

Vote Brokers, Clientelist Appeals,  
and Voter Turnout:  
Evidence from Russia and Venezuela

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## **Abstract**

Modern clientelist exchange is typically carried out by intermediaries—party activists, employers, local strongmen, traditional leaders, and the like. Politicians use such brokers to mobilize voters, yet we know little about their relative effectiveness. We argue that broker effectiveness depends on their (1) leverage over clients and (2) ability to monitor voters. We apply our theoretical framework to compare two of the most common brokers worldwide, party activists and employers, arguing the latter enjoy numerous advantages along both dimensions. Using survey-based framing experiments in Venezuela and Russia, we find voters respond more strongly to turnout appeals from employers than from party activists. To demonstrate mechanisms, we show that vulnerability to job loss and embeddedness in workplace social networks make voters more responsive to clientelist mobilization by their bosses. Our results shed light on the conditions most conducive to effective clientelism and highlight broker type as important for understanding why clientelism is prevalent in some countries, but not others.

Clientelism is common in much of the modern world. But the modern practice of clientelism rarely involves direct contact between politicians and voters. Instead, most clientelist exchange is carried out by intermediaries. Such brokers may be party activists, employers, chiefs, religious leaders, strongmen, landlords, criminal bosses, or civil society leaders, to name just a few. While most of the literature implicitly recognizes this variation, we know little about the relative effectiveness of these brokers (Mares and Young, 2016). Addressing this gap can help explain variation in the incidence of clientelism across settings, as well as the differential effects of clientelism on accountability, governance, and corruption.

Borrowing from longstanding insights in the clientelism literature, we develop a simple theoretical framework for exploring why some clientelist brokers are better than others at mobilizing political support. In brief, we argue that the effectiveness of a particular broker depends on two main factors. First, brokers are more effective to the extent that voters are structurally dependent on the broker for their material well-being. This dependence enables brokers to wield more consequential, *credible* inducements to motivate voter compliance. Second, brokers who are well-positioned to monitor voter behavior are more effective. Maintaining close proximity to voters and interacting with them regularly helps to mitigate the commitment problem that lies at the heart of clientelist exchange.

We apply our theoretical framework to compare the effectiveness of two of the most common brokers worldwide: employers and party activists.<sup>1</sup> We place special emphasis on employers because they are not only widely used to mobilize voters, but also woefully understudied (but c.f. Baland and Robinson (2008), Frye, Reuter, and Szakonyi (2014), Mares (2015), and Hertel-Fernandez (2016)). We argue that employers are especially effective vote brokers, given their ability to exert significant leverage over their clients. They

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<sup>1</sup>Our survey experiments also examine the effectiveness of government officials and neighborhood leaders, but our main theoretical focus is on the differences between employers and parties.

can threaten to fire employees, withhold (or increase) wages, or limit work hours. Indeed, in the modern world, workers are particularly dependent on their employers for their livelihoods. Employers are also well-positioned to penetrate the social networks of their employees, which helps them monitor vote behavior. Their daily, long-term interactions with their employees increase their credibility and reduce monitoring costs, which helps enforce clientelist arrangements.

To test our argument, we conduct two surveys: one of 4200 individuals in Russia after regional elections in October 2014 and another of 1400 individuals in Venezuela after parliamentary elections in January 2016. Russia and Venezuela are prominent authoritarian regimes, in which employers and party activists are commonly used as vote brokers. But the two countries have different historical legacies, economic structures, and, in particular, patterns of party development. For example, as a country with a recent history of strong grassroots party mobilization, Venezuela emerges a hard case to test our argument that employers outperform party activists at turning out the vote. Variation along these dimensions helps us determine whether our findings on broker effectiveness travel across distinct political settings.

Our empirical approach relies primarily on a factorial framing experiment that prompts respondents to think hypothetically about their propensity to turn out after being mobilized by a given broker using a given inducement, but we also supplement our experimental findings with observational analyses of direct survey questions about respondents' actual experiences with these. Our experiments reveal that both Russians and Venezuelans are, on average, more responsive to turnout appeals by employers than appeals by party activists. In Russia, our experiment reveals that respondents who received the employer-as-broker treatment are 6% more likely to vote than those who received the partisan mobilization treatment. In Venezuela, where parties have significant grassroots capacity, employers still appear better at mobilizing voters. Venezuelan respondents who receive the employer treatment are 6.3% more likely to vote compared to those that receive the party

treatment. These findings are consistent with observational data showing that both Russians and Venezuelans report higher actual turnout after being mobilized by employers.

We then take advantage of rich data on the characteristics of Russian workplaces to examine the conditions under which employers are effective at mobilizing votes. Our subgroup analysis shows that both leverage and monitoring ability drive the relative effectiveness of vote brokers. We first find evidence that the average voter responds more to employer-based mobilization when they fear losing their job, worry about finding comparable employment on the labor market, and rely on their employer for key in-kind benefits, such as health insurance and child care. Thus, employers who have the most leverage over their employees are the most effective at mobilizing votes. Next, our analysis reveals that strong social ties developed in the workplace ease monitoring problems and lead to more effective mobilization by employers. Voters who have a personal relationship with their employer and those who have worked longer at the same job were more responsive to workplace-based voting inducements.

While we find that employers are more effective at mobilizing the average respondent to vote, we also recognize that other brokers may be more effective at rallying particular subgroups of voters, especially in contexts where few voters are employed or where employers lack leverage and monitoring capacity. We focus on the average respondent as a first cut. In addition, we leave identifying the conditions under which politicians choose to mobilize voters using employers or party activists to future research.

Our work makes several contributions to the study of clientelism. There is a large literature on the causes of clientelism, but fewer studies examine its effectiveness. To our knowledge, our study is among the first to explicitly compare the effectiveness of different types of brokers and selective inducements using individual level data. Our research sheds light on what makes clientelism work by highlighting the identity of the broker as a crucial determinant of clientelism's effectiveness. Furthermore, by studying the relative effectiveness of different brokers, our work helps shed light on why clientelism

is prevalent in some countries, but not others. Not all politicians have equally effective brokers at their disposal. When such brokers are absent, politicians may have to opt for other, more programmatic strategies to win elections.

Second, our research indicates why scholars should pay more attention to employers as clientelist brokers. Although the older literature on clientelism focused heavily on some types of employers (particularly in agriculture), party activists have received pride of place in recent work. And yet, as this study indicates, employer-based clientelism is not only common, but also relatively effective for mobilizing typical voters in the modern world. In fact, employer-based clientelism presents a challenge to those who argue that clientelism will recede with economic modernization (Weitz-Shapiro 2014, Stokes et al. 2013). Although modernization may undermine traditional hierarchies, the expansion of the formal sector creates new ones. Our work suggests that given the significant leverage and monitoring ability that employers wield over workers, employer-based clientelism may become even more common in the developing world.

## **Vote Brokers and the Study of Clientelism**

Clientelism, the exchange of selective inducements for political support, is a common tactic that politicians use to mobilize votes.<sup>2</sup> Although they also make programmatic appeals to the public, politicians across the developing world rely on clientelist networks to buy off, cajole, and/or intimidate voters. Though much of the literature on clientelism has focused on attempts to influence vote choice (Stokes, 2005), recent work has shown that using selective inducements to induce turnout can be just as, if not more, common than vote buying (Nichter, 2008; Gans Morse, Mazzuca, and Nichter, 2014; Nichter and Palmer-

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<sup>2</sup>As Hicken (2011) notes, there is no universally accepted definition of clientelism, but many conceptions contain four key features: 1) dyadic relations between patron and client, 2) a hierarchy between the two, 3) support that is contingent on the inducement, and 4) iteration.

Rubin, 2015).<sup>3</sup> Here we focus on turnout rather than vote choice.

Scholars have emphasized that clientelist mobilization can entail different types of selective inducements. Most studies focus on positive inducements such as vote buying, (Stokes et al 2013, Nichter 2008 ), but a growing literature also explores the impact of negative inducements, such as coercion and threats (Mares and Young, 2016; Frye, Reuter, and Szakonyi, 2018). These inducements are often explored in isolation from each other, but here we examine the impact of different types of positive and negative inducements on turnout in a single analysis.

Many studies acknowledge that clientelism must be mediated by an intermediary or 'broker' who presents the selective inducement to the voter. By far the most common brokers discussed in the literature are party activists or independent brokers affiliated with parties (Stokes, Dunning, and Nazareno, 2013). But clientelism may be brokered by many different types of intermediaries, including traditional leaders (Koter, 2013; Lemarchand, 1972), landowners (Scott, 1972), strongmen (Sidel, 1999), gangs and warlords (Anderson, 2002), state employees (Oliveros, 2016), unions (Larreguy, Marshall, and Querubin, 2016), civil society leaders (Holland and Palmer-Rubin, 2015), and employers (Mares, 2015; Frye, Reuter, and Szakonyi, 2014). While some comparativists have come to recognize the range of possible brokers (Mares and Young, 2016), there are far fewer systematic studies that exploit variation in brokers to explore electoral clientelism. Moreover, almost all empirical studies of electoral clientelism focus on a single type of broker, but here we examine the relative impact of different types of brokers with a special emphasis on employers and party activists.

In addition, most studies focus on the prevalence of electoral clientelism and seek to determine what types of voters are targeted with what types of inducements. The vast majority of the *empirical* literature on clientelism seeks to identify the conditions that make

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<sup>3</sup>In our surveys in Russia and Venezuela, respondents were more likely to report being asked by a broker to turn out than they were to vote for a specific candidate.

it more likely to occur. Scholars have identified socio-economic factors (Stokes, 2005; Kitschelt, 2000), the ideological orientations of voters (Stokes, Dunning, and Nazareno, 2013; Calvo and Murillo, 2013), ballot structure (Lehoucq and Molina, 2002), and norms of reciprocity (Finan and Schechter, 2012) as important correlates of vote buying. Others have examined what types of voters are targeted with threats or coercion (Mares and Young, 2018).

But we have far fewer studies about the relative effectiveness of different types of brokers and clientelistic strategies.<sup>4</sup> The relatively few existing studies of effectiveness of electoral clientelism tend to focus on positive inducements. Recent work has examined how the effectiveness of vote buying is conditioned by social structure (Weitz-Shapiro, 2014; Gonzalez Ocantos, Jonge, and Nickerson, 2014); the type of gift offered (Lawson and Greene, 2014); the size of precincts (Rueda, 2017); and the ability of politicians to monitor brokers (Larreguy, Marshall, and Querubin, 2016). Other work questions whether vote-buying helps to turn out the vote (Wantchekon, 2003; Vicente, 2014; Cantú, 2019; Guardado and Wantchékon, 2018). The impact of negative inducements on turnout is much less studied (Mares and Young, 2016).

Finally, studies of clientelism in Venezuela have centered on party activists and state officials, but, to our knowledge, none explore employers as brokers (Handlin, 2017; Penfold-Becerra, 2007; Albertus, 2015). Studies in Russia have examined the prevalence of electoral mobilization by employers, party activists and state officials, but not the effectiveness of these strategies (Hale, 2003; Golosov, 2013; Allina-Pisano, 2010; Frye, Reuter, and Szakonyi, 2014).

By focusing on the effectiveness, rather than prevalence, of electoral clientelism and by

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<sup>4</sup>Another important and understudied question concerns why particular brokers are used in particular settings, but not in others. We leave this question for future research, although, as we discuss below, we believe that our study can provide some insight into this topic.

exploring the impact of different types of selective inducements offered by different types of brokers in a single analysis, our study is distinct from much recent literature.

## **A Special Focus on Parties and Employers as Vote-Brokers**

In the remainder of this study, we compare the relative effectiveness of party activists to another prominent broker—employers. Party activists are one of the most widespread clientelist brokers and by far the most studied. Employers, for their part, are probably the second most commonly used broker around the world. Historical evidence indicates that employer-based clientelism was common in settings as diverse as the United States ([Argersinger, 1985](#)), Imperial Germany ([Mares, 2015](#)) and early 20th century Chile ([Baland and Robinson, 2008](#)). The practice persists in contemporary times as well. [Mares, Muntean, and Petrova \(2016\)](#) find that 11 percent of Bulgarian voters and 5 percent of Romanian voters were pressured by their employers to vote in the 2013 parliamentary election.

Workplace mobilization is well-established in contemporary Russia. During the 2011 parliamentary election campaign, 25% of employees were asked by their employers to turn out ([Frye, Reuter, and Szakonyi, 2014](#)).<sup>5</sup> Russia's largest vote monitoring organization, GOLOS, aggregated hundreds of citizen reports of intimidation in the workplace during the 2011-12 election cycle and concluded in its final report: "Once again, administrative pressure on voters was actively used in these elections... including pressure on the employees of individual enterprises and organizations with the goal of securing votes for V. Putin" ([Report, 2012](#)). More recent surveys, such as the 2016 Russian Election Study, have found that 15% of employees were asked by their employers to vote during those elections.

Workplace mobilization in Russia takes many forms, including political rallies, coercion, turnout buying, and violations of the secret ballot. While the practice happens in many different workplaces, recent work finds that employer-based mobilization occurs

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<sup>5</sup>Levada Center Omnibus, 15 December 2011.

most often in firms that are either large or state-owned, or that possess immobile assets (Frye, Reuter, and Szakonyi, 2014). Most workplace mobilization in Russia is carried out, implicitly or explicitly, in favor of regime candidates.

There is less research on workplace mobilization in Venezuela, but available evidence indicates that the practice is common there as well. Since at least 2004, members of the Chávez and Maduro governments have made clear that public employees are expected to support the government at election time (Corrales and Penfold-Becerra, 2007; Handlin, 2017, 150-1). During the 2015 parliamentary elections, the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) required public sector employers to involve workers in turnout mobilization. Called the “1X10 campaign,” each party activist and public sector employee was required to mobilize an additional 10 voters.<sup>6</sup> In the post-election survey in Venezuela analyzed in this paper, 42% of employed voters reported that their employer had asked them to vote. And consistent with the anecdotal evidence cited above, our survey finds that nearly half of public sector workers experienced some form of workplace mobilization. However, the practice still occurs quite widely in the private sector, affecting 35% of workers there.

The prevalence of workplace mobilization in the Venezuelan public sector indicates that the practice is primarily perpetrated by the regime, but we cannot exclude the possibility that the opposition engages in workplace mobilization as well. Future research could profit by understanding how and when the opposition is able to make use of this type of clientelism.

While other types of brokers may be more prevalent than both parties and employers *in certain settings*—for instance, traditional leaders are common brokers in Africa—parties and employers are not specific to particular locations. They are used in many different countries, making conclusions about their effectiveness easier to generalize. And while

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<sup>6</sup>“Obligan a personal de empresas de la CVG y Pdvsa cumplir con el 1x10” El Nacional. 27 November 2015.

we would like to study location-specific brokers as well, the limitations of resources and sample size force us to limit our analytic focus in the countries we study. Therefore, in both Russia and Venezuela we focus on the three brokers that are most commonly used in each country. In Russia this is party activists, employers, and local government officials. In Venezuela, it is party activists, employers and neighborhood leaders.

## **Why Are Some Types of Brokers More Effective Than Others?**

To understand why some types of brokers are more effective at turning out the average voter, it is instructive to begin by examining what we know about the effectiveness of clientelism. Scholars have developed different theories of what makes clientelism “work.” The most common view is that successful clientelism results from an instrumental exchange (Stokes, 2005; Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007; Scott, 1972). Brokers induce voter compliance through the conditional use of future rewards and punishments (Calvo and Murillo, 2013; Rueda, 2017; Gingerich and Medina, 2013; Mares, 2015). By exploiting voters’ own self-interest, brokers convince voters to engage in political behavior that they might otherwise not undertake. A voter’s behavior is then contingent on the expectation of future rewards or punishments. As we argue below, different types of brokers are likely to vary significantly in the extent to which they are able to motivate such instrumental compliance.

An alternative view posits that brokers leverage voters’ feelings of intrinsic reciprocity or moral obligation (Finan and Schechter, 2012). Scholars argue that vote-buying is most effective at mobilizing votes when targeted individuals derive pleasure from helping those politicians or brokers who offered them material compensation. Vote-buying becomes self-enforcing when clients feel a strong obligation to return favors to their patrons (Lawson and Greene 2012). A related view is that vote-buying conveys information about candidates. Some argue that politicians offer handouts in order to inform voters about their ability to deliver particularistic services after the election (Keefer and Vlaicu, 2008;

[Kramon, 2016](#)). The goal may not be to mobilize individual votes, but instead foster wider perceptions of competence and trustworthiness.

Both informational and reciprocity-based theories have produced important insights, but they are less useful in helping us understand differences across classes of brokers. All brokers, it would seem, might use clientelism to convey information about politicians, and intrinsic reciprocity is a characteristic that varies across clients (or societies), not patrons. In addition, both informational and reciprocity-based theories of clientelism struggle to explain the use of negative inducements such as intimidation or threats to withdraw benefits, which are an important component of clientelist mobilization in much of the world. As such, we focus on political clientelism as rooted in instrumental exchange between brokers and voters.

## **Leverage**

One important determinant of broker effectiveness is leverage. To enforce clientelist exchange, brokers must be well-positioned to credibly offer (or threaten) consequential inducements. Where does this leverage come from? We argue that what matters most in determining leverage is the extent to which clients are structurally dependent on patrons for some benefit—economic, political, or social—that is important to their well-being.

The more a client has to depend on a patron to get by, the more likely a “captive electoral base” will emerge ([Holland and Palmer-Rubin, 2015](#)). Clients that rely heavily on brokers have less autonomy to defect from clientelist bargains ([Kramon, 2016](#); [Medina and Stokes, 2007](#)). Resisting the entreaties of clientelist exchange often requires outside options: voters must have other ways to secure the benefits that brokers provide, whether they be jobs, income, or access to state services. Without these other avenues, brokers occupy a monopolistic position in meting out rewards and punishments, resulting in high levels of voter compliance. This reading of dependence draws on a number of older, definitions of clientelism which assume some degree of social, economic, or political hi-

erarchy between patrons and clients (Scott, 1972; Lemarchand, 1972). Such asymmetries have played a less prominent role in some recent treatments of clientelism (Stokes, 2011), but we argue that this consideration of hierarchy is crucial for understanding the origins of leverage.

Brokers that command consequential sources of leverage over clients will be more effective at enforcing clientelist exchange. And, on this score, the main factor that distinguishes effective brokers from ineffective brokers is credibility. Any broker could conceivably offer a large amount of money or threaten severe social sanction, but only some types of brokers are able to make such inducements credible.

Some types of brokers have structural advantages that give them, in most conceivable settings, significant leverage over clients. Landlords, for example, can credibly threaten to evict (Scott, 1972). Traditional leaders, by virtue of their social standing, can credibly threaten meaningful social sanction (Lemarchand, 1972). Local strongmen and gangs can credibly threaten physical coercion (Acemoglu, Robinson, and Santos, 2013; Sidel, 1999). Low-level government officials can threaten withdrawal of social benefits.

Employers, an important focus of our study, wield consequential levers of influence over their employees. They can offer significant positive inducements such as increases in wages or benefits. But their real advantage is in the size of the negative inducements they can deploy. Employers can withhold wages, trim benefits, or even fire workers.

Available data indicate that employers do use such negative inducements in both Venezuela and Russia. In Venezuela, researchers have found that those who signed a leaked anti-Chávez petition in 2004 (the Maisanta list) suffered earnings and job loss as a result (Hsieh et al., 2011). Using list experiments to account for social desirability bias, Frye, Reuter, and Szakonyi (2018) estimate that as many as 17% of employed voters experienced coercion in the workplace during the 2012 Russian presidential campaign. Data from crowd-sourced election complaints revealed that 83% of workplace violations during the 2011 State Duma election involved some type of intimidation (Frye, Reuter, and Sza-

konyi, 2018). In 50% of these reports, managers simply ordered their employees to vote. In 38% of reports, they explicitly threatened dismissal or a reduction in salary/benefits.

Party activists, by contrast, usually lack such sticks. In most cases, they cannot credibly threaten sanctions that would approach the magnitude of job loss. And the modest positive inducements that they more commonly offer also pale in comparison to the benefit of job security. Activists have to invest significant resources to gain anything approaching the degree of leverage that employers have by virtue of their own position. Stokes (2011) describes British parties in the 19th century collecting information on voters' debts, crimes, and infidelities to use as leverage in their interactions with voters.

Employers also have a comparative advantage in making their offers credible. Employers are engaged in repeated, long-term interactions with their employees. Such iteration instills an understanding that defections will result in punishment or exclusion from future benefit streams (Stokes, 2005; Hicken, 2011). Workers know that they will have to interact with their bosses in the future. Workers cannot avoid punishment by evading or ignoring their employers. In other words, compliance with the clientelist bargain is easier to enforce in the workplace. By contrast, voters are unlikely to find threats made by party activists to be very credible. And if they encounter the activist only infrequently, promises of future benefits may ring hollow. In sum, employers have ample political leverage over workers and are likely to be particularly effective clientelist vote mobilizers.

## **Monitoring**

Inducing dependence and enjoying resource advantages may not be sufficient to enforce a bargain. It is well-known that clientelist exchange can be stymied by a monitoring problem. With the secret ballot, politicians find it difficult to determine whether voters are voting as directed. Turnout-based clientelism makes this an easier problem to solve, since monitoring turnout is easier than monitoring vote choice (Nichter, 2008). But monitoring turnout is not costless. Vote brokers still need to gather information on whether voters

turned out. At the very least, they need to imply that this information is being gathered.

The ability to monitor clients, even under a secret ballot, has been shown to increase the effectiveness of clientelism (Larreguy, Marshall, and Querubin, 2016; Stokes, 2005). Where does monitoring ability come from? First, close proximity between brokers and clients improves the amount and quality of information used to track client political behavior (Brady, Schlozman, and Verba, 1999; Hicken, 2011). Dense social networks transmit political information and cues as well as facilitate group monitoring (Cruz, Keefer, and Labonne, 2016; Cruz, Labonne, and Querubin, 2017). Second, repeated interactions help decrease monitoring and enforcement costs. When clientelist exchanges take place as a one-shot game, brokers lose the ability to observe which voters comply with their end of the bargain. Hicken (2011) argues that repeated interactions help brokers learn what works over time with different sets of voters, and calibrate the size of offers needed to be made.

Socially-embedded brokers, such as neighborhood and civil society leaders, have advantages on this dimension. But it is important to note that, since many people's social networks are intertwined with their workplace, employers share similar advantages. Sociologists have found that the workplace is a key site for the formation of "core discussion networks" (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Brashears, 2006). Coworkers can be confidantes for many employed voters. Indeed, evidence from a March 2018 post-election survey in Russia confirm this: 13% of respondents believed their coworkers and supervisors could surmise their vote choice without being directly told.<sup>7</sup> As noted above, repeated interactions facilitate employers' ability to gather detailed information on their employees' political behavior. By interacting on a near-daily basis regardless of electoral cycles, employers

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<sup>7</sup>In contrast, nearly 60% of respondents believed their family members could guess who they voted for, while just under 30% thought their close friends and 9% thought their neighbors could do so. The survey polled a representative sample of 1,600 Russian citizens in March 2018.

have more opportunities to learn whether their employees vote in elections, attend political rallies, or contribute to campaigns.

Stokes (2005) has argued that grassroots parties with tentacle-like organizations that penetrate the social networks of voters are able to successfully monitor voter behavior. In such settings, parties may have monitoring capacity that matches that of employers. But, as an empirical matter, such organizations are rare in much of the developing world (Van de Walle, 2007; Hale, 2005). Political leaders often do not prioritize long-term party development, preferring to quickly activate brokers and networks only during pre-election periods. After the polls close, party cells often lay dormant. The number of full-time activists capable of gathering information and sustaining interactions with voters is minimal. Given the built-in social networks that exist in the workplace, employers may be even better placed to monitor voters in much of the developing world.

Thus, to summarize, we argue that employers have inherent structural advantages that gives them superior leverage over a typical client. When it comes to monitoring, however, their relative advantages depend more on contextual factors, but in most settings, their monitoring capacity is likely greater than parties.<sup>8</sup>

## **Two Framing Experiments on Brokered Mobilization**

In order to examine the relative effectiveness of different brokers, we employ a framing experiment embedded in surveys in Russia and Venezuela. These are good cases for examining the questions posed here. Both are prominent authoritarian regimes that hold

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<sup>8</sup>Autocrats face a tradeoff in relying on parties that can mobilize all voters with weaker tools and employers who can mobilize employees with stronger tools. Whether parties or employers are more effective in turning out voters in the aggregate will depend on contextual factors, such as the share of the population that is employed. We show here that employers are relatively more effective than other brokers in mobilizing a typical voter, conditional on being mobilized.

elections at regular intervals. Clientelism is also common in elections at various levels, and several different types of brokers—employers, local officials, neighborhood leaders, hospital directors, council heads, schoolteachers, and party activists—are regularly employed in both (Forrat, 2018; Allina-Pisano, 2010; McMann, 2006; Handlin, 2016; Albertus, 2015). Furthermore, there are several well-regarded survey firms in Russia and Venezuela with extensive experience conducting complex surveys, including split-sample randomizations.

However, the two countries differ in analytically useful ways. Russia is a post-communist country, with a long history of politics in the workplace (Friedgut, 1979; Remington, 1984). Venezuela, by contrast, does not have a history of communist rule, so employers cannot draw on legacies of workplace mobilization. Second, parties in Venezuela have stronger grassroots organizations than in Russia, which are put to great use to mobilize voters during elections (Roberts, 2006; Handlin, 2016). This makes Venezuela a particularly hard case to test our argument, given the increased attention and resources devoted to developing party structures there. Finally, the two countries differ with regards to economic structure. Although private sector employment strictly dominates in both countries,<sup>9</sup> at the time of the survey, Venezuela was experiencing much a higher rates of unemployment and poverty than Russia. These differences allow us to explore whether broker effectiveness depends on particular historical legacies, political party development, or economic structure.

Our survey in Russia consisted of 4200 face-to-face interviews conducted in 20 regions that held regional (executive and/or legislative) elections in September 2014.<sup>10</sup> Surveys were carried out in October 2014, three weeks after the elections. The sample included a

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<sup>9</sup>Roughly 70% of employed respondents in Russia and 80% employed respondents in Venezuela work outside the government.

<sup>10</sup>A list of regions as well as an explanation of the sampling approaches is in the appendix.

base sample of 3360 respondents. This sample contained a representative sample of 500 respondents from four regions, and a random sample of 85 respondents from another sixteen regions. An additional oversample of 840 employed respondents was added to the base sample. Of these oversampled respondents, we required that no fewer than 240 individuals were working in heavy industry, oil/gas extraction, and mining.<sup>11</sup> As a robustness check, we present results from the framing experiment and observational analysis with and without the additional oversample of employed respondents (see Appendix).

Our survey in Venezuela included responses from 1400 face-to-face interviews in nine regions of the country. We used a stratified sampling procedure based on geography and habitation to achieve a nationally representative sample. The country was divided into 36 strata based on these two criteria, from which 173 sample points were randomly selected. In addition, we oversampled 400 employed respondents distributed proportionally from the sample points. Thus, our sample included 1400 respondents in all.

Because clientelist appeals are not randomly assigned, it is a challenge to study their effectiveness. Brokers may selectively target individuals which makes it hard to assess the causal effect of clientelist appeals.<sup>12</sup> Adopting an experimental design that randomly assigned voters to receive different types of appeals from different brokers is impractical and would raise ethical concerns about electoral interference. To address these difficulties, scholars have resorted to a series of indirect experimental approaches including informational campaigns (Vicente, 2014; Collier and Vicente, 2012) and framing experiments (Weitz-Shapiro, 2014; Lawson and Greene, 2014). We adopt the latter approach.

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<sup>11</sup>This somewhat complicated sampling design was chosen for a parallel project on the determinants of workplace mobilization. The sample is not nationally representative, but our goal is not to estimate the incidence of clientelism across Russia.

<sup>12</sup>Our focus here is on effectiveness, and we leave discussions of targeting to an array of other work examining differential advantages of brokers in mobilizing certain types of citizens.

The assumption that all respondents were equally likely to receive each treatment allows for randomization and better causal inference, but may be more plausible for some types of respondents than others. We relax this assumption in the observational analysis, but at the usual cost of weaker causal inference.

For our main analyses, we implemented a framing experiment using a factorial design in which we manipulate 1) the type of vote broker and 2) mobilizational technique. Each respondent was asked the following question:

Imagine that during the next election campaign [voter broker here] approaches you and [technique here]. Given this, how likely would you be to vote in these elections?<sup>13</sup>

Respondents were asked to rate their likelihood of voting on a five-point scale ranging from ‘definitely will not vote’ to ‘definitely will vote.’ Respondents were randomly assigned to one of 12 combinations of broker and technique as depicted in Table 1.<sup>14</sup> In the Russia survey, each group was comprised of between 331 and 372 respondents, while in the Venezuela survey, each group was comprised of between 94 and 133 respondents. Covariate balance checks presented in the Appendix indicate that the randomization was successful for both surveys.

[ Insert Table 1 Here]

We invoke three brokers in the experiment: in Russia we used employers, party activists, and government officials, while in Venezuela we used employers, party activists, and

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<sup>13</sup>In Russia, the question specified the next State Duma campaign. Original wordings in Russian and Spanish can be found in the appendix.

<sup>14</sup>Respondent characteristics such as employment status were not factored into the randomization procedure; every respondent had an equal probability of being assigned to treatment. We show results in the appendix where we restrict the sample to only employed individuals for whom the ‘employer as broker’ treatment would be more realistic.

‘neighborhood leaders.’ Employers are common vote brokers in Russia and Venezuela, and are the main subject of our research.

In addition to the anecdotes discussed above, our post-election surveys uncovered a substantial incidence of political mobilization by employers. In Russia, 52% of employed respondents experienced at least one of the following political activities in their workplace: seeing campaign posters, management discussing elections with employees, receiving agitation materials, management-provided transportation to the polls, management asking employees to agitate, or management publicly endorsing a candidate.<sup>15</sup> In Venezuela, the numbers were just as high, with 51% of those employed having experienced any number of the same political activities by employers. Workplace mobilization is also actively covered by media outlets, making most citizens at least somewhat aware of it around elections.

The next treatment references party activists because they are the vote brokers most commonly discussed in the literature and are also commonly employed in both countries. Surveys have found party officials in Russia to be key sources of information for voters, while also distributing inducements (Usmanova, 2008). In Venezuela, the Bolivarian Movement and its Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (PSUV) have developed extensive grassroots structures to direct government spending (Handlin, 2016). Our surveys confirm the active roles parties play during elections; roughly 27% of Russians and 26% of Venezuelans interacted with a party activist during their countries’ electoral campaign.

For the Russian survey, we included local government officials as the third broker be-

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<sup>15</sup>Clientelist mobilization was significantly less common in the 2014 Russian regional elections than in national elections either in Russia or Venezuela. Regional elections usually see less mobilization than national elections in Russia. Moreover, during the fall 2014, the regime was riding a wave of popularity following the annexation of Crimea. In this environment, it downplayed clientelist mobilization, given that high vote totals could be secured without additional effort.

cause they are common intermediaries, especially outside major cities, where the heads of local districts are frequently tasked with mobilizing rural voters. In Venezuela, clientelist exchange is often brokered by so-called ‘neighborhood leaders’ who are recruited by parties to mobilize candidates.<sup>16</sup> Access to the misiones, or government-run social programs, often hinges on an individual’s relationship with these neighborhood organizations. This is the third broker we included in the Venezuela experiment.<sup>17</sup>

In order to capture the full spectrum of clientelist techniques, we included four mobilizational techniques as treatments.<sup>18</sup> We included one clientelist appeal related to positive inducements, two clientelist appeals related to negative inducements, and one simple mobilizational appeal. The positive inducement explicitly mentions the use of a “gift, money, or reward” in exchange for voting in elections. In doing so, we follow much of the literature, which often measures vote-buying using survey prompts that communicate a general payoff in return for political support (Corstange, 2018; Gonzalez Ocantos, Jonge, and Nickerson, 2014). Next, the first negative inducement frame focused on individualized threats. We conceptualize this individualized threat as a person exchanging political support in order to maintain the status quo and prevent the loss of something of value. The second negative treatment focused on collective threats against the voter’s workplace or organization. Would political support not be offered, the loss would be inflicted on both

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<sup>16</sup>The exact phrasing was “persona de su urbanización/barrio que tenga mucha influencia” a phrasing that could encompass various types of neighborhood social leaders, including those affiliated with regime affiliated “Communal Councils.”

<sup>17</sup>University professors, hospital superintendents, and school directors are also prominent brokers, but their targets are a limited segment of the population. In order to preserve statistical power, we must necessarily limit the number of brokers assigned as treatments.

<sup>18</sup>Our concern was that a focus on one type of strategy, such as turnout-buying, might result in biased results at the broker level. Using four strategies helps allay concerns that specific inducements are driving differences in broker effectiveness.

the respondent and other members of their collective. Finally, we also include a treatment in which each broker asks the voter to turn out.

It is important to note that employers asking their employees to vote can be construed as form of implicit coercion, though weaker than if a direct threat is involved. Inherent asymmetries in the employer-employee relationship make these entreaties implicitly coercive. Indeed, our surveys indicated that a majority of respondents in both countries take a negative view of this type of workplace mobilization.

Our design is best suited to comparing the *relative* effectiveness of brokers and inducements. However, we conceive of the ‘simple ask’ treatment by party activists as the baseline. We are aware of no studies that find being asked to turn out by a party activist depresses turnout. Most find the opposite. Thus, any effects relative to this baseline category should be low estimates of clientelist mobilization. In any case, our main focus is on the relative effectiveness of different brokers across the fixed set of strategies used.

Our scenarios are hypothetical and we do not observe actual voting behavior. At the same time, the main effect of the hypothetical prompt should be to increase variance in responses and increase the number of non-committal (“Maybe I would vote, maybe I would not”) responses, since we are asking respondents to speculate about future behavior. This should make it harder to find a statistically significant effect for a given treatment. Moreover, while most Russians and Venezuelans do not directly experience clientelism in every election, these practices are common and average citizens would be aware of them.

Finally, even hypothetical framing experiments do not completely resolve potential problems of social desirability bias. Respondents could be wary of admitting that illegal practices such as turnout-buying might sway their behavior. They also could believe it more socially desirable to respond to collective rather than individual threats.<sup>19</sup> Even here, however, several factors reduce our concerns about social desirability bias. Our

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<sup>19</sup>On the other hand respondents may find personal threats more vivid than collective threats and react more strongly to them – a bias that would work in the opposite direction.

results hold among more educated respondents (see Appendix), who are usually viewed as more sensitive to concerns about social desirability (Silver, Anderson, and Abramson, 1986; Karp and Brockington, 2005) and we find that levels of non-response are low.<sup>20</sup> Some voters may frown upon mobilization by certain employers, party activists or local leaders, but the practice is not illegal in Russia and is often discussed in the media. More generally, recent survey research on Russia has indicated that social desirability bias is less common than often perceived (Frye et al., 2017).<sup>21</sup>

## Results: Comparing Effectiveness Across Brokers

Figures 1 and 2 show the main results of the survey experiment. Because the employer treatment is less relevant for non-employed voters, we limit the sample in our main analyses to the subset of respondents who reported that they were employed.<sup>22</sup> Given our theoretical focus on brokers, we focus primarily on the interpretation of those results. The y-axes of the panels in Figure 1 show the mean response on the turnout propensity scale (responses range from 1 to 5). The first and most important result is that the average respondent in both countries is more responsive to mobilizational appeals by employers. Because we use a factorial design to assign respondents to treatment, we can simplify

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<sup>20</sup>The survey experiment in Russia lacked a non-response category, but in Venezuela 5% of respondents chose this option. The rate of non-response did not vary significantly across brokers. It was slightly lower for the "simple ask" treatment, which makes some sense.

<sup>21</sup>Survey research on equally sensitive topics using data from Russia have appeared in the *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *American Economic Review*, and *American Journal of Sociology* in recent years.

<sup>22</sup>In the appendix, we show all our main results on the full sample. We also show regression results that control for the employment status of the respondent. The main results are substantively and statistically similar.

the presentation of the individual broker (and strategy) treatments. Figure 2 collapses the treatment groups based on each axis in the factorial. This is a standard approach to analyzing data generated using conjoint analysis (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2015). The figures demonstrate that the employer advantage over the two types of activists is statistically significant in both countries.

[ Insert Figure 1 Here]

[ Insert Figure 2 Here]

Among those who received the employer treatment in Russia, the mean response on the 5-point scale of *Turnout Propensity* was 2.851, while the mean response among those who received either the party activist treatment or the government official treatment was 2.43. The difference is 0.21, which is statistically significant, and translates into a 4.2% increase ( $.21/5$ ) in *Turnout Propensity* over non-employer brokers. However, since the turnout propensity variable is an ordinal scale, this quantity cannot be directly interpreted as a 4.2% increase in the probability of turning out. Rather it makes more sense to evaluate effects across the range of *Turnout Propensity*.

One simple way to do this is by examining changes in predicted probabilities from an ordered logit model, in which the dependent variable is *Turnout Propensity* and the independent variable is a binary indicator for whether the respondent received the employer treatment. Table 2 shows these quantities. Here we see that receiving the employer treatment increases the likelihood of the respondent answering that they will be likely to turn out (response category 4 or 5) by 5 to 6 percentage points. Similar effect sizes are found in the Venezuela experiment: respondents that receive the employer treatment are 9.3% more likely to answer that they would turn out than those that receive the party activist treatment. The difference between the employer and neighborhood leader treatments is even larger.

These effect sizes are substantial. As many turnout studies demonstrate, it is very difficult to increase turnout by large amounts (Green and Gerber, 2015). Modest, but

precisely estimated effect sizes are common in this literature. Our results indicate that employer-based clientelist appeals have sizable effects on turnout. We also find that the other brokers we included in the design are roughly comparable to party activists in terms of their ability to mobilize voters. Government officials slightly outperform party activists in Russia, while neighborhood leaders slightly underperform party activists in Venezuela. These differences are less precisely estimated and we interpret them in more detail below.

While employers outperform party activists in both countries, it is interesting to note that party activists appear considerably more effective in Venezuela. Party mobilization is more common in Venezuela, which could make these prompts more realistic for Venezuelan respondents. It may also be the case that Venezuelan party activists are more credible representatives of the state than they are in Russia. This would make their inducements more credible.

[ Insert Table 2 Here]

In Appendix Tables A3 and A7, we show that the main effects are not contingent on the type of sample analyzed in the two countries. First, employers are more effective brokers when the entire sample of respondents are analyzed, and including a control for being employed. Interestingly, the same is true when comparing whether a respondent is employed in the public or private sector.<sup>23</sup> Although government employees appear to respond more strongly to the hypothetical invocation of employer-based mobilization, we also find strong evidence that private sector employers command sizable political influence. Finally, we show that the sampling procedure used in Russia and Venezuela are not driving the results: employers demonstrate greater mobilizational capacity in both the more representative ('original') samples and the oversamples of those employed.

Although our focus in this paper is on the relative effectiveness of brokers, the survey experiments also shed interesting light on how well different types of selective inducements function for mobilizing voters. First, across both surveys, organizational threats

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<sup>23</sup>Workplace mobilization is, however, more prevalent in the public sector.

strongly outperform individual threats (and all other types of inducements). Russian respondents who received the organizational threat treatment were eight percentage points more likely to respond that they were likely or very likely to vote; in Venezuela, those who received this treatment were fourteen percentage points more likely to respond similarly.

These findings make sense in light of the theoretical propositions sketched above. For one, organizational threats are more credible than inducements toward individuals. As other scholars have pointed out, monitoring a collective's voting behavior is easier than monitoring an individual ([Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007](#)). It is straightforward to observe the voting returns of a municipality or small town. Monitoring the voting behavior of some other collectives—e.g. firms, schools, hospitals—is more difficult, but the task may be simplified if employees live close together and correspond loosely to one or small number of precincts, as is often the case with large firms.

Perhaps surprisingly, we also find that providing gifts and/or patronage (turnout-buying) is a relatively ineffective way of mobilizing voters, even compared to simply asking voters to turn out and irrespective of the broker used. These findings largely accord with recent studies arguing that without strong monitoring capacity, electoral hand-outs often do not change electoral outcomes ([Guardado and Wantchékon, 2018](#)). Another explanation for this non-result in Russia is that the median voter is too wealthy for pre-electoral gifts to make much of an impact. In fact, we do find evidence that poorer respondents in both surveys respond to positive inducements by turning out. In Appendix Tables A5 and A9, we interact the turnout-buying treatment with indicators for education and income. In general, the less educated and less wealthy respondents are, the more effective are all types of inducements, including attempts at turnout-buying.

Variation across these inducements also may help explain the relative effectiveness of other brokers we employ in the experiment. The survey results indicate, for example, that government officials in Russia derive their mobilizing power mainly from making organizational threats, which is reasonable given these officials' leverage coming in the

form of budget allocations. Officials are less able to use inducements that potentially require increased monitoring capacity, such as wielding positive and negative inducements to individuals. This makes sense given officials' limited penetration of social networks and visibility in neighborhoods. On the other hand, we find that party activists in Venezuela command more leverage through organizational threats, while neighborhood leaders enjoy more success mobilizing voters when more monitoring capacity is required.

### **Robustness Check: Observational Data on Broker Effectiveness**

The findings from the survey experiment support our contention that employers are, on average, more effective vote mobilizers than other brokers. However, we would be more confident in our findings if we could corroborate them with another, separate piece of evidence. Fortunately, both surveys also included a series of direct questions about individuals' experiences with mobilization by different kinds of brokers as well as direct questions about their decision to turn out. We use these questions to examine the correlation between turnout and being mobilized in the workplace, conditional on potential confounders.

In the Appendix, we model whether respondents actually turned out in the Russian regional (Appendix Table A11) and Venezuelan elections (Appendix Table A14). We specifically look at the effect of having been mobilized politically at work, by a party activist, or by a government official (Russia) or neighborhood leader (Venezuela). The models control for a large number of demographic factors that could potentially influence both being mobilized by various actors as well as an individual's baseline propensity to turn out. We also alternate sample restrictions between the full sample and only those employed.

In both countries, we see that being mobilized in the workplace is positively correlated with higher turnout. Depending on the model used and the country studied, the estimates range from a five percentage point increase to a 14 percentage point increase. Although being mobilized by a party activist is also positively correlated with turnout, the magnitude

of the effect is smaller than for employers. These differences hold even when including indicators of mobilization by the three brokers in the same model, though the estimates are less precisely estimated.<sup>24</sup>

On their own, these correlations are only suggestive. Workplace mobilization is not randomly assigned and there are many potential endogeneity problems. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the findings remain robust and significant while controlling for a considerable number of important confounders. And it is especially noteworthy that these findings are consistent with the findings from the survey experiment. Employers in both countries appear to be more effective at mobilizing the average voter than parties.

## **Results: Mechanisms**

Our data allows us to probe some of the mechanisms that make workplace mobilization effective. Our theory predicts that the mobilizational superiority employers enjoy over other brokers stems from the unique characteristics of the workplace. Employers have greater leverage over workers (such as control over hiring and firing decisions), engage in more sustained, repeated interaction with their employees, and can draw on the dense social networks in the workplace. Using data from the Russia survey, we put these mechanisms to the test by asking employed respondents detailed information about their job and social relationships at work.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>In Venezuela, the comparison between the two brokers is more difficult than in Russia because the two questions were not asked as part of the same battery and the wordings were slightly different—respondents were asked if employers had “encouraged” them to vote, but they were asked if party activists had “requested” that they vote. This may explain some of the discrepancies between the employed and unemployed sample.

<sup>25</sup>Due to resource constraints, we were not able to include a similar battery of workplace-related questions on the Venezuela survey, nor were we able to poll enough respondents to generate the statistical power to estimate precise interaction effects. In Ap-

[ Insert Table 3 Here]

In Table 3, we group the mechanisms into two broad categories (leverage and monitoring)<sup>26</sup> and limit the sample to respondents who received either the employer or political party broker treatments in the experiment.<sup>27</sup> Once again, we collapse the data along the broker dimension, creating a binary indicator for whether a respondent received any of the inducement treatments from an employer as broker. All models are use OLS, include basic demographic characteristics as controls (age, gender, education, etc.) and limited the sample to only the employed population.<sup>28</sup>

First, we observe greater effectiveness of employer-based mobilization where employers command more leverage over their workers and can make promises of future reward and sanctions more credible. Table 3 shows positive interactions between the employer treatment and measures of respondents worries about losing their job (Column 1) and their self-reported difficulty of finding a new job in the event of job loss (Column 2). Employer-based mobilization is more effective among respondents who are more vulnerable to job loss and thus dependent on their employer. Next, we see in Column 3 that

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pendix Table A20, we show two sets of interactions with the employer treatment variable: whether a respondent receives official state benefits and whether they work for the government. Both are positively signed, but not statistically significant, mainly due to the small sample of people that are employed and received either the employer or party treatment. Note that our question on benefits in Venezuela asks about official state benefits, not those from one's employer. We discuss these results further in the Appendix.

<sup>26</sup>For the exact question wordings, please see the Appendix.

<sup>27</sup>The control group is then if a respondent received any of the inducement treatments from a political party as broker. This analytical approach is valid given the factorial design of the survey experiment. We show results with the party and governmental official as a control group in the Appendix.

<sup>28</sup>We show robustness checks using ordinal logit specifications in the Appendix.

employers are more effective at mobilizing the vote among respondents that receive in-kind benefits (such as health insurance, child care, and transportation vouchers) from their workplace. Job loss would be more devastating for those who depend on their employer not just for salary, but also important social services. Government employees (Column 4) are also more likely to respond to workplace mobilization. Government workers who often rely on political patronage and have skills that are not transferable to the private sector would find job loss particularly catastrophic.

The righthand columns in Table 3 show evidence for the monitoring mechanism. Finding proxies for the monitoring capacity of employers is somewhat harder, but we do find evidence that employees who knew their supervisor personally (Column 5) were more responsive to the employer treatment. Employers who have social ties to their employees should find it easier to learn how their employees voted. Next, employees who had worked in their firm or organization longer were more responsive to the employer treatment. Long-serving employees are more likely to be embedded in workplace social networks, which improves the ability of employers to monitor voting behavior. Lastly, we find positive but insignificant effects on the interaction with a measure of coworker socializing. The greater the density of workplace social networks, the more information on voting behavior is likely to spread.

Taken together, we find significant empirical support that both theoretical dimensions of interest - leverage and monitoring ability - influence the relative effectiveness of employers. Indeed, Figure 3 demonstrates that the magnitudes of the effects along the two dimensions are similar. The y-axis plots the marginal effects for the employer treatment conditional on different values for indicators of leverage and monitoring. We see that employers who wield influence over citizens' future economic security are well positioned to mobilize voters as are those in workplaces with strong social networks.

Of course, it is theoretically possible that a party could develop the strong grassroots organizations necessary to monitor voter behavior as well as, or even better than, employ-

ers. However, such strong organizations are rare in much of the world, while employment is a near universal (and increasingly widespread) phenomenon. Thus, to the extent that employers have an observed advantage in monitoring, it is likely due to contextual factors. Employers, however, have a clear theoretical advantage when it comes to leverage. It is hard to imagine many practical circumstances in which party activists could offer the significant inducements that employers are able to deploy. For these reasons, we are left to conclude that the most general advantage of employers is their hierarchical relationship with employees.

## **External Validity and Related Concerns**

Our results emerge from Russia and Venezuela two undemocratic countries with a recent history of electoral subversion. The fact that the basic findings from Russia extend to Venezuela suggests that workplace clientelism is not limited to settings with a legacy of state socialism. Nonetheless, we expect that our results may be more applicable to countries with weak legal protections for workers, a high degree of economic dependence on the state, and weak accountability mechanisms, but these are topics for future research.

In addition, the fact that workplace mobilization can only be directed at employed voters has important implications for external validity. The practice will be less useful in countries where few voters are employed outside the home. In such settings, politicians will necessarily have to rely on other brokers to reach voters that cannot be mobilized in the workplace. Practically speaking, employer-based clientelism will likely be most prevalent in middle-income countries, especially those with large public sectors.

At the same time, it is worth noting that party-based clientelism requires significant investments in mobilizational infrastructure. It is not costless to mobilize via parties. Thus, even where many voters are unemployed, politicians will find it advantageous to mobilize via the existing hierarchies of the workplace. For example, in Russia, even though only 53% of the population is formally employed a full 10% of the *population* reported

being mobilized by an employer during the 2016 State Duma elections. Fourteen percent were mobilized by a party activist. In Venezuela, our survey indicated that just 37% of the adult population was formally employed. And yet 18% of the total sample experienced mobilization by employers. Twenty-six percent experienced mobilization by party activists. Thus, in both countries, the sheer extensiveness of workplace mobilization makes the practice highly significant, even if many (or most) voters are outside the workforce. We leave for future research the question of how politicians decide whether to mobilize via parties or firms.

One key result from the experiments is that organizational threats by employers are especially effective. This raises a question about the degree to which employers can efficiently target their messaging to supporters, given that their pool of workers may have diverse political leanings. This could make some employers less effective at mobilizing, especially since acquiring individual-level information is costly. Many firms may not confront this problem. For instance, firms operating in certain sectors draw on a (relatively) homogenous pool of workers (e.g in small towns or in the public sector). In addition, the results indicate that individualized strategies can also be quite effective in the workplace, which we interpret as evidence that employers do not mobilize their workers exclusively in aggregate. While upper management may have difficulty gathering information and micro-targeting mobilizational appeals, middle-managers, line supervisors, and the like are in a good position to gather political information and target supporters (or opponents). Indeed, evidence from Russia indicates that middle-management plays an important role in mobilizing workers. In this regard, employers might be no worse than party activists at efficiently targeting their appeals.

Another topic for future research concerns the role of employment in the informal sector. Our theory and empirics focused on formal employment, but employment in the informal sector is widespread in most developing countries. On the one hand, a lack of legal protections and transparency could make informal sector workers more vulnerable

to pressure by those who pay them wages. On the other hand, greater flexibilities in the informal labor market could make threats of job loss less salient. Future research could profit by examining how clientelism works in the informal labor market.

Finally, our findings come from settings with moderate levels of grassroots party organization. The extent of workplace mobilization is likely to depend on the availability and effectiveness of alternative clientelist networks. Pre-existing party organizations are one such alternative. The Putin regime did not inherit such organizations from its predecessor, but has nonetheless built a party whose organizational capacity is considerably greater than many other ruling parties in modern autocracies (Reuter, 2017). We have shown that our findings are similar in Venezuela, where regime leaders have invested even more in local party organization (Handlin, 2017). But even in Venezuela, the organizational complexity of the ruling party is significantly lower than in some highly mobilizational autocracies, such as classical communist regimes. We leave for future research to consider how our findings will apply in settings with very high levels of party capacity.

## Conclusion

Our research makes several contributions to the study of clientelism. First, we hope that scholars will devote greater attention to identifying the determinants of the effectiveness of clientelism. We have many excellent studies of the prevalence of clientelism, but far fewer about its effectiveness. We find that in Russia and Venezuela different types of brokers, appeals, and targets have different effects on voter turnout which suggests that there is a rich menu of clientelist mobilizational strategies available to politicians whose effects we are only beginning to understand.

Second, we join a small but growing literature that looks beyond party brokers to consider a broader range of potential brokers, including employers, chiefs, landlords, and local notables (Ziblatt, 2009; Baland and Robinson, 2008; Allina-Pisano, 2010). In particular, our research suggests that scholars of clientelism should pay more attention to employers

as vote brokers. Much of the literature suggests that clientelism will recede with modernization, as the marginal cost of buying votes increases (Weitz-Shapiro, 2014; Stokes, Dunning, and Nazareno, 2013). But intimidation, especially workplace mobilization, may not decline as a country industrializes. Indeed, as the formal sector expands in developing countries, electoral intimidation in the workplace may become a more common tool of electoral subversion.

This analytical turn also has implications for our understanding of how political parties develop in weakly institutionalized societies. If other avenues are available to efficiently mobilize voters, politicians need not invest in strong parties to carry the mantle (Hale, 2005). Instead, candidates may rely on employers and other pre-existing clientelist brokers to act as operational substitutes, thus undermining the development of strong, programmatic parties. Finally, this focus on employers has implications not only for academic studies of clientelism, but also for efforts to promote electoral integrity (Norris, Frank, and i Coma, 2013). For example, since state-dependent firms are more likely to engage in workplace mobilization, policy initiatives to reduce this practice must target the nexus of business-state relations.

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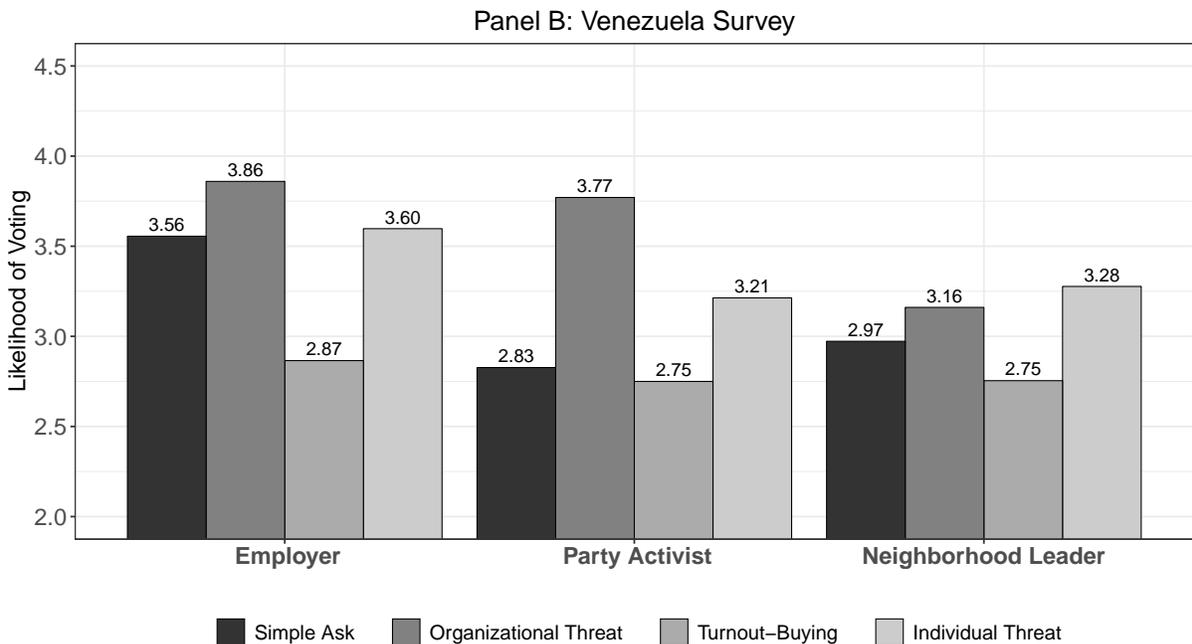
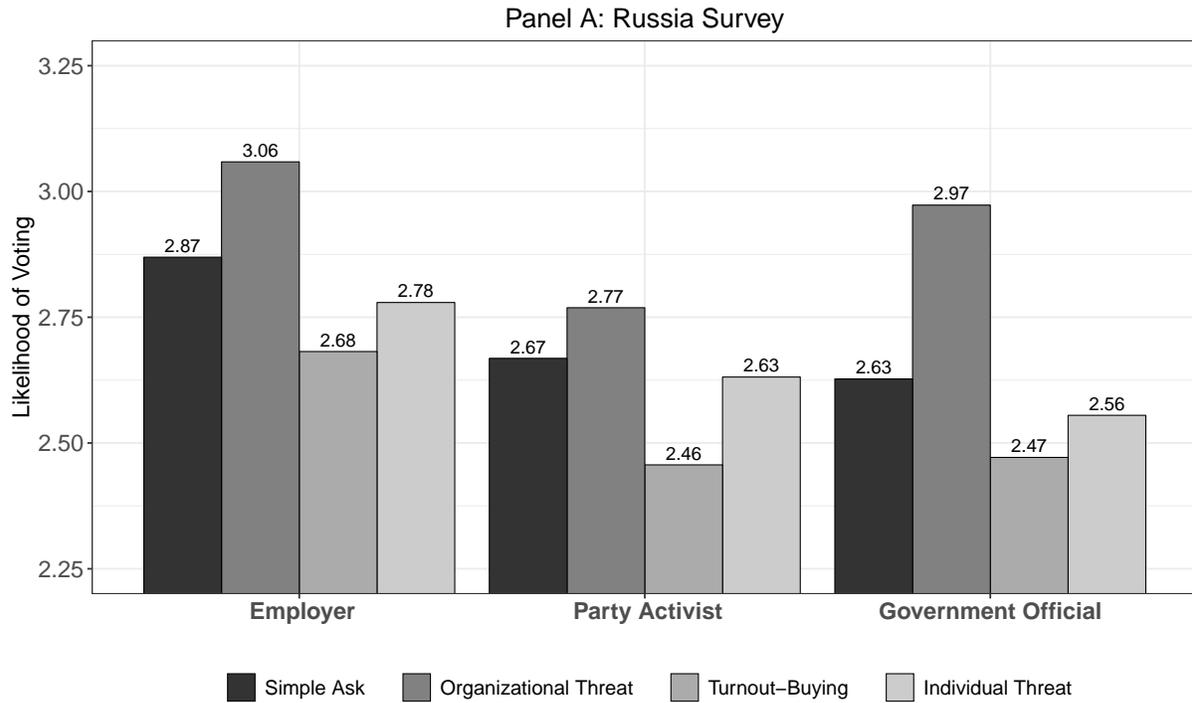
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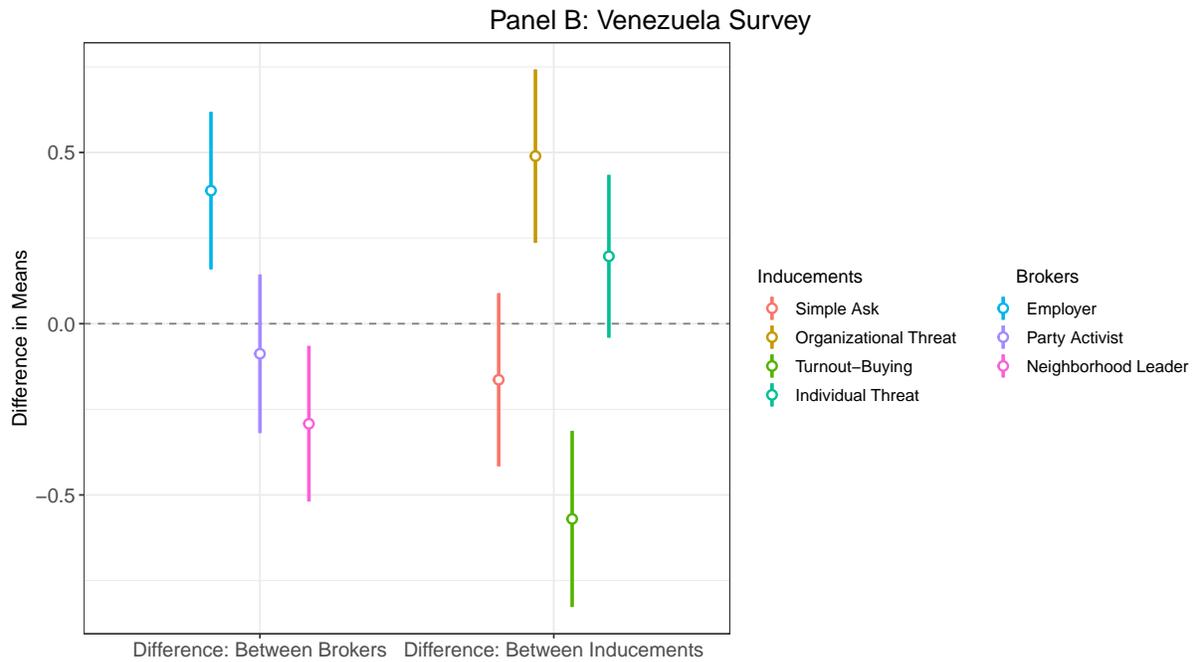
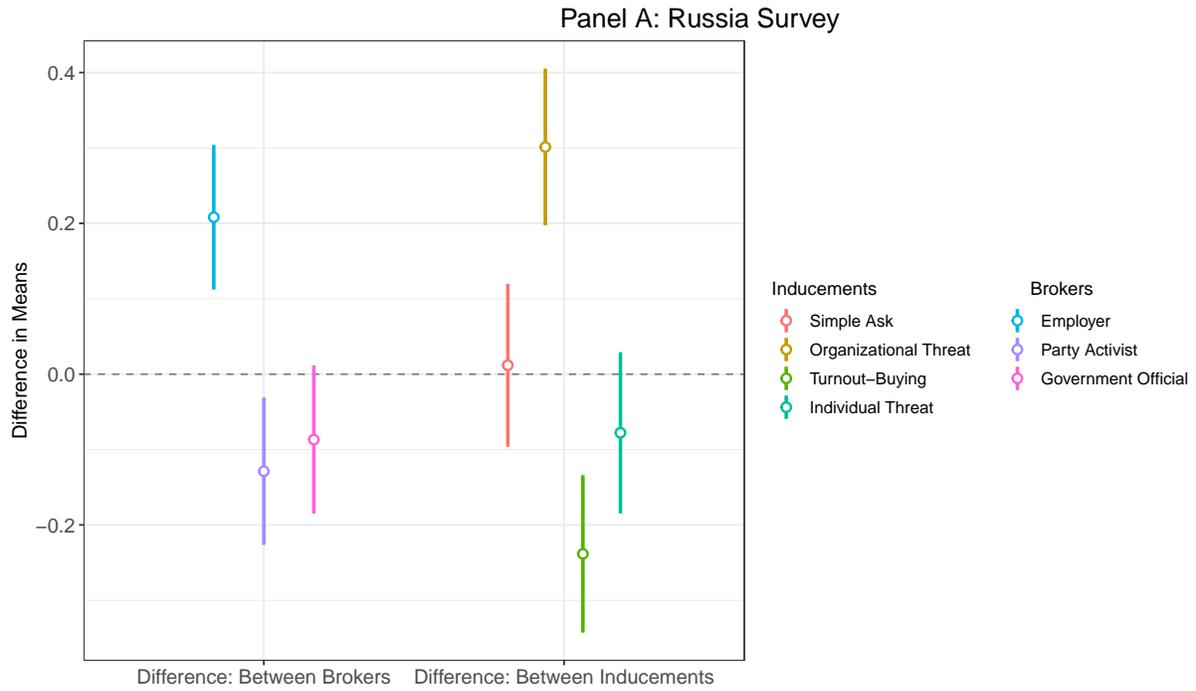
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**FIGURE 1: CLIENTELISM EFFECTIVENESS ACROSS BROKERS**



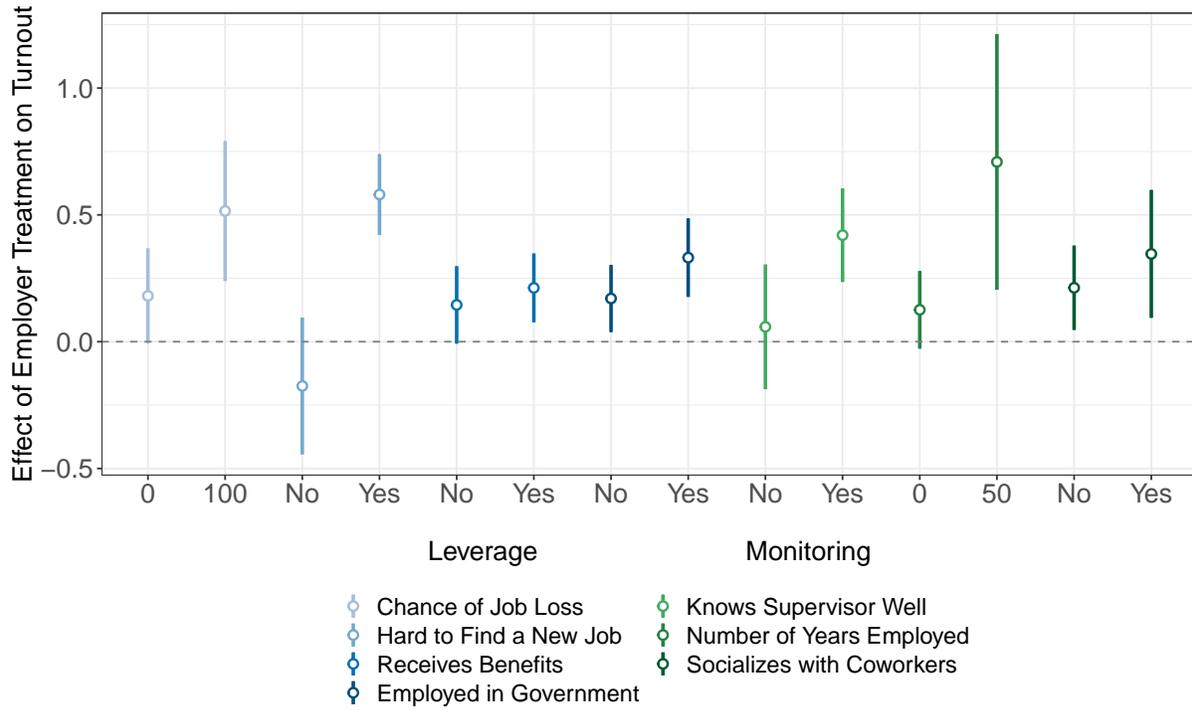
The panels display the difference in the likelihood of voting among all respondents to the survey experiment. Voting likelihood is measured on a five-point scale, with higher values indicating increased likelihood. Mean values for each treatment group are found above each bar and are organized according to which broker was responsible for voter mobilization. The sample is subset to only employed respondents.

**FIGURE 2: DIFFERENCES IN MEANS**



This picture displays the differences in means between brokers and between inducements. Each dot displays the difference in means from each treatment and the aggregate means of the alternate treatments (for example, the dot for “Employer” is the difference between the “Employer” Treatment and the combined mean of the other two brokers). Each dot has 95% confidence intervals. The sample is subset to only employed respondents.

**FIGURE 3: MECHANISMS: CONDITIONAL EFFECT OF EMPLOYER TREATMENT ACROSS SUBGROUPS**



This picture shows how the effect of receiving the employer treatment changes across the subgroups discussed in the Mechanisms section. The dots indicate the marginal effect of the employer treatment and show 95% confidence intervals. Calculations are based on the interactive models in Table 3.

**TABLE 1: SURVEY COVERAGE**

Panel A: Russia Survey				
	Asked You to Vote	Indicates There Will be Negative Consequences For You If You Do Not Vote	Offers You a Gift, Money, or Reward for Voting	Tells You That Your Firm or Org. Will Suffer if Turnout Among Employees is Low
Your Employer	344	344	374	372
A Party Activist	336	353	360	362
A Government Official	339	337	352	331

Panel B: Venezuela Survey				
Your Employer	96	132	113	114
A Party Activist	94	133	113	118
A Neighborhood Leader	125	118	120	124

**TABLE 2: SUBSTANTIVE EFFECTS:  
PREDICTED PROBABILITIES BY BROKER TREATMENT**

Panel A: Probability of Voting (%)		
	Russia	Venezuela
Employer	28.6	54.2
Party Activist	22.5	44.9
Government Official	23.1	
Neighborhood Leader		40.9

Panel B: Probability of Not Voting (%)		
	Russia	Venezuela
Employer	35.7	24.4
Party Activist	43.5	32.1
Government Official	42.7	
Neighborhood Leader		35.7

This table presents the predicted probabilities from individual ordered logit models that regress the respondents likelihood of voting in the survey experiment on binary indicators for each Broker treatment status. The probabilities in Panel A displayed are the total of the predicted values for outcomes '4' and '5' (with '5' signifying 'Definitely Will Vote'). The probabilities in Panel B displayed are the total of the predicted values for outcomes '1' and '2' (with '1' signifying 'Definitely Will Not Vote'). The sample is subset to only employed respondents.

**TABLE 3: EXAMINING MECHANISMS:  
RUSSIA SURVEY EXPERIMENT**

	Outcome: Respondent Would Vote						
	Leverage				Monitoring		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Employer Treatment * Chance of Job Loss	0.360** (0.167)						
Employer Treatment * Hard to Find a New Job		0.156*** (0.038)					
Employer Treatment * Receives Benefits			0.070** (0.036)				
Employer Treatment * Employed in Government				0.166** (0.072)			
Employer Treatment * Knows Supervisor Well					0.119** (0.059)		
Employer Treatment * Number of Years Employed						0.012** (0.006)	
Employer Treatment * Socializes with Coworkers							0.063 (0.076)
Constituent Terms	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,209	1,532	1,724	1,806	1,567	1,806	1,389

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$  The outcome variable is the willingness to turnout outcome (five-point scale) from the survey experiment. The same includes only respondents who received the Employer or Political Party broker treatment. The Employer Treatment collapses the data along the inducement treatment arm of the factorial design used in the experiment. The sample is limited to only those who are employed. Chance of Job Loss measures the probability a respondent believes they will lose their job in the next 12 months. Hard to Find a New Job uses a five-point scale to capture the likelihood that if they were to lose their job, a respondent could find a similar one; higher values indicate more difficulty. Receives Benefits captures the number of in-kind benefits (health care, education, transportation subsidies, etc.) respondents received from their employer. Higher values on the three-point scale used in Knows Your Supervisor Well indicate better familiarity with the one's boss. Number of Years Employed measures the length of time at one's work. Socializes with Coworkers captures whether respondents spend time with colleagues outside of work. All models include the constituent terms and basic demographic characteristics (gender, age, education, size of settlement, and an indicator for government employment). Models are estimated via OLS and cluster errors at the region level.