of citizens viewed the *Bolsa Familia* program as protected from clientelism and vote buying efforts. The program achieves this because it is run by a strong national bureaucracy, gives benefits directly to the recipients instead of local bureaucracies, and has civilian oversights and transparency measures in place.

Questions:

1. Is only polling the Northeastern region a definitive marker of this program’s potential affinity to clientelism? Could other regions also be prone to clientelism?
2. Although having a publicly accessible database of the program’s beneficiaries increases transparency, does it not also hinder the beneficiaries’ fundamental right to privacy?
3. Doesn’t the mere possibility that a corrupt local politician could use this program for clientelist purposes reduce the legitimacy and independence of the *Bolsa Familia*?