

# CLIENTELIST MOBILIZATION AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OUTSIDE OF THE ELECTORAL ARENA

*Movilización clientelar y participación política fuera  
de la arena electoral*

*Mobilização Clientelista e Participação Política Fora  
da Arena Eleitoral*

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## **Abstract**

Scholarship on clientelist mobilization has focused almost exclusively on electoral clientelism, that is efforts by patrons and brokers to encourage turnout and participation in campaign rallies. What is less well understood is the impact of clientelist mobilization on other modes of political participation, like protest activity and citizen claim making. To fill this gap, I use LAPOP survey data from 2010 and 2014 to explore the relationship between vote-buying and nonelectoral forms of political activity. Despite the expectation by many that collective action and clientelist mobilization are incompatible, this study finds a strong relationship between vote-buying efforts and participation in protests in most of Latin America. Similarly, people who receive vote-buying offers are much more likely to engage in claim-making activities. I explore the mechanisms through which clientelism encourages political activism, highlighting ways that clientelist networks work through civic organizations and foster stronger partisan identities and greater political engagement.

**Palabras clave:**  
*clientelismo;  
compra de  
votos; protestas;  
reclamo;  
participación  
política*

### Resumen

Los estudios sobre la movilización clientelar se han enfocado casi exclusivamente en el clientelismo electoral, es decir, en los esfuerzos de los partidos y de los intermediarios para fomentar el voto y la participación en los actos de campaña. Lo que ha recibido mucha menos atención es el impacto de la movilización clientelista en las formas de participación política que desafían a las élites, como las protestas y los reclamos ciudadanos. Este estudio utiliza datos de encuestas de LAPOP de 2010 y 2014 para explorar el impacto de la compra de votos en formas no electorales de actividad política. A pesar de la expectativa que la acción colectiva y la movilización clientelar son incompatibles, este estudio demuestra una fuerte relación empírica entre la compra de votos y la participación en protestas en la mayoría de los países de Latinoamérica. Además, el análisis demuestra que es mucho más probable que las personas que reciben ofertas de compra de votos participen en la presentación de reclamos. Exploro los mecanismos a través de los cuales el clientelismo fomenta este activismo político, destacando el papel de organizaciones cívicas y la manera en que la movilización clientelar fomenta identidades partidistas y un mayor interés en asuntos políticos entre los ciudadanos.

**Palavras-chave:**  
*Clientelismo;  
compra de  
votos; protestas;  
reivindicações;  
participação  
política*

### Resumo

Os estudos sobre a mobilização do clientelismo têm se concentrado quase que exclusivamente no clientelismo eleitoral, ou seja, nos esforços dos partidos e intermediários para incentivar o voto e a participação em eventos de campanha. O que tem recebido muito menos atenção é o impacto da mobilização clientelista nas formas de participação política que desafiam as elites, como protestos e demandas cidadãs. Este estudo usa dados das pesquisas LAPOP de 2010 e 2014 para explorar o impacto da compra de votos em formas não eleitorais de atividade política. Apesar da expectativa de que ação coletiva e mobilização patronal sejam incompatíveis, este estudo demonstra uma forte relação empírica entre compra de votos e participação em protestos na maioria dos países latino-americanos. Além disso, a análise mostra que as pessoas que recebem ofertas de compra de votos têm muito mais chances de participar das reivindicações. Exploro os mecanismos pelos quais o clientelismo fomenta esse ativismo político, destacando o papel das organizações cívicas e a forma como a mobilização clientelista fomenta identidades partidárias e um maior interesse por questões políticas entre os cidadãos.

## INTRODUCTION

Vote buying and other forms of clientelist mobilization are common in many developing countries, including those that have transitioned to democratic rule. The imperative to win elections in young democracies creates strong incentives for candidates and political parties to use patronage and clientelist exchanges to influence vote choice and encourage turnout to the polls. Scores of studies from Latin America and elsewhere make clear that these kinds of exchanges are tried and true strategies for getting individuals out to vote and participate in electoral

activities like campaign rallies (Brusco *et al.*, 2004; Nichter, 2008; Szwarcberg, 2015; Stokes, 2005). What is less well understood is the impact of vote buying on nonelectoral forms of political participation like protest activity and citizen claim making.

The overwhelming assumption in the literature is that clientelism inhibits autonomous political participation and is particularly antagonistic to collective action and elite challenging political activity (Auyero *et al.*, 2009; Hicken, 2011; Holzner 2004; Scott, 1972; Weitz-Shapiro, 2012). Clientelist networks are most often described as demobilizing structures based on asymmetrical power relations that allow elites to control and inhibit participation from below. (Eisenstadt & Roniger, 1980; Roniger, 1990; Scott, 1969, 1972; Stokes, 2005). Clientelism atomizes individuals, fragments organizations, and creates patterns of loyalty and dependence that discourage protest activity and community activism that might pose a challenge to elites (Lapegna, 2013; Price, 2019; Scott, 1972). Instead, elites steer political participation towards party and regime supportive activities but discourage and even suppress political activism in between elections (Wolfinger, 1972). At the individual level, clientelism is thought to inhibit the development of political attitudes and preferences over policy that are important motivators of nonelectoral forms of political participation (Epstein, 2009; Ruth, 2016). Studies of protest movements in Latin America similarly point to clientelism's demobilizing dynamics and emphasize the need for social movements to preserve their autonomy by rejecting clientelist exchanges. According to these studies, for collective mobilization to occur, organizations and social movements must reject and eschew clientelist exchanges (Escobar & Alvarez, 1998).

In contrast to this pessimism, recent studies, many based on case studies and deep ethnographic work, have shown that clientelism is not necessarily incompatible with non-electoral forms of political activity, even elite-challenging activities like protests and citizen claim making. In the case of the Argentinian *Piquetero* movement, for example, Poma (2020) finds that brokers and patrons helped promote citizen mobilization by disseminating information and by mobilizing and coordinating political activity. Similarly, Hilgers (2009) shows that brokers use their leverage over communities and individuals not only to encourage attendance at rallies and other politically supportive events, but also to mobilize participation in protests, demonstrations, and marches in order to make more forceful claims for government assistance. Rather than seeing clientelism and contentious collective action as opposites, Auyero *et al.* (2009) posit a recursive relationship through which "protest can actually emerge from patronage" (p. 7).

This emerging debate raises the question: Can vote buying foster political activism outside of the electoral arena? This article contributes to the literature on clientelist mobilization by analyzing the relationship between vote buying and non-electoral forms of political participation, in particular potentially elite

challenging political activities like protests and citizen claim making. Its main argument is that rather than suppressing political participation, experience with clientelism can motivate non-electoral political activism, making participation in protest activity and direct government contacting more likely. This effect operates through at least two mechanisms. First, although often described as promoting particularistic vertical relationships between patrons and individual clients (Roniiger, 1990), modern-day clientelist networks typically operate through local organizations, which give patrons and brokers much of their power to monitor and mobilize individuals, as well as an efficient way to distribute benefits (Auerbach, 2017; Auyero, 1999, 2000; Boulding & Holzner, 2021; Garay *et al.*, 2020; Holland & Palmer-Rubin, 2015; Levitsky, 2003; Szwarcberg, 2015). The same organizational strength that allows patrons and brokers to get out the vote and ensure attendance at political rallies can be used to mobilize collective protests and claim making. But mobilization from within clientelist networks is not only a top-down affair. The organizational bases of clientelism may also empower individuals and communities to make claims on elites, for example to demand more assistance and to hold patrons accountable when clientelist exchanges break down (Auer &, 2017; Auerbach & Thachil, 2018; 2016, Nichter & Peress; 2012, Lapegna & Auyero).

Second, experiences with clientelism and the linkages to political parties that come with it may provide individuals with politically relevant experiences that teach them important political skills, piques their interest in public affairs, promotes political engagement, and strengthens party identification, all factors that are strongly correlated with increased political activity of all kinds. Rather than creating passive, apathetic and cynical subjects, experiences with clientelism may foster the attitudes and predispositions that motivate individuals to become more politically active.

Attention to these theoretical mechanisms is not new. A vibrant recent literature based primarily on qualitative evidence and single case studies has shown that clientelism can coexist with and even foster greater political activism among individuals. A principal contribution of this paper is to show that this relationship between vote-buying and political participation is common across Latin America. To do this it uses LAPOP's 2010 and 2014 AmericasBarometer survey data from 18 Latin American countries to examine the empirical relationship between vote buying and nonelectoral forms of political participation, namely protests and political contacting, also referred to as citizen claim making. The analysis shows that individuals who receive vote and participation buying offers are significantly more likely to protest and make demands on government officials, all else equal. The analysis also provides evidence for the hypothesized mechanisms: clientelism often operates through organizations and is positively associated with individual political attitudes that support independent activism.

## CLIENTELISM AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The literature on clientelist mobilization is vast and thriving, particularly in Latin America where the transition to democracy failed to do away with political clientelism. Far from undermining clientelism, the return to competitive elections created powerful incentives for elites to use clientelist exchanges to encourage turnout, participation at political rallies, and buy votes in order to win elections. Perhaps because of this interest in elections, the current literature on political clientelism in Latin America focuses primarily on vote-buying and electoral clientelism, that is the exchange of material goods for votes and electoral support during electoral campaigns (Brusco *et al.*, 2004; Hicken, 2011; Nichter, 2008; Szwarcberg, 2015; Weitz Shapiro, 2012). This abundant literature on electoral clientelism contrasts sharply with a dearth of studies that explore the relationship between clientelism and nonelectoral modes of political activity like protesting and citizen claim making (but see Auyero *et al.*, 2009; Boulding & Holzner, 2021; Hilgers, 2009; Lapegna, 2013; Nichter, 2018). This bias toward electoral activity is so pervasive that many recent influential studies define political clientelism narrowly as the exchange of material goods for votes and attendance at political rallies (Brusco *et al.*, 2004; Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007; Weitz-Shapiro, 2012; Nichter, 2018; Hicken, 2011).<sup>1</sup> As a result, the possibility that autonomous political activity like protests or citizen demand making could emerge from within clientelist networks is rarely considered, and when considered typically dismissed (Price, 2019; Ruth, 2016; Scott, 1972; Stokes, 2005; Wolfinger, 1972).

This gap in the literature is rooted in part in the common assumption that clientelism discourages participation outside of the electoral arena (Gay, 1998). Scholarship has identified a long list of perverse dynamics that makes political activity like protests and citizen claim making unlikely when individuals and communities are enmeshed in clientelist networks. On the one hand, patrons have little incentive to mobilize participation that might place demands on them. Instead, patrons and brokers use their control over scarce resources to mobilize citizens into activities that enhance their own power, like political rallies and to the polls, but discourage any activity that challenges or puts pressure on elites (Boulding and Holzner, 2020). Wolfinger observed this difference between campaign and non-campaign activities in a classic analysis of machine-politics in the United States:

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1. For example, in their influential study, Kitschelt and Wilkinson define clientelism as “the direct exchange of a citizen’s vote in return for direct payments or continuing access to employment, goods, and services. While acknowledging the lack of conceptual clarity surrounding clientelism, Hicken (2011) also identifies voting as the essential kind of political support clients must provide in order to receive targeted benefits.

*...the discipline of patronage compels campaign work. There are no such external inducements for most non-campaign political action. Indeed, because such activity usually consists of trying to exert pressure on public official, it is likely to be viewed with apprehension or disfavor by those machine politicians who dispense patronage. (Wolfinger, 1972: 370).*

In addition, virtually all studies agree that political clientelism is characterized by stark power asymmetries between patrons and clients that allow the former to control political participation from below and suppress elite challenging activities. According to Hicken, Scott and others, patrons possess a variety of tools to enforce client's compliance, from social ostracism to withholding of material benefits, and at times the threat of violence (Eisenstadt & Roniger, 1980; Hicken; 2011; Roniger, 1990; Scott, 1969, 1972). Clients, in contrast, are seen as deprived of meaningful opportunities to exit or exercise their voice, leading to what Stokes referred to as situations of perverse accountability where voters are accountable to politicians, rather than the other way around (Stokes, 2005).

Much of the literature also assumes that clientelism impedes collective action, especially contentious collective action and protests. Clientelist networks atomize communities and individuals, restrict the flow of information, inhibiting citizens' capacity for collective action or for the development of collective identities (Holzner, 2004; Scott, 1972). Patrons also use their access to resources to coopt and demobilize independent organizations and social movements, robbing them of their capacity to organize protests (Lapegna, 2013; Price, 2019). Where autonomous organizations exist, they often enter into clientelist exchanges in order to solve problems for members, but in so doing risk losing their ability to mobilize independently (Palmer-Rubin, 2019).

At the individual level, most studies agree that clientelism creates subjects rather than citizens. Individuals enmeshed in clientelist networks forgo long-term policy preferences and representation because they are primarily interested in securing immediate material resources, and remain uninterested in and unaware of policy implications, party labels or broader ideological debates (Dixit & Londregan, 1996; Epstein, 2009; Ruth, 2016). Further, individuals enmeshed in clientelist networks don't need to develop knowledge of politics or of political issues to participate since brokers organize and coordinate their political participation. Some scholars go so far as to argue that clientelist linkages with political parties inhibit the development of political attitudes like an interest in politics or strong ideological views that are necessary for citizens to participate in politics on their own. (Epstein, 2009; Ruth, 2016).

In short, rather than mobilizing participation, patronage networks with their asymmetrical power relations and emphasis on loyalty and political support, are seen as demobilizing structures that inhibit political participation outside of the electoral arena. There is a lot of truth to these claims, and under certain conditions,

particularly authoritarian and monopoly clientelism, clients may have little power or ability to mobilize independently. Yet, a vibrant wave of recent research has emphasized that clientelism in democratic contexts is more complex and dynamic than these traditional depictions (Auerbach, 2016, 2017; Auyero, 1999, 2000; Hilgers, 2009; Garay *et al.*, 2020). Where elections are competitive and elites do not have a monopoly over state resources, clientelist linkages are less oppressive and less coercive than in the past. In such contexts, brokers compete with each other for the support of prospective clients, who in turn have more choice and autonomy in choosing which clientelist networks (if any) to join and which brokers to support (Auerbach & Thachil, 2018; Hilgers, 2012; Gay, 1998). Thus, in democratic contexts like those that exist in much of Latin America, clientelism need not be in opposition to elite-challenging political activism.

For example, with regard to citizen claim making Nichter (2018) argues that individuals, rather than being passive subjects constrained by the power asymmetries of clientelist networks, often *choose* to enter into clientelist exchanges in order to secure valuable resources and solve pressing problems. At election time they willingly attend political rallies and turn out to vote when asked. However, in between elections they will organize to request benefits from governments and political machines as a way to gauge the credibility of patrons' promises and hold them accountable should they fail to deliver the goods. If brokers or local officials are not responsive to petitioners, they risk losing credibility, community support, and ultimately political influence (Levitsky, 2003; Nichter, 2018; Szwarcberg, 2015).

In the case of India, Auerbach showed that local associations, even those linked to clientelist networks, provide a medium for individuals and communities to demand public goods and services, like paved roads, sewers, drainage, streetlights, and more from the state in between elections. (Auerbach, 2016, 2017). Though elites may control valuable and scarce resources, they rarely have a secure monopoly on government patronage and so face competition from rival patrons and rival clientelist networks. In such contexts, petitioning elites for government assistance and services, even if it occurs from within clientelist networks, may still be an autonomous and meaningful way that citizens forge relationships with the state, exert pressure on elites, and hold elites accountable in between elections (Auerbach, 2017; Auerbach and Thachil, 2018; Garay *et al.*, 2020; Nichter & Peress, 2016).

With regards to protests, mostly ethnographic studies have shown that clientelism is sometimes at the root of contentious collective action. This was the case, for example, with the Piquetero movement in Argentina, where protests and citizen claim making were influenced in important ways by clientelist networks and the organizational infrastructure they provided (Auyero, 2007; Auyero *et al.*, 2009; Poma, 2020). Similarly, in Bolivia patronage politics frequently gave rise to contentious collective action as part of the normal democratic process in which political parties fought for supporters and for political power (Lapegna & Auyero, 2012; Lazar,

2004). In Mexico City, Hilgers described ways in which leaders of urban popular organizations used clientelist strategies to mobilize protest and collective claim making activities both to demonstrate their power to political leaders above them, and to signal the relevance of membership to those below. At times protest and claim making activities *preceded* efforts to mobilize turnout and electoral support for political candidates (Hilgers, 2009). The imperative to mobilize protests and claim making activities may be most important when parties and brokers find themselves in the opposition and therefore without direct access to state resources. In such cases mobilizing supporters to make demands on the state is an important way that clientelist leaders demonstrate their ongoing mobilizational power and ability to advocate for supporters even though they do not control political office.

These studies also show that clientelism's grip on individuals, even very poor ones, is contingent on the quality, quantity and frequency with which patrons deliver goods (Auyero, 1999; Hilgers, 2009; Nichter, 2018). In contexts where organizations and patrons compete with each other, clients choose which organizations to join and which patrons to support (Auerbach & Thachil, 2018). If patrons fail to deliver on their promises or prove ineffective at securing goods and services for members, individuals may defect to other organizations or even launch contentious collective activities to demand the goods and services promised to them. In sum, all of this scholarship points to what Auyero, Lapegna, and Poma identify as a strong "recursive relationship" between clientelism and political participation. According to them, rather than suppressing elite challenging political activism, clientelism may lie at the root of collective action and claim making activities (Auyero *et al.*, 2009).

If these studies are correct that clientelism can foster participation in non-electoral forms of political activism, analysis of LAPOP's AmericasBarometer surveys should reveal a positive relationship between receiving vote-buying offers and participation in protests and government contacting activity. Vote-buying is only one aspect of clientelist exchanges, but it is almost always present where clientelist linkages exist (Nichter, 2018), which makes it a reasonable proxy measure of the prevalence of clientelism in an area. However, using vote-buying to measure clientelistic recruitment might create a difficult test of this expectation since vote buying is closely associated with *electoral* clientelism and not necessarily with participation in nonelectoral activities. Also, receiving a vote-buying offer does not necessarily mean that individuals accepted the offer or that they are enmeshed in a clientelist network. Studies also show that such inducements can backfire, creating distrust in the political process and perhaps inducing apathy rather than activism (Carlin & Moseley, 2022; González Ocantos *et al.*, 2014). As such, if we observe a relationship between receiving vote-buying offers and participation in protests and contacting activity, we can have greater confidence that



clientelism more generally is associated with participation in nonelectoral political activities.

**H1a (electoral mobilization):** As a baseline expectation, individuals who receive a vote-buying offer should be more likely to report voting in elections and participating in campaign rallies and activities.

**H1b (non-electoral mobilization):** Individuals who receive a vote-buying offer are more likely to report participating in protests and contacting government officials.

Protests may seem like a threat to patrons whose main goal is to win elections and control political demands from below (Boulding & Holzner, 2020). But in certain contexts, especially where protests are commonplace or parties suddenly find themselves in the opposition, clientelist networks may supply individuals with the organizational support necessary to mobilize collective, even contentious political action (Moseley, 2018). In one of the few quantitative analyses of clientelism and protests, Moseley makes a strong case that clientelism and collective action can coexist in so-called “protest states” like Argentina and Bolivia. According to this argument, in countries where contentious behavior has been normalized as a political tool by both citizens and elites, political elites use the distribution of patronage to mobilize supporters into contentious collective activity in much the same way that they mobilize individuals and groups to the polls or to political rallies, for example through the offer of a material reward, or punishment in the case of non-participation (Moseley, 2018).

Though Moseley makes this argument for protest states like Argentina and Bolivia, there is no reason this dynamic cannot operate elsewhere, especially where clientelism is common and elections are competitive. The existence of competitive elections means that patrons and brokers will periodically lose elections and lack reliable access to state resources. In such situations mobilizing protests may be an effective way for patrons and brokers who are out of power to secure benefits for their members and demonstrate their ongoing relevance to clients. From this perspective, clientelist networks don't just coexist with protests, they may foster them by supplying the key structures and resources for individuals to participate in contentious collective action (Auyero *et al.*, 2009; Moseley, 2018).

**H1c (institutional context):** We should observe the relationship between vote-buying offers and participation in protests and contacting activity in a wide-range of institutional contexts, not just in contexts where protests are common.

Why would exposure to clientelism be related to participation in non-electoral activities? Recent scholarship, much of it based on detailed qualitative studies and

deep ethnographic work, suggests that experiences with clientelism may foster greater political activism through two causal mechanisms. First, because organizations are critical to both clientelism and participation, clientelist networks may supply individuals with the organizational support necessary to protest and carry out claim-making activities. Second, and somewhat counterintuitively, experiences with clientelism can help individuals develop political skills, political engagement, and strong party affiliations that support all kinds of political activity.

### ***Clientelism, Organizations and Political Participation***

Though many studies emphasize the individual and particularistic nature of clientelist exchanges, the reality is that clientelism often operates through both partisan and non-partisan community organizations where organizational leaders serve as brokers in clientelist exchanges (Auerbach, 2017; Auyero, 2000; Cornelius, 1974; Levitsky, 2003; Hilgers, 2009; Holland & Palmer-Rubin, 2015, Garay *et al.*, 2020). In fact, Holland and Palmer-Rubin find that organizational membership, not poverty or partisan activity, is the strongest predictor of exposure to vote buying in Latin America (2015). This makes sense since organizations increase both the effectiveness and efficiency of clientelist exchanges, giving brokers strong incentives to work through organizations (Boulding & Holzner, 2020, 2021). Organizations can make the distribution of benefits much more cost effective, since benefits are often granted to a group rather than to individuals. Perhaps more importantly, organizations do much of the work of monitoring behavior, distributing selective benefits, and mobilizing participation when necessary –all essential components to ensure the functioning of clientelist exchanges (Garay *et al.*, 2020).

Scholarship has long recognized the importance of *partisan* organizations for encouraging, cajoling, and coercing groups and individuals to participate primarily in *electoral* activities like voting and showing up at campaign rallies (Garay *et al.*, 2020; Stokes, 2005; Szwarcberg, 2015; Weitz-Shapiro, 2012). In addition to mobilizing electoral support for candidates, partisan organizations at times also have interests in mobilizing supporters into non-electoral activities like contacting government officials and even protests. Partisan brokers will encourage contacting both to demonstrate their effectiveness in securing resources for supporters, and to signal their mobilizing capacity to party elites (Auyero, 2000; Szwarcberg, 2015). Similarly, Auyero and others have shown that partisan brokers sometimes play key roles in mobilizing clients into contentious collective acts like protests, riots, and even looting (Auyero, 2007; Poma, 2020).

Though much of the emphasis in the literature is on the role that partisan organizations play in mobilizing people into politics, more recently scholarship has

shown that clientelist networks also operate through and are sustained by local organizations which may have only loose connections to political parties (Holland & Palmer-Rubin, 2015; Garay *et al.*, 2020; Hilgers, 2009; Levitsky, 2003). Brokers are often not politicians but leaders of community organizations who seek out clientelist relationships in order to secure resources for their members and enhance their own status and legitimacy (Szwarcberg, 2015). In turn, community organizations provide clientelist networks the resources and mobilizational structures necessary to encourage not just voting, but also protest and contacting activity.

Whereas *party* brokers have a primary interest in mobilizing individuals to the polls around election time, *organizational* brokers represent the individual and collective interests of members and so have an interest in demanding and securing benefits on their behalf. In between elections they mobilize ongoing claim-making activities to ensure that promised goods and services are delivered after elections are over. In many cases, mobilizing claim making activities rather than turnout at rallies or polls is the imperative for organizational brokers since it is through contacting activities that they secure the benefits that organizations need to recruit and maintain members (Garay *et al.*, 2020; Palmer-Rubin, 2019). This collective pressure can take the form either of collective demand making, in which a community organization mobilizes members to make claims on local and national governments, or in the form of more contentious protests. As Garay *et al.* note, organizations help empower individuals to demand hard-to-access social policy benefits by helping them exert collective pressure to access such benefits (Garay *et al.*, 2020). Though this type of collective pressure from below may operate from within the logic of clientelism, often this kind of collective mobilization is autonomously organized, is less conditioned on partisan support, and maybe an effective means of holding political elites accountable.

In short, patrons and brokers interested in mobilizing individuals into protests and claim making activity can't do so effectively if they target primarily atomized individuals who do not participate in organizations. Instead, to mobilize individuals and groups efficiently and effectively, clientelist elites must tap into the mobilizational capacities of organizations by finding ways to enmesh whole organizations and their members in clientelist networks. One strategy for doing so is to offer gifts, services, and access to social policy benefits to organizations as a whole rather than to individuals. Thus, if the effect of clientelist recruitment on protest and contacting activity operates through community and partisan organizations, then we should expect that members of such organizations will be more likely to receive vote-buying offers than individuals who do not participate in such organizations.

**H2 (organizational recruitment):** Members of both partisan and non-partisan organizations should be more likely to receive vote and participation buying offers

than people who do not participate in community organizations. Members of partisan organizations should be the most likely to receive such offers, but vote-buying should also be common among members of non-political and community organizations.

### *Clientelism and Participatory Attitudes*

Exposure to vote and participation buying offers may also have the counterintuitive effect of producing the skills, the interest in politics, and the partisan loyalties that supports higher levels of political activism even in the absence of external mobilization efforts. One of the best predictors of political participation is past political activity, so participation in rallies, meetings, and elections mobilized from within clientelist networks may provide individuals with valuable political experiences that supports further political activism. Canel (2012), Hilgers (2009), and others have documented ways that clientelism has positive effects on collective action and political involvement by providing individuals with important organizational and participatory skills. The experience and perhaps excitement of attending rallies, hearing speeches, and participating in marches can pique people's interest in politics and give them a sense that they can be effective participants in the political process. When clientelist exchanges are less coercive and individuals have more choice, experiences within clientelist networks may also teach individuals participatory values and engender an interest in politics that supports further political activism (Hilgers, 2009).

Experiences within clientelist networks may also strengthen partisan identities, since the connections with party brokers and attendance at entertaining political rallies where participants yell party slogans, listen to passionate speeches, and wear the colors of the political party builds a sense of collective and partisan identity (Auyero, 2000; Lazar, 2004). These identities in turn make future political activism more likely, even if it is not mobilized from within clientelist networks.

Thus, if clientelism encourages non-electoral political participation through its effect on political attitudes and engagement, I expect that individuals who are exposed to vote-buying offers will report higher levels of interest in politics, stronger partisan identities, and more political efficacy than those who do not receive such offers. Though it is possible that more engaged individuals seek out clientelist exchanges, ethnographic studies suggest that a more common scenario is one in which individuals join clientelist networks to solve concrete problems and gain access to essential goods and services, not because they have an inherent interest in politics. In my own field research, I saw how individuals with little prior political experience with or interest in politics developed a greater interest in politics and stronger partisan identification as a result of participation in clientelist

politics. Thus, I hypothesize that exposure to vote buying efforts also have an indirect effect on political participation through the development of political attitudes that foster greater political activism.

**H3 (Political Attitudes):** Individuals who receive vote-buying offers should report a greater interest in politics, a greater sense of political efficacy, and stronger partisan identifications than individuals who do not receive such offers.

## DATA AND ANALYSIS

Much of the scholarship reviewed in the prior section is valuable because country studies and deep ethnographic work reveals in detail how clientelist exchanges work in practice to promote political activism. Importantly, they give us clues about how the causal process linking clientelism and participation works. However, most of these studies focus on a single country, and sometimes a single city or neighborhood, so questions remain about the generalizability of their findings. The goal of the rest of the paper is to use survey data to show that experiences with clientelism are important predictors of protesting and contacting activity across many countries in Latin America. The survey data won't allow a direct test all of the proposed mechanisms, nor allow us to make causal claims with confidence, but it can show whether there is a close relationship between clientelism, membership in organizations, and the development of participatory values and attitudes across the region.

This paper uses LAPOP's 2010 and 2014 AmericasBarometer surveys from 18 Latin American countries to examine the effect of vote and participation buying offers on protest and contacting activity.<sup>2</sup> The two main dependent variables of interest are participation in protests and experiences contacting government officials. *Protest* is a dichotomous variable which indicates whether a respondent participated in a protest or march during the last 12 months.<sup>3</sup> *Contactany* is also a dichotomous variable constructed from four questions that ask about respondent's contacting activity:

- 1) *Contactlocal*: "In order to solve your problems have you ever requested help or cooperation from a local public official or local government: for example,

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2. The 2012 wave is not used because it only asked questions about experiences with vote buying in a small number of countries.

3. The question does not specify what kind of protest (riots, blockades, etc.), or what the content of the protest demands are. But since the survey asks separate questions about participation in campaign rallies, we can be confident this question is not conflating participation in protest with participation in noncontentious electoral events.

- a mayor, municipal council, councilman, provincial official, civil governor or governor?" (AmericasBarometer 2010, 2014)
- 2) *Petitionlocal*: "Have you sought assistance from or presented a request to any office, official or councilperson of the municipality within the past 12 months?" (AmericasBarometer 2010, 2014)
  - 3) *Contactfederal*: "In order to solve your problems have you ever requested help or cooperation from any ministry or minister (federal), state agency, or public agency or institution?" (AmericasBarometer 2010)
  - 4) *Contactcongress*: "In order to solve your problems have you ever requested help or cooperation from a member of Congress/Parliament?" (AmericasBarometer 2010)

I recode these four questions into a binary variable (*contactany*) that takes on the value of 1 if respondents report that they have ever participated in any of these contacting activities and 0 if they did not report any kind of contacting activity. In the 2014 wave, only *contactlocal* and *petitionlocal* were asked of respondents, so only these two questions were used to create *contactany* for 2014.<sup>4</sup>

The key independent variable of interest is exposure to clientelism. The two survey waves ask similar questions about respondent's exposure to vote or participation buying offers. The 2010 survey asks whether a "candidate or someone from a political party offered you something like a favor, food or any other benefit in return for your vote or support?" and respondents indicate whether they received such an offer "never", "sometimes", or "often." In 2014 the question asks respondents whether any candidate or political party offered them "something, like a favor, gift or any other benefit" in exchange for their support or vote. Unlike the 2010 question, here respondents were asked simply to indicate whether or not they received such a vote or participation buying offer. For consistency, I recoded these questions into a dichotomous variable (*clientelism*) which takes on the value of 1 if respondents were exposed to a vote buying offer "sometimes" or "often" in 2010 and if they were exposed to such an offer in 2014.

All measures of clientelism suffer from social-desirability bias, so most surveys systematically underestimate the actual prevalence of vote-buying practices (Castro Cornejo & Beltrán, 2022; González Ocantos *et al.*, 2012). These concerns are partially attenuated in LAPOP's AmericasBarometer surveys because the question asks respondents whether they were *offered* benefits in exchange for their votes, not whether they *accepted* such offers. Since respondents did not need to admit participating in a clientelist exchange (which is one of the biggest sources

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4. Unfortunately, the survey does not provide information about what respondents are demanding, but the questions do make clear that the contacting activity is directed at government officials, whether at the local or national level, and not at organizational or partisan brokers.

of non-response or biased response), social desirability pressures are reduced. Despite worries about underreporting of vote buying in these surveys, the data suggest that clientelism is common across Latin American. Overall, 12 % of respondents from the region reported receiving a vote-buying offer, with average levels of vote-buying ranging from a low of about 5 % in Costa Rica and Uruguay, to a high of 18 % in Honduras and 23 % in the Dominican Republic.

The analysis includes information about respondent's participation in both community and party organizations. *Polparty* is a dichotomous variable that indicates whether or not a respondent has attended meetings of a political party or political organizations at least once during the past year. The variable *organization* is based on the following prompt: "I am going to read you a list of groups and organizations. Please tell me if you attend meetings of these organizations once a week, once or twice a month, once or twice a year, or never." Organizations listed are religious organizations, parents' associations at school, community organizations, professional associations (e. g., of merchants or farmers), and women's organizations. I recode these questions into a dichotomous variable (*organization*) to indicate whether or not a respondent attended a meeting of any organization at least once or twice a year. These measures of party and organizational participation do not capture heavy organizational involvement, which is necessary for individuals to develop skills, democratic attitudes, and experience personal transformations that motivate political action in an autonomous way. Therefore, if we do see a relationship between organizational involvement, clientelism, and political activism we can have more confidence that it is not the result of skills or attitudes individuals learned in the organizations, but rather the result of the role that organizations play as nodes of recruitment for political parties and brokers.

I am also interested in the relationship between exposure to clientelist vote buying offers and political attitudes and partisan identities. The models analyzed below contain a 4-point measure of interest in politics (*polinterest*) (where 1 = "none", 2 = "a little", 3 = "some", 4 = "a lot") and a 7-point measure of political efficacy (*efficacy*) that indicates how strongly respondents agree with the statement "You feel like you understand the most important political issues of this country." I also include a dichotomous measure of partisan identification (*partyID*) which indicates whether or not respondents identify with any political party. Finally, the models include a number of common socioeconomic controls, including education levels, age, sex, wealth<sup>5</sup>, and urban/rural residence.

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5. Instead of self-reported income measure which suffers from nonresponse issues and may not be comparable across countries, I follow the lead of Córdova (2008) and create a 5-point quintile measure of wealth based on questions about ownership of assets.

## RESULTS

To test the relationship between clientelism and participation in nonelectoral political activities, I run several multilevel logit regression models with fixed year effects where protest and different kinds of contacting activity are the dependent variables (Models 3-7 in Table 1). For comparison, I run similar models to test the relationship between clientelism and voting and participating in campaign events, the two forms of political activism most closely associated with clientelist mobilization (Models 1-2).<sup>6</sup> The results in Table 1 provide evidence to support the first set of hypotheses: that individuals who receive a vote-buying offer are more likely to report participating in both electoral and nonelectoral political activity. Of most theoretical interest, the results confirm that receiving a vote-buying offer is a strong predictor of participation in protests and in many kinds of government contacting at both the local and federal level. The estimated effects of vote-buying on government contacting is particularly large. An analysis of predicted marginal effects shows that vote buying increases the likelihood of voting, protesting, and participating in campaigns by about 3 %, 3 % and 6 %, respectively. By comparison vote-buying is estimated to increase participation in government contacting activity by nearly 12 %. These results therefore provide support for the main expectation of this paper that clientelist mobilization, namely vote buying efforts, foster participation in non-electoral political activities like protests and citizen claim making.

**Table 1. Impact of Clientelism on Political Participation**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Vote	Campaign	Protest	Any Contact	Contact Local	Contact federal	Contact congress
Clientelist Offer	0.247*** (0.040)	0.714*** (0.053)	0.372*** (0.048)	0.610*** (0.033)	0.638*** (0.034)	0.525*** (0.063)	0.803*** (0.069)
Education	0.064*** (0.003)	0.026*** (0.006)	0.041*** (0.005)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.005 (0.003)	0.028*** (0.006)	-0.0159* (0.008)
Wealth Quintile	0.003 (0.009)	-0.057*** (0.017)	0.031* (0.013)	-0.036*** (0.009)	-0.042*** (0.009)	-0.059** (0.019)	-0.038 (0.023)

6. *Vote* is a dichotomous variable indicating whether or not a respondent voted in the last presidential election. *Campaign* is a dichotomous variable that indicates whether or not a respondent worked for a party or candidate in the last presidential election. This question was not asked in 2014, so the results include only responses from the 2010 surveys.



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	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Vote	Campaign	Protest	Any Contact	Contact Local	Contact federal	Contact congress
Female	0.086*** (0.024)	-0.210*** (0.044)	-0.16*** (0.035)	0.057* (0.023)	0.0600* (0.024)	-0.017 (0.05)	0.162** (0.061)
Age	0.057*** (0.001)	0.005*** (0.002)	-0.01*** (0.0013)	0.006*** (0.001)	0.006*** (0.001)	0.006*** (0.0017)	0.001 (0.002)
Community Org.	0.267*** (0.028)	0.180** (0.060)	0.350*** (0.048)	0.710*** (0.032)	0.712*** (0.033)	0.790*** (0.074)	0.530*** (0.09)
Political Party	0.350*** (0.038)	1.550*** (0.048)	0.915*** (0.040)	0.770*** (0.030)	0.772*** (0.030)	0.663*** (0.060)	0.860*** (0.070)
Internal Efficacy	0.015* (0.007)	0.063*** (0.013)	0.060*** (0.011)	0.041*** (0.007)	0.0454*** (0.007)	0.0071 (0.015)	0.056** (0.018)
Party ID	0.563*** (0.029)	0.680*** (0.048)	0.260*** (0.039)	0.194*** (0.026)	0.201*** (0.027)	0.150** (0.057)	0.284*** (0.068)
Interest in Politics	0.185*** (0.014)	0.385*** (0.024)	0.316*** (0.02)	0.132*** (0.013)	0.132*** (0.013)	0.174*** (0.028)	0.131*** (0.034)
Compulsory Voting	0.690*** (0.190)						
Voted in Last Presidential Election			0.003 (0.046)	0.180*** (0.030)	0.220*** (0.030)	0.044 (0.065)	0.270** (0.084)
Constant	-2.570*** (0.140)	-4.500*** (0.140)	-4.240*** (0.130)	-2.780*** (0.097)	-2.939*** (0.098)	-4.091*** (0.160)	-4.380*** (0.190)
Observations	50,655	27,237	50,359	50,309	48,106	22,921	22,930

Source: LAPOP 2010, 2014. Results for Models 6 & 7 include only responses from 2010 since those questions were not asked in 2014.

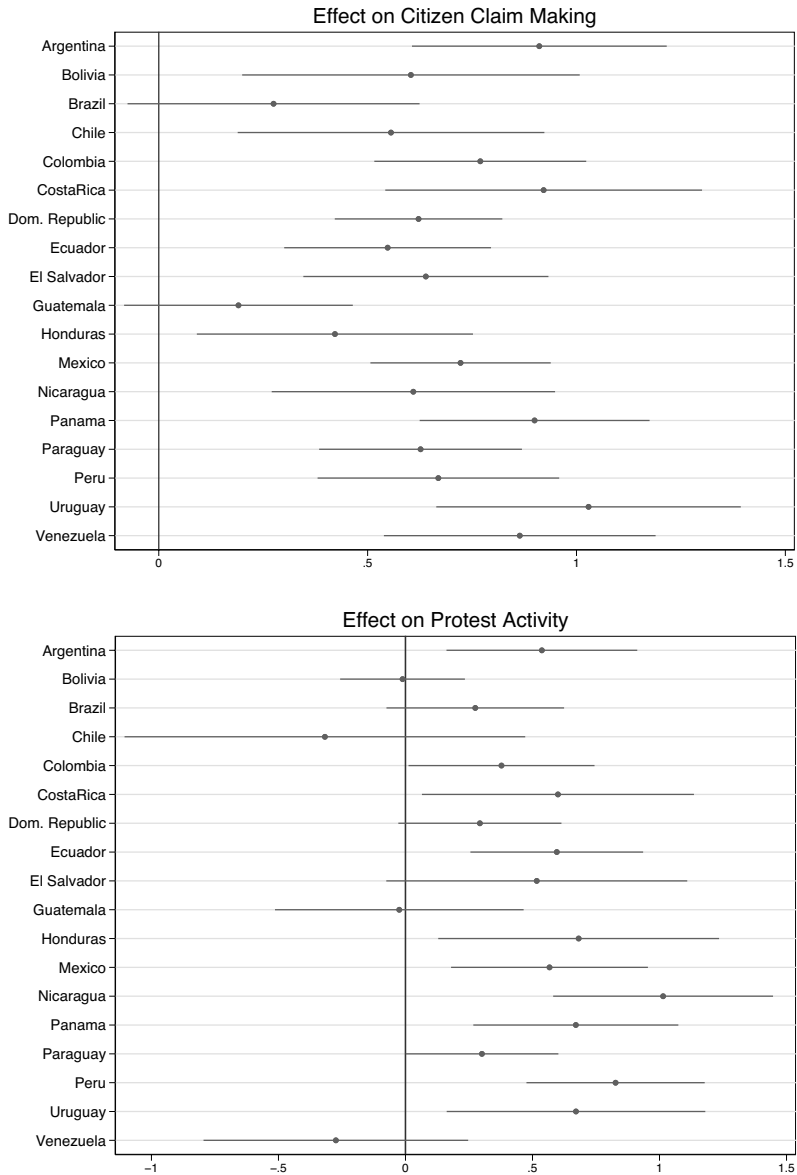
Standard errors in parentheses; \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

An alternative explanation for these results is that the relationship between clientelism and protesting and government contacting activity is spurious –the result of individuals being members of organizations which make both clientelist recruitment and political activity more likely. It might also be possible that the effect of vote-buying operates through prior political activism, namely that clientelist networks mobilize people to the polls and it is this prior experience with political activism that makes it more likely individuals will protest or make claims on governments. Including prior voting experiences along with involvement with civic and party organizations in the models helps rule out these alternative explanations. Moreover, it is encouraging to find that exposure to vote-buying remains a significant predictor of both protest and government contacting activity even after controlling for these other factors. In fact, among respondents who are not members of any type of organizations and *did not* receive a vote-buying offer, only 4 % reported protesting compared to 6 % *who did* receive a vote-buying offer. The effect on contacting was even larger: among those who did not receive a vote-buying offer only 12 % reported contacting a government official compared to 20 % who did receive such an offer. This suggests that clientelist recruitment has a significant effect on political activism independent of whether an individual participates in civic or partisan organizations.

Moseley found similar results in Argentina and Bolivia and argued that in protest states clientelism can foster greater participation in protests and marches. My argument implies that this dynamic should also exist in other contexts where protests are less prevalent (H1c). To test whether vote-buying offers have a significant positive effect on protest and contacting activity across institutional contexts, I run logit models similar to those above for each of the 18 countries included in the LAPOP sample. The top part of Figure 1 reports only the coefficient (and 95 % confidence intervals) of *clientelism* in models predicting the likelihood of protest for each of the countries, and the bottom part does the same for political contacting. The results show that the mobilizing effect of clientelism on protests and contacting activity is not limited to protest states. In fact, exposure to vote-buying offers has a positive and significant effect on protesting in 11 of the 17 countries, including Costa Rica, Mexico and Uruguay which have strong democratic institutions and where protests are not a normalized parts of politics. The effect of clientelism on contacting is even more consistent: it is positive and significant in 15 of the 17 countries.

One reason scholars are skeptical about the mobilizing capacity of clientelism outside of elections is because of the common presumption that it involves the exchange of particularized benefits between patrons and individual citizens, which divides groups and inhibits collective action (Hicken, 2011; Scott, 1972). I hypothesized instead that clientelism makes participation in protests and government contacting activity more likely precisely because of its embeddedness in

**Figure 1. Effect of Clientelist mobilization on Protest and Citizen Claim Making across Latin American Countries**



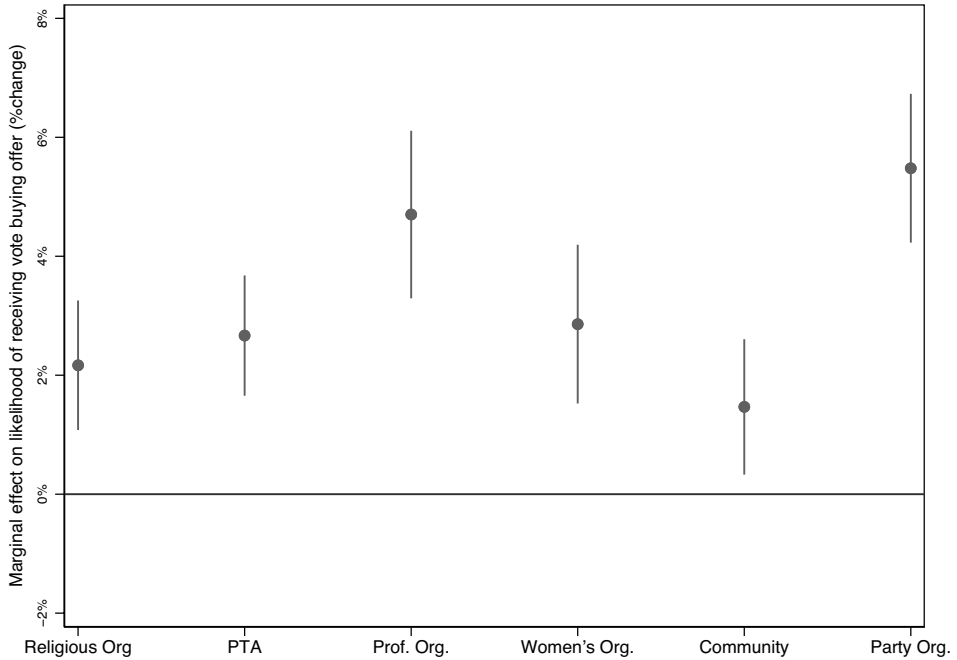
Source: LAPOP 2010 & 2014; control variables are included in the analysis but omitted from the results.

both partisan and grass-roots organizations. An interesting question to examine is whether clientelism is more likely to operate through partisan organizations, or whether it is more likely to operate through certain kinds of community organizations than others. It is certainly reasonable to expect that participation in partisan organizations would make it more likely that individuals would be exposed to vote-buying offers. What about organizations that are more clearly non-political, like religious groups or parent-teacher organizations?

To explore these issues, I estimate the effect of organizational involvement on the likelihood someone receives a vote-buying offer using mixed-level logit model where the dichotomous variable *clientelism* is the dependent variable. The LAPOP surveys asks questions about membership and participation in a variety of organizations, including parent's organizations (PTAs), religious, women's, professional, community and partisan organizations. The model includes dummy variables for each organization type, in addition to the previously used socio-economic control variables. Figure 2 reports the predicted marginal effects of participation in different kinds of organizations on the likelihood of receiving a vote-buying offer. Not surprisingly, participation in partisan organizations has the largest estimated effect, but participation in any kind of organizations – including religious or parent's organizations – makes it more likely an individual will be exposed to clientelist vote buying offers. The survey analysis cannot determine whether this relationship between organizations and clientelism is the result of brokers reaching out to organizations, or because individuals and community organizations choose to develop linkages to political parties in order to signal party loyalty and gain access to benefits. Both dynamics are likely very common, and for the purposes of my argument the direction of causality does not matter. What matters is that vote-buying offers are commonly made through organizations and to individuals affiliated with organizations, rather than to atomized voters (H2).

Finally, I also expect clientelism to impact protest and contacting activity through its effect on people's partisan identification and taste for politics (H3). To test the impact of experiences with vote-buying on political attitudes and party identification, I estimate three regression models that predict party identification (*partyID*), levels of political interest (*polinterest*) and levels of political efficacy (*efficacy*). I estimate mixed-effect ordered logit models for *partyID* and *efficacy*, since those are ordinal dependent variables, and a mixed-effect logit model to predict *partyID* since it is a dichotomous variable. Each of the three models include all of the socioeconomic controls from before. In addition, to better isolate the effect of *clientelism* on political attitudes, I include controls for organizational involvement (*organization*), participation in partisan organizations (*polparty*) and prior voting experiences. The results of these three regression models are summarized in Figure 3, which shows that the coefficient for *clientelism* is a positive and significant predictor of efficacy, political interest and party identification. In other words,

**Figure 2. Predicted effect of organizational involvement on likelihood of receiving vote buying offer**



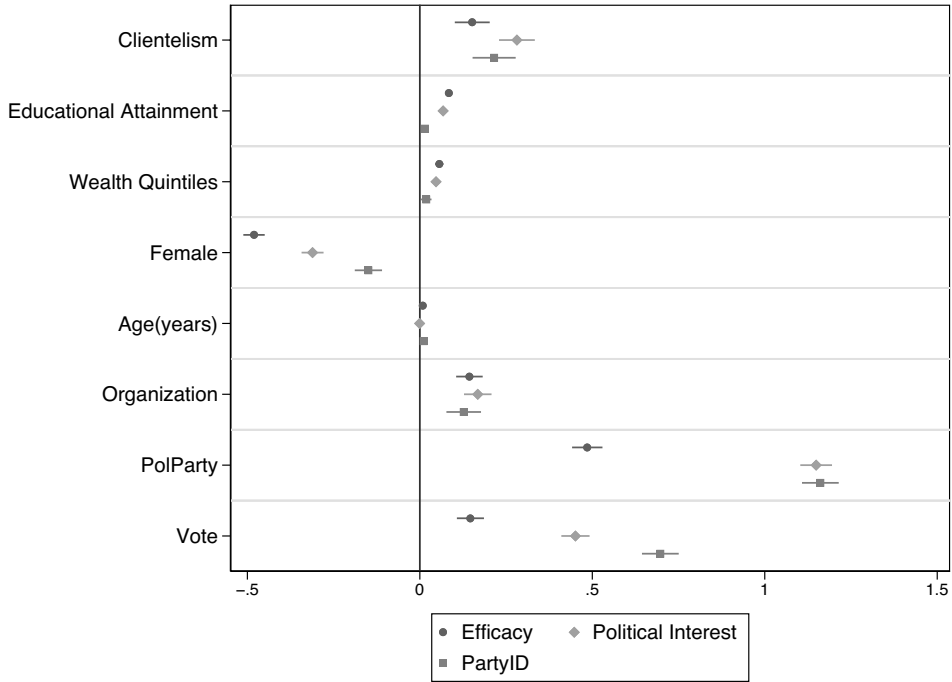
Source: LAPOP 2010 & 2014.

people who experience vote-buying offers, and are therefore likely enmeshed in clientelist networks, are more politically engaged and have stronger partisan identification than individuals who do not receive such offers – even after controlling for prior political activity and organizational involvement. In turn, higher levels of political engagement foster more protest and contacting activity, even in the absence of clientelist mobilization (Table 1).

### ***Issues of Causality***

The argument developed in this paper assumes that patrons and brokers take the first step in mobilizing individuals into protest and contact activities. However, an alternative explanation for these results is that the causal effects operate in the opposite direction. That is, it is possible that people who are already active in protests and contacting activities become targets for vote-buying efforts by political machines that are trying to secure the support of politically active

**Figure 3. Impact of experiences with clientelism on political attitudes and engagement**



Source: LAPOP 2010 & 2014.

individuals. Similarly, it is possible that instead of individuals developing participatory and democratic attitudes as a result of participation mobilized through clientelist networks, it is clientelist machines that target individuals with participatory and democratic attitudes. Individuals who are more interested in politics, more efficacious, and have stronger party identifications may seek out clientelist networks in order to signal partisan loyalty, resolve problems and gain access to valuable resources and services. Particularly in contexts where states have little ability to deliver essential services to all citizens equally, politically savvy individuals may join clientelist organizations to secure preferential access to essential goods and services. These issues of causality cannot be definitively resolved with cross-sectional survey data, and in practice political activism and clientelism are likely intertwined in a recursive relationship (Auyero *et al.*, 2009).

Nonetheless, most studies of clientelism agree that it is unlikely that more politically sophisticated citizens seek out vote-buying offers because they tend to have negative views of the practice as undemocratic and corrupt (Carlin and

Moseley, 2022; González Ocantos *et al.*, 2014; Weitz-Shapiro, 2012). It is also unlikely that clientelist machines target engaged and democratically inclined individuals since such targeting usually proves costly and inefficient (Carlin and Moseley, 2015, 2022). Other qualitative studies and ethnographic accounts also give us greater confidence that the causal effects operate in the hypothesized direction. These studies have shown that the more common case is one in which clientelist mobilization precedes participation in nonelectoral political activity (Canel, 2012; Gay, 1998; Lazar, 2004; Hilgers, 2009; Poma, 2020). This is especially the case among poor citizens who are both more likely to welcome vote-buying offers and otherwise lack the resources or ability to undertake difficult political acts like contacting and protesting on their own. In this dynamic, individuals join clientelist organizations not because they have an interest in politics or care particularly deeply about partisan politics, but as a problem-solving strategy and to get access to selective benefits (Auyero, 2000). In the process they are exposed to political stimuli and mobilized into political activities that teach them skills and pique their interest in politics. As Hilgers noted, some people who join clientelist organizations for instrumental reasons come “to see the importance of the activities that are required aspects of the exchange bargain”, like attendance at associations meetings, political rallies, and community assemblies (Hilgers, 2009: 13). Though many put little thought into these activities, others come “to see activism as personally fulfilling and important for society at large. These erstwhile clients responded to their experiences of clientelism by making the patron’s projects their own and actively supporting the party.” (Hilgers, 2009: 13)

## CONCLUSION

Most research on clientelist mobilization focuses on the impact of vote-buying on electoral activities like voting and participation in campaign rallies. This analysis adds to the existing literature by showing that exposure to vote-buying offers is also strongly correlated with participation in non-electoral political activities like protesting and citizen claim making, even after controlling for many other possible causal factors. The analysis builds on recent case studies and ethnographic accounts that tease out the causal connections between clientelist mobilization and political activity beyond the electoral arena. Based on these studies, I hypothesized that exposure to vote buying offers could have both direct and indirect effects on the likelihood individuals will engage in nonelectoral political activity. The organizational basis of clientelism allows elites to use clientelist mobilization strategies to encourage participation in protests and contacting activity in much the same way that they use organizations to increase turnout and participation in political rallies. In addition, clientelist networks may

supply groups of citizens with the organizational support, resources, and structures necessary to mount collective challenges on their own. For example, when elites renege on their promises, clients, especially those who can tap into existing organizational resources, might organize collective acts of resistance to demand the delivery of promised goods and services. I also argue that clientelism may have an indirect effect on political participation by increasing individual's interest in politics, their sense of political efficacy, and strengthening partisan identities. By cultivating these participatory attitudes, clientelist mobilization can boost people's willingness and ability to participate in activities like political demand making and protests on their own, even when not mobilized by elites.

The statistical results provide support for these hypotheses. The analysis revealed a robust region-wide relationship between clientelism, political attitudes and non-electoral modes of political participation. Vote-buying offers were strongly correlated with both protest and government contacting activity in most every country in Latin America. Though studies often emphasize the partisan nature of clientelism and vote-buying, the analysis also showed that being a member of a community organization, even ostensibly nonpolitical ones, makes it much more likely individuals will receive vote-buying offers. People who receive vote-buying offers are also significantly more interested in politics, have stronger partisan identities, and report more political efficacy, all factors that make it more likely they will be politically active.

These results are evidence that clientelism can coexist with collective, even contentious, modes of political participation. However, the study is limited by the cross-sectional nature of the data, and we must be careful not to make claims about causality that the data does not support. The main contribution of this analysis is to show that clientelism is not antithetical to non-electoral modes of political activity, even contentious collective action that seeks to hold parties and elites accountable. Future research should further explore these and other possible causal mechanisms linking clientelism and political participation, ideally by combining qualitative and quantitative research methodologies that complement each other (Auerbach, 2017).

One line of inquiry is to better understand the conditions under which vote buying and clientelist mobilization produces participatory values and attitudes. This connection between clientelism and political engagement is one of the more surprising findings of the analysis, but teasing out exactly who experiences this effect, or what kind of institutional contexts are more likely to foster it, is beyond the scope of this paper. Future studies could explore whether this effect of vote-buying is stronger for poor or more affluent individuals, or perhaps determine whether the effect is mediated by the characteristics of the organization in which individuals are embedded. I also suggested that protest and claim-making activity may be more likely to occur when clientelist machines lose elections and therefore access to state



patronage. In such situations, brokers and parties who lack institutionalized access to government patronage might mobilize their supporters to the streets in attempts to remain relevant and legitimate in the eyes of current and prospective clients. Citizens whose clientelist network lost elections might also take up claim-making or even protest activities on their own out of fear of being excluded from the distribution of public goods. Future studies could further investigate how elections and political competition impact the mobilization strategies used by clientelist machines (Beltrán & Castro Cornejo, 2019).

Finally, the findings presented in this paper contribute to the emerging debate about the benefits and drawbacks of clientelist mobilization for democracy (Hilgers, 2012). Most studies still presume that clientelism harms democracy by breeding apathy rather than activism, especially among poor citizens who make up large pluralities in most Latin American countries. The “patronage trap” is real (Palmer-Rubin, 2019), and very often clientelist exchanges hinder individual and collective capacities to mobilize in an autonomous way. But under certain conditions clientelist networks may educate and activate citizens and allow for a certain amount of political agency. By cultivating stronger partisan identities, clientelist mobilization might also help stabilize and even strengthen parties and party systems, particularly where clientelism operates through grass roots organizations. This also suggests that clientelism might do more than solve people’s immediate problems. The organizational basis of many clientelist exchanges may empower citizens to mobilize collective challenges and demand not just particularistic benefits, but also social benefits and rights to which they are entitled (Garay *et al.*, 2020). If clientelism operates through organizations, it may provide individuals and associations with greater capacity to mobilize against elites when they fail to deliver promised benefits. Instead of waiting for the next election cycle to punish parties that renege on their promises, clients who are also members of grass roots organizations, may mobilize autonomously to hold parties accountable in between elections, thus increasing citizen voice rather than silencing it.

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