

## I

## Introduction

You must have a wide variety of people around you on a daily basis. Voters will judge you on what sort of crowd you draw both in terms of quality and numbers. The three types of followers are those who greet you at home, those who escort you down to the Forum, and those who accompany you wherever you go. (Quintus Tullius Cicero)<sup>1</sup>

In recent decades, the distribution of gifts to voters during election campaigns has become the norm in Peru. While campaigning, candidates and their supporters give away all sorts of perks, including the likes of free alcohol and meals; food staples such as rice, flour, milk, or fish in coastal areas; T-shirts and caps bearing party logos; pots, pans, and cups; cookers and gas tanks; household appliances; cement bags and other construction materials; wheelchairs; and even sums of money to be raffled among participants at campaign events. A list experiment conducted after the 2010 local elections, estimated that around 12.8 percent of voters were offered a benefit in exchange for their vote during the 2010 subnational campaign (González-Ocantos *et al.* 2012a). Moreover, conventional surveys corroborate this finding, showing that at least 12 percent of Peruvian voters are regularly offered goods during campaigns in exchange for electoral support (Faughnan and Zechmeister 2011).

Gift distribution is particularly notable during subnational elections, but it is also commonplace during candidate visits and campaign events in presidential and congressional races. For instance, during the 2011 presidential election, multiple allegations were made against *Fuerza Popular*,

<sup>1</sup> Cicero 2012.

the *Fujimorista* party, for intensive distribution of freebies while campaigning.<sup>2</sup> In the southern region of Ayacucho, *Fujimoristas* even distributed the so-called “Keiko-kit” made up of several *Fujimorismo*-branded items for personal and domestic use – a bracelet, a scarf, a T-shirt, a large notebook, a plastic food-container, a breakfast mug, a box of matches, a pen, a cap, a poster and a *Keiko Presidente* bag – to convince voters from low-income sectors and rural areas to support their presidential candidate.<sup>3</sup>

This distribution of gifts became so pervasive that in 2015 the Congress unanimously approved a bill prohibiting the practice during electoral campaigns. An exception was made for those goods regarded as valid in the context of electioneering (pens, calendars, key chains, and others), which could not exceed 0.5 percent of the statutory tax unit (approximately 5.5 US dollars) per item. The implementation of this law during the 2016 general election campaign resulted in the expulsion of a presidential candidate and several congressional candidates from the race. Despite these draconian sanctions, experts believe that, given the limited state capacity throughout the territory, the law will not be enough to counteract such a ubiquitous electoral strategy, particularly during subnational elections in which thousands of lists compete for office.

To be sure, candidates of all stripes engage in this type of electoral strategy, even political *outsiders* with no party affiliation who compete for the first time and do not have previous experience of electioneering. Peruvian politicians know that they *have to* deliver goods in order to run effective campaigns. As one campaigner puts it, “You need to know how to invest. You have to hand out construction materials, cement, calves, beer. It is an investment. If you don’t deliver, you are done: someone else will come and give away more.”<sup>4</sup> However, because candidates are not backed by stable organizations, these handouts cannot guarantee voters’ support at the polls. And politicians are well aware of this: “People receive handouts, but they do not commit. ‘Let him spend his money,’ they say.”<sup>5</sup> Another politician is even more direct: “All candidates give

<sup>2</sup> Alberto Fujimori was president of Peru between 1990 and 2000. He was well-known for having used intensively clientelistic and pork-barrel strategies to garner political support.

<sup>3</sup> *Janampa, Tycho*, “*Campaña fujimorista despliega plan ‘Merchandising’ en Ayacucho*”, *Noticias SER*, May 18, 2011. In: [www.noticiasser.pe/18/05/2011/ayacucho/campana-fujimorista-despliega-plan-%E2%80%9Cmerchandising%E2%80%9D-en-ayacucho](http://www.noticiasser.pe/18/05/2011/ayacucho/campana-fujimorista-despliega-plan-%E2%80%9Cmerchandising%E2%80%9D-en-ayacucho). See also “*Keiko Fujimori repartee comida entre los pobres a cambio de votos*”, *El Mundo*, May 6, 2011, in: [www.elmundo.es/america/2011/05/06/noticias/1304691775.html](http://www.elmundo.es/america/2011/05/06/noticias/1304691775.html).

<sup>4</sup> Personal interview with campaign manager Jorge Nuñez. Puno (June 12, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Personal interview with Jorge Martorell, former candidate and political advisor to the mayor of Cusco (May 17, 2010).

away goods ... If they offer you something, you accept. But you vote for whichever candidate you prefer.”<sup>6</sup>

Under prevailing theories of electoral clientelism, this widespread distribution of goods would be considered unlikely in the context of effective ballot secrecy (e.g., Auyero 2001; Stokes 2005; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Schaffer 2007a; Díaz-Cayero *et al.* 2007; Nichter 2008; Finan and Schechter 2012; Stokes *et al.* 2013; Lawson and Greene 2014; Zarazaga 2014, 2016). But these theories are inadequate in explaining the prevalence of electoral clientelism in countries with loose political organizations. Conventional wisdom among political scientists holds that in the absence of traditional bonds of deference, electoral clientelism requires well-organized political machines.<sup>7</sup> Clientelistic practices, it is argued, require extended organizations and enduring political relations, in part because of the problem of monitoring. Given that politicians usually deliver benefits such as food or cash before election day, voters could potentially “receive the benefit with one hand and vote with the other.”<sup>8</sup> Politicians, therefore, need local agents to target distribution and enforce the clientelistic bargain. According to this logic, it would be foolish to engage in clientelistic distribution during elections in developing democracies without the support of a dense grassroots infrastructure.

Nonetheless, electoral clientelism persists in weakly organized political contexts throughout the developing world. Despite a growing trend of party deinstitutionalization in Latin America (Mainwaring 2006; Gutiérrez 2007; Sánchez 2009; Morgan 2011; Luna and Altman 2011; Dargent and Muñoz 2011; Seawright 2012; Roberts 2015; Ronsenblatt forthcoming) electoral clientelism remains a widespread phenomenon across the region. Indeed, the assumed positive relationship between party organization and vote buying is not borne out empirically in the region. There is no significant statistical association between the frequency of reporting vote purchases and the organizational strength of the party system. Moreover, although not significant, the direction of the association is in fact negative.<sup>9</sup> As can be observed in Figure 1.1, reports of politicians offering material benefits during campaigns are common

<sup>6</sup> Personal interview with Edmundo Gatica, campaign manager of Fujimorismo. Cusco (September 6, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Kitschelt (2000: 849–50); Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes (2004: 85); Stokes (2005: 317); Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007: 8–9, 17); Magaloni *et al.* (2007: 185).

<sup>8</sup> Argentine politician quoted by Mariela Szwarcberg in an unpublished manuscript written in 2001. Reference taken from Stokes 2007a.

<sup>9</sup> The Pearson coefficient is  $-0.2566$  and its significance level is  $0.3202$ .

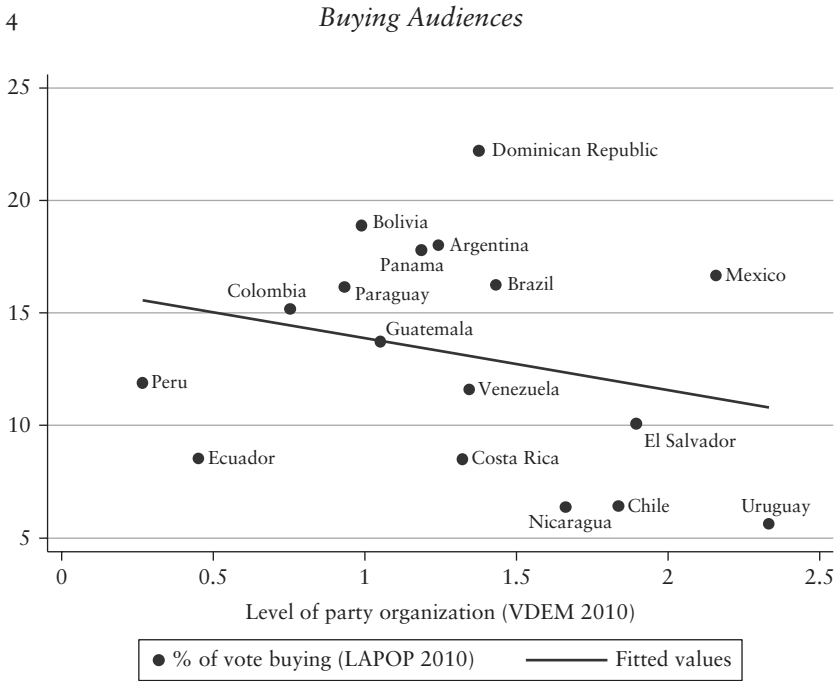


FIGURE 1.1. *Latin America 2010: Percentage of vote-buying attempts by level of party organization*  
 Sources: LAPOP (2010); VDEM (2010)

in countries with loosely organized parties. Although Peru is an extreme case of weak party organization, in clientelistic terms it lies quite close to other countries with weak parties, such as Colombia, and Guatemala, as well as those with more organized machines such as Venezuela or El Salvador. Similarly, Bolivia, another country without well-organized parties, scores higher in vote-buying frequency than do more organized systems, such as Mexico and Argentina. But despite this phenomenon, most studies on electoral clientelism in Latin America focus mainly on cases with stronger local party organization, the latter two countries.

Peru's barely organized politics might be much more representative of the region today than the strong and well-organized party system in Mexico, or the Peronist Party in Argentina. Therefore, in this book, I use Peru as a deviant case study for theory building and testing purposes. Electoral clientelism persists in Peru's democracy even though parties have remained inchoate since their collapse twenty years ago (Levitsky and Cameron 2003; Tanaka 2005a), while political brokers lack long-term party affiliations (Levitsky 2013; Tanaka and Meléndez 2014; Levitsky

and Zavaleta 2016). Why do candidates continue to employ clientelistic strategies in countries like Peru where, in the absence of political machines, they lack effective tools for enforcing the clientelistic bargain? And more generally, how do politicians campaign without organized parties?

Existing approaches do nothing to solve this puzzle because, as I argue, they concentrate only on the direct effects of clientelistic investments and fail to take competition and campaigning into account. Their theories have exaggerated the importance of organized networks and long-term relations in sustaining electoral clientelism. As discussed in depth in the second chapter, scholarly approaches focused on monitoring, reciprocity, or the conditional loyalty of clients all conceive electoral clientelism as an iterated relation backed up by political organizations. Consequently, these theories cannot account for short-term clientelistic transactions in unorganized settings. While recent theoretical studies (Szwarcberg 2012b; Holland and Palmer-Rubin 2015; Kramon 2016) address some of the shortcomings of this scholarly consensus and show that electoral clientelism can have an informational role in Latin America, they are still subject to inadequacies: some fail to tackle the paradox of how electoral clientelism persists without machines, while others do not fully develop the theoretical implications of their approach to explain how politicians campaign and establish varied political linkages in the absence of organized and enduring parties. This may be related to the fact that the literature on clientelism overlooks the presence of segmented and mixed electoral strategies (Luna 2014).

To deal with this conundrum, I propose an informational approach that stresses the indirect effects that investments in electoral clientelism early on in campaigns have on vote choice. From this perspective, electoral clientelism is a campaigning tool. In this chapter I begin by presenting my core arguments. Then, I discuss the theoretical relevance of this novel addition to the literature on electoral clientelism, campaigns, and party-voter linkages. Subsequently I present my research design. I conclude the chapter by providing an overview of the book.

#### THE ARGUMENT IN BRIEF

Prevailing approaches to analyzing clientelism as an electoral strategy assume that the main goal of politicians who distribute particularistic goods during campaigns is to buy votes, turnout, or abstention *directly* on election day. Consequently, electoral clientelism is portrayed as a campaign strategy aimed at influencing electoral results at the margins,

contributing to victory only in tight races. Scholars who espouse this approach maintain that politicians distribute selective incentives close to or on election day, as this – along with other strategies – helps them reduce the likelihood of commitment problems. In summary, scholars continue to assume that the only effects of electoral clientelism are direct ones.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast to existing approaches, my theory highlights the unfolding dynamics of the campaign itself and stresses the *indirect* effects that early investments in electoral clientelism have on electoral choices. I contend that the clientelistic strategies used during campaigns generate and transmit valuable information that is utilized by strategic actors to make electoral decisions. Electoral clientelism shapes who becomes a viable candidate – the “supply” from which voters choose the most desirable option. Simultaneously, it also shapes the demands that voters make of candidates. By influencing competition, preferences, and the dynamics of the race, electoral clientelism affects vote choices. From this perspective, electoral clientelism is not, by any means, just a marginal tool to obtain votes.

I argue that politicians may engage in clientelism not *once they have* a viable political machine, but *because they lack one* – that is, they may distribute gifts during elections in order to attract voters’ attention and influence unattached voters while campaigning. Electoral clientelism, thus, affects vote choices through two mechanisms. First, clientelism during campaigns is crucial to establishing candidates’ electoral viability. From early stages of the race onward, politicians induce voters, often mostly poor ones, to show up at rallies and other campaign events by offering them rewards. Moreover, the distribution of material rewards allows candidates’ campaign teams to make an impression, convey information, and signal to donors and the general public that they are *electorally viable candidates*. Actors’ beliefs about candidates’ prospects of winning are based, among other factors, on the perceived level of public support. By turning out large numbers of people at rallies, candidates establish and demonstrate their electoral prospects to the media, donors, benefit-seeking activists, and voters. In this way, politicians induce more and more donors and voters to support them strategically.

Second, candidates can use electoral clientelism to persuade voters while campaigning. Politicians buy voters’ participation as a means of getting their attention. But though the distribution of gifts buys participation

<sup>10</sup> An exception is the recent study by Schaffer and Baker (2015), which analyzes clientelism as a persuasion-buying of opinion-leader’s epicenters in informal conversation networks. The authors explore how politicians forge indirect linkages with voters by targeting relatively few individuals who work as social multipliers.

at campaign events, it may not necessarily be translated into support from voters at the polls. Indeed, without stable political attachments, most voters are opportunistic. Therefore, politicians need to work hard to transform the temporary hold they have on participants' attention into a firm electoral commitment. To this end, politicians deploy a series of mixed campaign appeals aimed at going beyond clientelism to forge political linkages with voters. First, during campaign events, politicians particularize their messages and promise particularistic benefits (local public goods) to specific constituencies. These events are also privileged opportunities to interact with poor voters and convey a candidate's personal traits. Indeed, personalistic campaigning becomes crucial to building credibility and trust in the eyes of unattached voters. Politicians can also expect to influence voters' choices by generating a positive "buzz" in the audience. In short, by providing citizens with valuable information at campaign events, politicians help clients, often mostly poor voters, form their preferences and make their political choices. They do so by combining campaign strategies and forging different types of political linkages.

My informational theory is well-suited to explaining electoral clientelism in loosely organized polities. Informational deficits are particularly severe in countries with weakly institutionalized parties (Moser 2001). Moreover, in contexts where political parties are poorly organized, and voters do not have lasting political attachments, elections are highly contested and there is greater uncertainty among politicians about their prospects of winning than in organized settings. As has been documented elsewhere (Bartels 1988), in races in which there is less information, substantive predispositions matter less in defining vote choices because voters give more weight to candidates' electoral chances.

Moreover, within loosely organized polities, the informational value of electoral clientelism can also vary for different types of elections. Strategic actors usually contrast the different sources of electoral information available, including turnout figures. In developing democracies, more information is usually available for national elections than for local elections. In the case of presidential elections, candidates need to have substantial name recognition before running successful campaigns. Likewise, national media and citizens are generally more attentive to presidential races. Opinion polls, in particular, tend to be conducted more frequently in presidential elections and become a primary source of information in defining electoral viability. Electoral surveys have a role that complements that of campaign rally turnouts, but this role is more important in national elections. Campaign clientelism should, thus, be

more effective in local campaigns than in national ones. Consequently, the informational approach, better explains the effects of electoral clientelism on candidates' trajectories in local elections than in national ones.

Similarly, where party systems are institutionalized, the levels of information and the associated electoral uncertainty can also differ substantially between primaries and general elections. Therefore, the indirect effects of electoral clientelism on vote choices also function differently in each type of election; while signaling viability may matter more in defining primary races, influencing undecided voters may be more important during general elections. Thus, my theory may also aid our understanding of electoral clientelism in more organized political settings.

Finally, electoral rules may be instrumental to influencing the form of electoral clientelism that prevails (Hicken 2007, Gans-Morse *et al.* 2014). Particularly in the case under analysis, mandatory voting could be central to why goods are mostly distributed early as part of campaign clientelism, and not on election day to mobilize turnout at the polls. As Gans-Morse *et al.* argue, with higher abstention costs, compulsory voting has the effect of boosting turnout and, consequently, the number of weakly opposed or indifferent voters who will probably vote. Within a context of scarcely organized political machines in which politicians do not have the means to reliably identify voters' preferences and deal with non-compliance, these voters will most likely be the target of campaign clientelism rather than of vote buying attempts.

#### A NOVEL FOCUS ON CAMPAIGNS

This book makes several theoretical contributions to the study of electoral clientelism, political linkages, and campaigns. To begin with, in the informational theory that I propose here, political organization is not a prerequisite for electoral clientelism. In contrast to prevailing approaches, my informational approach portrays electoral clientelism as a complex game that takes place *throughout* the campaign and not just on or near election day. That is, electoral clientelism can in fact also be understood as a campaigning tool; once campaigning is taken into account it, the reasons why electoral clientelism can actually persist in contexts of low political organization become clear. Distributing resources helps overcome the challenges of campaigning, without the backing of a party machine because it helps politicians improvise political organizations, persuade indifferent clients, and signal their electoral viability to strategic actors. In other words, electoral clientelism can be an appealing campaign



strategy precisely *because of* the absence of stable political parties, since it generates valuable information for strategic competition.

In addition, my approach takes campaign competition seriously since I do not assume that a single incumbent buys votes, nor do I focus only on cases in which machines are dominant and competition is negligible. Indeed, under this informational theory – most candidates, and not just powerful incumbents, can distribute minor consumer goods or cash during campaigns using private resources – candidates compete *through* electoral clientelism. Electoral clientelism can, thus, be associated both with political dominance and volatile electoral contexts. Moreover, while analyzing the tactics of elites, the informational approach also emphasizes the strategic logic of clients during campaigns. Thus, in making electoral choices, clients consider the changing electoral prospects of contending candidates in addition to their preferences. In contrast, most studies of vote buying assume that clients vote sincerely and underrepresent the degree of client opportunism and actual power that is found empirically.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, instead of pitching in with an increasingly narrow discussion among specialists, my approach – by integrating important insights about political competition, strategic behavior, campaign styles, and party–voter linkages – opens up a broader dialogue with other strands of the literature on parties and sheds new light on existing debates. On the one hand, the core idea of my informational theory is that information about the electoral prospects of different candidates influences voters and elites to behave strategically in response to electoral incentives (Cox 1997). Sustained campaign clientelism is, therefore, important because it helps to generate this valuable information, which will then be used by strategic donors, activists, and voters. On the other hand, my informational approach shows how candidates *combine* different types of appeals to rally and persuade indifferent and unattached voters. Candidates use campaign clientelism to buy an audience, which they then try to persuade through particularistic and personalistic tactics. As research shows – and contrary to the assumptions of the conventional party–voter linkage framework – campaign strategies that involve segmenting (Luna 2014) and/or mixing (Boas 2016) are routine among parties and candidates in developing democracies.

My approach also confirms that the increasing mediatization of campaigning in Latin America – highly television-dependent, poll-driven, and consultant-based – has not so much supplanted traditional methods of

<sup>11</sup> See Nichter and Peress (2017) for a piece that bestows more bargaining power to clients.

campaigning as blended with them, resulting in the coexistence of old and new on the campaign trail (Swanson and Mancini 1996; Waisbord 1996; Plasser and Plasser 2002; De la Torre and Conaghan 2009). Through campaign clientelism, political marketing meets street politics. As in the past, when candidates demonstrated political strength by mobilizing partisans and supporters to the plazas, I show here that large-scale and visible mobilization still matters (De la Torre and Conaghan 2009; Szwarcberg 2012b). At least in low-organization settings, characterized by high uncertainty and electoral volatility, head counting is still a powerful cue for assessing appeal and electoral viability. In addition, I highlight how the media amplifies the informational cues of on-the-ground rallies. Candidates record and broadcast their mass rallies, or else the press covers them, disseminating turnout figures or pictures. Moreover, the expansion of the internet and social media over the last few years stands as a new, alternative route for the transmission of turnout informational cues, and this should be explored further in future research.

Finally, this research has normative implications. If electoral clientelism works as my informational theory predicts, it may be less problematic for democratic accountability in weakly organized polities than some scholars have suggested is the case for countries with entrenched partisan machines (e.g., Fox 1994; Stokes 2005, 2007b); poor citizens may sell their participation at campaign events, but this is not to say that they necessarily sell their votes. They decide whether to lend their vote to the buyer based on their tactical preferences, and so candidates must still convince clients of their electoral desirability. Hence, in scarcely organized contexts, these pragmatic voters are neither passive citizens subject to perverse accountability (Stokes 2005), nor diminished citizens who do not evaluate their governments or engage in public deliberation (Stokes 2007b). Nevertheless, campaign clientelism still raises normative concerns. Voters can be misled when public perceptions of electoral viability are manipulated by politicians. Moreover, in the absence of long-lasting clientelistic relations, electoral clientelism can result in the entrenchment of corruption and the monetization of campaigns, thus, reinforcing social inequality. I will further develop these issues in the concluding chapter.

#### RESEARCH DESIGN

I use Peru as a case study that deviates from the conventional understanding of clientelism; that is, it is a country in which electoral clientelism thrives without organized parties. But even if Peru is a deviant case in