

Clientelism

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Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci. 2011.14:289–310

First published online as a Review in Advance on
March 17, 2011

The *Annual Review of Political Science* is online at
polisci.annualreviews.org

This article's doi:
10.1146/annurev.polisci.031908.220508

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1094-2939/11/0615-0289\$20.00

Keywords

patronage, patron-client relationships, particularism, contingency, development

Abstract

Clientelism is characterized by the combination of particularistic targeting and contingency-based exchange. This method of contingent exchange thrives in both autocracies and democracies. It exists in a large variety of cultural contexts. Confronted with economic development, clientelism fades away in some political contexts but adapts and survives in others. This article explores our understanding of the origins and dynamics of clientelism, focusing on the relationships between clientelism and democracy and between clientelism and development. It then evaluates the connection between clientelism and a variety of political and economic outcomes, including democratic accountability, corruption, and public goods provision. It concludes by outlining some remaining empirical and theoretical challenges and highlighting recent innovations in data collection and empirical methods.

Clientelism exists in all polities. The form it takes, its extent, and its political functions vary enormously, however, across time and place.

Nicholas van de Walle (2007, p. 50)

INTRODUCTION

Clientelism has proven highly adaptable to different political, economic, and cultural environments. This method of contingent exchange thrives in both autocracies and democracies (and in everything in between); it exists in a large variety of cultural contexts; and in the face of economic development it often adapts and endures (contrary to the expectations of earlier analyses). Clientelism also affects things we care about. For some, it is a subverter of democracy and economic development and an indicator of a suboptimal pattern of politics. For others, clientelism undermines the ability of citizens to hold elected officials individually and collectively accountable and induces them to keep the dictatorial and corrupt in power out of fear and narrow self-interest. Clientelism also diverts scarce resources that might otherwise be used to further economic development and generates incentives for keeping constituents poor and dependent. It both reflects and feeds high levels of corruption and ultimately undermines public trust in democratic institutions.

These are just a few of the claims made in the vast and growing literature on clientelism. In the pages that follow, I review the logic of some of these arguments and assess the extent to which these claims have been verified empirically. Before doing so, however, I must define the parameters of the phenomenon under study. The following section describes the lack of conceptual clarity and consensus in the field, discusses the common elements of many definitions, and attempts to situate the concept of clientelism within a universe of related terms, e.g., particularism, pork, and vote-buying. I then discuss the various accounts of the origins of clientelism, focusing specifically on the relationships between clientelism and democracy and between clientelism and devel-

opment. Why does clientelism emerge in some settings but not others? How do we account for variation across time or across space in the reliance on clientelist practices? This is where the literature has made the most progress in recent years, through a combination of careful theorizing and creative approaches to evaluating the empirical implications of these theories. I then turn to the question of the consequences of clientelism. I conclude by outlining some of the challenges to empirically evaluating theoretical claims, and I highlight some of the recent innovations in data collection and empirical methods as they relate to clientelism.

WHAT IS CLIENTELISM?

If there is one theme that appears again and again in *Annual Review* articles, it is the lack of conceptual clarity and consensus that plagues the study of whatever topic is under review. Clientelism is no different. In fact, the term is often used in the literature colloquially with little attempt to define it. The term serves as shorthand for systems, institutions, or individuals that are somehow less than ideal (e.g., clientelist party system, clientelist political party, or clientelist politician). And yet these colloquial uses are grounded in a literature replete with attempts to define and delimit the concept of clientelism. There is no generally accepted definition, but many definitions highlight the following as key elements of clientelist relationships: dyadic relationships, contingency, hierarchy, and iteration. Below, I discuss each of these elements in turn, highlighting shifts in the literature over the relative weight of each element.

Dyadic Relationships

For early scholars of clientelism, the social relationship between patron and client was paramount. The emphasis was on direct, face-to-face interactions and transactions between the patron and client. For example, Scott (1972, p. 92) speaks of clientelism as an “instrumental friendship,” while Landé (1977, p. xx) refers to “dyadic” alliances. Clients, it was assumed, had

a close personal relationship with the patron (Mainwaring 1999). Recent work has complicated this picture considerably. Although there is still an acknowledgment of the importance of personal, face-to-face relationships, the emphasis has shifted toward discussions of brokers and networks. Many clients may have little or no direct contact with their patron, but instead the two are connected through a chain of broker relationships (Weingrod 1968, Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007a, Stokes 2007a, Munoz 2010). Some of these clientelist machines can be quite complex, reaching “from the summits of national politics down to the municipal level” (Kitschelt 2000, p. 849). Those at the top of the pyramid generate resources that are channeled down the pyramid, while votes and other forms of fealty flow upward (Krishna 2007). At the local level, patrons typically rely on brokers who have standing in the community and are deeply imbedded in local networks. These may be local government officials, landowners, respected business people, or other local notables (e.g., Moerman 1969, Curtis 1971, Krishna 2007, Scheiner 2007, Wilkinson 2007).

Nevertheless, as long and complex as this broker network may become, most scholars stress that at the core are personal, dyadic relationships between individuals—e.g., between the patron and high-level brokers, between high- and lower-level brokers, and ultimately between brokers and individual clients. There are, however, a few scholars who argue that dyadic relationships are not a necessary element of clientelism. For example, Kitschelt & Wilkinson (2007a) argue that, under certain conditions, club goods (benefits directed at groups of individuals, which can be withheld from other groups but not withheld from individuals within the group) can be a form of clientelist exchange.¹ Such “collective clientelism” is distinguished from pork or programmatic redistributive benefits by the contingent

nature of the exchange (Stokes 2007a), and it is to that element of clientelism I turn next.

Contingency

The element that every definition of clientelism has in common is the contingent or reciprocal nature of the patron-client exchange. The delivery of a good or service on the part of both the patron and client is in direct response to a delivery of a reciprocal benefit by the other party, or the credible promise of such a benefit (Piattoni 2001a, Robinson & Verdier 2003, Roniger 2004). As mentioned above, it is the *quid pro quo* nature of the exchange that distinguishes it from other forms of political particularism. Other forms of particularism target specific groups, but in the case of clientelism, that targeting *always* comes with strings attached. Politicians supply benefits only to individuals or groups that support or promise to support the politician. Likewise, the client supports only that politician who delivers, or promises to deliver, a valued benefit in return for the client’s electoral support.

The nature of the goods and services that are being exchanged is generally left unspecified in definitions of clientelism. The list of material goods that can be offered voters is limited only by politicians’ and voters’ imaginations, and can range from cash to cookware to corrugated metal.² Nonmaterial benefits can include jobs (Robinson & Verdier 2003, van de Walle 2007), access to public services such as housing, education, or healthcare (Hicken & Simmons 2008), protection (Jamal 2007), or intervention with the bureaucracy (Chubb 1982).

Finally, although the exchange must be contingent in order to be classed as clientelism, it need not be immediate. There is generally a lag between when the voter delivers his vote and when the politician delivers the promised benefit, or vice versa, and thus the ability of each

¹Specifically, club goods are clientelist if the exchange satisfies the following conditions: predictability, elasticity, and competition (Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007a, pp. 14–15). Club goods are discussed further below.

²Schedler (2002) includes an extensive list of material goods offered to Mexican voters. See Brusco et al. (2004) for a similar list of goods offered to Argentinean voters.

party to monitor and sanction the other is crucial (Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007a).

Hierarchy

Hierarchy has been a crucial element in many definitions of political clientelism, particularly in sociological approaches. Scott (1972, p. 92), for example, defines clientelism as a relationship “in which an individual of higher socioeconomic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering generous support and assistance, including personal service, to the patron.” Landé (1977, p. xx) likewise emphasizes the importance of hierarchy, defining patron-client relationships as a “vertical dyadic alliance; i.e., an alliance between two persons of unequal status, power or resources each of whom finds it useful to have as an ally someone superior or inferior to himself.” (See also Eisenstadt & Roniger 1984, p. 48.) Yet among these approaches there is a recognition that even highly constrained clients can sometimes turn the terms of the relationship to their advantage (Scott 1977a, Silverman 1977, Waterbury 1977).

As mentioned above, much of the recent work in the field has focused on the contingent nature of clientelism and does not typically include an explicit reference to hierarchy or asymmetry in the formal definition.³ However, nearly all such studies take for granted that the relationship between patron and client is asymmetric—with the patron possessing information, resources, or prestige that the client lacks. Kitschelt & Wilkinson (2007a, p. 7) are an exception to this general pattern. They conceive the patron-client relationship as a

principal-agent relationship, with the client as the principal and the patron, or politician, as agent. This conceptualization certainly corresponds with standard models of democratic delegation, where voters select representatives and then endeavor to hold them accountable. However, at first blush this seems at odds with the more common view of how the patron-client relationship functions. The client-as-principal model seems to imply that the client has the ultimate power advantage in the relationship, whereas most other studies place the patron firmly above the client. Stokes (2005), for example, argues that in clientelist systems the standard democratic accountability framework is turned on its head. Rather than voters holding parties and politicians accountable for their performance, it is parties and politicians that hold voters accountable for their vote. When juxtaposed with this reality, Kitschelt & Wilkinson’s client-as-principal framework serves to underscore the way in which patron-client relationships can “pervert accountability” (Stokes 2005) and ultimately distort democracy.⁴

Iteration

One of the key factors that differentiates clientelist exchange, from, say, a bribe demanded by a policeman, or pencils handed out by political candidates to potential voters at the county fair, is the ongoing nature of the relationship. The former are (hopefully) one-off interactions, with neither party having a strong expectation of interacting in the future. By contrast, clientelism is at its core an iterated interaction, with each side anticipating future interactions as they make decisions about their behavior today. This has a couple of important implications. Iteration provides a mechanism for overcoming one of the key challenges of

³Kitschelt & Wilkinson (2007a, p. 2) 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 Stokes (2007a, p. 605) offers the following definition: “the proffering of material goods in return for electoral support, where the criterion of distribution that the patron uses is simply: did you (will you) support me?”

⁴When Kitschelt & Wilkinson turn to the *dynamics* of clientelism, they reverse the patron-client relationship. Politicians become the effective principal, concerned with shirking on the part of voters, and thus need to find ways to monitor voters and ensure compliance (Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007a, pp. 14–17).

clientelism—the lack of exchange simultaneity. Whether it is a bag of rice in exchange for a promised vote, or a vote in exchange for a promised job, clientelist exchange usually requires one of the parties to trust that the other will deliver on their promises. Such promises are more credible when there is an expectation that the relationship will be an ongoing one. Repeated interaction reinforces social norms of reciprocity, which some scholars identify as a feature of clientelism (e.g., Eisenstadt & Roniger 1984). Iteration also provides both the patron and client with information about the reliability of the other and gives each party the opportunity to punish the other for defecting. Ongoing relationships allow politicians, for example, to leverage social networks to monitor the behavior of clients (e.g., is the client attending rallies? Does she come to the polls? What bumper sticker is displayed in her home window?) and come to an informed decision about whether clients are following through (or are likely to follow through) with their promised support.

Iteration is directly related to two of the three components of clientelism discussed by Kitschelt & Wilkinson (2007a, p. 9). In order for clientelist exchange to emerge as an equilibrium, they argue, there must be both predictability and monitoring. Iteration facilitates both. The problem that all politicians face where the ballot is truly secret is uncertainty about whether voters actually vote the way they say they will. Unable to actually observe how votes are cast, politicians must develop reasonable predictions about voters' behavior in order for clientelism to work. To be specific, they must be able to make two kinds of predictions. First, as discussed above, politicians need to be confident that voters who receive a benefit will deliver the expected vote. Second, politicians must develop reliable predictions about how a targeted clientelist benefit will affect voter behavior—what Kitschelt & Wilkinson (2007a, p. 13) term “vote choice elasticity.” How responsive will a potential voter be to an offer of a clientelist benefit—or, put differently,

how big an offer does a politician need to make in order to bring a potential voter over to his camp? Repeated interactions over time allow politicians to observe which voters keep their promises and which voters can be swayed, and to calibrate the size of an offer needed to sway those voters. Ultimately, then, iteration enables both voter and politician to make reasonable predictions about the other's behavior, and the combination of iterative exchange and social networks enables politicians and political parties to overcome the strictures imposed by the secret ballot (Stokes 2007a, p. 611).⁵

Volition?

The concept of volition as a possible element of clientelism is strongly debated in the literature (for the positive case, see Eisenstadt & Roniger 1984). At its core, this is a question about the nature of the glue that holds clientelist relationships together: power/force, needs/demands, or voluntary obligations (Muno 2010). Like any relationship, clientelism contains certain costs of ending the relationship. The question is whether these costs are so prohibitively high as to deprive “voluntary” of any recognizable meaning. If we approach patron-client relationships as a mutually beneficial contingent exchange, as rational choice approaches typically do, then speaking of volition makes sense. Successful clientelist exchange is a mutually reinforcing equilibrium, with each side free to exit if they become dissatisfied with the nature of the relationship.

Other approaches focus on power asymmetries and argue that in many cases these are so severe that it is not useful to think of clientelism as voluntary—for example, where the threat of violence or legal ramifications are attached to noncompliance on the part of the client (e.g.,

⁵As a corollary, where voters and politicians trust each other to deliver on their promises, this trust raises the costs (decreases the vote choice elasticity) for potential rivals looking to sway voters to their side (Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007a, p. 13).

slavery or bonded servitude).⁶ However, even short of the threat of violence, the nature of the relationship may be such that clients are deprived of any meaningful opportunity to exercise exit, or even voice (Hirschman 1970). Patrons possess a variety of tools to enforce clients' compliance, from social ostracism to withholding of material benefits, but a client, acting alone, cannot generally force a patron to honor his commitments. Collective action by multiple clients is required to "punish" a patron, but the way clientelist systems are organized makes such collective action extremely difficult (Lyne 2007). In fact, in equilibrium, the difficulty of taking votes away from a clientelist incumbent is so severe as to sometimes deter any credible challengers from entering, thus depriving voters of meaningful exit options (Lyne 2007). Hence, the perverse accountability referred to earlier (Stokes 2005).

Given the observational equivalence problems inherent in compliance issues generally, it can be difficult to ascertain the degree of voluntary compliance on the part of clients. On the one hand, one can argue that voters have no meaningful agency to exercise when there is only one credible choice. On the other hand, a patron's dominance may arise because that individual or party is truly the best, most credible provider of resources the clients value. Likewise, the rise of a credible challenger may signal that voters now have a true choice, or it may also indicate that voters' evaluations of the patron have changed such that they are now willing to entertain competing offers for their loyalty.

Clientelism and Other Types of Exchange

With the key elements of clientelism in hand, we can now turn to differentiating clientelist exchange from other forms of political exchange. It is not the distributive or targeted nature of

clientelism that sets it apart. Rather, it is the criterion by which targeting decisions are made that distinguishes clientelism from other forms of distributive, redistributive, or particularistic politics (see Stokes 2007a, p. 605; Grzymala-Busse 2008). Parties may craft packages of programmatic policies designed to target specific groups of voters. Candidates or parties may appeal to ethnic, religious, regional, or partisan identities. Politicians may target pork to their home constituency. Populist politicians may promise more resources to previously marginalized segments of society. All of these types of appeals target certain groups over others, and all are carried out with electoral considerations in mind—i.e., politicians expect that the targeted groups will be more likely to support them in the next election. What is unique about clientelist exchange is that the chief criterion for receiving the targeted benefit is political support, typically voting. This is not true of other strategies, in which the chief criterion is membership in the targeted constituency. To identify her target, the politician in a nonclientelist environment asks, in effect, questions like: Do you live in my district? Are you a member of my ethnic or religious group? Are you a farmer? Are you poor? Not: Did you vote for me (see Chandra 2004). Certain groups receive targeted benefits, to be sure, but no member within the targeted group can be excluded from the benefit on the basis of a lack of support for the politician or party.

It is not a surprise that the latter description sounds like the definition of a club good. Many of the potential benefits politicians can provide fall into this category. But to reiterate, it is not the nature of the benefit being offered that determines whether an exchange is clientelist—it is the terms on which it is offered. The delivery of a purely private good by a politician to an individual would not be considered clientelism if it came without electoral strings attached. Likewise, whether or not club goods are considered clientelism depends on the criteria for distributing those goods. Programmatic club goods are disbursed according to well-defined rules and without regard to partisan

⁶Some scholars reject such relationships as examples of clientelism (e.g., Muno 2010, Piattoni 2001b), but others choose to include them (Stokes 2007a).

characteristics or voting history. The discretion given to politicians over the distribution of these benefits is minimal. (Unemployment benefits in the United States are a classic example of a programmatic club good.) By contrast, clientelist club goods come with substantial discretion by politicians over disbursement, and delivery of benefits is contingent on the group's past or promised political support (Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007a).

A couple of examples from Southeast Asia help to illustrate the distinction between clientelism and other types of targeted benefits. In Thailand, part of Thaksin Shinawatra's electoral strategy was promising a basket of club goods targeted to poor, rural voters—an innovative strategy in the Thai context (Hicken 2009). Policies such as the 30-baht healthcare scheme and a debt moratorium for farmers targeted certain groups, with the costs of the programs borne by other groups, but the benefits of the policies were not directly contingent on a vote for Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai party. Qualified voters in constituencies that supported the opposition still had access to the promised health cards and debt relief. By contrast, in the 1980s, the Singapore government announced a change to its vote-counting system—votes would now be counted and reported at the ward level, which in Singapore roughly equates to an apartment block. As the vast majority of Singapore citizens live in public housing estates, this meant that the government would possess fairly detailed data about the distribution of its support. The ruling PAP party wasted no time in explicitly tying housing services to support for the PAP. Apartment complexes that supported the opposition could expect to be last on the list for upgrades and improvements (Tremewan 1994).

How is clientelism distinct from the related concepts of patronage and vote buying? For many authors, patronage and clientelism are largely synonymous and are used interchangeably (see Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007c; Piattoni 2001b, p. 6). However, in a subset of the literature there is an important distinction between patronage and clientelism. Some define patron-

age narrowly as the exchange of public sector jobs for political support (what was known in the nineteenth-century American context as the spoils system), whereas clientelism includes not only jobs but also other state resources (goods, services, decisions, etc.) (Piattoni 2001b).⁷ Others tie the term patronage to the use of resources and benefits that flow from public office (Mainwaring 1999, Stokes 2007a, van de Walle 2007). Here the distinction hinges on the position of the patron and the types of resources at his disposal. In patronage, the patron must be an office holder or at least have access to state resources. In clientelism, the patron may or may not be an office holder, and so may not be able to credibly promise to deliver public resources. Absent access to those resources, the patron must rely on alternative means of exchange (e.g., private resources, party resources, etc.).⁸ Different authors draw this distinction in various ways, but a common thread is that clientelism is a much broader phenomenon than patronage, with patronage simply one specific type of clientelist exchange.

Where does vote buying fall? The key to classifying vote buying rests on our judgment about whether the exchange of resources for a vote corresponds to the elements of clientelism outlined above, particularly the elements of contingency and iteration.⁹ If the exchange of resources for votes is part of an ongoing relationship, and the criterion for awarding the resource is how the recipient casts (or promises to cast) his vote, then we can comfortably categorize vote buying as a particular type of clientelism. If, however, vote buying is an exercise akin to an entry fee, which all serious

⁷Robinson & Verdier (2003, p. 2), by contrast, label the exchange of a public sector job for political support as clientelism.

⁸Medina & Stokes (2007) draw a similar distinction between resources that the patron controls independent of electoral outcomes (what they term economic monopolies) and resources that depend on the patron holding public office (political monopolies). The latter would be patronage, and both would fall under the rubric of clientelism.

⁹On vote buying see Schaffer (2007), Schaffer & Schedler (2007), and Hicken (2007).

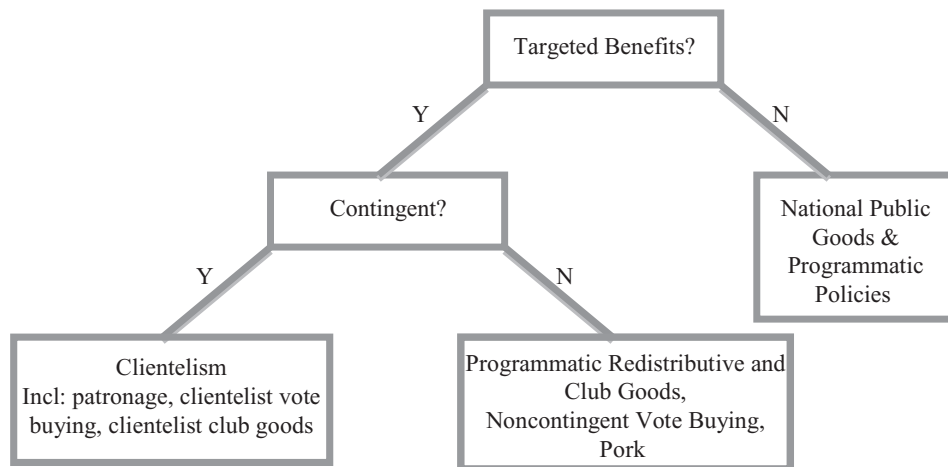


Figure 1
Clientelism versus other benefits.

candidates must pay but which carries no specific obligation for the recipients, then the contingency element is missing and we would not consider it clientelism (see Callahan & McCargo 1996). How do we judge whether there is contingency attached to a vote-buying exchange? First, we can look at how targeted the vote buying is. If the good or service is available to all comers, e.g., tee shirts handed out to spectators along a parade route, then although the benefit may be intended to sway people's vote, it does not rise to the level of clientelism. Second, we can observe whether voters accept vote-buying offers from more than one candidate/party. Where this is common, it is reasonable to infer that the expectation of reciprocity on the part of voters and candidates is weak at best. Finally, we can observe the effort candidates make to monitor the targets of their vote-buying efforts. The more resources devoted by the candidate to monitoring and compliance, the more likely it is that the vote-buying exchange is clientelist in character.

Although contingency is necessary in order for vote buying to be considered clientelism, I would argue that it is not sufficient. The relationship between vote buyer and seller must be more than a one-off transaction. There must be some recognition by both parties that the relationship is, or is likely to be, ongoing. For

example, brokers may offer to buy voter identity cards, or stand outside polling places offering to pay voters for depositing a premarked ballot (while returning with the blank ballot they receive from the election official). These examples would certainly qualify as vote buying under most definitions, and are certainly contingent transactions, but do not necessarily constitute clientelist exchange. They are essentially arm's-length transactions with no expectation of future interaction—akin to accepting an offer of a new camera in exchange for agreeing to listen to a sales pitch about timeshares.

Figure 1 summarizes some of the conceptual distinctions discussed above. It is important to note that (a) the boundaries between these concepts can be blurry, and (b) in practice, politicians and especially parties may simultaneously pursue a mix of strategies—promoting a program of public goods, providing programmatic targeted benefits to particular groups, and deploying clientelist strategies to reach other potential voters (Kitschelt 2000, Magaloni et al. 2007).

CLIENTELISM AND DEMOCRACY

The literature on clientelism can be broken down into roughly three approaches (Roniger

2004, Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007a). The first approach concerned itself with describing what it saw as the vestiges of a premodern form of political/social relations (e.g., Gellner & Waterbury 1977, Landé 1977, Schmidt et al. 1977, Scott 1977a, Eisenstadt & Lemarchand 1981). The focus was on conceptualization and case studies, with most studies assuming that clientelism was bound to disappear as countries modernized both economically and democratically.

Confronted with the reality of clientelism's continuity, the second approach focused on understanding how clientelist exchange changed and adapted to shifting circumstances, describing the ubiquity of clientelism across historical and political settings, and analyzing clientelism as an explicit political strategy and one type of political/social exchange (Chubb 1982, Eisenstadt & Roniger 1984, Kettering 1986, Reynolds 1988, Willerton 1992, Roniger 2004). We see the shift described above from an emphasis on dyadic relationships to complex clientelist networks embedded in or attached to various political institutions (i.e., political parties, unions, and bureaucracies) (Weingrod 1968, Silverman 1977, Tarrow 1977, Clapham 1982, Mavrogordatos 1983). This second research approach also stands out for its explicit emphasis on a comparative approach in addition to single case studies and for its shift from developmental/modernization explanations of clientelism toward a focus on political institutions as key independent variables (Shefter 1977).

Building on this rich foundation (and following trends in the broader discipline), the current phase of scholarship explicitly aims to build and test generalizable arguments about the causes and consequences of clientelism. As part of this new emphasis on causal explanation, we have seen the development of more nuanced theorizing and a move away from viewing clientelism through a dichotomous lens (i.e., the presence or absence of clientelism) toward understanding why and how the degree and pattern of clientelist exchange can vary across and within states. Of particular interest to this new generation of studies is the way in which clientelism coexists with, supports, and even thrives under (semi)democratic elections.

It is clear that clientelism can exist in a variety of political settings—from autocratic to democratic. Nonetheless, the nature of the political environment influences clientelist exchange in important ways. For example, the political functions that clientelism fulfills can vary across regime type (van de Walle 2007). In democracies, clientelism is a tool for building a loyal network of supporters. In autocracies, clientelism also involves creating socioeconomic dependence on the regime (e.g., public housing in Singapore), and, as a corollary, political subservience (see Fox 1994, Wintrobe 2000, Grzymala-Busse 2008). The nature of the regime can also affect the kinds of benefits offered to voters or the nature of the exchange relationship; for example, clientelism in democratic settings tends to be more transactional and less hierarchical than what we observe in autocratic settings. What drives many of the differences between autocratic and democratic clientelism, and indeed a key factor that shapes the incentives to pursue clientelist strategies within democracies, is the robustness of political competition.

Competitiveness is defined and operationalized in a variety of ways in the literature—including party-system fragmentation, electoral volatility, margin of victory, and party turnover in government. Kitschelt & Wilkinson (2007a, p. 28) boil down the indicators of party-system competitiveness to the following: “when citizens and politicians have strong incentives to try hard and win supporters at the margins for one or the other partisan camp.” For this to be the case, two conditions must be met: (a) elections are close between identifiable and distinct rival party blocs, and (b) the number of uncommitted (swing) voters is large enough to potentially tip the outcome of the elections toward one party bloc or the other (Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007a, p. 28).

For most scholars, robust competition provides a check against clientelism, although the mechanisms they identify vary. Geddes (1991), for example, argues that robust, balanced party

competition induces politicians to professionalize the bureaucracy and abandon clientelism (see also Grzymala-Busse 2007, Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007a). Keefer argues that once one political party develops an electoral advantage via a shift to a programmatic strategy, the presence of robust competition will compel other parties to follow (Keefer 2006, Keefer & Vlaicu 2008).

Work by others, however, demonstrates that competition can be a double-edged sword. In Latin America, for example, the high levels of electoral competition helped provide the impetus for labor-based parties to transform themselves into clientelist political parties (Levitsky 2007).¹⁰ In Africa, Lindberg & Morrison (2008) find that the more competitive the elections in a given district, the higher the percentage of citizens who report voting based on clientelist reasoning. More generally, we should expect that where clientelism is already common, politicians facing robust competition may actually increase the use of such tactics. But whom do they target? Does competition induce politicians to use clientelism to build support among marginal or swing voters, or to reward and perhaps encourage higher turnout among party loyalists (core supporters)?¹¹ The evidence for whether parties target core or swing voters with clientelist appeals is mixed. A variety of studies have found that parties target marginal or swing voters (see Schady 2000, Stokes 2005, Magaloni 2006, Keefer & Khemani 2009, and indirectly, Golden & Tiwari 2009). But others find that parties consistently direct benefits to their core supporters—even where turnout is not an issue (e.g., under compulsory voting) and where they can reasonably expect the support of loyalists even without clientelist

inducements (see Hiskey 1999, Ansolabehere & Snyder 2002, Stokes 2005, Pérez Yarahuan 2006, Dunning & Stokes 2010). What is increasingly clear is that parties pursue both types of strategies, although more work is needed to understand what determines the particular mix of targeting strategies a party pursues.

In an interesting new study along these lines, Dunning & Stokes (2010) empirically demonstrate that parties target both swing and core voters. They argue that this mixed strategy is a function of the internal organization of clientelist parties. Vote brokers and party leaders have different strategies. Vote brokers prefer to target loyalist supporters, the cheapest way to build a network. Party leaders prefer to target swing voters in order to increase the probability of victory. The result is that party leaders tend to target swing districts while, within those districts, brokers target more loyal voters than optimal from the perspective of party leaders.

Regardless of whether the response to competition and electoral uncertainty is trying to mobilize core supporters or trying to sway marginal/swing voters to their side, clientelism can be a useful tool for parties/politicians. However, the precise mix of programmatic and clientelist policies politicians end up offering voters depends on two factors: the need to appeal to marginal voters, and the level of development. The more competition forces politicians to appeal to indifferent, marginal voters, the more costly clientelist strategies become, *ceteris paribus*. The payment needed to sway an indifferent voter to one's side is likely to be higher than what is needed to turn out loyalists and those who lean toward the party, and the risk that indifferent voters will fail to uphold their end of the clientelist bargain is also much greater. Thus, because the return on clientelist investment is lower when indifferent voters need to be targeted, the incentive to pursue alternative mobilization strategies should increase with the need to appeal to indifferent voters (see Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007a).

Economic development also plays a role by interacting with competitiveness to heighten the incentive to switch to programmatic

¹⁰Nyblade & Reed (2008) and Golden & Tiwari (2009) similarly find that robust electoral competition and the accompanying uncertainty make politicians more likely to engage in criminal or corrupt behavior.

¹¹Dunning & Stokes (2010) actually distinguish between core supporters (those who are a predictable part of a clientelist network but are ideologically heterogeneous) and loyalists (those who will vote for the party on ideological grounds, regardless of whether they receive a clientelist benefit).

appeals. As discussed in the next section, at high levels of development the price of swaying voters of all stripes with clientelist goods increases, as does the value voters place on programmatic goods (Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007a, Lyne 2007; see also Geddes 1991).

CLIENTELISM AND DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development

Perhaps the most common association drawn in the clientelism literature is between the level of economic development and the prevalence of clientelism. The literature reports this association both cross-nationally, noting that clientelism appears to be more prevalent in developing countries, and within nations, noting that poorer voters appear to be more susceptible to clientelist offers than richer voters (e.g., Brusco et al. 2004). We can trace the scholarly roots of this association to the modernization and developmentalist schools from the mid-twentieth century, but current theorizing views the relationship between economic development and clientelism as probabilistic rather than deterministic. Although the empirical association between poverty/development and clientelism is fairly robust (see Wantchekon 2003, Keefer 2006, Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007a, Remmer 2007, Bustikova & Corduneanu-Huci 2009; for opposing views see Schaffer 2004, Speck & Abramo 2001), there are a variety of views about the causal mechanisms at work. We can divide these into two groups: first, those that emphasize the effect of development on potential clients' assessment of the *value* of a clientelist offer versus other alternatives, and second, those that emphasize the effect of development on the *capacity* of patrons to provide clientelist benefits.¹²

Development might affect voters' assessment of the relative value of clientelist benefits

in a number of ways. First, as incomes rise, the marginal utility to a recipient of a given material benefit decreases. Because of this diminishing marginal utility of income, candidates can get more bang for their clientelist buck by targeting the poor (see Dixit & Londregan 1996, Calvo & Murillo 2004). Second, as income varies, so do voter preferences over the relative value of different types of benefits (Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007a). With greater development comes greater voter involvement in the broader national economy. Thus, the impact of government policies on voters' economic well-being also increases. Things like tax rates, exchange rates, the rate of growth, interest rates, wage rates, etc., become more important to voters as their incomes rise, *ceteris paribus*. Thus, the opportunity cost of supporting politicians who promise only clientelist benefits increases relative to voting for candidates who (promise to) deliver broader, collective goods and policies. Third, the poor are more risk averse than their more wealthy counterparts, and thus the immediacy of clientelist exchange is appealing. Better a concrete material benefit today than the promise of some policy benefit tomorrow (see Scott 1977b, Kitschelt 2000, Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007a, Desposato 2007).¹³

Development also directly shapes the capacity of potential patrons to provide clientelist benefits by affecting the costs and benefits of clientelist strategies. In brief, as incomes rise the cost of clientelism rises, while the benefits decline, *ceteris paribus*, thus making other strategies more appealing. First, development leads to increased voter mobility—both physical and occupational (Ramseyer & Rosenbluth 1993, Shugart & Nielson 1999, Bloom et al. 2001, Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007a, Kitschelt et al. 2010). Greater mobility undermines the traditional patron-client networks through which clientelist funds can be distributed and makes it difficult to successfully develop, monitor, and

¹²Kitschelt & Wilkinson (2007a, pp. 24–28) term these, respectively, demand-side and supply-side factors.

¹³Lyne (2007) argues that even wealthy voters should generally prefer the immediate benefits available via clientelism to offers of larger-scale collective goods.

maintain new clientelist networks. Thus, the cost of clientelism increases (and the incentives to employ a clientelist strategy decrease) as development and mobility increase. Second, given the decreasing marginal utility of income as incomes rise, the resources needed to support clientelism grow as well. To maintain a given level of support via clientelism, politicians must increase the benefits they distribute. This is not necessarily problematic if the resources available for clientelism keep pace with the growth in income. However, politicians are likely to find that their access to clientelist resources is increasingly constrained as incomes rise. Where clientelist policies entail a transfer of resources from middle/upper class voters to poorer voters, one can expect to see resistance to clientelist policies increase as the cost of such transfers increases (Robinson & Verdier 2003, Hicken 2007, Stokes 2007a,b). In light of this, candidates may find it more appealing to curtail clientelism and switch to alternative strategies that produce a better return. In addition, as the cost of clientelism rises, the negative externalities for politicians also increase. These negative externalities can include reduced economic performance (Keefer 2007) and, given the general shift away from clientelist preferences among voters as incomes rise, greater public discontent with clientelist practices and an increase in perceived corruption (Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007a, Singer 2009, Kitschelt et al. 2010).

There is still much to be done to parse the mechanisms connecting economic development with clientelism. Rather than simply testing the hypothesis that development is negatively related to clientelism, as most studies have done, future work should try to derive testable implications of the competing causal stories. For example, if the mechanism that connects income to clientelism is mobility, we would expect the degree of clientelism to differ across populations that have similar incomes but different levels of physical or employment mobility. Or, if changes in voter attitudes are truly an important part of the story, we should be able to observe differences in how voters

across time and across income groups respond to survey questions about clientelism. Work by Brusco et al. (2007) is a promising move in this direction. The researchers set out to test the risk-aversion explanation using a survey of Argentinean voters. The survey revealed no support for the risk-aversion hypothesis; although poor voters were indeed more risk averse than wealthier voters, the level of risk aversion by itself had no independent effect on the likelihood of a voter selling her vote.

State Development and Access to Public Resources

One of the necessary conditions for clientelism to exist is that potential patrons must have access to resources that can be tapped for clientelist purposes. As Stokes (2007a) points out, these resources need not be public resources, but a supply of plentiful and easily accessible public resources certainly makes clientelist strategies more viable. This insight lies at the heart of Shefter's (1977, 1994) work on the origins of programmatic and clientelist party systems. Shefter argues that the relative timing of bureaucratization (i.e., the development of a rational administrative system) and democratization (i.e., the introduction of universal male suffrage) determines whether party leaders opt for clientelist or programmatic voter-mobilization strategies.¹⁴ At the onset of democracy, the

¹⁴A related line of argument focuses on the size of the state and its involvement in the economy as key independent variables. Specifically, the propensity toward clientelism increases as the state expands and comes to command more resources, and as the level of state intervention in the economy increases (see Kitschelt et al. 1999, Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007a, O'Dwyer 2006). Conversely, as the size of the state and its level of involvement in the economy shrink (e.g., via liberalization and privatization), the opportunities and incentives for clientelism shrink as well (Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007a, Scheiner 2007, Kitschelt 2007). However, the empirical evidence is mixed. Levitsky's (2007) work demonstrates under some conditions liberalization in Latin America actually induced some parties to *adopt* clientelist policies. In his review of the literature, Roniger (2004, p. 367) notes the flourishing of clientelism under liberalization and reduced state intervention, stating that "clientelism proves to

first question potential party leaders must face is whether they can count on access to state resources. For those parties that have been shut out of power (“externally mobilized parties” in Shefter’s terminology), patronage is simply not a viable option. Instead, such parties develop programmatic appeals to mobilize voters and activists.¹⁵ Where these parties subsequently gain power, we see political competition proceeding largely along programmatic grounds (Piattoni 2001b, p. 19). For those parties organized by entrenched elites who hold positions within the prevailing regime (“internally mobilized parties”), the key question is whether those parties can expect to have access to the resources necessary for clientelism. Whether clientelism is an option for these parties depends on the extent to which the bureaucracy is autonomous or politicized. Where there exists an administrative system with a high degree of bureaucratic autonomy, the ability of politicians to divert state resources toward clientelist strategies will be greatly circumscribed, and programmatic strategies will thus be more appealing. If, however, the bureaucracy is politicized, then the exploitation of the “spoils of government for partisan purposes is too strong a temptation to resist” (Piattoni 2001b, p. 19; see also Anderson 1988, Hutchcroft 2000, van de Walle 2003).

The evidence for Shefter’s theory is mixed. The contributors to Piattoni’s (2001a) excellent edited volume take Shefter’s theory as the starting point and examine the development of clientelist practices in several countries across Europe. They find that although the theory does a good job of accounting for some of the variation across cases (e.g., Sweden, Germany, Greece, Spain, and Italy), it leaves many important cases unexplained (e.g., England, France, the Netherlands) (Piattoni 2001a, p. 19). In the latter cases, the incentives for clientelism were

present, but citizen preferences were such that the political parties opted for alternative strategies. More generally, Shefter’s argument cannot account for why transformations away from clientelism do occur in some cases (as in the United Kingdom and United States).

Worth noting are two recent attempts to test elements of Shefter’s theory. Keefer (2006) echoes a common critique of the theory: Once a party is in power, what is to keep it from politicizing the bureaucracy to turn it into a source of patronage? Indeed, such political interference with once autonomous bureaucracies is not uncommon (Hicken 2001, Baxter et al. 2002). Further, contra Shefter, he argues that where politicians are truly unable to politicize the bureaucracy, programmatic parties should be *less* likely to emerge—the logic being that voters will continue to assign credit for good programmatic outcomes to the high-quality bureaucracy, inducing parties to switch to alternative mobilization strategies for which they can claim credit, such as clientelism (Keefer 2006, p. 6). Using a cross-national analysis of more than 100 countries between 1975 and 2004, he finds support for the argument that countries with high-quality bureaucracies are less likely to develop programmatic parties.

In an interesting new study, Bustikova & Corduneanu-Huci (2009) use a new dataset on clientelism created by Kitschelt and his collaborators (described below) to assess some of the determinants of clientelism. They find that, for developing countries, the level of economic development is the strongest predictor of the level of clientelism. Beyond a certain level of income, however, the bureaucracy’s reputation for delivering needed public goods, regardless of which party is in power, is the best predictor of the degree of clientelism. This is consistent with Shefter’s argument about the link between bureaucratic quality and the emergence of programmatic parties, although the study’s manner of operationalizing bureaucratic quality raises some questions about endogeneity and the direction of the relationship. Specifically, the authors use infant mortality as a proxy for

be highly adaptive to changing market logics... and capitalistic considerations....”

¹⁵For a similar logic as it relates to party strategies in established democracies, see Golden & Chang (2001), Samuels (1999), and Cox & Theis (1998).

bureaucratic capacity. Given the strong evidence of a link between clientelism and an underprovision of public goods (discussed below), one wonders whether the causal arrows ought to be reversed.

In short, the evidence for Shefter's argument is mixed. But what is clear from these and other studies is the importance of institutional legacies.¹⁶ Not surprisingly, the best predictor of whether a given country currently has programmatic parties is whether it has a historical legacy of such parties.¹⁷

Consequences

The starting point (stated or unstated) for most of the literature is that clientelism is inefficient at best and downright dangerous at worst. It may be a necessary or at least an unavoidable evil in many cases, but it is nonetheless regrettable. There is however, an alternative school of thought that emphasizes theoretically salutary aspects of clientelism. First, it points to the redistributive and social welfare aspects of clientelist exchange and argues that our standard for comparison should be not only programmatic political systems but also predatory or exploitative systems. Yes, clientelism may be less than ideal, but if the alternative is a state that provides even fewer benefits to citizens, especially the poor, then clientelism is not such a bad bargain. Clientelism can be one important mechanism for securing transactional benefits from the state. Second, there is also a line of argument that stresses the benefits of localism

and specialization.¹⁸ Clientelism is a mechanism for dividing up national public goods and distributing them to local constituencies. There are costs in terms of lost efficiencies and economies of scale, but in exchange we get outcomes that are better calibrated to local needs and conditions—some clients will receive cash, others foodstuffs, others local public goods, depending on local demands (Roniger 2004).

Despite the plausibility of some of these arguments, the empirical reality has generally been otherwise. The consensus in the literature is that clientelism has profound negative implications for the way in which democracy functions, citizen attitudes about the quality of their democracy, and the capacity of governments to produce needed public policies. To begin with, clientelism has the potential to reverse the standard accountability relationship that is central to democratic theory. By obliging voters to give up some of their political rights in exchange for access to distributive benefits, clientelism limits the exercise of citizenship rights and ultimately may undermine democratic consolidation (Fox 1994, p. 153). In clientelist systems, voters may lose the ability to effectively hold politicians and parties accountable for their behavior in office, and instead, voters become the ones held accountable for their actions by parties and politicians (Stokes 2005, Lyne 2007, Kitschelt et al. 2010). It is not surprising, then, to see that voters in clientelist systems are, on average, more cynical and disillusioned than their counterparts in more programmatic systems (Kitschelt et al. 2007b, 2010).

Clientelism also hampers the development of the political institutions necessary for democratic development and consolidation (Graziano 1973). As discussed above, it warps systems of representation and accountability, consolidates incumbency advantage, and can undermine the promise of a secret ballot (Stokes 2005, Lyne 2007). Clientelism is also associated with the politicization of the bureaucracy

¹⁶See Grzymala-Busse (2007) for how historical institutional legacies interacted with the robustness of democratic competition to shape party strategies in postcommunist democracies.

¹⁷In addition to competition, economic development, and access to state resources, the literature identifies several other possible determinants of clientelism. These include cultural norms (such as norms of reciprocity) (see Lemarchand 1977, Auyero 2000, Putnam 1993), ethnicity (see Chandra 2004, 2007; Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007a), and political institutions such as regime type, electoral systems, or ballot design and distribution (see Golden 2003, van de Walle 2003, Roniger 2004, Lehoucq & Molina 2002, Brusco et al. 2004).

¹⁸See Hicken & Simmons 2008 for a summary of these arguments as they relate to particularism generally.

and is an impediment to the development of a system of administrative control and oversight (Shefter 1994, Golden 2003, Keefer 2006, Cruz & Keefer 2010).¹⁹ There is also some evidence that the freedom of information is higher in programmatic party systems compared to their clientelist counterparts (Keefer 2006).

Furthermore, clientelism affects the party system. Programmatic systems tend to have lower electoral volatility, lower party-system fragmentation, and higher levels of party-system institutionalization (Kitschelt et al. 2010). In addition, clientelism shapes the behavior of political parties in power. For example, Desposato (2007) finds that clientelist parties behave differently in the legislature than do their more programmatic counterparts. Specifically, parties in the more clientelist state legislatures in Brazil are less likely to rely on roll-call voting and less cohesive when they are in the opposition.

In terms of governance and economic performance, clientelism is clearly linked to higher levels of rent seeking, but this does not necessarily translate directly into poor economic performance. The chain of variables from clientelism to economic growth is a long one, and we know that clientelism, and associated rent seeking, may proceed hand in hand with strong growth as long as certain sectors of the economy maintain high levels of efficiency and are not swamped by the costs and inefficiencies associated with clientelist sectors (Hill 1996, Hutchcroft 1997, Khan & Jomo 2000, Hicken 2001, Kitschelt 2010).

Still, clientelism tends to distort incentives in predictable ways and is thus associated with certain patterns of governance. A number of studies find a correlation between clientelism and the size of the public sector, whether measured in jobs or wage bills (Gimpelson & Treisman 2002, Calvo &

Murillo 2004, O'Dwyer 2006, Grzymala-Busse 2008).²⁰ Similarly, clientelism has been linked to larger public deficits and public sector inefficiencies. There is also a stark difference in the types of goods supplied in clientelist versus programmatic systems. In clientelist systems, nontargeted, national public goods are undersupplied while there is an overprovision of goods and services targeted to narrow constituencies. For example, programmatic systems exhibit lower levels of targeted spending, higher primary school enrollment rates, and make [please keep] more efficient and effective use of public resources than do clientelist systems (Keefer 2006, 2007; Hicken & Simmons 2008).

Finally, numerous studies have found a strong link between clientelism and corruption or perceptions of corruption. Theoretically, it is not hard to see why such an association would exist. As Singer (2009) points out in an interesting new study, clientelism may drive corruption through any of three separate causal pathways. First, clientelism or certain forms of clientelist exchange, e.g., vote buying, may actually be illegal. Second, by undermining the ability of citizens to hold public officials accountable, clientelism may foster a culture of impunity and make it difficult to punish individuals for corrupt behavior. Third, the demand for resources to support clientelist exchange may increase the incentives of politicians to raise funds through illicit means. Expectations/assumptions about the association between clientelism and corruption are so strong that some propose using indicators of corruption as a proxy for the level of clientelism (Persson et al. 2003, Keefer 2007). Empirically, these expectations are borne out in several recent studies. For example, Singer (2009) finds that businessmen report higher levels of corruption in their interactions with government officials in clientelist systems than they do

¹⁹For suggestive evidence that clientelism may hamper the development of the rule of law, see Kitschelt et al. 2010. By way of contrast Keefer 2006 finds no support for a link between the presence of programmatic parties and the rule of law.

²⁰Calvo & Murillo (2004), however, argue that there is a tradeoff between public sector wages and the number of public sector workers.

in more programmatic systems (see also Keefer 2007, Kitschelt 2007, Kitschelt et al. 2010).

CONCLUSION

This most recent wave of scholarly interest in clientelism is quite promising. Although conceptual and definitional questions are still debated, there has been a greater emphasis in recent years on developing and testing theories about the causes and consequences of clientelism. Traditionally, local or country-level case studies have been the most common approach to the study of clientelism. The case-study approach has produced works of scholarship that are notable for their empirical richness and their creativity in devising ways to capture clientelism (see Auyero 2000). But these types of studies are limited by the standard problem of generalizability and, in some cases, a lack of attention to theory or causal analysis. In addition, their very creativity can make replicability a challenge for many of these studies.

The recent work on clientelism continues its attention to an in-depth understanding of specific cases, but it also addresses these limits in a variety of ways. First, more and more of the work is explicitly comparative, whether across countries (e.g., Piattoni 2001a, Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007c), within countries (e.g., Brusco et al. 2004, Calvo & Murillo 2004, Desposato 2007), or across time (e.g., Hagopian 2009). Second, there is a greater emphasis on developing theories, on deriving testable hypotheses from those theories, and on evaluating those hypotheses empirically. This shift reflects increased attention to the microfoundations and causal mechanisms that connect clientelism's various independent and dependent variables. It is also an indication of new tools and methods that allow us to begin to get at these microfoundations and mechanisms in ways that simply were not possible in the past. The increasing use of public opinion surveys and field experiments is particularly notable in this regard. Also noteworthy is a recently completed effort by a team based at Duke University to gather detailed data on

parties' propensity to use programmatic versus clientelist appeals (the International Democratic Accountability Expert Survey, <http://www.duke.edu/web/democracy/index.html>). The data were collected via an expert survey of over 1,400 political scientists, sociologists, and journalists. Respondents were asked to answer more than 40 questions on the nature of partisan activities in their country of expertise, covering four subject areas: (a) how parties are organized, (b) how politicians provide targeted benefits to voters, (c) how politicians can police the contingency of clientelist exchange, and (d) how politicians appeal on programmatic issues (Kitschelt 2010, pp. 12–13). The results of this effort, along with several country-level surveys of voters, are providing researchers with new and better quality indicators of clientelism than have ever before been available.

The development of more precise indicators from both in-country and cross-country surveys is a welcome advance. One of the chief challenges in the empirical study of clientelism is the difficulty in operationalizing and measuring the concept.²¹ Few if any “smoking guns” can be found. As a result, we researchers are forced to rely on a stunning variety of (sometimes crude) proxies. This is particularly, but not exclusively, true of large-*n* empirical work, where the search for a valid measure of clientelism is especially daunting. **Table 1** presents just a few examples of the many ways clientelism has been operationalized in the recent empirical literature.

Probably the most commonly used proxy for clientelism is some measure of the size of the public sector, be it the public wage bill or the number of government personnel. Although this may sometimes be the best we can do, the size of the public sector captures only one possible outcome of clientelist exchange—public employment. As is clear from this article, the benefits that patrons can offer to clients include much more than a

²¹ See Kitschelt & Wilkinson (2007a, pp. 323–29) for a summary of these challenges.

Table 1 Clientelism as a variable in empirical analysis

Operationalization/proxy	Sample works
Characteristics of voter-politician exchange relationship	Brusco et al. 2004, 2007
Congruence between the preferences of parties and of their voters ^a	Kitschelt et al. 2010
Congruence of appeals by party operatives ^a	Kitschelt et al. 2010
Demographic characteristics of voters	Desposato 2007
Level of clientelism in a given unit of analysis	Desposato 2007
Level of corruption	Persson et al. 2003, Keefer 2007
Parties' efforts to supply clientelist benefits	Singer 2009, Kitschelt 2010
Presence or absence of programmatic parties	Keefer 2006, Cruz & Keefer 2010
Salience of a left-right partisan divide ^a	Kitschelt et al. 2010
Size of public investment/construction budgets	Keefer 2007
Size of the public sector (wages and/or personnel)	Calvo & Murillo 2004, Grzymala-Busse 2008, Remmer 2007, Robinson & Verdier 2003
Spending on capital expenditures	Remmer 2007, Chhibber & Nooruddin 2004
Strength of an economic partisan divide ^a	Kitschelt et al. 2010
Voting rationale as reported by voters	Lindberg & Morrison 2008

^aA measure of "programmatic party structuration."

government job. If public employment is part of a package of correlated clientelist benefits that are regularly offered to voters, then it may indeed be a useful proxy. If, however, public employment and other types of clientelist benefits are substitutes for one another, then we need to be cautious about inferring the importance of clientelism from the wage bill or number of government bureaucrats. We also need to be cautious about concluding that low levels of programmatic exchange necessarily equate to high levels of clientelism. It is not uncommon for scholars to operationalize clientelism as the degree to which parties are (un)programmatic. However, although there is clearly a strong negative relationship between clientelist and programmatic exchange, it is not a one-to-one relationship. Clientelism is a common alternative strategy to programmatic exchange, but is not the only alternative.²²

There of course remains an abundance of theoretical and empirical work to be done.

There is an increasing number of excellent country-level surveys, but comparable cross-national data about voter attitudes and behaviors toward clientelism remain relatively scarce. There is also room for much more work on the factors that determine the particular mix of strategies that politicians/parties choose to employ and what voters they choose to target. We have some good ideas about the factors that make clientelism more or less likely, and some understanding about how parties mix clientelist appeals with other types of appeals, but there is more to discover. For example, what factors affect the mix of swing and core voter targeting? What factors affect the choice over the strategic mix of clientelism and programmatic policies? In addition, within the broad category of clientelist exchange, patrons can offer clients a variety of benefits. What affects the types of benefits that voters demand, or that politicians choose to supply? Do certain types of benefits tend to go together?

Future research might further explore mechanisms linking poverty/development to clientelism. The literature suggests several possible causal mechanisms, but little has been done to tease out their relative influence. Other

²²Other alternatives include noncontingent pork-barrel politics, noncontingent constituency service, or appeals that rely on charisma or shared ethnicity.

interesting work could be done on how clientelism shapes party organization and how, conversely, party organization may shape the type of clientelist strategies a party pursues. In addition, we are still lacking in our understanding of why some states are able to transition from clientelism to other forms of exchange, while in others clientelism adapts and endures. Finally, it is worth exploring more carefully the role of political institutions such as electoral systems and regime type. At present, there is relatively little evidence that such institutions have an

independent effect on the level of clientelism (in part because, in the long run, institutional choice may be endogenous to preferences about clientelism), but it is quite possible that institutions play an important modifying role. For example, do they shape the form or type of clientelist exchange politicians choose to pursue? Do the effects of clientelism on democratic health and governance vary depending on the type of institutions in place? Taking institutions more seriously could yield interesting new theoretical and empirical insights.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The author is not aware of any affiliations, memberships, funding, or financial holdings that might be perceived as affecting the objectivity of this review.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Anna Grzymala-Busse for her helpful and challenging comments.

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