

## **Are All Types of Wrongdoing Created Equal in the Eyes of Voters?**

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### **Abstract**

Do voters evaluate some forms of political wrongdoing more harshly than others? Do they punish private enrichment and clientelism equally? We argue that voters' responses to political wrongdoing are a function of the expected benefits voters associate with specific types of malpractice. We conducted a survey experiment varying two common types of political wrongdoing and measuring citizens' evaluations of political candidates in Argentina. The results show that respondents punish politicians engaged in private enrichment more severely than politicians engaged in clientelism. Respondents were less willing to evaluate a candidate favorably on a series of dimensions when the candidate was accused of private enrichment rather than clientelism. We test two arguments that could provide a mechanism for this phenomenon. While the strength of one's partisan affiliation does not moderate the treatment effect, we find that respondents with low socio-economic status punish illicit enrichment more harshly than clientelism and that high socio-economic respondents punish both types of wrongdoing equally.

**Keywords:** Corruption; voting behavior; accountability

## **Introduction**

Corruption and clientelism are often connected (Stokes 2005, Singer 2009, Manzetti and Wilson 2007) and common in developing democracies (Treisman 2007, Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). Even though they hinder economic development and undermine trust in political institutions, these political wrongdoings have persisted in spite of voters having the chance to punish them in free and fair elections. How do voters respond to these common types of misdeeds? Do voters punish both types of wrongdoing equally, or do they strategically tolerate one type more than the other? We argue that voters will be more likely to disapprove of a candidate when he is accused of a classic self-regarding type of corruption from which only the politician himself benefits than when he is accused of clientelism, another common type of misdeed from which a larger subset of voters can also expect to benefit. We also investigate whether heterogeneous attitudes toward these two types of wrongdoings can be traced to individuals' economic and partisan interests.

To assess these propositions, we fielded an original nationwide telephone survey experiment in Argentina. Respondents were presented with two hypothetical candidates' profiles: one clean from an opposition party and one accused of wrongdoing from the voter's own party. In the description of the accused candidate, we randomly varied whether the charge involved clientelism (i.e., offering goods and jobs in exchange for political support) or private enrichment. Random assignment assures that the only difference between the two conditions is the type of misdeed the co-partisan candidate was accused of.

The results confirm our argument and show that, on average, voters disapprove more of politicians' private enrichment from the public coffers than engaging in clientelism. We find empirical support for only one of the two mechanisms that could be driving voters' responses to different types of misdeeds. The strength of partisan attachments does not motivate voters to punish clientelism less than personal enrichment. However, we find some evidence that respondents with lower SES discriminate the most between these two misdeeds, punishing clientelism less severely than private enrichment. In contrast, voters with higher SES do not appear to differentiate at all between these types of misdeeds, punishing both at about the same rate. This differentiation does not mean the poor are more lenient towards corruption in general; poor voters are at least as likely as their wealthier peers to punish wrongdoing in general, regardless of its type. In other words, what differentiates voters with high and low SES is not general attitudes toward political malfeasance, but rather attitudes towards a specific type of misdeed from which poor voters stand to benefit more than wealthier ones. Even among poor voters, clientelism is still perceived as a wrongdoing act that deserves punishment.

This paper offers an understanding of the responses to types of political wrongdoings to which voters in young democracies are frequently exposed. In doing so, it sheds light on how individuals form their judgments about what is right and wrong in politics as well as on the electoral implications of these common types of misdeeds. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: the next section introduces the two types of misdeeds and introduces a theoretical framework for understanding their electoral effects. The following section presents the hypotheses that guide the study. The next

section presents the experimental strategy and data. The results section presents the main findings of the study, and the conclusion discusses their implications.

### **Types of Wrongdoing and their Electoral Implications**

Our paper explores whether voters differentiate between two broad classes of wrongdoing often observed in new democracies. The first one, private enrichment (also referred to in the literature as illicit enrichment), is understood as the abuse of public office or resources to increase one's personal wealth (Johnston 1986). Private enrichment is an unambiguous case of corruption: "an official (the agent) entrusted with carrying out a task by the public (the principal) engages in some sort of malfeasance for personal enrichment" (Bardhan 1997, 1321). It signals a politician's engagement in illegal transactions to divert public resources to her own private benefit.

Clientelism is a related, though different type of political wrongdoing. Although clientelism is practiced differently in different environments and has been characterized by a variety of definitions that highlight distinct facets of the phenomenon, it can be broadly defined as "the individualized, contingent exchange of goods or services for political support or votes" (Weitz-Shapiro 2014, p. 5). While some forms of clientelism are not strictly illegal, this practice is often characterized as a wrongdoing to the extent that it "delivers benefits from the state to a small clique associated with a politician" (Singer 2009, 03). In this sense, just like the corruption described in the previous paragraph, "many forms of nonprogrammatic distribution are illegal, immoral (by local standards), or both" (Stokes, Dunning, Nazareno, and Brusco 2013).

Despite being two different categories of political wrongdoing, private enrichment and clientelism are often related to such an extent that some authors have used levels of corruption as proxies for the incidence of clientelism (Persson et al. 2003, Keefer 2007). Stokes (2005) argues that corrupt government institutions serve the interests of politicians who invest in clientelism, while Manzetti and Wilson (2007) suggest that clientelistic networks may help corrupt politicians survive democratic elections. Regardless of the precise causal link between clientelism and corruption, both types of wrongdoings tend to flourish in similar economic and political contexts and to coexist in new democracies (Treisman 2007, Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). Despite representing common practices in many parts of the world, we still know very little about how citizens in these countries respond to these two types of wrongdoing. As will be further discussed in the next section, there are significant differences between these two types of wrongdoing and this paper investigates whether voters respond to these differences when punishing political misbehavior.

Empirical studies that explore differences in types of misdeeds indicate that these differences matter to voters. For instance, Welch and Hibbing (1997) show that moral charges hurt incumbents more than other types of corruption such as bribery, conflict of interest, campaign violations, and abuse of congressional prerogatives. Funk (1996) finds that people respond more negatively to scandals related to tax evasion than marital infidelity. Both studies show that voters punish some forms of misdeeds more than others, but they differentiate between types of wrongdoing that are most relevant to developed democracies.

More closely related to our study is the work by Fernández-Vázquez, Barberá, and Rivero (2015) and Truex (2011). Using data from Spanish local elections, Fernández-Vázquez et al. (2015) distinguish types of corruption that are welfare enhancing from those that are not, showing that while the latter is condemned by voters, the former goes largely unpunished. Truex (2011) uses survey data from Nepal to show that while individuals condemn large-scale bribery, they are more likely to accept petty forms of corruption such as gift-giving and favoritism. Despite their contributions, these studies rely on observational data that cannot isolate the effects of different types of corruption. Some types of misdeeds may be associated with confounding factors such as media attention, politician biography, governing style, or the broader culture of accountability. A survey experiment fielded in Delhi, India, has shed some light on this issue.<sup>i</sup> Weschle (2016) manipulates how politicians use the money they receive from a company for a political favor. He finds that respondents are less inclined to favor punitive measures when the money is used to buy votes than when the money is hoarded by the politician.<sup>ii</sup>

Finally, the growing experimental literature attempting to understand voters' responses to corruption has offered mixed results, perhaps because different authors manipulate different types of corruption. While some studies show that corruption (Ferraz and Finan 2008) and clientelism (Weitz-Shapiro and Winters 2012) are subject to punishment, others reveal that this is not always the case (Banerje et al. 2010). In an experiment in which voters were confronted with real information about two different politicians of different parties accused of different types of corruption, voters were found to punish only one of the politicians (de Figueiredo, Hidalgo, and Kasahara 2012). In these studies, corruption attributed to elected officials is frequently viewed as a catchall

category of illegal behavior. A possible explanation for these contradictory results is that, rather than always punishing or always rewarding corrupt politicians, voters react differently to different types of wrongdoing.

### **Attitudes Toward Different Political Wrongdoing**

Both private enrichment and clientelism are wrongdoings that signal a misbehavior that does not conform with the public role politicians are elected to fulfill, both lawfully and from a political representation perspective. If revealed to the public, both types of misbehaviors should be disapproved by voters. However, as stated before, these two types of wrongdoing differ in one important way: while the benefits accrued from private enrichment are concentrated in the hands of the politician involved in the corrupt transaction, the benefits accrued from clientelism are shared with the candidate's political party as well as with people in need. While clientelistic politicians benefit from the erratic behavior indirectly through re-election and via the creation of influential political networks, politicians charged with private enrichment benefit personally from their wrongdoing in a much more direct and explicit way.

When evaluating different types of wrongdoing, it is likely that voters will take into account the potential benefits these types of behaviors may generate. Due to the obvious differences between the potential benefits associated with clientelism and private enrichment, it is likely that, on average, voters should respond more harshly to accusations of private enrichment than to accusations of clientelism.

*Hypothesis 1: On average, voters will disapprove of private enrichment more than of clientelism.*

What factors could be driving differential judgments of political wrongdoing? As we have argued, private enrichment tends to benefit exclusively the politician involved in the wrongdoing, while clientelism has the potential to benefit political parties, by increasing their chances of electoral victory, and voters in need, who are targeted with material inducements from clientelistic politicians. Therefore, these two types of broad benefits associated with clientelism could overshadow the negative implications of this wrongdoing, serving as incentives for voters to adopt more lenient responses to this type of misdeed. The extent to which individuals care about political parties and about the material incentives associated with clientelism should shape their evaluations of this wrongdoing. In other words, individuals' socio-economic status and partisan concerns should define the extent to which individuals discount political wrongdoing when evaluating politicians.

First, voters may be responsive to the *material inducement* involved in clientelism and may trade corruption for material incentives (Rundquist, Strom, and Peters 1977). The existing literature shows that the distribution of material benefits is associated with more lenient attitudes toward corrupt governments (Manzetti and Wilson 2007, Fernández-Vázquez, Barberá, and Rivero 2015, Weschle 2016). While not addressing whether voters distinguish between types of wrongdoing, findings like these suggest that the distribution of gains from political misdeeds can pay electoral dividends. An implication of the material inducement hypothesis is that economically vulnerable citizens will discriminate the most between the two types of political wrongdoing (personal enrichment and clientelism).

Previous research on clientelism, particularly in new democracies, suggests that the urban poor tend to be more susceptible to clientelistic appeals (Calvo and Murillo 2004; Chubb 1982; Dixit and Londregan 1996), since they have limited access to government services and are more likely to discount the future (Scott 1969; Auyero 2000; Kitschelt 2000). Weitz-Shapiro (2012, 2014) uses survey and experimental evidence to show that attitudes toward clientelism vary across socio-economic status, and that nonpoor voters punish this type of wrongdoing, which imposes electoral costs to politicians who rely on this mobilization strategy. Thus, respondents with high SES should be less likely to differentiate between the two types of corruption and nearly all the treatment effect is expected among low SES respondents.

*Hypothesis 2 (Material Inducement Explanation): Poor and less educated respondents will be more likely to differentiate between types of misdeeds and to be more tolerant of clientelism.*

A second strategic consideration for distinguishing between clientelism and private enrichment is partisanship and a desire for party building. Partisanship has been shown to bias voters' judgments of corruption accusations (Anduiza, Gallego, and Muñoz 2013). Even in a literature that implicitly views the campaign tactic as immoral, authors invoke party building through clientelism as an important strategy that political parties use to connect to voters (Kitschelt 2000; Wantchekon 2003; Stokes 2005, Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). Because clientelism can be a strategy for parties to gain or maintain political support (Auyero 2000, Gibson and Calvo 2000; Levitsky 2003, Epstein 2009), partisan voters may perceive it as beneficial to their political party and a necessary evil to achieve desired representation and policy goals. Unlike clientelism, private enrichment does not signal a politician's commitment to benefiting his or her political party and does

nothing to boost the odds of electoral success—in fact, it decreases the odds. Thus, it is plausible that strong partisans may look on clientelism more favorably than on private enrichment.

*Hypothesis 3 (Party Building Explanation): Strong partisans will be more likely to differentiate between types of misdeeds and to tolerate clientelism because it helps to advance electoral goals.*

### **Experimental Strategy and Data**

We fielded an original nationwide telephone survey experiment in Argentina between July 26th and August 10th of 2012.<sup>iii</sup> The survey was conducted by *ISONOMIA Consultores* and was answered by 2552 respondents,<sup>iv</sup> who were randomly divided into 8 groups of roughly 300 individuals apiece (see Table B1 in appendix). These groups appear balanced across observed covariates (see Table B2 in appendix).<sup>v</sup> Respondents in each group were presented with the profiles for two hypothetical candidates and asked which candidate most appealed to them along five dimensions. Both candidate profiles contained information on the candidates' profession, marital status, previous work, and public service experience. The first hypothetical candidate was described as having no irregularities; the second hypothetical candidate was identified as engaging in wrongdoing. In order to make our treatments as realistic as possible, we chose two types of misdeeds that are salient in Argentina. Clientelism has been reported by many authors as prevalent in the country (Auyero 2000; Calvo and Murillo 2004; Stokes 2005; Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes 2004) and private enrichment was classified as one of the most common types of corruption in Argentina.<sup>vi</sup>

The candidate accused of wrongdoing was always a member of the respondent's preferred party. We made this design decision for five reasons. First, we take for granted

based on prior studies that allegations of misdeeds are politically damaging. Our research question concerns the relative loss of support between two different forms of wrongdoing, so that is what we randomly vary. Second, an out-party candidate accused of wrongdoing would receive virtually no support. Because this lack of support would be over-determined, adding a corrupt out-party candidate would not help inform our understanding of voter decision-making. Thirdly, having the co-partisan candidate be accused of wrongdoing provides incentive for the respondent to oppose the candidate and potentially support an out-party candidate. All things being equal voters support members of their party over members of alternative parties and our hypothetical biographies attempt to hold “all else equal.” Fourthly, a persistent puzzle both in academic articles and journalistic coverage about elections is why voters stay with corrupt politicians in their party. Voters rejecting corrupt politicians they disagree with ideologically and programmatically is not a puzzling attitude. Finally, while our sample size is much larger than most lab and survey experiments, we needed to preserve statistical power to detect heterogeneous treatment effects for theoretically interesting subgroups. We ultimately decided that the ability to address heterogeneous treatment effects was more important than including sparsely populated treatment cells such as clean co-partisan or out-partisan candidates accused of wrongdoing.

For respondents with no party affiliation, the accused candidate shared the party of the respondent’s previous vote choice. For those respondents without partisan identification and who did not report which candidate they voted for, the clean candidate was affiliated to the *Unión Cívica Radical* and the accused one to the *Partido Justicialista* (the incumbent party) (see Appendix Table A1 for coding details).<sup>vii</sup> Except

for party affiliation, the clean candidate's biography is the same for all respondents. The biography of the candidate accused of wrongdoing, on the other hand, varies according to the type of wrongdoing that the candidate engages in: private enrichment or clientelism.

Two additional experiments were embedded in this survey. One of them varied the newspaper that reported the information on wrongdoings. Half of the sample received a vignette in which the information came from *Página 12* (pro-government newspaper) while the other half received the information reported by *El Clarín* (opposition newspaper). These two newspapers are established media outlets that stood at opposite ends vis a vis the Kirchnerista government in power: *Página/12* had at the time a documented pro-government editorial stance (Pinto 2008) while *El Clarín's* coverage had a slant against the executive (Repoll 2010). The second experiment varied the source of accusation. For half of the sample, the wrongdoing accusation came from the opposition. For the other half it came from the judiciary. These additional experiments do not materially affect our results. The results we present in this paper hold across newspaper and source assignments.<sup>viii</sup>

The profile presented was typical of a candidate running in Argentinean elections (see appendix A for the entire questionnaire in English and the original wording in Spanish). The clean candidate's description read as follows:

**Clean candidate:**

*Marcos Pérez is an engineer. He is married and has a daughter. His political party is [Respondent's OPPOSING POLITICAL PARTY]. He was Secretary of Sports in his town. He obtained high performance*

*evaluations and awards for his efficiency and competence on the job.*

*Based on reports from [NEWSPAPER], it was concluded that no irregularities were found while he was in public office.*

The opponent accused of wrongdoing was similar and read as follows:

**Accused candidate:**

*Sebastián González is a lawyer. He is married and has two children. His political party is [Respondent's POLITICAL PARTY]. He was mayor in his town. He obtained high performance evaluations and awards for his efficiency and competence on the job. Based on reports from [SOURCE OF INFORMATION], [NEWSPAPER] accused him of [TYPE OF CORRUPTION].*

The types of wrongdoing were described without too much specificity in order to avoid drawing undue attention to the item. The clientelistic candidate was described as “offering employment in public institutions and construction materials under the condition that they would vote for him and participate in political events”. In the private enrichment condition, the corrupt candidate was accused of “misuse of public funds”. More specifically, Gonzalez “could not justify a 450% increase in his wealth while he was in office.” Thus, our treatment compares survey participants’ reactions to clientelism and to private enrichment.

After reading both profiles, respondents were asked four questions about which candidate they thought was the most prepared, trustworthy, on the people's side, and better legislator. A fifth question asked respondents for whom they would vote for if elections were held tomorrow. All five questions had identical response categories: "Marcos Pérez", "Sebastián González", and "None" (volunteered). Random assignment to the treatment conditions guarantees that, on average, respondents exposed to different treatments will be identical on both observable and unobservable characteristics. Any systematic difference between groups in the answers to each of the five questions used to measure candidate evaluation provides an estimate of how the type of misdeed affects candidate evaluations. For example, if we found 30% of the sample was willing to support the candidate in the clientelism condition—and 20% was willing to vote for the candidate in the private enrichment condition, we would conclude that the more private form of wrongdoing reduced support by 10 percentage points.

As our primary dependent variable of interest, we construct a dichotomous outcome variable ("prefers accused candidate once") that equals 1 when the respondent supports the candidate accused of wrongdoing in any of the outcome questions and 0 when the respondent prefers the clean candidate or none across all five measures. Supporting a candidate accused of corruption is a stigmatized behavior where we expect respondents to be reluctant to pick this option. By asking five highly correlated questions (Cronbach's alpha = 0.92), we can construct a more sensitive outcome measure that is capable of detecting subtle shifts in respondent willingness to support the accused candidate.<sup>ix</sup> While this composite measure is more sensitive and forms a single dimension of support, the on-line appendix replicates the analysis in the paper with each

of the 5 component dependent variables separately (see Appendix D). Given the high correlation between each of the outcome variables and the similarity in the top-line treatment effects, it is not surprising that the results largely do not depend on the outcome measure used. All five outcome variables, which represent both voters' attitudes and behavior, tap a single dimension of candidate preference and are well suited to capture how voters respond to the misdeeds of politicians.

To test the material inducement hypothesis (Hypothesis 2) that low SES respondents are more likely than high SES respondents to differentiate between types of misdeeds, we constructed a variable that equals 1 if a respondent has either a high or a mid-level status according to an index supplied by our polling firm<sup>x</sup> and more than a high school diploma<sup>xi</sup> and 0 if the respondent has either a low or a mid-level status and no schooling past high school.<sup>xii</sup> We expect respondents scoring a 0 on this dichotomous measure of SES to differentiate more between types of misdeeds and to express more tolerance towards the candidate engaged in wrongdoing when he is accused of clientelism. Respondents receiving a 1 on the measure of SES are expected to punish clientelism and private enrichment equally. As a robustness check on our results, we also tested the material inducement hypothesis using a 3-category education variable and report the results in appendix H.

To test our party building hypothesis (Hypothesis 3), we collapse the five-category party identification variable<sup>xiii</sup> into a three-category variable (Weak, Neither weak nor strong, Strong). If strong partisans are more forgiving of wrongdoing when it is related to party building clientelism than to private enrichment, we would expect larger

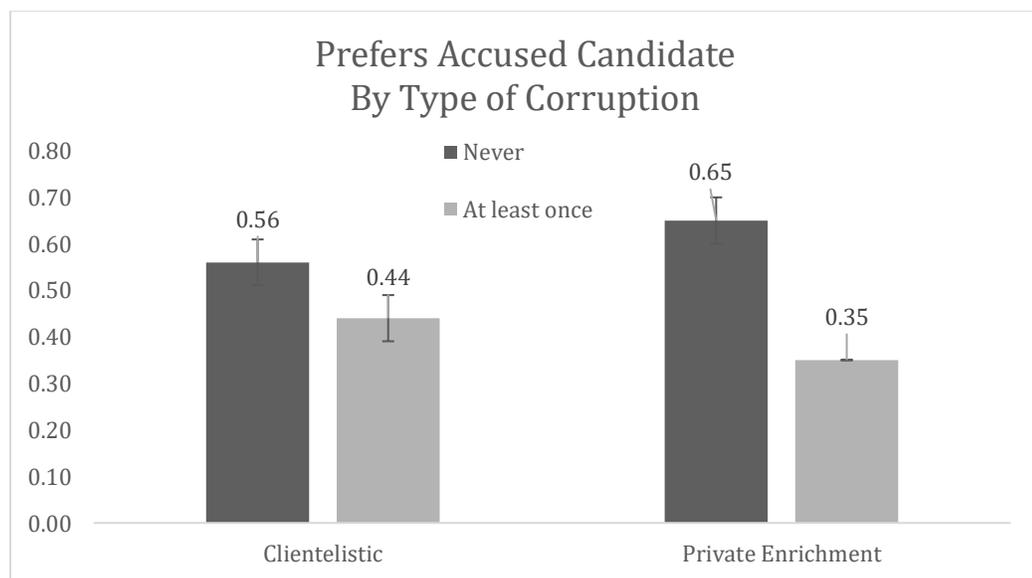
treatment effects among strong partisans and smaller treatment effects among weak partisans.

The analysis that follows presents the results of linear probability models, which provide unbiased estimations of average treatment effects in randomized experiments and have the virtue of being easily interpretable. However, our results are robust to alternative specifications (see Appendix F).

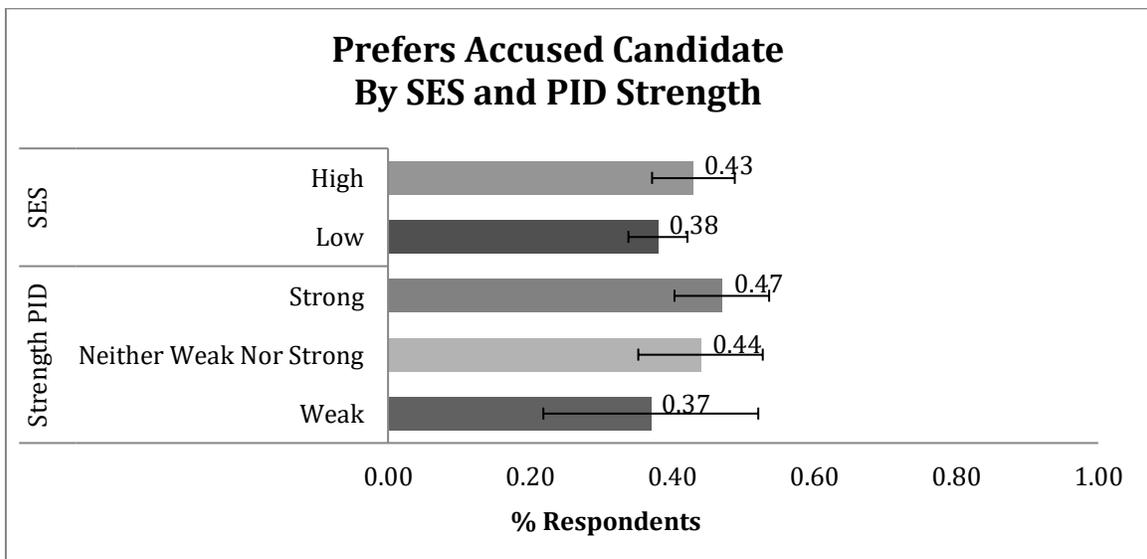
## **Results**

The first step in the analysis is to determine whether voters in general have different levels of support for the candidate accused of political wrongdoing when the accusation is related to clientelism than when it is associated with private enrichment. Figure 1 depicts the overall responses to the clientelism vs. private enrichment conditions. Before comparing across the two treatment conditions, it is interesting to note that respondents to our survey clearly punish both accusations. Despite matching party affiliation and past vote choice, a majority of respondents in both the clientelism (56%) and private enrichment (65%) conditions never supported the accused candidate from their party. While a non-trivial portion of the respondents did not choose either candidate (18% for vote, 13% for better legislator, 10% for side of the people, 9% for better qualified, and 11% for trustworthy), indifference and abstention are not driving this result. When faced with accusations of wrongdoing, whether they be clientelism or personal enrichment, a majority of respondents are willing to cross-party lines and support a member of the opposing party.

Comparing across treatment conditions, the data show that voters do not punish clientelism and private enrichment equally. When given a choice between a clean candidate and candidate accused of private enrichment, 65% of the respondents never supported the accused co-partisan. In contrast, when asked to choose between a clean candidate and a candidate involved in clientelism, only 56% never selected the opposition candidate. The 10 point movement is sizable and not due to random chance ( $p < 0.01$ ). This substantively and statistically significant difference appears across all five of the components of our dependent variable. Respondents are 10 percentage points more likely to punish a candidate accused of private enrichment than accused of clientelism. Respondents were also less likely to evaluate the candidate accused of private enrichment as the “better legislator” (6 percentage points), “side with the people” (10 percentage points), “better qualified” (10 percentage points), and “trustworthy” (8 percentage points). Thus, regardless of how support for the accused candidate is measured, it is clear that respondents are more forgiving of co-partisans accused of clientelism rather than private enrichment (see Appendix D).<sup>xiv</sup>



Before testing the subgroup hypotheses to better understand why voters prefer clientelism to private enrichment, it is useful to observe the propensity of each subgroup to support candidates accused of wrongdoing. Figure 2 presents the percentage of respondents who prefer the accused candidate on any of the five outcome variables (“prefers accused candidate once”) for our subgroups of interest. In our sample poor respondents were five points *less* likely to support the accused candidate as rich respondents (see Figure 2, top panel). This finding implies that any differences in response to treatment that differs by SES cannot be the result of the poor being broadly lenient when it comes to wrongdoing by candidates. Strength of partisanship (see Figure 2, second panel) behaves exactly as one would expect; strong partisans are the least likely to prefer the clean candidate of the other party (47% support the accused candidate) and weak partisans readily abandon the accused co-partisan for the clean opposition candidate (only 37% voice support for the accused candidate).



While these differences across types in willingness to support corrupt candidates are interesting, the focus of this paper is on whether they respond to the type of misdeed a candidate is accused of differently. Figure 3 presents the treatment effects for each subgroup (the full models are presented in table C3 in the appendix).<sup>xv</sup> To explore the first mechanism (*material inducement*), we consider whether high or low SES respondents differentiate more between types of misdeed (Figure 3, top panel). The results offer some support to our second hypothesis. While the poor are not accepting of wrongdoing in general, as indicated in Figure 2 (first panel), they have a preference for the clientelistic candidate over the candidate engaged in private enrichment (+10pp,  $p < 0.01$ ). The picture is very different for high SES individuals, who do not appear to prefer one type of wrongdoing to another. That is, high SES respondents punish clientelism just as severely as private enrichment (-1pp,  $p < 0.83$ ). The nine points difference in reaction to the type of misdeed the candidate is accused of is large and nearly crosses traditional thresholds for statistical significance ( $p < 0.07$ ). Looking at each of the outcome variables separately, we find that the low SES group differentiates between the two types of wrongdoing more than the high SES across all five measures, but none of the differences approach traditional thresholds for statistical significance (see Appendix E).<sup>xvi</sup> Thus, our experiment provides some support for the material inducement hypothesis.<sup>xvii</sup> These results hold when we use a more fine-grained education variable that groups respondents into three levels of educational attainment: low (elementary + secondary), middle (high school), and high (college or more). In line with the material inducement hypothesis, we find that respondents with the lowest levels of education differentiate the most between

private enrichment and clientelism, and are the least likely to punish the latter form of wrongdoing. Results are reported in appendix H.

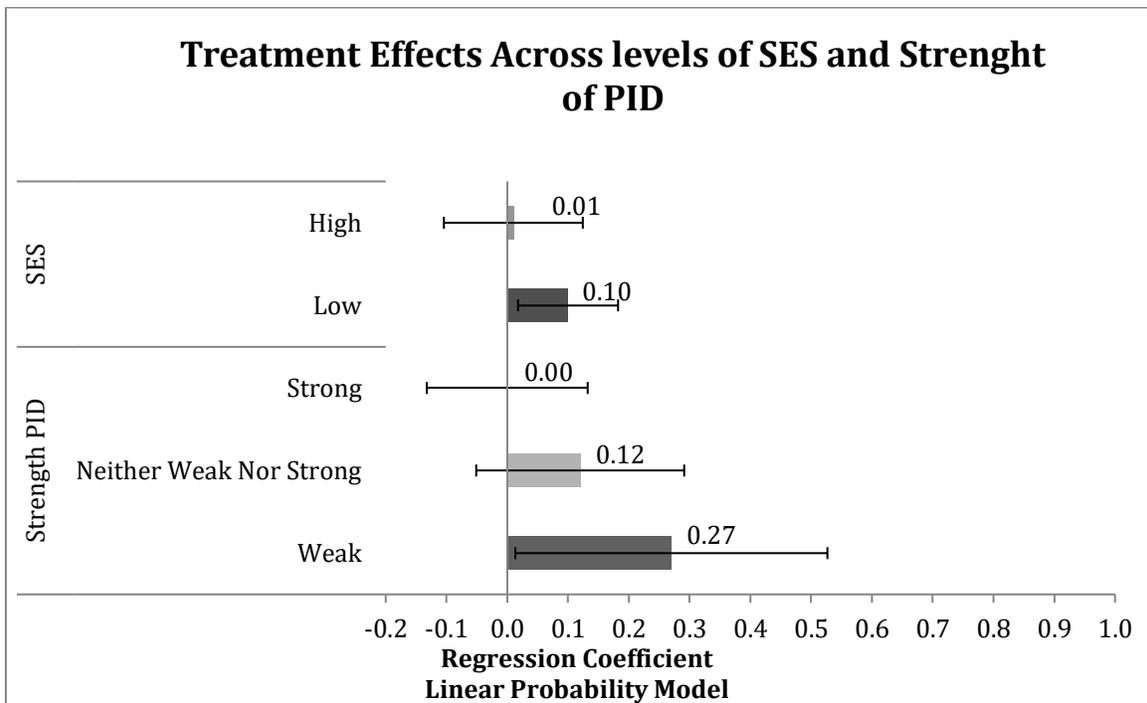
It is worth noting that Weschle (2016) also tested this hypothesis, but found the opposite of what he had expected: wealthier voters differentiated the most between corrupt activities with different welfare consequences. Surprisingly, lower income voters were not more lenient toward a corrupt activity whose end was vote buying in Weschle's sample. Furthermore, our results differ from Weitz-Shapiro's (2014), who finds that non-poor voters react more negatively to clientelism than poor voters. A closer look at our data indicates that poor and non-poor voters in our sample react in the same way to the candidate accused of clientelism. It is in their responses to the candidate accused of private enrichment that poor and non-poor respondents differ. More specifically, when presented with the candidate accused of clientelism, both high and low SES respondents reject the accused candidate in all five outcomes 56% of the time. However, when presented with the candidate accused of engaging in private enrichment, this percentage changes considerably across these groups: while low SES citizens in our sample reject this type of wrongdoing 57.5% of the time, this rejection rises to 66.6% among high SES citizens. These results suggest that most of the heterogeneity found in attitudes towards political wrongdoing across levels of SES is might not be driven by high SES voters rejecting clientelism, but rather by poor voters' harsh evaluations of other types of misdeeds (in this case private enrichment).

The second mechanism (*party building*) predicted that strong partisans would be more forgiving of clientelism because it could bolster the electoral success of their political parties. The results in Figure 3 (second panel) provide no support for the

hypothesized relationship whatsoever. Strong partisans do not appear to make a distinction between clientelism and private enrichment (+0pp), while weak partisans make the biggest distinction (+27pp,  $p < 0.04$ ). The first thing to note is that our statistical precision is such that we cannot be very certain of these results; all of the confidence intervals overlap to a large extent. While the three estimates are approximately linear, the interaction does not cross traditional thresholds of statistical significance ( $p < 0.12$ ).<sup>xviii</sup> However, since the observed relationship is in the opposite direction of what was anticipated, it is fair to say that the data does not support the hypothesis in the slightest and strong partisans are not necessarily more lenient towards clientelism compared to private enrichment than are weak partisans. Given what we know about how partisanship biases not only general political perceptions and blame attribution (Malhotra and Kuo 2008; Bartels 2002, among others), but also responses to wrongdoing (Anduiza, Gallego, and Muñoz 2013), it is possible that strong partisans are more tolerant towards any type of wrongdoing against their preferred party. If these voters are always inclined to explain away accusations of wrongdoing directed at their party, regardless of type, little room is left for differentiating between types of misdeeds. Weak partisans, on the other hand, would be more attentive to different forms of wrongdoing simply because they are less biased and more judicious when processing information on misdeeds against their preferred party.

The finding that weak partisans make the biggest distinction between types of wrongdoing may run counter to the partisan strength hypothesis, but it can be viewed as supporting the material inducement hypothesis. If parties target weak supporters with clientelistic appeals aimed at switching their vote (Nichter 2008), then weak partisans

stand to benefit more from clientelistic activities than strong partisans. This means those who are most likely to be targeted by clientelism (i.e., stand to benefit from this type of misdeed) are more likely than those not targeted by clientelism to be lenient towards wrongdoings when they involve clientelism than when they relate to private enrichment. Thus, the party building hypothesis may not be supported by the data, but the fact that weak partisans differentiate the most between clientelism and private enrichment does neatly fit the logic of clientelistic campaigning.



## Conclusion

Our finding that voters distinguish between types of wrongdoing contributes to the important academic debate about the electoral punishment of political misbehavior in new democracies. The results suggest that researchers need to be attentive to the nature of the corruption accusations candidates face when interpreting results. Null findings where voters are seemingly unmoved by accusations of corruption may reflect

individuals' attitudes toward the specific type of wrongdoing manipulated, rather than a general acceptance of corrupt behavior.

Although not definitive, the heterogeneous responses to different types of misdeeds found between voters with high and low SES offer some insights into extant knowledge on class divisions in attitudes toward political wrongdoing. Important qualitative (e.g., Auyero 1999) as well as survey and experimental studies (e.g., Weitz-Shapiro 2012, 2014) that focus exclusively on attitudes toward clientelism suggest that wealthier individuals are less supportive of clientelistic practices than poor individuals. By comparing people's attitudes toward clientelism vis-à-vis another common type of political wrongdoing, however, we find that this is not necessarily the case. High SES voters not only dislike clientelism just as much as they dislike other types of misdeeds, but they also dislike clientelism just as much as poor voters do. In our sample, they see no difference between "*offering employment in public institutions and construction materials*" to voters and outright transferring public money to private bank accounts. Low SES voters, on the contrary assess different types of misdeeds differently. They are significantly more likely to punish private enrichment than clientelism.

Furthermore, while some studies show that the poor are more tolerant of political wrongdoing in general (Manzetti and Wilson 2007; Blake 2009), our results suggest that the poor condemn misdeeds just as much as wealthier respondents, but they are more nuanced in their views of what type of wrongdoing is worthy of crossing party lines and opposing a candidate accused of wrongdoing. Future work should explore more thoroughly how socioeconomic status predicts the way people interpret and understand misbehavior by government officials.

The null finding that strength of partisanship does not predict leniency regarding clientelism is interesting. Strong partisans are more emotionally invested in political parties. One would think that the strength of the social identity and high stakes nature of electoral politics would cause partisans to turn a blind eye to accusations of clientelism and make more allowances than weak partisans. The fact that we do not observe this pattern raises two possibilities. First, as explained earlier, it is possible that strong partisans respond to clientelism and private enrichment in a similar way simply because they always hesitate to punish any type of wrongdoing against their party. But our finding could also reveal the limits of partisan support, helping to explain why political parties engaged in large-scale vote buying operations keep the activities an open secret, denying any and all knowledge of such activities. Admitting perpetration of electoral crimes will alienate not just swing voters but even core supporters. Of course answering a survey question is a very cheap way for a respondent to express dissatisfaction with wrongdoing. It is a much higher bar to actually cast a ballot against your preferred party and for the opposition.

The external validity of this survey experiment is an interesting question on two levels. In one sense, there is no reason to believe that these results would not hold in countries with clientelistic electoral campaigns and non-trivial levels of private enrichment among government officials. Such scope conditions mean that this survey experiment should be replicable in the majority of new democracies (as well as in a non-negligible number of established democracies). On the other hand, answering a survey question about hypothetical candidates differs from the choices voters make in actual electoral contexts. Attachments to particular, charismatic politicians may mute the

degree to which corrupt behavior is punished. Similarly, contested races with accusations and counter-accusations may throw enough sand in the air to give supporters plausible deniability regarding what they believe to be the case. However, these are muted expectations about punishment of wrongdoing in general, not of clientelism compared to private enrichment. The background noise from real campaign contexts generally makes treatment effects found in surveys and in the lab smaller, but there is no particular reason to believe that real world voters do not distinguish between the two types of misdeeds and that this differential is not largest among low SES respondents. Thus, the external validity of the experiment is hard to determine.

Unfortunately, it is not clear whether field experiments could actually estimate the quantity reported in this paper. Most experiments on corruption revelations are measuring the marginal effect of an awareness campaign, not the type of wrongdoing revealed. If a candidate is facing credible accusations of private enrichment, political opposition looking for an edge and media outlets looking to sell advertising will make sure that the typical voters know all about the accusations. In this way, most corruption experiments measure the effect of just the awareness campaign designed by researchers rather than the presence/absence and the type of accusation. Furthermore, different politicians will be accused of different misdeeds and it is reasonable to assume that the corruption a politician availed himself of is likely to be correlated with confounding factors such as experience, ideology, and the strength of the political network backing him. Thus, our survey experiment is one of the cleanest means of estimating the effect of type of corruption on vote choice.

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<sup>i</sup> Rebecca Weitz-Shapiro (2014) has designed and fielded an experiment similar to ours in a sample of non-poor Argentines. However, the author focuses on attitudes toward clientelism, and does not explore individuals' heterogeneous responses to clientelism vis-a-vis corruption.

<sup>ii</sup> Despite some similarities, our research design significantly differs from Weschle's (2016). First, while our paper manipulates the type of wrongdoing a hypothetical candidate is accused of, Weschle (2016) manipulates how a corrupt politician uses "dirty" money. In his design, the corrupt activity—described as "a politician who received money from a company for a political favor" (p. 02)—is constant across treatments. Second, while Weschle characterizes vote buying explicitly in one of the treatments, we use a more general characterization of a clientelistic exchange when defining one of the types of corruption we manipulate. Furthermore, while Weschle tests arguments that are similar to our hypotheses 1 and 2, our design includes additional information (such as politicians' partisan affiliation) and questions that allow us to test a broader set of explanations.

<sup>iii</sup> Our survey was representative of the population with landlines in Argentina, and it had a special subsample of the greater Buenos Aires metropolitan area. In 2012, 27 out of 100 Argentine residents had a landline at the national level. In the metropolitan area of Buenos

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Aires, which concentrates 30% of the country's population, 40 out of 100 residents had a landline (Comisión Nacional de Comunicaciones 2012). The following was the distribution of respondents in our survey: 817 in the City of Buenos Aires; 1198 in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area, 112 in other areas of the Buenos Aires Province and 425 in other provinces nationally.

<sup>iv</sup> The respondents were geographically distributed as follows: 817 in Ciudad de Buenos Aires; 1198 in greater Buenos Aires; 112 in other cities of the Buenos Aires Province; and, 425 in other provinces outside Buenos Aires, which largely mirrors the distribution of the Argentine population.

<sup>v</sup> All of the analysis that follows uses sample weights to estimate average treatment effects for the general population rather than our specific sample.

<sup>vi</sup> According to a dataset of corruption cases compiled by *Asociación por los Derechos Civiles/ADC* (<http://www.cdh.uchile.cl/corrupcion/>). Last accessed: 09/22/2014.

<sup>vii</sup> Argentine politics is marked by the polarization between Kirchneristas (represented by the alliance Frente para la Victoria) and non-Kirchneristas. While Frente para la Victoria clearly dominated the government for many years (from 2003 to 2015), the opposition was split into three anti-government blocks: the UCR, the Civic Coalition, and Republican Proposal (Levitsky and Murillo 2008). However, it is important to note that, as a faction of the Partido Justicialista, Frente para la Victoria also faced opposition from Peronistas. Therefore, when assigning a partisan affiliation to the clean candidate, we relied on two questions: one that asks respondents to name the political party they identify with and also a follow-up question that asks respondents to name the specific faction of their political party they identify the most with. In doing so, we were able to identify the different groups that opposed Frente para la Victoria from both outside and within the Peronist Party. For more details, see table A1 in the appendix.

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<sup>viii</sup> The additional treatments do not significantly affect the results. For details regarding the two other experiments, please see Table B1 and the complete survey instrument in the Appendix A. For a replication of the analysis by sub-strata see Appendix F.

<sup>ix</sup> We also constructed a variable to measure latent support for each candidate. The first dimension explained all the variance and additional factors offered no explanatory power. The analysis using the latent support variable is presented in table G15 in the appendix.

<sup>x</sup> This index, provided by ISONOMIA, is estimated with a set of questions that include respondent's level of education, possession of a basket of goods, and characteristics of their job. In our survey, 29% of the sample has low status, 62% medium-status, and 9% high status.

<sup>xi</sup> As measured originally, education included more nuanced categories: Incomplete Elementary, Complete Elementary, Incomplete High School, Complete High School, Incomplete Tertiary, Complete Tertiary, Incomplete College, Post-graduate.

<sup>xii</sup> 54% of the respondents scored 0 in the SES, 46% scored 1.

<sup>xiii</sup> Very weak, Weak, Neither weak nor strong, Strong, Very strong. This question has a filter. Only those who expressed having some party affiliation (1,318 people) were asked the question. We only run the analysis with this group.

<sup>xiv</sup> The change in willingness to cast a vote ("neither candidate") does not differ (16% vs. 20%) substantially across treatment conditions and does not cross traditional thresholds of statistical significance. Moreover, this difference in choosing the option "neither candidate" across clientelistic and personal enrichment treatment conditions is small and insignificant for the other four dependent variables (better legislator = -4pp; favors people

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= -2pp; can govern effectively = -0pp; trustworthy = -2pp). While it is possible that accusations of private enrichment may cause some partisan supporters to stay home and accusations of clientelism are less demobilizing, this effect is small. Since we are theoretically and practically most concerned with the decrease in support for corrupt candidates, we will analyze dichotomous outcomes where one means that the respondent chose the corrupt candidate and zero means the respondent did not choose the corrupt candidate (i.e. voted for the clean candidate or abstained). The results do not differ meaningfully if we continue to use all three response categories in multinomial models (see table G1 in appendix).

<sup>xv</sup> We use a linear probability model to facilitate graphic representation, but the results are robust to other modeling decisions (see Appendix Table G7).

<sup>xvi</sup> “Better Legislator”, “Favors people”, and “Can govern effectively” are all right around  $p < 0.15$ .

<sup>xvii</sup> The finding regarding low SES voters is unlikely to be driven by the distribution of these respondents' strength of partisanship, as Figure G1 and Table G17 in the appendix show.

<sup>xviii</sup> While the weak partisans differentiate between types of corruption noticeably more than strong partisans across all five component dependent variables, the “neither weak nor strong” partisans do not demonstrate any stable pattern in whether they differentiate between corrupt co-partisans engaged in clientelism or private enrichment.