

# Legitimacy Buying: The Dynamics of Clientelism in the Face of Legitimacy Challenges

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## Abstract

Although elections have become the norm not only in democratic regimes but also in autocratic ones, the legitimacy of the electoral process in different countries is often contested. Facing strong international pressures to prove democratic credentials, eventual winners have a strong incentive to ensure high levels of voter turnout. Conversely, leaders of parties likely to lose the election have an incentive to reduce turnout—for example, through boycotts—to delegitimize the election. In such situations, turnout is a major dimension of competition. To overcome the potential delegitimizing effects of low turnout, incumbents will often turn toward clientelistic mobilization, as high turnout can be a powerful rejoinder to those who denounce elections as a sham and can put observers' concerns about the legitimacy of the electoral process to rest. We develop a theory to explain how such campaigns will target particularistic benefits. We argue that what we term “legitimacy buying” will be primarily aimed at “staunching the bleeding” of supporters who are usually consistent voters but have doubts about the legitimacy of the election. This theoretical prediction departs from theories

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used to explain vote buying in contexts in which the legitimacy of the elections is largely uncontested by significant groups in society. The theory is supported by data from a list experiment on vote buying conducted after the Honduran 2009 elections, which occurred in the wake of President Zelaya's ousting and in the midst of a boycott promoted by his supporters.

**Keywords**

elections, public opinion, voting behavior, non-democratic regimes, Latin American politics, political parties

**Introduction**

When incumbent governments are faced with questions about the legitimacy of the electoral process, expected and actual turnout during elections can become a central political issue to which both the government and opposition play close attention. In fact, partisan competition can be sometimes overshadowed by competition over turnout, with boycotts representing an extreme version of this shift in focus of electoral competition (Schedler, 2009).<sup>1</sup> When faced with these pressures, the best message governments can send abroad is that their own citizens support the regime and regard elections as meaningful and worthy of participation. A show of internal legitimacy can make it harder for international actors to withdraw external legitimacy, thus providing substantial incentives for incumbents and affiliated actors to increase turnout (Magaloni & Kricheli, 2010). In the post–Cold War era, rulers increasingly value being perceived as enjoying such legitimacy by the international community (Levitsky & Way, 2010), as foreign aid (Wright, 2009), foreign direct investment (Jensen, 2008), and membership in regional organizations (Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, 2005) are often conditioned on regime type.<sup>2</sup> In this article, we explore one tactic to which incumbents in such contexts often turn to boost turnout: clientelism (e.g., Blaydes, 2011). In particular, we ask how parties target clientelistic dispensations with the aim of bringing voters to the polls and manufacturing the appearance of high levels of internal support for the political system.

The prominence of this second dimension of competition is common and occurs not only within competitive authoritarian and semi-democratic regimes but also within purportedly democratic ones.<sup>3</sup> Efforts by authoritarian incumbents to boost turnout figures—through outright fraud, clientelism, and other means—with the aim of demonstrating internal support are well documented (e.g., Blaydes, 2011; Kaya & Bernhard, 2013, 749 n. 44).<sup>4</sup> Similarly, when elected leaders are removed from office before their terms

end, transitional governments often seek to restore democratic legitimacy by immediately holding elections with high levels of turnout (Marinov & Goemans, 2014). The seemingly constitutional removal of a president by courts or Parliament,<sup>5</sup> for example, can elicit strong debates about the legality of such moves and the fairness and meaningfulness of subsequent elections, as in the cases of Honduras (2009), Paraguay (2013), or the Ukraine (2014), where elites faced substantial international pressure to demonstrate that the regime retained legitimacy among citizens.<sup>6</sup> Legitimacy pressures can also occur in democratic and competitive authoritarian settings in which incumbents are accused of stacking the electoral system, co-opting electoral courts, engaging in unfair gerrymandering, or filing criminal suits against opposition candidates. In such contexts, supporters of the incumbent have strong incentives to increase turnout, whereas those questioning the legitimacy of the electoral process face incentives to reduce turnout through, for example, calling for a boycott of the election.<sup>7</sup>

Although there are different methods parties and governments employ to increase actual or reported turnout, vote buying is a particularly attractive tactic as clientelism is less likely to lead international observers to disqualify an election relative to more visible strategies such as outright fraud or violent intimidation (Beaulieu & Hyde, 2009). But who are the most efficient targets for clientelistic campaigns aimed at maximizing legitimacy? The logic of the existing literature on clientelistic campaigns emphasizes domestic rather than international pressures, and focuses on parties' efforts to maximize their vote share rather than validate the electoral process. We argue that these assumptions lead to incorrect expectations about the types of citizens parties will target preferentially in contexts in which legitimacy remains contested.

We argue that "legitimacy buying" is an optimal strategy for incumbents to pursue in instances where concerns about the legitimacy of the election make turnout of paramount importance.<sup>8</sup> Rather than resorting to common vote-buying strategies, including targeting core supporters who have uncertain turnout records (turnout buying) or targeting swing voters with more consistent poll attendance (preference buying; Gans-Morse, Mazzuca, Nichter, 2014; Nichter, 2008; Stokes, 2005), legitimacy buying is aimed at "staunching the bleeding" of normally consistent voters who are considering abstaining. We contend that budget-constrained parties will seek to buy turnout by targeting core supporters who are normally reliable voters but harbor doubts about the legitimacy of the election. That is, parties buy turnout from people whose normally high propensity to vote has been temporarily shifted downward due to legitimacy concerns. Thus, unlike turnout buying, which targets partisans who are unlikely voters, legitimacy buying focuses on citizens for whom clientelistic dispensations would normally be wasted.

Although our theory should be applicable to a wide variety of cases in which incumbents (whether democratic or authoritarian) put a high premium on international recognition and support, the targeting dynamics we predict should be most apparent in more extreme instances of legitimacy deficits: incumbents who face electoral boycotts orchestrated by opposition parties. We test our theory using an original representative survey collected in the aftermath of the 2009 Honduran general elections, which occurred under the government installed after the June 2009 ousting of President Manuel Zelaya by the military on the orders of the Supreme Court and quickly ratified by Congress. Due to intense international pressure, political elites had an incentive not only to organize clean and fair elections (i.e., non-fraudulent) but also to ensure that citizens voted en masse. Indeed, much of the campaign debate focused on the issue of turnout and Zelaya encouraged his supporters to abstain to jeopardize the legitimacy of the new administration. Using a list experiment to overcome response bias due to social desirability pressures, we find that regime-affiliated elites utilized legitimacy buying with the aim of increasing turnout rather than altering electoral preferences. In keeping with expectations, these clientelistic efforts were focused on strong partisans with a past history of voting but who also had doubts about the legitimacy of the election.

## **Legitimacy Buying**

The use of electoral manipulation strategies such as voter intimidation and repression, ballot manipulation, and clientelistic dispensations (Schedler, 2013; Simpser, 2013) varies across electoral contexts. Some incumbents are clearly non-democratic and plan to hold on to power indefinitely, whereas others are willing to take on the challenge of democratic uncertainty or at least project that image to the broader world.<sup>9</sup> There are multiple reasons for this, ranging from an actual normative commitment to respect the minimal formal institutions of a democratic polity, more or less robust checks that prevent incumbents from fully eroding them, or instrumental incentives based on the conviction that democratic elections are the best way for the regime to stay in power, or to avoid and/or end international sanctions.

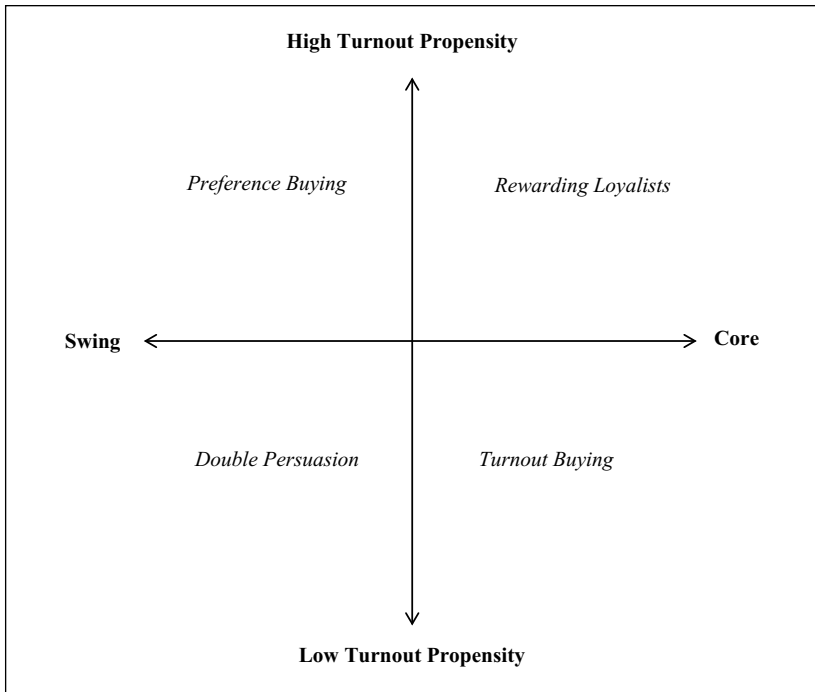
Incumbents who want to send signals to the wider world that their regime holds free and fair elections are limited in their ability to use certain manipulation strategies such as outright fraud or violent intimidation. These tactics are simply too visible, and the costs of being caught engaging in them are very high for a regime that seeks the approval of international actors. As Beaulieu and Hyde (2009) indicate, this type of incumbent is often more inclined to deploy covert strategies, although sometimes they opt for ones

that “are visible but unlikely to be labeled by international observers as fraud” (p. 400).

The dispensation of goods and favors during campaigns falls within this category, especially due to the known and “accepted” use of such tactics in fully democratic settings. As a result, neither external actors nor the communities targeted with clientelism will be particularly surprised or scandalized when seeing parties using these electoral strategies.<sup>10</sup> Given the incentive to quietly tip the electoral scale, using clientelistic tactics to increase turnout is particularly appealing for incumbents seeking to legitimize the regime via elections, especially when the opposition questions the fairness of these processes. International and domestic actors can interpret high turnout as evidence of widespread democratic enthusiasm and support, in addition to bolstering the incumbents’ democratic credentials. Low turnout, by contrast, can be a sign of deep domestic skepticism about the meaningfulness of the electoral process and the credibility of the incumbent’s aspirations (McManus-Czubińska, Miller, Markowski, & Wasilewski, 2004).

Although vote buying is one of the few viable electoral strategies for increasing turnout in the face of doubts about the democratic nature of the regime, how should elites utilize clientelism to achieve this goal? The literature on the targeting dynamics of clientelistic machines generally assumes parties base their strategies on two main variables: the political predispositions of citizens (i.e., “swing” vs. “core”) and their underlying propensity to turnout to vote in elections. Figure 1 shows a typology of common clientelistic strategies identified by political scientists based on these two dimensions (e.g., Gans-Morse et al., 2014; Nichter, 2008) from the perspective of one machine. The two dominant strategies advocated in the literature are (a) *preference buying*, which entails targeting citizens with strong voting records but who hold indifferent or weakly opposed political predispositions (i.e., swing voters; for example, Dixit & Londregan, 1996; Stokes, 2005) and (b) *turnout buying* of core supporters with unreliable voting histories (e.g., Cox & McCubbins, 1986; Nichter, 2008).

Although many early theories of distributive politics discounted both the strategy of *double persuasion* of citizens weakly attached to parties and voting (due to cost considerations) as well as *rewarding loyalists* (because such resources were thought to be wasted), recent works have suggested scenarios in which both *double persuasion* and *rewarding loyalists* might occur (Gans-Morse et al., 2014). For example, Diaz-Cayeros, Magaloni, & Estevez (2012) argue that machines may *reward loyalists* to stem the erosion of partisan loyalties over time (i.e., “loyalty reinforcement”). Similarly, Stokes, Dunning, Nazareno & Brusco (2013) suggest that rent seeking by partisan intermediaries (i.e., “brokers”) will lead to greater distribution to loyalists than both



**Figure 1.** Types of clientelistic targeting strategies.

candidates and theories of *preference buying* and *turnout buying* would expect. Brokers focus on building networks of loyalists (“organization buying”) as candidates only have a vague sense of how well brokers are performing (Szwarcberg, 2012). Loyalists are not only the cheapest targets, allowing brokers to pocket the remaining party resources, but they are also easier to mobilize to rallies, one of the few venues where bosses can observe their activities. Finally, recent work predicts different levels of *preference buying*, *turnout buying*, *double persuasion*, and *rewarding loyalists* in different situations (e.g., Dunning & Stokes, 2007; Gans-Morse et al., 2014; Stokes et al., 2013). In other words, clientelistic portfolios are highly context dependent.<sup>11</sup>

In line with this renewed attention to contextual specificities, we argue that existing theories do not adequately capture targeting dynamics in cases in which incumbents are under pressure to legitimize a regime via elections. New patterns of political instability in the developing world in which anticipated executive turnover via nominally constitutional procedures has become

more frequent than outright coups (Pérez-Liñán, 2007) and the expansion of competitive authoritarian regimes (Levitsky & Way, 2010; Magaloni & Kricheli, 2010) make this type of scenario quite common. Elections in these contexts—and especially those that also face opposition boycotts (Beaulieu, 2006)—differ significantly from the type of elections the targeting literature usually has in mind as incentives for partisan persuasion decrease and the parameters of turnout shift.

More specifically, we argue that rather than targeting swing voters for *preference buying* or *double persuasion*, or unreliable partisans for *turnout buying*, rational parties will actually focus their attention on buying loyalists. Furthermore, our theory suggests that this focus on core, consistent voters is not the result of the loyalty reinforcement or organization buying dynamics suggested by Diaz-Cayeros et al. (2012) or Stokes et al. (2013), respectively, but rather reflects the need to reinforce existing turnout proclivities, which we term “legitimacy buying.”

In electoral contexts that suffer from a deficit in democratic legitimacy, the locus of competition shifts from parties competing for the most *votes* to one in which regime-affiliated elites as a whole are competing with the anti-regime opposition over *turnout*. This de-emphasis of partisan competition significantly decreases incentives for the targeting of swing voters for *preference buying* or *double persuasion*. First, in the more extreme case of boycotts, the absence of a strong opposition means that even if the regime fails to persuade indifferent or opposition voters, victory remains highly likely. A weak opposition that participates in the elections in spite of the boycott cannot be expected to sway or mobilize a sizeable number of independent voters to its camp by means of programmatic or clientelistic appeals. Second, massive preference buying campaigns can result in oversized winning coalitions that may jeopardize the credibility of the regime’s commitment to comply with domestic or international democratizing demands. The incumbent’s legitimacy is actually *enhanced* if the contest is perceived as somewhat competitive. Third, if running against its own allies or satellite oppositions, electoral defeat does not pose a high risk for the incumbent in terms of, for example, transitional justice. Given high international pressures to democratize, the cost of losing to an ally may be offset by the long-term benefits of external legitimacy.

Although the goal of increasing participation could be also met by targeting independents/swing voters who are normally reliable voters (i.e., the group targeted for preference buying under democratic settings), if we factor in budget constraints, it is also logistically more efficient to target those within reach of the tentacles of existing clientelistic networks (Nichter, 2008). Not only is it easier to locate and distribute goods to past supporters, but also

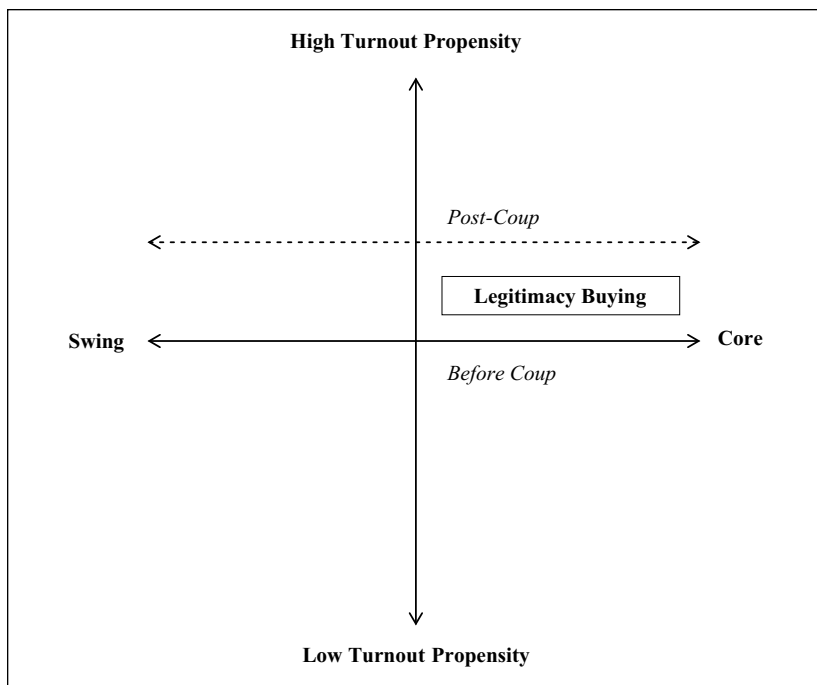
the information costs associated with ascertaining attitudes toward the regime and associated turnout proclivities are lower for these voters. Moreover, it makes little sense to target independents when participation within your own ranks is not guaranteed.

**Hypothesis 1 (Contra Swing Buying):** In electoral contexts that suffer from a deficit in democratic legitimacy, campaigns will target swing voters less frequently for either *preference buying* or *double persuasion*.

Under such contexts, the key variable of interest for machines is not partisan preferences but turnout propensities. In unquestionably democratic settings, turnout proclivities are determined primarily by the salience of the election (e.g., competitive vs. uncompetitive; local vs. national) and individual-level costs associated with going to the polls, with a certain threshold value distinguishing between voters and abstainers (Arceneaux & Nickerson, 2009; Gans-Morse et al., 2014).<sup>12</sup> Efforts to *buy turnout* thus focus on core supporters who are on the margins between voting and not voting (i.e., loyalists with inconsistent turnout records).

However, after a coup or the constitutionally dubious removal of an executive from office, when oppositions orchestrate boycotts, or when domestic and international actors voice concerns about an unlevelled playing field, latent attitudes toward the nature of the regime have the potential to shift this threshold value, thereby increasing the number of abstainers, *ceteris paribus*. That is, the baseline rate of turnout that would normally be expected in an election is lowered because of the concerns about the legitimacy of the election. Indeed, perceptions about regime legitimacy, electoral fairness, and the clarity of partisan choices are strong predictors of turnout (Birch, 2010; Blais, 2006; Carreras & İrepoğlu, 2013). In non-democratic settings, for instance, the absence of real, meaningful alternatives to the authoritarian coalition can induce a large portion of the population to abstain from voting, due to the perceived futility of an individual vote. Boycotts as well as less radical critiques of the electoral process by domestic and international actors entail one additional, perhaps more fundamental problem for incumbents seeking to use elections as a legitimization device. Typically, elite discourse is united in its promotion of high levels of electoral participation. In this sense, research has shown that cueing descriptive social norms about voting can cause higher turnout (Gerber & Rogers, 2009). However, when there are powerful voices questioning the democratic legitimacy of elections or the fairness of electoral institutions, voters receive conflicting signals from elites on whether participation is desirable or not. When elites provide conflicting cues, the effect of elite messaging is minimal at best (Zaller, 1992). In other words, the effect of





**Figure 2.** Turnout propensity in the aftermath of legitimacy challenges.

the descriptive social norm for voting will be substantially weaker in these contexts.

As we illustrate in Figure 2, this shift in the turnout threshold upward to the dashed line implies a group of citizens who are normally likely to vote but who now have questions about participating in elections that do not appear free, fair, or meaningful. Thus, in such a context, the location of marginal voters is not determined simply by electoral salience and participation costs but also by attitudes toward the regime. This implies that campaign efforts will not focus on the traditional targets for turnout buying (i.e., unreliable core supporters). Parties will specifically avoid targeting individuals with a low propensity to vote under unquestionably democratic settings as it is unlikely that particularistic inducements will persuade them to attend the polls.<sup>13</sup> If citizens with a history of abstention in previous elections that did not suffer from the same legitimacy concerns (e.g., prior democratic elections) could not be moved to vote, the task of motivating turnout is surely more difficult in an election of questionable legitimacy (e.g., one boycotted by the opposition).<sup>14</sup>

Instead, rational campaigns will target normally consistent core supporters who have doubts about the legitimacy of the regime, that is, core supporters in the rectangle in Figure 2. "Legitimacy buying" thus involves targeting a different group of marginal voters. That is, parties' objectives should shift toward "staunching the bleeding" of core supporters by reinforcing existing turnout propensities.

The fact that brokers will take into account these attitudes is not surprising as "they employ any and all information" to maximize the cost-effectiveness of targeted distributions (Carlin & Moseley, 2015). In addition to classic factors such as turnout propensity and partisanship, recent work has identified other attitudes such as beliefs in ballot secrecy (e.g., Gonzalez Ocantos, Kiewiet de Jonge, Meléndez, Osorio, & Nickerson, 2012; Stokes, 2005) or reciprocity values (e.g., Lawson & Greene, 2014) as information brokers take into account. If brokers know not only citizens' partisan preferences and normal turnout propensities (Stokes et al., 2013) but also which citizens trust the secret ballot or feel a sense of reciprocity, it is reasonable to assume that brokers deeply embedded in the neighborhoods can also find out what clients think about the removal of a president, calls for a boycott, or the general fairness of the electoral process. Given that these topics are likely to elicit extensive debate within citizens' social networks, knowledge of these opinions may even be relatively easy for a broker to gather.

**Hypothesis 2 (Contra Turnout Buying):** In electoral contexts that suffer from contested democratic legitimacy, campaigns will less frequently target core supporters with low turnout propensities.

**Hypothesis 3 (Legitimacy Buying):** In electoral contexts that suffer from contested democratic legitimacy, campaigns will target preferentially (a) core supporters with (b) normally high turnout propensities (c) who have doubts about the legitimacy of the election.

Although this logic suggests another context in which it is rational for campaigns to target core supporters who are consistent voters (*rewarding loyalists*), the rationale for such a strategy as well as its empirical predictions differ from other theories that suggest that parties will focus on loyalists. In contrast to the argument of Diaz-Cayeros et al. (2012), the aim of targeting core voters for legitimacy buying is not to reinforce existing partisan loyalties, but rather to prevent the erosion of existing turnout proclivities (or equivalently, reinforce turnout).

Similarly, the focus on core supporters is not merely the product of rent seeking by brokers, as suggested by Stokes et al. (2013). According to their theory, targeting loyalists for organization buying stems from the fact that (a)

brokers demonstrate their competence to their employers through the sheer size of their networks as perceived, for example, in rallies (candidates have difficulty monitoring broker actions beyond these events) and (b) it is cheapest for brokers to build networks among core, consistent voters, which allows them to pocket greater rents. In the type of elections studied in this article, by contrast, the votes of many citizens who are normally core loyalists are no longer as inexpensive, as perceptions of regime legitimacy lead to shifts in the likelihood of turning out to vote. If organization buying and rent seeking were the key motivation for brokers, then they would target loyalists who do not have concerns about the legitimacy of the elections, as such citizens would remain the cheapest to mobilize into their networks. In contrast, if targeting is based on the logic of legitimacy buying, brokers should direct distribution to loyalists with doubts about electoral legitimacy.

**Hypothesis 4 (Contra Organization Buying):** In electoral contexts that suffer from contested democratic legitimacy, campaigns will avoid targeting (a) core supporters with (b) normally high turnout propensities (c) who believe the elections are legitimate.

In the next sections, we assess these theoretical predictions using the case of the 2009 general elections in Honduras, which occurred under a *de facto* government brought to power in the wake of President Zelaya's ousting in 2009.

## The 2009 Honduran General Election

After the June 2009 ousting of President Zelaya, the elites associated with the regime strongly wanted to restore their country's international image. The elections of November of that year presented an unparalleled opportunity for doing so. The possibility of high abstention rates, however, was ominous for the government and its allies, especially after Zelaya called for a general boycott of the contest. Given the saliency of elites' concerns about turnout levels, Honduras is a suitable case to test propositions about the targeting dynamics of legitimacy buying operations. If the theory of "legitimacy buying" is broadly valid, the proposed targeting dynamics must be particularly clear in this case.

Until 2009, the Honduran political scene was dominated by two major parties: the Liberal and National parties. Between the 1982 democratic transition and 2009, they peacefully alternated in the presidency.<sup>15</sup> Despite several episodes of military rule during the 20th century, Honduras's two-party system dates from the 1910s. There are no significant ideological differences

between the two, and both represent the economic elite's conservative interests (Ajenjo Fresno, 2007; Arancibia Córdova, 1991). During and prior to this sustained period of democratic competition, clientelistic practices served as the primary currency of power in the country (Ajenjo Fresno, 2007; Ruhl, 2000; Rosenberg, 1987; Taylor, 2009). Parties "maintain linkages with poor communities via clientelism and the distribution of benefits to specific individuals and/or communities" (Taylor, 2006b, n.p., our translation). As a result of factious internal competition inside both parties, regional bosses invest heavily in clientelism to shore up support for the presidential bid of their faction's national leader (Acker, 1988; Shepherd, 1986; Taylor, 1996, 2006a).<sup>16</sup> The regular alternation in office between Nationals and Liberals provides incentives for local brokers and party operatives to remain loyal to their party even when it is temporarily out of power (Taylor, 2006b).

Political stability was interrupted on June 28, 2009, when the armed forces arrested Liberal President Manuel Zelaya on the orders of the Supreme Court. The court's decision found ample support in the business, judicial, and political establishments (Ruhl, 2010; Salomón, 2009). Most of these actors opposed Zelaya's decision to sponsor a referendum on the possibility of reforming the constitution to allow for the reelection of the president (Cassel, 2009). Concerns about Zelaya's ambition and plans to implement a radical leftist agenda began a year before the ousting when the president initiated a cozy relationship with Hugo Chávez (Taylor, 2009). Opposition to Zelaya was strong even within his own party. For example, the Liberal attorney general made it clear in early 2009 that he thought the referendum was illegal (Ruhl, 2010). Furthermore, since mid-2008 Congress had been reluctant to pass Zelaya's legislative agenda, which was unprecedented in a country accustomed to absolute presidential control over legislative outcomes (Taylor, 2009). Congress's unhappiness with the administration was also made apparent by its reaction to the ousting of the president: The same day Zelaya was deposed an overwhelming legislative majority made up of Liberals and Nationals swiftly voted to confirm Roberto Micheletti, the Liberal Speaker of the House of Deputies, as interim president (Ruhl, 2010).<sup>17</sup>

The international community reacted immediately. President Obama declared, "We believe that the coup was not legal and that President Zelaya remains the President of Honduras."<sup>18</sup> Secretary of State Hillary Clinton supported the efforts by Oscar Arias, president of Costa Rica, to mediate between Zelaya and Micheletti. The U.S. State Department pressured the *de facto* administration to join the negotiations by suspending the issuance of U.S. entry visas to Honduran citizens and canceling the visas of politicians and businessmen who supported the ousting of Zelaya (Moreno, 2009a). Similarly, the UN condemned the coup<sup>19</sup> and 33 members of the Organization of

American States voted to suspend Honduras's membership. Finally, on the economic front, both the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank canceled their loans, and the European Union and the United States withheld millions of dollars in foreign aid (Fernández, 2009a; Ruhl, 2010).

Given these international pressures, Micheletti's mission was to preside over an electoral process that would send external actors credible signals about elites' commitment to democracy. As the candidates of the two main parties had already been selected in primaries that took place prior to the ousting of Zelaya—which both candidates supported—the government simply had to buy time until November. Both parties believed that to redeem the country from its status as a regional pariah, it would suffice to organize seemingly pristine elections (Fernández, 2009b; Salomón, 2009).<sup>20</sup> To appease the international community and prolong the status quo, Micheletti accepted a proposal by the United States to mediate between his administration and the former president, and agreed to a deal indicating that Zelaya would be reinstated only if Congress approved it.<sup>21</sup> The apparent success of the negotiations led the United States to announce that it would recognize the upcoming elections as valid (Moreno, 2009a; Ruhl, 2010).

Elites' main concern was to make the November elections a high turnout affair or, at the very least, ensure that turnout reached levels similar to those of recent presidential elections. To regain the country's international standing, elections not only had to be perceived as free and fair but also had to elicit high levels of enthusiasm (Fernández, 2009b). In addition, high levels of turnout would strike a fatal blow to Zelaya, undermining the effectiveness of his call to boycott the contest. Unfortunately for them, high abstention rates were a real possibility. Participation in presidential elections had gone down systematically since 1997: 72.4% in 1997, 66.3% in 2001, and 55.4% in 2005 (Taylor, 2006b). In addition, the protracted protests against the new administration were indicative of the potential lack of legitimacy in the eyes of many voters. More importantly, Zelaya and his followers announced early on that they would boycott the election, and publicly asked citizens to do the same (Fernández, 2009b).

There is evidence that the Micheletti administration, members of the Liberal and National parties, and business leaders put a premium on encouraging turnout during the electoral campaign. For example, in an editorial published in the Liberal newspaper *La Tribuna*, voters were told that “the elections are an opportunity to start again and build the Honduras that we want with the participation of all [ . . . ] This is the most important election in your lifetime. Participate in the 2009 elections.”<sup>22</sup> The independent media also reported instances of participation buying by businessmen and political brokers. According to Moreno (2009b), 2 months before the elections

business owners began publishing ads in newspapers, television networks, and radio stations promising up to 50% discounts for those who showed up with proof of having voted. Others threatened to fire their employees if they did not vote. Moreover, in the days prior to the election, brokers and business owners began a door-to-door operation in poor neighborhoods offering between 500 and 1,000 lempiras (US\$25-US\$50) to convince people to attend the polls to vote for whomever they pleased.

The importance of turnout levels to legitimize the election was also reflected in the post-electoral debates between Zelaya's supporters and regime supporters. On election night, anti-Zelaya radio stations reported that turnout was significantly up from previous elections, reaching over 80% of the electorate (Moreno, 2009b). Although weeks later it was confirmed that turnout had been approximately 50%, on election night the Supreme Electoral Tribunal triumphantly announced in its first press release that turnout levels were above 60%. In yet another attempt to delegitimize the election, Zelaya's supporters suggested that between 65% and 70% of the electorate had abstained. Similarly, former president Zelaya stated in a press conference that only 40% of voters had actually attended the polls.<sup>23</sup>

Consequently, the election to select Zelaya's successor in 2009 was held in a setting dominated by elites who had a strong interest in gaining international legitimacy and faced an opposition that denounced the contest as fraudulent window dressing. As indicated by the above anecdotal evidence, the distribution of particularistic inducements to potential voters was part of the elites' effort to transform a questioned electoral process into a high turnout affair. Was this distribution surgically targeted as our theory predicts, or was it fairly indiscriminate, as some anecdotal evidence suggests? This is the focus of the remainder of the article.

## **Data and Method**

To assess our theoretical expectations, we analyzed data from an original nationally representative survey of 1,008 adults conducted in Honduras following the 2009 general election.<sup>24</sup> The survey improves on much of the extant vote-buying literature by implementing an unobtrusive survey experiment known as a list experiment to measure the prevalence of gift dispensation among citizens. Mass survey questions that ask citizens directly about receipt of gifts or favors during electoral campaigns are likely to be subject to significant response bias as many respondents are likely to underreport clientelistic exchanges due to social desirability pressures. Indeed, in some cases, this bias is likely to be so systematic as to call into question empirical findings based on direct self-reports (Gonzalez Ocantos et al., 2012). By contrast,

list experiments are an unobtrusive measurement technique that provides respondents with an anonymous way to indicate participation in stigmatized behaviors (Kiewiet de Jonge & Nickerson, 2014).

Our list experiment functioned as follows: Respondents were randomly assigned to a treatment group or a control group. Members of the treatment group were shown and read a list of four campaign activities that candidates and parties use to convince people to vote for them. Treatment group respondents were shown and read another list that included all four of the items presented to the control group as well as an additional item, "They gave you a gift or did you a favor." Interviewers asked respondents from both groups to indicate the *number* of activities on the list that applied to them and not *which ones*. This indirect questioning means that it is impossible for the interviewer to know if respondents in the treatment group are including the sensitive item in their counts or not.<sup>25</sup> However, researchers can leverage the random assignment of respondents to treatment and control lists to generate aggregate and subgroup level estimates of clientelistic exchanges by comparing the mean number of items indicated by respondents in each group. The size of the difference of means between control and treatment groups at the aggregate or subgroup level provides an estimate of the proportion of respondents receiving a gift or favor during the electoral campaign.<sup>26</sup>

To test which targeting strategies were most prevalent, we created dummy variables corresponding to *preference buying*, *turnout buying*, and *rewarding loyalists* (*double persuasion* served as the excluded category) based on dichotomous indicators of turnout propensity and strength of partisanship.<sup>27</sup> Our measure of prior voting propensity is based on respondents' reported voting behavior in the prior presidential election that occurred in 2005 pitting Manuel Zelaya (Partido Liberal [PL]) against Porfirio Lobo (Partido Nacional [PN]), with those who voted in the 2005 election coded as past voters (1) and non-voters (0). To measure strength of partisanship, we asked respondents which party they sympathized with, and among those who expressed sympathy for a party, the survey asked how strongly they identified with the party using a 5-point scale. For the analysis, this party identification strength variable was coarsened to two categories corresponding to the main distinctions in the clientelism literature: strong partisans (1) and weak partisans/independents (0).

As we argue that "legitimacy buying" rather than organization buying or loyalty reinforcement explains why *rewarding loyalists* is the dominant strategy in contexts where incumbents seek to legitimize the regime via elections, we created an additional dummy variable (legitimacy buying) that combined the rewarding loyalists dummy variable with an indicator of legitimacy attitudes. To measure views about the legitimacy of the de facto regime led by

interim President Micheletti, we created a dichotomous variable based on answers to two questions. The first question asked respondents about their interpretation of the ousting of President Zelaya in June 2009. The item forced respondents to choose whether they thought it was an illegal, unjustified coup or a justified, constitutional process.<sup>28</sup> The second question asked the respondent to evaluate how well President Micheletti was performing as president using a 3-point scale (well, fair, or poor). Respondents who thought that Micheletti was performing well and considered the ousting of President Zelaya to be constitutional and justified were coded as viewing the regime as legitimate (1). On the other hand, those who answered that Micheletti was performing only fairly or poorly and/or considered the ousting of Zelaya as an unjustified illegal coup were coded as having doubts about the legitimacy of the regime (0).<sup>29</sup> In keeping with the findings of other surveys conducted shortly before or after the election (Pérez, Booth, & Seligson, 2010; Ruhl, 2010), Hondurans were divided about the legitimacy of the ousting of President Zelaya and the ensuing *de facto* regime, as approximately a third of respondents viewed the new regime as fully legitimate.<sup>30</sup>

Control variables included a question concerning respondents' beliefs about the secrecy of the ballot (e.g., Gonzalez Ocantos et al., 2012; Stokes, 2005), attitudes about reciprocity (e.g., Finan & Schechter, 2012; Lawson & Greene, 2014), income (e.g., Calvo & Murillo, 2004), education, gender, and age. Descriptive statistics and precise variable operationalizations are available in Online Appendix B.

To test our theoretical expectations, we follow the standard procedure of implementing a linear regression that includes interactions between assignment to the treatment list and each of the main covariates and the other control variables of interest along with non-interacted versions of each of these independent variables (e.g., Gonzalez Ocantos et al., 2012; Holbrook & Krosnick, 2010).<sup>31</sup> Vote-buying estimates are derived from coefficients that are interacted with treatment assignment, while non-interacted coefficients predict answers to the control list.<sup>32</sup>

## Results

The survey data suggest that the distribution of gifts and favors during the electoral campaign was very common but also that direct questions about such exchanges severely underestimated the prevalence of the practice (Table 1). Although less than 4% of respondents admitted to receiving gifts or favors when asked directly, the list experiment suggests that nearly 21% of respondents received gifts or favors, surpassing even the neighborhood estimates (17%).<sup>33</sup>



**Table 1.** Percent Receiving Gifts of Favors.

|          | Direct individual | Direct neighborhood | List experiment |
|----------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Estimate | 3.5%              | 17.4%               | 20.7%           |
| SE       | 0.6%              | 1.5%                | 6.8%            |

Standard errors are linearized and adjusted for the survey design.

Although there is strong evidence that campaigns targeted a large proportion of the population with gifts and favors, our theoretical framework suggests that different groups of citizens—defined by their prior voter turnout records, strength of partisan attachments, and views about the legitimacy of the *de facto* regime—were likely to be targeted at different rates. Table 2 presents results from the multivariate analysis. The first model includes dummy variables for strong party identifiers, prior voters, and respondents with doubts about the legitimacy of the regime along with control variables.<sup>34</sup> The second replaces the three main variables with the indicator variables corresponding to *preference buying*, *turnout buying*, and *rewarding loyalists*. Finally, Model 3 adds the legitimacy buying dummy variable to isolate the mechanism by which *rewarding loyalists* occurs.<sup>35</sup>

The results from Model 1 show that both prior voting history and being a strong partisan are positively associated with the receipt of goods or favors, but only the latter reaches marginal levels of statistical significance, and legitimacy attitudes appear unrelated to party targeting. However, the combined targeting variables in Model 2 decisively demonstrate that loyalists—that is, strong partisans with prior voting histories—were the most targeted, as the *rewarding loyalists* dummy variable is substantively and statistically significant, while the remaining variables do not depart significantly from zero. These findings provide strong support for both H1 and H2, which suggest that, in contexts where the democratic legitimacy of the election is in doubt, the campaigns should generally avoid distributing goods and favors to groups traditionally targeted for *preference buying*, *double persuasion*, and *turnout buying*.

The addition of the legitimacy buying variable in Model 3 shows that this targeting of loyalists was driven by the logic of legitimacy buying, in support of H3 and H4. While the coefficient of legitimacy buying variable is both large and statistically significant, the coefficient for the rewarding loyalists declined sharply in size and no longer is statistically distinguishable from zero.

**Table 2.** Predicting Vote Buying in Honduras, OLS Regressions.

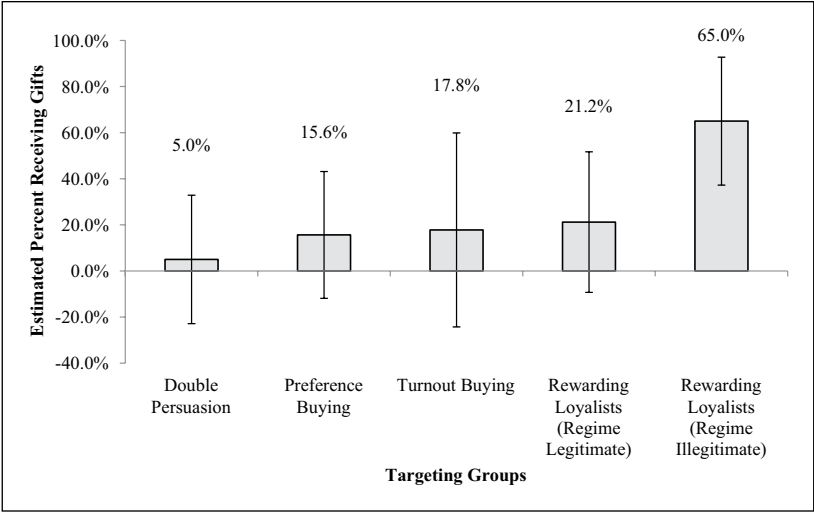
|                             | Model 1         | Model 2         | Model 3         |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Treatment list <sup>a</sup> |                 |                 |                 |
| Prior voter                 | 0.210 (0.175)   |                 |                 |
| Strong partisan             | 0.273* (0.129)  |                 |                 |
| Illegitimate                | 0.076 (0.142)   |                 |                 |
| Preference buying           |                 | 0.116 (0.198)   | 0.106 (0.198)   |
| Turnout buying              |                 | 0.129 (0.253)   | 0.128 (0.253)   |
| Loyalist buying             |                 | 0.447* (0.193)  | 0.162 (0.226)   |
| Legitimacy buying           |                 |                 | 0.438* (0.212)  |
| Reciprocity                 | 0.012 (0.061)   | 0.004 (0.060)   | 0.006 (0.059)   |
| Monitoring                  | 0.047 (0.143)   | 0.042 (0.141)   | 0.043 (0.141)   |
| Female                      | 0.058 (0.137)   | 0.058 (0.137)   | 0.075 (0.138)   |
| Age                         | -0.043 (0.098)  | -0.050 (0.096)  | -0.033 (0.097)  |
| Education                   | 0.049 (0.093)   | 0.039 (0.094)   | 0.024 (0.094)   |
| Very poor                   | -0.264† (0.140) | -0.283* (0.141) | -0.295* (0.138) |
| Middle/upper                | 0.046 (0.200)   | 0.037 (0.202)   | 0.056 (0.202)   |
| Income missing              | -0.563 (0.497)  | -0.584 (0.514)  | -0.579 (0.502)  |
| Treatment constant          | -0.069 (0.172)  | 0.044 (0.142)   | 0.050 (0.142)   |
| Control list <sup>b</sup>   |                 |                 |                 |
| Prior voter                 | 0.026 (0.117)   |                 |                 |
| Strong partisan             | 0.254* (0.101)  |                 |                 |
| Illegitimate                | 0.077 (0.108)   |                 |                 |
| Preference buying           |                 | -0.053 (0.150)  | -0.053 (0.149)  |
| Turnout buying              |                 | 0.138 (0.176)   | 0.138 (0.176)   |
| Loyalist buying             |                 | 0.260* (0.128)  | 0.258 (0.171)   |
| Legitimacy buying           |                 |                 | 0.003 (0.153)   |
| Reciprocity                 | -0.029 (0.040)  | -0.031 (0.041)  | -0.031 (0.041)  |
| Monitoring                  | 0.122 (0.103)   | 0.126 (0.101)   | 0.126 (0.102)   |
| Female                      | 0.000 (0.094)   | 0.005 (0.094)   | 0.005 (0.094)   |
| Age                         | -0.031 (0.064)  | -0.034 (0.064)  | -0.034 (0.064)  |
| Education                   | -0.003 (0.069)  | 0.002 (0.068)   | 0.002 (0.069)   |
| Very poor                   | 0.062 (0.117)   | 0.072 (0.117)   | 0.071 (0.116)   |
| Middle/upper                | 0.081 (0.131)   | 0.084 (0.132)   | 0.084 (0.131)   |
| Income missing              | 0.521* (0.221)  | 0.504* (0.227)  | 0.504* (0.227)  |
| Control constant            | 1.842* (0.119)  | 1.940* (0.103)  | 1.940* (0.102)  |
| Observations                | 930             | 930             | 930             |
| R <sup>2</sup>              | .09             | .09             | .10             |

Coefficients are from OLS regressions. Linearized standard errors, adjusted for clustering in the survey design, are in parentheses. OLS = ordinary least squares.

a. Covariates interacted with treatment assignment. These coefficients are comparable to main effects in standard regression analyses.

b. Non-interacted covariates. These coefficients predict the number of control items indicated by the respondent.

†*p* < .1. \**p* < .05.



**Figure 3.** Targeting dynamics in the 2009 Honduran elections, model predictions. Vote-buying predictions are based on estimates from Model 3, holding control variables at their mean values. The 95% confidence intervals take into account clustering in the survey design and were calculated based on the delta method.

To provide a clearer sense of what these coefficient estimates imply about the targeting dynamics, Figure 3 plots estimated vote-buying rates across different targeting groups while holding all other independent variables at their mean values based on the parameters estimates from Model 3. The model predictions suggest that for the most part campaigns did not distribute goods to swing voters or citizens who did not vote in the previous presidential election, as predictions for groups normally targeted for *preference buying*, *double persuasion*, and *turnout buying* are relatively low and not statistically distinguishable from zero. On the other hand, among loyalists, gifts were overwhelmingly targeted at those who harbored doubts about the legitimacy of the election, while those without such concerns were targeted at a rate similar to the swing voters and unreliable core supporters. The difference is striking: The model predicts that nearly two thirds of loyalists who expressed doubts about the legitimacy of the election received a gift or favor, a percentage that is triple the rate of distribution directed at loyalists who viewed the de facto regime as fully legitimate. In contrast, only 14% of respondents not included in the legitimacy buying group received gifts or favors. That is, the greatest mobilization efforts of parties and elites rationally focused on staunching the bleeding of core supporters to reinforce existing turnout

proclivities rather than to accomplish goals more consistent with competition in unquestionably democratic settings.

## Discussion

Incumbents in search of external legitimacy (i.e., those who face strong domestic and international skepticism about the democratic nature of the elections they organize) are likely to focus their electoral manipulation efforts on the purchase of participation during campaigns, specifically among supporters questioning the legitimacy of the election. Our theory should increasingly hold for cases in which the focus of competition shifts toward turnout, as doubts about electoral fairness put downward pressure on turnout propensities. This troubles incumbents because of international incentives for high levels of participation: High turnout can be a powerful rejoinder to those who denounce elections as a sham and can put observers' concerns about the regime's prestige to rest.

Our findings support the argument that Honduran elites deployed an ambitious legitimacy buying operation, anticipating the deleterious effect of Zelaya's controversial ousting on some citizens' support for the regime, and hence on their propensity to vote. In addition to the non-significant coefficients of the indicators of other forms of clientelistic targeting, there are other findings that render our conclusions plausible. First, the variables "reciprocity" (Finan & Schechter, 2012; Lawson & Greene, 2014) and "monitoring/ballot secrecy" (Gonzalez Ocantos et al., 2012; Stokes, 2005) are not substantive—much less significant—predictors of targeting. This suggests that parties did not target citizens with the goal of solving the commitment problem inherent in attempts to buy preferences as opposed to turnout.

Second, across the models, only one control variable reached statistical significance: Being a member of the poorest income group is negatively related to being a target of the clientelistic machines. Although this finding goes against expectations in much of the clientelism literature, it is consistent with other results (e.g., Gonzalez Ocantos et al., 2012) that suggest that vote buying occurs over a wider range of incomes than many formal models imply, particularly in countries such as Honduras in which nearly all respondents are poor in an absolute sense. Furthermore, this result is consistent with Carlin and Moseley's (2015) finding that the common correlation between socioeconomic status and vote buying could be masking the relationship between legitimacy attitudes and vote buying.

Although we are not the first to point out citizens' regime attitudes as a factor in brokers' targeting calculations, we demonstrate that such attitudes may lead to different targeting dynamics depending on the electoral context.

For example, Carlin and Moseley (2015) show that in fully democratic settings brokers generally avoid targeting citizens with strong democratic values. Democratic values often entail a rejection of clientelism as crass and corrupt, making investment in these citizens likely to backfire, or at the very best, simply ineffective (Gonzalez Ocantos, Kiewiet de Jonge, & Nickerson, 2014; Weitz-Shapiro, 2013). In contexts where incumbents are under pressure to show the world that the regime enjoys a reservoir of internal legitimacy, the incentive to boost turnout figures modifies these dynamics. A group of regular voters may abstain because of domestic or external shocks that put the question of the regime's democratic legitimacy into sharper focus, leading them to repudiate regime practices. These individuals consider abstaining because they are concerned about endorsing breaches to the democratic norm. Via "legitimacy buying" operations, incumbents desperately seek to prevent this defection from happening. In other words, although a belief in regime legitimacy may ward off clientelism in fully democratic settings, when important domestic and international actors question the integrity of elections, voters receptive to these claims may end up being the prime target for clientelistic mobilization.

Our results suggest that legitimacy buying is a promising context dependent model of campaign behavior, consistent with recent trends in the literature toward greater awareness of the impact of contextual specificities on parties' choices (Dunning & Stokes, 2007; Gans-Morse et al., 2014). Because the distribution patterns we theorized should be more clearly seen where legitimacy deficits are more extreme, the controversial ousting of a president, international sanctions, and the boycott make Honduras a good starting point for empirical testing. Future empirical tests of our argument should ideally compare gift dispensation across elections differing both in electoral salience and legitimacy. Our theory would predict that the turnout propensity threshold targeted by campaigns depends on the expected baseline rate of turnout and the severity of the decrease in legitimacy. Unfortunately, we do not have reliable data on either clientelistic distribution or views about regime legitimacy for previous elections in Honduras, so it was not possible for us to implement this type of design.<sup>36</sup>

With regard to theoretical refinement, future work should assess the implications of different legitimacy challenges, as the patterns of legitimacy buying could vary. In particular, different forms of boycotts or international criticism of regime practices could make legitimacy concerns more or less orthogonal to partisanship with important implications for parties' calculations. In the Honduran case, for example, there is not a perfect correlation between political preferences and legitimacy preferences, which is likely to be the case in most legitimacy-challenged elections where citizens can choose

between different parties. In contrast, a full boycott resulting in only one ticket appearing on the ballot will lead to an overlap of partisanship and legitimacy attitudes where most core supporters are likely to turnout in support of the incumbent, making them worse targets for legitimacy buying operations. As a result, brokers may be forced to shift toward harder to reach weak supporters and independents who are normally reliable voters, but who also have more mixed legitimacy perceptions.

What are the implications of legitimacy buying for the consolidation of the international democratic governance norm? In the Honduras case, our data suggest that legitimacy buying might have helped the regime to fend off attacks against its democratic integrity, thus setting a dangerous precedent for the region. The Honduran elites effectively demonstrated that the international costs of ousting presidents can be offset by quickly organizing elections and potentially buying participation.

Examining vote-buying estimates by turnout in the 2009 elections can provide us with an upper bound on the effectiveness of such efforts.<sup>37</sup> Overall, we estimated that 20.7% of the populace was offered a gift or favor in exchange for their vote. If we make the unlikely assumption that every single offer converted an erstwhile abstainer into a voter, the largest effect vote buying could have on turnout is 20.7 percentage points. However, our sample strongly suggests that targeting was far from this logically possible maximum. A considerable number of citizens were targeted with legitimacy buying by campaigns and then abstained.<sup>38</sup> Among the 51% of the sample who abstained in the 2009 election, 21.7% reported being approached with offers for gifts. Among the 49% of the sample who voted, 20.5% report being targeted with vote buying. Thus, the maximum possible effect legitimacy buying could have had on the turnout in the 2009 Honduran election is 10 percentage points, as slightly more than half of the gifts went to non-voters. Of course, the true causal effect of the gifts on turnout will be less than this maximum, but knowing the upper bound allows us to estimate the degree to which legitimacy buying can transform the electorate. Ten percentage points will not radically transform the participation rates but could certainly help to push turnout above the 50% turnout mark fetishized by casual election watchers.<sup>39</sup>

More generally, our research suggests that certain forms of clientelism may efficiently undercut the meaningfulness of the international norm favoring democratic governance by inoculating regimes against domestic or external criticisms of the elections they organize. Corrupt practices that are not forcefully condemned by the international election-monitoring establishment as anti-democratic—such as the dispensation of gifts and favors during campaigns—may allow incumbents to enhance the external legitimacy of their

regime. Although clientelism is common in many full democracies, its implications could therefore be more problematic in situations in which the democratic status of a regime is tenuous. This calls for a reassessment of, for example, the way external monitors evaluate the impact of vote buying on the quality of elections. Moreover, the feasibility of legitimacy buying as a way to appease international observers points to an important drawback from drawing conclusions about the legitimacy of a regime based on electoral turnout. In fact, although the literature on turnout finds a strong relationship between regime legitimacy and participation (Birch, 2010), this article suggests that properly targeted particularistic goods and favors can compensate for negative public evaluations of the regime.

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### **Notes**

1. Boycotts can degrade the perceived quality of elections and trigger international skepticism about the nature of the regime. However, in non-democratic settings, boycotts “tend to derail rather than promote democratization” (Lindberg, 2004, p. 245). Ironically, there is strong evidence indicating that boycotts are a response to incumbents’ use of legitimacy-boosting strategies (Beaulieu & Hyde, 2009).
2. Reflecting these increased costs, Hyde (2011) shows that since 1990 incumbents of all stripes have gone to great lengths to increase confidence in elections, for example, by allowing external election monitors.
3. For example, Beaulieu (2006) indicates that 14% of all multiparty elections between 1990 and 2002 were boycotted. According to Frankel (2010), between 1995 and 2004, an average of 10 elections per year suffered boycotts. Since the early 1990s, 34% of presidential elections in Africa were boycotted (Lindberg, 2006).

4. The Egyptian elections of May 2014 provide a clear example. Authorities declared election day a national holiday in “an attempt to boost voter turnout, seen as crucial to casting legitimacy on the electoral process, in which former army chief Abdel Fattah el-Sisi is expected to clinch a landslide victory” (*Al Arabiya*, May 27, 2014, available at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/05/27/Egypt-declares-holiday-to-boost-voter-turnout.html>, accessed November 5, 2014).
5. In Latin America, these constitutional paths to anticipated presidential exits have become increasingly common, as the incidence of outright military coups has declined (Pérez-Liñán, 2007).
6. Recent events in Ukraine underline this dynamic. Disputes about turnout in the Crimea referendum on joining the Russian Federation were center stage. According to Ukrainian news sites, the Russian Council on Civil Society and Human Rights published a report that it quickly removed from circulation stating that turnout in Crimea was only 30%, whereas official turnout in the March elections was reportedly 83% (*Forbes*, May 5, 2014, available at <http://www.forbes.com/sites/paulroderickgregory/2014/05/05/putins-human-rights-council-accidentally-posts-real-crimean-election-results-only-15-voted-for-annexation/>, accessed November 5, 2014; *Business Insider*, May 6, 2014, available at <http://www.businessinsider.com/did-vladimir-putins-human-rights-council-just-publish-2014-5?IR=T>, accessed November 5, 2014). Similarly, turnout was the clear focus of observers in the 2014 Ukrainian presidential elections. After the victory of the candidate backed by the West, European Union (EU) officials were quick to point out that “this election proved the democratic spirit of the people of Ukraine, who had the opportunity to genuinely express their will at the ballot box, and seized it in high numbers.” See Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) Newsroom, May 26, 2014, available at <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/119081> (accessed November 5, 2014). See also Clem (2014).
7. Lindberg (2006) finds that the degree of electoral fairness is a key predictor of opposition boycotts. Although most boycotts occur in contexts in which electoral fairness is questionable, in a minority of cases, opposition groups have turned to boycotts to delegitimize incumbent democratic governments. The Venezuelan 2005 legislative elections are a good example of these dynamics. The opposition boycotted the elections arguing that the electoral commission lacked impartiality, at a time when the regime had weakened checks on the executive branch but had not yet become a competitive authoritarian one (Corrales & Penfold, 2011). During the remaining period of the campaign, President Chavez was at pains to encourage turnout and denounce the opposition’s decision as an attempt to destabilize democracy. On Election Day, only 25.26% of the electorate voted and the ruling party won 100% of the seats, which led the Organization of American States (OAS) to question the democratic legitimacy of the outcome. See press release, December 6, 2005. Available at [http://www.oas.org/es/centro\\_noticias/comunicado\\_prensa.asp?sCodigo=MOE-VE-04](http://www.oas.org/es/centro_noticias/comunicado_prensa.asp?sCodigo=MOE-VE-04) (accessed November 5, 2014).



8. Opposition parties could use this same strategy and the logic holds for any group highly likely to win. However, for the purposes of clarity, and as incumbents are more likely to be in this position, we will refer to the group utilizing the strategy as “incumbent” throughout the text.
9. Examples of the former type are 19th century Latin American oligarchs (Posada Carbó, 1996), Mubarak (Blaydes, 2006), and Fujimori (Tanaka, 2005); examples of the latter include the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) after 1994 (Magaloni, 2006) or the Honduran elites analyzed in this article.
10. For example, Gonzalez Ocantos, Kiewiet de Jonge, and Nickerson (2014) show that people who experienced clientelism have lower propensities to condemn the practice.
11. Earlier models tended to side with either preference or turnout buying as dominant strategies (e.g., Cox & McCubbins, 1986; Dixit & Londregan, 1996; Nichter, 2008; Stokes, 2005)
12. There are, of course, many other factors that lead some people to vote and others to abstain.
13. In contexts where there is no record of prior participation in democratic elections, it would also be too risky to target regular abstainers. Renewed concerns about the regime’s democratic credentials triggered by the removal of a president, a boycott, international sanctions, and so forth, make it even harder to bring these disaffected, highly skeptical regular abstainers to the polls.
14. This reasoning applies even more so to swing voters with normally low turnout propensities. The costs of *double persuasion* of such unattached citizens are likely to only increase in legitimacy-challenged settings.
15. The Liberal Party won the presidency in 1982, 1986, 1994, 1998, and 2006, and the National Party in 1990 and 2002 (Ruhl, 2010; Taylor, 2009).
16. Taylor (2006b) suggests that the introduction in 2005 of open lists for congressional races exacerbated intra-party competition outside primary elections, making clientelism even more widespread.
17. Micheletti’s administration further undermined its dubious democratic credentials by violating civil liberties, “including deaths; the arbitrary declaration of the state of siege; the repression of public demonstrations with a disproportionate use of force; [ . . . ] and serious arbitrary restrictions and violations of political rights.” (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2009, our translation). This type of assault continued for months. For example, in September, a journalist was accused of the crime of sedition, detained, and tortured when she was on her way to the Brazilian embassy to meet with President Zelaya, who had secretly reentered the country (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2009).
18. Statement available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-by-President-Obama-and-President-Uribe-of-Colombia-in-Joint-Press-Availability/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-President-Obama-and-President-Uribe-of-Colombia-in-Joint-Press-Availability/) (accessed March 19, 2012).
19. UN Resolution 63/301, available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/388/35/PDF/N0938835.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed March 19, 2012)

20. Both candidates were strongly committed to use the election to legitimize the regime. In a press conference held jointly with the Liberal candidate, the National candidate stated, "[I]t is a mistake to weaken the process because it destroys one of the real possibilities of bringing peace back to the nation." See *El Heraldo*, October 2, 2009, our translation.
21. Congress indefinitely postponed this debate.
22. *La Tribuna*, August 10, 2009. Available at <http://old.latribuna.hn/2009/08/10/verdades-amargas-por-lizzy-flores/> (accessed March 19, 2012)
23. *El Faro*, November 30, 2009. Available at <http://elfaro.net/es/200911/noticias/604/> (accessed March 19, 2012).
24. Methodological details and precise question wordings are available in the online appendices.
25. When designing list experiments, it is important to choose items such that very few respondents indicate zero or five items, as in those cases anonymity breaks down. When the sensitive item is socially undesirable, ceiling effects are more problematic than floor effects. As a result, we included an item on the list that very few respondents were likely to include in their counts: "A presidential candidate visited your home." The distribution of responses to the control list suggests that we were largely successful in avoiding ceiling effects, as less than 5% of respondents in the control group indicated four items and less than 1% of respondents in the treatment group indicated five items. To the extent that ceiling effects did occur, estimates will be biased downward rather than upward.
26. For a more detailed discussion of the technique, see Gonzalez Ocantos, Kiewiet de Jonge, Meléndez, Osorio, and Nickerson (2012). The question wording for the list experiment is also available in the online appendices.
27. A potential objection to this operationalization, as well as nearly every other cross-sectional survey-based analysis of vote buying, is that political preferences could be endogenous to participation in clientelistic exchanges. Without panel data, it is impossible to refute this challenge empirically. Nonetheless, the assumption of exogeneity of partisan preferences likely holds more force in Honduras relative to other Latin American countries. The traditional Liberal and National parties are deeply entrenched in society, and partisanship in the country is more like an *identification* rather than mere *sympathy*. Only 20% of our sample did not sympathize with any party, and a majority strongly identified with one of the two main parties. Similarly, receipt of goods or favors could alter views about the legitimacy of the regime (described below). This potential endogeneity could undercut the findings if the receipt of goods led clients to view the regime more skeptically. Although we cannot empirically evaluate this hypothesis, existing literature on attitudes about vote buying suggests that participation in clientelistic exchanges tends to have a positive impact on opinions about the exchanges themselves (Gonzalez Ocantos et al., 2014) and the trustworthiness of politicians (Cleary & Stokes, 2006).
28. We treated the nearly 12% of respondents who answered "don't know" to this question as being undecided between these two extremes.

29. We also constructed a trichotomous index ranging from those who saw that regime as fully legitimate (1) to those who thought it was wholly illegitimate (−1), with those with mixed views coded in the middle category (0). Tests showed that the key cut point was between the fully legitimate and other groups, as the illegitimate and mixed legitimacy groups were equally likely to be targeted.
30. Views about the legitimacy of the regime varied in predictable ways across different partisan groups and voting behavior in 2005. Liberal Party identifiers, independents, 2005 Zelaya voters, and 2005 abstainers were more likely to view the regime as illegitimate. On the contrary, near majorities of National Party identifiers and 2005 Lobo voters viewed the regime as legitimate. However, the correlation between legitimacy attitudes and partisanship is far from perfect.
31. This fixed interaction approach is a multivariate extension of the common difference in means estimator. For a more formal treatment of this estimator, see Imai (2011) and Blair and Imai (2012).
32. Due to the well-known inefficiency of both the subgroup stratification and fixed interaction approaches, scholars have developed alternative maximum likelihood estimators that improve efficiency without biasing results (Blair & Imai, 2012; Corstange, 2009; Glynn, 2013; Imai, 2011). Unfortunately, the complexity of the likelihood function of such estimators often creates flat sections in the likelihood surface that can make convergence difficult or unattainable. Although we attempted to implement our models using estimators described in Blair and Imai (2012), our repeated attempts to reach convergence proved unsuccessful. Nonetheless, while inefficient (and therefore conservative), the fixed interaction approach reported here produces unbiased estimates (Imai, 2011).
33. Two follow-up questions asked respondents who reported goods distribution in their neighborhood to detail the types of goods and favors parties distributed, and which parties engaged in the practice. The most common goods were food and money, with more than 30% indicating that they were distributed in their neighborhood. Approximately one quarter reported construction/agricultural equipment and clothing. Other goods distributed included a variety of home goods and medicine. In addition, 70% reported that the Liberal Party was distributing goods in their neighborhood and over half mentioned the National Party.
34. All control variables are mean centered.
35. As a robustness check, we ran additional models (see online appendices) in which we included dummy variables for each unique combination of voter types defined by the interaction between partisanship, past turnout, and legitimacy concerns and also disaggregated the estimates by partisan identification. Although there is some evidence of heterogeneity across partisanship, strong partisans of both parties who voted in 2005 and expressed doubts about the legitimacy of the election were the most targeted groups for both parties by large margins. Furthermore, remaining heterogeneity across parties does not reach statistical significance.
36. Whereas LAPOP's AmericasBarometer surveys began including batteries on vote buying in the 2010 round, such questions have not been included on the Honduran surveys.

37. In the absence of random assignment of clientelistic goods, it is impossible to tell how much turnout was actually bought. Some scholars, however, have attempted to estimate the effect of vote buying during elections using survey data. See, for example, Conroy-Krutz & Logan (2012).
38. Arguably, we would expect such a pattern if campaigns were targeting people on the cusp of voting rather than likely voters, although such an observation is not definitive.
39. In Honduras, observers indicated that for the election to be considered legitimate, turnout could not be lower than in the 2005 race (55.4%). For a discussion see Moreno (2009b).

## Supplemental Materials

The online appendices are available at <http://cps.sagepub.com/supplemental>

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