Conditionality and Coercion

Electoral Clientelism in Eastern Europe

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Disaggregating Clientelism

Resource Constraints and Informational Signals

In elections around the world, candidates seek to influence voters’ decisions using not only past performance or general promises, but also individualized promises and threats. Such practices are as old as mass politics. They have been documented in European countries such as Britain, France, or Germany during the immediate decades following the introduction of mass suffrage. Such practices of undue influence are also a common occurrence in electoral campaigns in recently democratized countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia or Eastern Europe. Political scientists have studied such electoral strategies using the term electoral clientelism.

(Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007)

In this chapter, we lay out a conceptual framework for understanding variation in electoral clientelism, and the forces that shape why one form is used over another. We make the case for the need to disaggregate among different types of non-programmatic strategies, and we propose a classification that disaggregates electoral clientelism along two dimensions. The first dimension considers variation in the resources used to incentivize the choices of voters or brokers. Here we distinguish between clientelistic strategies that deploy state resources, and strategies that deploy private resources, financed by candidates, parties, or other private actors. The second dimension captures how candidates and brokers structure voters’ incentives. We differentiate between clientelistic strategies based on promises of positive inducements and strategies premised on coercive threats.

We argue that these two dimensions—whether clientelism is financed by state or private resources, and whether it is structured as a positive or negative incentive—are important for several reasons. First, there are important differences in how strongly these different forms of clientelism violate important ethical principles. Coercive strategies are particularly offensive because they take away voters’ choices to opt out of clientelism. Clientelism involving state resources also violates basic principles of equal access to state resources. Second, coercive and state-based forms of clientelism may have a stronger effect on voters’ behavior than the archetypical one-off vote-buying transactions. For these reasons, it is
important to understand not only the overall level of clientelism, but also where it is likely to take its more powerful and morally odious forms.

Incorporating this classification, the chapter thenformulates a set of hypotheses about the factors explaining the choice of different forms of non-programmatic strategies. We draw on existing theory to propose two families of explanations for how much clientelism should occur, and what form it should take. One family of explanations focuses on the availability and attractiveness of the resources used to finance clientelistic transactions. We will refer to these theories as “resource-based explanations.” These explanations focus on the supply side of clientelism to argue that the existence and manipulability of political resources shapes candidates’ choices of whether to use state versus private funding in the personally targeted incentives that they offer to voters. These explanations suggest that politicians prefer to use state resources such as social policy benefits or procedural favors to incentivize voters rather than their own campaign resources when possible. However, their ability to do so varies systematically across localities and according to local political conditions.

The second type of explanation focuses on the demand for clientelism, or more specifically, on how voters perceive and punish or reward candidates who use clientelism. We call this family of theories “informational explanations.” This emerging view emphasizes that voters who are offered material incentives in clientelistic transactions, or who hear about these transactions secondhand, may also update their beliefs about the characteristics of the clientelistic candidate. In other words, clientelism may carry important informational signals. In small communities where information about clientelism quickly becomes common knowledge, these informational signals can affect how costly it is for politicians to use clientelism. At one extreme, voters might judge candidates who use clientelism so harshly that it’s no longer worth it to the candidate. At the other extreme, clientelism might send positive signals about candidates to some voters. As a result, politicians and brokers must take into account the extent to which voters are willing to punish or reward candidates who use different clientelistic strategies. The way that voters judge candidates may also depend on whether they offer material incentives that are positive or negative, and state-based versus privately funded. Thus, this view implies that the distribution of voters’ preferences in a particular locality should affect the informational advantages or costs that candidates derive from a particular clientelistic strategy.

We contend that local social conditions, particularly the level of distributional conflict over social policy benefits among poor voters, play an important role in shaping whether local electorates punish or reward particular clientelistic practices. Distributional conflicts pit low-income voters who can access social policy benefits against those who fall below the eligibility threshold for such benefits due to their demographic and labor market characteristics. These conflicts often center on whether different groups of poor voters are deserving of generous state
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support. The ways that candidates and their brokers manage local resources and treat different groups of poor voters are a strong signal of candidates’ policy positions in this distributional conflict. We predict that the use of programmatic strategies premised on positive inducements, particularly those involving state resources, signals a pro-poor concern and a desire to maintain or expand the current distribution of social policy benefits. By contrast, the use of coercive clientelistic strategies that threaten to impose harsh and abusive sanctions, particularly on recipients of social policy benefits, signals that the candidates are willing to treat current social policy beneficiaries more harshly, and perhaps reallocate resources to more “deserving” citizens.

Whether these informational signals merely lower the cost of using clientelism, or actually make it more likely that certain voters will support clientelistic candidates, if these informational signals are strong they should inform the relative attractiveness of different clientelistic strategies. We argue that candidates’ choices between clientelistic strategies based on positive inducements and those based on coercion thus depends on the relative size of the different constituencies in the locality. The use of coercion is an attractive electoral strategy in localities where the size of the political constituency supporting social policy retrenchment is large. By contrast, in places where size of the electoral constituency favoring an expansion of the existing social policy benefits is large, candidates should choose non-programmatic strategies premised on positive inducements.

Our explanation of electoral clientelism departs from the existing literature by demonstrating that clientelistic strategies create opportunities for candidates to also convey signals about their policy position even to voters who are not directly engaged in clientelistic exchanges. These signals, and the existence of distributional conflicts between groups of poor voters, help explain why voters sometimes fail to harshly judge candidates who use even morally reprehensible coercive forms of clientelism. In the final section of the chapter, we discuss the observable implications of this account of clientelism at both the individual and locality levels. At the individual level, we lay out predictions for how demographic characteristics translate into social policy preferences that then shape how voters update their beliefs about candidates who use various forms of clientelism. At the locality level, we discuss what this informational demand side and the resource-based supply-side argument imply about where different forms of clientelism should be used. While resource-based theories focus on variables measuring local political control over social policy resources, informational theories lead us to make predictions around the size of different demographic groups.

2.1 Disaggregating Electoral Clientelism

We begin by clarifying our definition of clientelism. Clientelistic exchanges are electoral strategies where politicians rely on intermediaries to incentivize voters
to support a particular candidate. We draw on Hicken’s (2011) definition of clientelism as chains of dyadic relationships between politicians, brokers, and voters. Behavior in clientelistic relationships involves a political quid pro quo: in exchange for some agreed behavior by political intermediaries, voters agree to a particular electoral behavior. Our definition of clientelism exclusively considers exchanges between candidates, political intermediaries (or brokers), and voters. We exclude political exchanges at higher levels of aggregation that do not target voters directly such as allocations by federal or regional governments to local governments.¹ While political criteria may be present in the allocation of such benefits, the distribution of these grants does not require a voter to reciprocate at the ballot box.² Our definition also excludes policy favoritism, where benefits are offered to individuals but political reciprocation is not required. This includes common electoral handouts such as banquets or rallies with food, drinks, and party regalia that are given to all attendees and not conditioned on voting behavior.

In the next subsection, we disaggregate forms of clientelism along two dimensions: first, whether voters are offered positive or negative inducements, and second, whether they involve state or private resources. While many criteria could be used to disaggregate clientelism, we believe that these two dimensions are both inherently and instrumentally justifiable. First, distinguishing between promises, or voluntary exchanges, and coercive threats is important because coercion violates voters’ autonomy. By taking away a voter’s option to opt out of a clientelistic exchange, coercive threats are normatively worse than voluntary (although still harmful) positive forms of clientelism. Second, clientelism powered with public revenues is arguably more harmful than that based on private resources. State-based forms of clientelism not only pervert electoral processes, but also distort public spending and erode trust in the state. Finally, as we will argue in the remainder of the chapter, the resource-based and informational theories of clientelism imply that the forms of clientelism differentiated along these dimensions should be used in different localities.

2.1.1 Offers and threats

While coercion was a central component of early studies of electoral clientelism, it has fallen out of focus in recent years. We conceptualize positive inducements or proposals as a category that involves offers of money, goods, or favors. This includes the most prominent form of clientelism in the literature: vote buying. Negative inducements include the threat of economic or physical sanctions for an individual’s voting behavior. Such negative inducements include threats to cut voters off from benefits on which they depend, removing them from their land or residences, or violence, including assault and death.³

Early research on electoral clientelism considered coercion to be an important component of clientelistic exchanges. Scott (1972a: 99–100), for instance, considers
coercive strategies such as threats of punishment or withdrawal of benefits as central to the conceptualization of clientelism. Other scholars of clientelism consider that coercion is used in combination with other types of incentives (Powell 1970: 412; Lemarchand 1972; Lemarchand 1981: 17–19; Özbudun 1981; Chubb 1982: 80). More recently, while some scholars have differentiated between positive and negative inducements, most consider both offers and threats as part of the same strategy and have tended to limit the definition of coercion to only include the use of physical force. A number of scholars have examined the trade-off between clientelism, violence, and programmatic politics both theoretically (Robinson and Torvik 2009; Collier and Vicente 2012) and empirically (Fujiwara and Wantchekon 2013). Yet the dominant definition of clientelism still centers on offers of goods or services that are contingent on voters’ actions but that voters enter into freely. We challenge this definition based both on theoretical distinctions between positive and negative inducements, and on empirical evidence that voters perceive some of the incentives that politicians offer them during elections as threats.

Voter expectations or beliefs matter for distinguishing between positive and negative strategies. If a voter does not expect to receive a sack of grain in the week before an election, and then she does receive it in exchange for a promise to vote for a specific party, the grain serves as a positive inducement. However, if she expects to receive it or feels entitled to it, then an effort to use the grain to incentivize her vote would take the form of a negative inducement, a threat to withhold the grain if she votes for the principal’s non-preferred party. Although this difference is subjective and thus cannot be measured without micro-level measures of voters’ beliefs and expectations, it may impact behavior. There is significant evidence that individuals think about gains and losses in very different ways. Being in the domain of gains (positive inducements) rather than losses (negative inducements) has implications for how individuals think about risk and how much utility they derive from different states (Kahneman and Tversky 1979). For the vast majority of individuals, a negative sanction has a much larger impact on an individual’s utility than a gain of the same size.

In general, the literature on clientelism has elided the distinction between positive and negative electoral strategies. With regard to access to entitlements or assets such as welfare transfers, jobs, or land, a deeper understanding of voters’ expectations or reference points could explain why these are such effective patronage tools. Threatening to take away a job that a voter expects to keep for years should be a much more powerful inducement than offering to give him the same job. Yet to date, jobs and welfare have typically been conceptualized as positive inducements that voters can take or leave.

Another important difference between positive and negative strategies involves whether the incentive worsens a voter’s baseline condition, that is, his condition if he rejects the broker’s offer. When a broker presents a vote-buying proposal—“If
you vote for me, you get X, and if you don’t, you get nothing”—a voter can either accept it or turn it down. Turning down the offer does not affect the voter’s status quo. Coercion, however, can be used to push a voter into accepting a deal he otherwise would not consent to (Wertheimer 1987). For example, threatening voters with a reduction of their social policy benefits if they do not support a particular candidate can be conceptualized as reducing the attractiveness of the status quo, or outside options, of those voters. If they do as the broker says, they get to remain in their status quo state. If they do not, they are much worse off than before. Strategies premised on coercion therefore have more severe normative implications than offers of positive inducements do because they violate a principle of autonomy.

Positive inducements and coercion vary in the autonomy exercised or retained by the voter targeted by this transaction. Voters who are offered positive inducements have the freedom to opt in and out of vote-buying exchanges, unlike those who face a threat. Referring to this lack of autonomy, James Scott (1972a: 98) called voters who are “coerced by the landlord or their employer” as “locked-in electorates.” This type of voter is “connected to the larger political system through his agent-patron whose control over his political will was a function of his control over his means of subsistence” (Scott 1972a: 98, emphasis added). Similarly, Carl Landé discusses the relationship between coerced voters and their patrons, noting that it is “made clear to such voters that he remains perpetually a debtor” despite their “continuous display of deference and obedience” (Landé 1977: xxvii).

Although in much of the recent literature on clientelism it is taken as an assumption that all clientelistic transactions are voluntary, we seek explicitly to examine variation in the level of autonomy of clients that the case study literature has identified.

2.1.2 State and private resources

A second distinction among non-programmatic strategies concerns the type of resources that brokers present as incentives. Specifically, we distinguish between forms of clientelism that are powered by the resources of the state and those powered by private resources. Previous studies have referred to clientelistic strategies that exploit state resources as “patrimonial” or “neopatrimonial” strategies (Bratton and van de Walle 1997; Giraudy 2007; Hale 2014). We take a broad view of the type of state resources that can be used for clientelistic mobilization and consider offers of employment, privileged access to policy benefits, and promises of administrative favors as state resources that can be used as clientelistic incentives.

Early studies of clientelism considered offers of employment in the public sector as the quintessential clientelistic strategy. The importance of such
promises of public sector employment in exchange for votes in the overall mix of non-programmatic strategies is likely to have been overstated. The total number of public sector jobs that can be offered in exchange for support is likely to be small, especially in recent decades, when the size of the public sector has decreased significantly. This strategy is also likely to be very costly compared to other policy alternatives because other state resources are likely to be more cost-effective and more abundant than jobs. Such resources include policy benefits and promises of licenses and other administrative advantages. State resources can be used both as positive inducements but also coercively, as threats to induce a particular behavior or as punishment for failure to comply with a political request.

In the case of policy coercion, brokers seek to influence the choices of voters by threatening to withhold public resources that represent important sources of income to voters. We will refer to strategies of policy coercion as those strategies where the negative incentive used to influence the voters’ choice is a particular resource or a right that is defined by the state. Examples of coercion involve the threat to rescind a property right that gives a voter the right to use land if the voter does not support a candidate. Alternatively, brokers may threaten voters to remove long-term access to a policy benefit unless the voter supports a certain candidate. In many cases in the region we study, the right or benefit used to threaten voters is access to welfare.

### 2.2 A Typology of Clientelistic Strategies

Table 2.1 summarizes the preceding discussion and maps out the four distinct types of clientelism that we examine in this book. The two columns in this table differentiate forms of clientelism based on the resources that are used to finance it. We distinguish clientelism that involves the authorities and resources of the state from clientelism financed by private revenues or powers. Second, we differentiate clientelism based on the ways that political intermediaries structure the incentives that they offer to voters. Here we distinguish between strategies structured as threats and those premised on promises.

**Table 2.1 A Typology of Clientelistic Strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are state resources used to finance the clientelistic incentive?</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the clientelistic incentive the threat of a negative sanction?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Vote buying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Economic coercion</td>
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Our classification departs from current research on clientelism in two ways. First, we emphasize the multidimensional character of clientelism. While the earliest research on electoral clientelism—as exemplified by Schmidt et al.’s 1977 volume *Friends, Followers and Factions*—considered a broad range of non-programmatic strategies, most recent contributions have considerably narrowed the scope of the empirical analysis, equating clientelism with vote buying. By broadening our view of clientelism beyond a single type of non-programmatic exchange, we paint a more complete picture of its prevalence and drivers, and can study the trade-offs between different strategies.

Our study also departs from existing research on electoral clientelism by considering the importance of coercion in the bundle of non-programmatic strategies. Studies of electoral politics during the first and second waves of democratization recognized the importance of electoral coercion. Discussing different forms of electoral corruption in the Philippines, Wurfel (1991 [1988], 770–2) notes that vote buying emerged as a non-programmatic strategy only after coercion by employers declined in importance. In an analysis of clientelistic strategies in England, Scott also commented on the transition from coercion to positive inducements. As he noted, “No longer being able to threaten voters physically or to stuff ballot boxes on a scale sufficient to win, candidates and parties were obliged to proffer material rewards as a means of persuasion” (Scott 1972a: 94). By contrast, the most recent literature on clientelism has avoided the study of electoral coercion altogether. One important goal of our study is to illustrate the continuous presence of coercion in the menu of non-programmatic strategies and to characterize the trade-offs encountered by candidates as they consider positive inducements rather than coercion.

Although our typology is not defined by broker types, we recognize the importance of political intermediaries or brokers who mediate the relationship between candidates and voters. Such brokers use their control over a good that is valuable to voters to influence voter behavior. The most well-known brokers are affiliated to particular parties, and have taken a variety of names in different contexts, including *intepretes* or “go-between” in ancient Rome (Davis 1910: 13), *cabo eleitoral* in Brazil during the 1930s, *capituleros* in Peru, *gestor* or *padrino politico* in Mexico, *caudillo barrial* or *punteros* in Argentina (Auyero 1999: 302), and *capibastone* in Southern Italy (Gambetta 1996: 307). However, many clientelistic exchanges are brokered by agents who also fill other functions, including the heads of civic associations (Holland and Palmer-Rubin 2015), civil servants (Oliveros 2016), and employers (Mares 2015). While these groups may not be known primarily for their roles as political brokers, in many cases they do serve as highly influential conduits for personalized election-time inducements.

Our typology is not driven by variation in brokers, although the variation between state and non-state resources does sometimes track broker types. For instance, brokers who are not affiliated with the state are unlikely to be able to use...
state resources to incentivize voters. However, many brokers are able to engage in both positive and negative forms of clientelism. In our cases in Eastern Europe, for example, mayors can use state resources to both make promises and threats. The dimensions that define our typology thus cut across broker types even if they are not completely independent from them.

The typology we propose is focused on economic incentives and excludes violence. In theory, violence can be used as a form of coercive clientelism when politicians and brokers tell voters that they will be face physical sanctions if they do not vote in a certain way. We suspect that our theory could be extended to include physical threats as a third form of clientelism in addition to positive and negative economic inducements. For reasons that will become clear in Section 2.3.2 when we discuss the supply and demand factors that explain variation in the form of clientelism, we think that violence is qualitatively different than economic threats. However, because threats of violence are not a common strategy in the cases we cover in this book, we leave a full discussion of substitutions between economic and physical electoral incentives to future work. In the following sections we discuss the definitions and intellectual history of the four types of clientelism we consider.

2.2.1 Policy favors

Policy favors are state resources that are offered to voters in clientelistic transactions. A wide variety of resources financed by general tax revenues can be used for policy favors, including public sector jobs (Chubb 1982), public services (Fox 1994), unemployment benefits (Giraudy 2007), and food assistance (Weitz-Shapiro 2014). For example, in Mexico under the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) government, Fox notes the importance of a variety of programs that distribute “sewage and potable water, health, education, food distribution, electrification, street paving, housing and soft loans for low-income producers” (Fox 1994: 167). In Venezuela under Hugo Chávez, the Misiones program, which includes educational campaigns, food and housing subsidies, and the construction of housing and clinics, was a primary source of funding for political mobilization (Penfold-Becerra 2007: 65; Diaz-Cayeros et al. 2016: 35; Stokes et al. 2013).

The modalities of policy favors have changed over time with trends in public sector management and social policy. Zolberg noted in the 1960s that politicians competing in countries with expanding public sectors made so many promises of government jobs that it created an “inflationary process of demand formation” (Zolberg 1968: 149). As neoliberal reforms were put into place globally in the 1980s and 1990s, the availability of jobs to reward supporters became more rare. By contrast, as many clientelistic countries have expanded their social policy, the
use of offers of access to public policies in exchange for such electoral support has increased. Public policies that have been used for clientelistic exchanges include housing, unemployment assistance, family benefits, and poverty relief.

Scholars of clientelism in many developing countries have also documented the use of state resources to incentivize both brokers and voters. Studies of Indian politics have argued that rural programs based on agricultural loans may be the primary factor accounting for the Congress party’s hold in rural areas (Weiner 1967: 464; Scott 1972a). Wilkinson, for instance, estimates that around 10 percent of the budget for rural development programs was used as political patronage (Wilkinson 2007: 124–5). In Africa, van de Walle argues that Constituency Development Funds were an important source of clientelistic practices in Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia (van de Walle 2014: 239). Others have documented the use of agricultural inputs such as land, fertilizer, and seeds as rewards for political support (Beck 2008: 75; Zamchiya 2011).

In addition to employment and access to policy, local bureaucrats can also politicize the provision of administrative regulations they control, and condition access to administrative decisions—such as certificates or titles—on political support. As Chandra writes,

The state also dominates the everyday business of existence, especially in rural India, and especially for the poor. Citizens require a minimum set of goods to attest to their existence and then to survive—birth certificates, death certificates, caste certificates, land titles, appointment letters, ration cards, hospital beds, loans, drinking water, electricity, sanitation, and so on—and procuring each of these requires contact with the state, which in turn can be influenced by politicians. The standard promise of the candidate at the constituency level, therefore, is ‘Vote for me and I will get your work done’. (Chandra 2014: 161)

For policy favors, state employees are the most important brokers. Early studies of party machines in US cities like Chicago and Philadelphia estimated that most party brokers were public servants (Kurtzman 1935; Gosnell 1968 [1937]: 54). The use of state employees as brokers has also been observed in a variety of contemporary contexts. In a study of three Argentinean municipalities, Oliveros (2013) documents the use of a variety of state employees as brokers. Public teachers in particular appear as important brokers in a number of cases including Mexico (Larreguy et al. 2017), Colombia (Eaton and Chambers-Ju 2014), and Indonesia (Aspinall, 2014 553).

2.2.2 Vote buying

The second non-programmatic strategy we examine is vote buying. Much like the provision of policy favors, vote buying is a strategy premised on positive
inducements, but in our definition of vote buying the goods used to incentivize voting behavior are not financed out of general tax revenues. Descriptively, the goods offered as part of vote-buying exchanges are quite heterogeneous. Consider some historical examples of vote-buying strategies. In nineteenth-century US elections, party agents offered voters goods such as boots or shoes, pants, bushels of corn, or plugs of tobacco (Bensel 2004: 59). In Third Republic France, men could trade their votes for bread, cigarettes, or clothes (Journal Officiel de la République Française, Débats Chambre des Députés, 23 January 1898; 7 July 1898). Party operatives campaigning in Chicago during the period of the Great Depression distributed not only food but also more durable goods such as clothes (Gosnell 1968 [1937]: 72).

Studies of vote buying in contemporary elections have also documented wide heterogeneity in the goods offered in these exchanges. A study of Argentinian brokers found that they distributed “medicine, a metal sheet for the rook, pairs of sneakers for their sons and daughters, a choripan (meat sausage sandwich) on the day of the rally” (Auyero 1999: 301). One broker in Paraguay described vote-buying exchanges as follows: “the operative does his work, buying the conscience of the voter with money, with alcohol, buying his id card, a little medicine, sugar, bread, tea and in this way he goes buying and winning adherents” (Finan and Schechter 2012: 867).

Many vote-buying exchanges include offers of money. A study of Nigerian elections found that 68 percent of the respondents who were offered positive inducements were offered money. The amounts offered were small, averaging around four dollars (Bratton 2013: 126). A study of electoral practices in Ghana also notes that during these campaigns, “one of ‘the boys’ (runners and bodyguards) continue to feed the candidate with small notes for handouts from a small envelope” (Lindberg 2003: 129).

Brokers used in vote-buying exchanges often differ from those used to offer state policy resources. In many cases, vote-buying brokers come from the same low-income background as the voters they target (e.g. see Aspinall 2014: 58 on Indonesia). Networks of brokers used in vote-buying exchanges are established on an ad hoc basis. Brokers are “free hand operatives” (Bensel 2004: 63) who are recruited into “highly fluid organizations” (Aspinall 2014: 58) in spot transactions and paid small amounts of money that are often only slightly higher than the amounts that they subsequently use to incentivize voters (Aspinall 2014; Finan and Schechter 2012: 867). Networks of vote-buying brokers are also often bloated, with one study of clientelistic mobilization in Taiwan documenting a ratio of one broker to twenty voters (Wang and Kurzmann 2007: 234).

2.2.3 Policy coercion

Both vote buying and favors are non-programmatic strategies premised on positive inducements. In the case of coercive strategies, brokers seek to influence the
choices of voters by threatening to withhold resources that voters perceive as a critical part of their livelihoods. We define policy coercion as the threat to withhold publicly financed resources on which voters depend. Examples of policy coercion include the threat to rescind a property right or the removal of access to a policy benefit the voter receives or anticipates. In this way, electoral coercion is not a freely entered into exchange but rather “the political subordination of clients” (Karl 1995: 73; see also Fox 1994).

Reports of policy coercion are extremely common in clientelistic political systems. Official French publications document cases of local officials threatening welfare beneficiaries with the loss of assistance from their communes if they did not vote for a specific candidate (Journal Officiel de la République Francaise, Débats Chambre des Députés, 30 June 1902). There is also evidence that such threats are carried out in contemporary elections: in the case of Brazil, for example, Nichter (2014) documents that people who voted against a mayoral candidate were subsequently excluded from public temporary employment.

Land is another common resource that bureaucratic brokers can threaten to withhold from voters. Coercive strategies occur when the politician or broker threatens voters by exploiting imperfections in the definition of land property rights. Students of electoral politics in Mexico have documented how PRI mayors have selectively used ambiguity regarding legal access to land to influence voters’ choices (Diaz-Cayeros et al. 2016). Scholars of African politics have also analyzed the conditionality of land rights on political support. Boone and Kriger have documented the decisions of Laurent Gbagbo in Côte d’Ivoire to remove land rights of known opponents of his political regime (Boone and Kriger 2012).

2.2.4 Economic coercion

The final strategy we consider is economic coercion, or threats to cut voters off from resources that are not financed by the state. In one of the earliest conceptualizations of economic coercion, Scott and Kerkvliet (1977: 449) describe it as the ability of economic elites to “extract compliance from the clients in return for not seizing his land, for not jailing him and so on.” The ability of such brokers to coerce stems from their market power. Scott and Kerkvliet define the brokers involved in economic coercion as “most often in a position to supply goods unilaterally which the potential client and his family need for their survival and well-being” (442). It is this position as a “monopolist or at least an oligopolist for critical needs” that puts the broker “in an ideal position to demand compliance” (442).

Landowners and employers were the dominant brokers encountered in a variety of settings at the time of the early democratizations. Studies of economic coercion in nineteenth-century Europe documented a large number of coercive strategies used by landlords to influence electoral choices of voters. These included
threats of dismissals, termination of leases, or eviction (Mares 2015: 87–8; Kühne 1994). Consider Lavinia Anderson’s discussion of post-electoral reprisals used by landlords in East Prussia:

Against voters who ignored their wishes, the agents of the Hohenlohes employed all the usual means by which a landlord could make life hard for his dependents. They withdrew the small offices (such as the supervision of the town clock) that enabled a man to earn a tiny income. They terminated gleaning and grazing privileges. They called in outstanding debts, raised taxes and canceled tenancies. They evicted. (Anderson 2000: 165)

Bensel describes how powerful the threat of economic losses was in the case of the United States: “A landowner or factory owner could use his power over employees or tenants to influence their voting decisions. For intimidation to be effective, it was not necessary that this threat be explicit. When a man was sufficiently sensitive to the prospect of unemployment, all was required was a public announcement by an employer of a party preference” (Bensel 2004: 77). Similarly, employers and landowners have played an important role in contemporary elections in Chile (Bauer 1995; Baland and Robinson 2008). Recent studies have documented such practices of economic intimidation in Russia and Ukraine and even in democratic settings such as the United States.

Actors in the informal or criminal economies have also been implicated in economic coercion. Throughout much of Latin America and Spain, political brokers known as caciques have used a range of economic activities to threaten voters. Friedrich (1968: 247) defines caciques as “strong and autocratic leaders in local and regional politics, using an informal, personalistic and arbitrary rule.” In Mexico, caciques are involved in a variety of economic activities including trafficking in lots or permits for land, informal lending, and exploitation of local mineral rights (Cornelius 1977: 339). In a study of electoral clientelistic in urban Mexican communities, Cornelius documents the unprecedented economic and political influence exerted by these brokers within their respective communities. In three-quarters of the settlements where Cornelius conducted his research, “caciques were involved in a variety of illicit activities. Such activities included trafficking in lots or permits to occupy land within the settlement, fraudulent collection of money for personal use, [and] commercial exploitation of local mineral resources” (Cornelius 1977: 339). At election time, caciques mobilized these economic resources to provide support for a particular candidate and used a combination of coercive strategies and sanctions on opponent or resistant voters. Caciques rewarded political support by granting access to loans and by allowing squatters to occupy some of the land they controlled.

Illicit businesses including illegal moneylenders and organized crime gangs are a final common broker of economic coercion. Gosnell, for example, documents the involvement of “underworld personnel” providing services to candidates in
Chicago in the 1930s. In describing their influence, Gosnell noted that “when word is passed down from gangster chiefs, all proprietors of gambling houses and speak-easies, all burglars, pick-pockets, pimps, prostitutes, fences and their like are whipped into line. In themselves, they constitute a large block of votes and they frequently augment their value to the machine by corrupt election practices. Chain voters, colonized voters, and crooked election boards are recruited from the ranks of organized crime” (Gosnell 1968 [1937]: 42). Similarly, the mafia has been implicated in threatening voters in Italian elections (Arlacchi 1983; Gambetta 1993), and scholars of Thai politics have documented the importance of local godfathers (chao pho) involved in illegal smuggling, mining, and harvesting timber, mobilizing voters through blackmail or threats (Charntornvong 2000: 53–73).

2.3 Explaining the Mix of Clientelism

In the remainder of the chapter, we develop an explanation for the variation across localities in the use of clientelistic strategies. Prior to developing our explanation, we outline two important theoretical perspectives developed to explain the use of clientelism. The first highlights the importance of material resources held by different candidates. The second emphasizes the informational consequences of different clientelistic strategies in terms of how clientelistic candidates are viewed by voters. Our proposed explanation for the variation in the use of clientelistic strategies integrates insights developed by both approaches to explain why clientelism takes different forms in different localities. We argue that the use of different clientelistic strategies could be affected both by differential opportunities to politicize resources and by differential costs in terms of the loss of support of voters who judge clientelistic candidates.

2.3.1 Why do candidates use clientelism? Resource-based and informational explanations

Why do candidates use clientelistic strategies and what factors enhance or diminish opportunities for their use? Existing studies provide two different answers to this question. The first set of studies considers that the use of clientelistic strategies can be explained by examining the political resources that candidates can access. The second set of studies suggests the main factor shaping the costs and benefits of clientelism to candidates is the propensity of voters to punish such electoral corruption, and conditions that might make such punishment less likely, or even lead voters to reward candidates for using clientelism.

Resource-based explanations for clientelism have pointed to differences in access to the types of resources that can be politicized as the main predictor of
the use of clientelism and patronage. In one of the first systematic examinations of patronage, Martin Shefter (1994) proposes the distinction between “insider” and “outsider” parties and documents that the use of political patronage was higher among parties that were in power or formed the government coalition. Other studies of clientelism confirm this general observation by noting that the use of clientelistic strategies is higher among parties that have benefitted from long-term incumbency, such as the PRI in Mexico, the Christian Democratic Party in Italy, and the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan (Scheiner 2006; Magaloni 2006).

Other studies point to the importance of economic resources in explaining clientelistic strategies. Studies of political development in Europe following the adoption of mass suffrage have pointed to the ample incidence of economic coercion used by employers. The incidence of such coercion varies across localities and is significantly higher in districts where employers control opportunities for employment and output, in other words, localities with high levels of economic concentration (Mares 2015). Baland and Robinson (2008) document that the incidence of economic electoral intimidation is greater in regions with high levels of economic inequality. We refer to this type of argument as “resource-based” or “supply side” because it is focused on constraints on factors that increase or constrain access to the resources that candidates use to supply clientelism.

In contrast to these explanations, other studies consider that an important motivation accounting for the use of clientelism is the propensity of different types of voters to reward or punish candidates for using clientelism. The studies that fall under this line of research, which we weave into a consolidated theoretical framework, show first that clientelism sends informational signals about candidates to voters. These signals might be positive: offering gifts to voters may signal that a candidate is generous, well-resourced, and likely to help the groups that are targeted with gifts. They may also be negative if voters judge that clientelistic candidates are more likely to be corrupt and ineffectual once in office.

One early formulation of this signaling logic goes back to an early study of the vote-buying practices in Senegal by Bill Foltz (1977). In his study, Foltz discusses offers of gifts—what he refers to as patterned gift-giving—and suggests that it reflects the intention of candidates to signal personal attributes, such as generosity:

The size of a person’s clientship is likely to be proportional to his generosity and his ability to further his client’s fortune. However—and the distinction is of great importance—a patron does not buy his clients’ support and recognition. Rather, his generosity, particularly to members of lower casts, shows that he is an individual worthy of popular acclaim. Thus, public gift-giving is a patterned process, designed to ennoble the giver and reflect his ‘concern for honor’ not an underhanded and reprehensible attempt to buy support of status. (Foltz 1977)

Other studies point to the use of vote-buying strategies as signals of a candidate’s wealth. Using qualitative evidence from Benin and Nigeria, van de Walle suggests
that candidates distribute goods and money to signal their wealth and capability to win elections (van de Walle 2007: 64; see also Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007: 64). Candidates who use vote buying seek both to signal generosity and that they will not steal from the citizenry (Banegas 1998; Schatzberg 2001: 82; van de Walle 2005: 64). In a study of clientelism in Ghana, Lindberg considers that “the use of cash handouts is not simply a buying of votes ... it is an institutionalized behavior signifying willingness to take care of your people” (Lindberg 2003). More recent work using survey experiments on electoral handouts has similarly argued that parties that provide handouts are perceived as having more positive qualities (Conroy-Krutz 2013; Kramon 2016).5

On the other hand, others have documented that voters often have strong normative stances against clientelism and other forms of electoral corruption. Survey experiments in India and Central America have shown that the average voter judges harshly citizens who participate in clientelistic transactions, and candidates who have received bribes or engaged in violent crime (Banerjee et al. 2014; Gonzalez-Ocantos et al. 2014). Weitz-Shapiro (2014) argues that clientelism signals to voters that candidates will govern poorly, and that candidates therefore consider the electoral costs of alienating voters, particularly those in the middle classes, when deciding whether and how to use clientelism.

There is also evidence that the electoral costs and benefits of clientelism’s informational signals vary greatly across different types of voters. Kramon (2016) finds in Kenya that the positive effects of electoral handouts are concentrated among poor voters. In Latin America, Gonzalez-Ocantos et al. (2014) find that respondents with more education are more likely to condemn citizens who sell their votes. Finally, Weitz-Shapiro (2014) argues that in Argentina clientelism is permitted by the poor, but punished by the middle class. As a result, she argues that the attractiveness of clientelism as an electoral strategy decreases as the size of the middle class in the electorate grows.

We distinguish between a strong and weak form of arguments about the informational signals of clientelism. The strong form of this argument asserts that clientelism actually has a positive effect on how candidates are viewed by voters. Kramon (2016) is a good example of this strong informational argument. In his words, “electoral handouts help politicians establish credibility by conveying information” about their competence, trustworthiness, and electoral viability (455). This strong version of the informational argument implies that the material incentives provided by clientelism are secondary, or non-existent, to the positive effects of these informational signals with some or all voters. The weaker form of the informational argument, exemplified by Weitz-Shapiro’s (2014) book, asserts that clientelism usually leads voters to update negatively about candidates’ personal qualities or propensities to deliver policy benefits once in office. However, voters with certain characteristics such as low education or high poverty may be willing to forgive candidates for clientelism. This version of the argument implies that, from
the perspective of the candidate, these negative informational effects are balanced against the positive material incentives that clientelism sets for voters.

While both resource-based and informational explanations provide important insights accounting for the use of clientelism, few studies have attempted to integrate insights generated by both approaches. The goal of our study is to provide a unified framework that examines the relative importance of political resources and informational considerations in explaining variation in the use of different non-programmatic strategies across localities. As we will argue in the following section, the variation across localities in the use of different clientelistic strategies can be explained by considering the availability of existing resources and the propensity of voters to either reward or punish candidates who engage in different forms of clientelism.

2.3.2 Variation in the incidence of different forms of clientelism across localities

When and under what conditions do candidates use different forms of clientelism? We contend that the political incentives to use different clientelistic strategies vary in significant ways across localities. This variation is largely affected by a combination of two types of factors. One set of factors can be understood more broadly as “supply-side conditions” and results from differences in institutional and partisan conditions across different localities that enable candidates and brokers to politicize local public policy. Another set of factors can be understood as “demand-side conditions” and refers to variation in voters’ propensities to judge and punish candidates who use clientelism.

To anticipate our discussion, we argue that past theory gives us reasons to believe that both supply-side and demand-side conditions should influence variation among clientelistic strategies. On the one hand, supply-side conditions should affect the relative availability of resources that can be politicized by the candidate for electoral purposes. As such, supply-side conditions should especially affect the choice between clientelistic strategies that use resources of the state relative to strategies that rely on private resources. On the other hand, demand-side conditions should affect whether candidates choose to structure clientelistic incentives as positive offers or negative threats. Specifically, we predict that the presence of social conflict over the distribution of social policy resources should enable politicians to use coercive forms of clientelism without facing harsh punishments by other voters. We argue that social conflict arises in localities that have large populations of poor voters who are benefiting from valuable social policy, and large groups of voters who are poor but ineligible for the same benefits. Table 2.2 summarizes our main predictions about locality-level variation in the
incidence of clientelism and intends to guide the reader for the remainder of this section.

A candidate who considers using clientelistic strategies to incentivize voters faces a first choice regarding the type of resources that can be used during his interaction with voters. Should voters be incentivized with policy resources financed by general tax revenues, or should they be incentivized using private resources instead? One candidate competing in Third Republic France addressed the trade-off between clientelistic strategies that involve state resources and private resources by noting that “in using resources of the state one does not pay from one’s own money. Rather, the state is the one who pays” (Journal Officiel de la République Française, Débats Chambre des Députés, 30 June 1902). Similarly, a party operative of the Republican Party machine in Philadelphia suggested that “the Philadelphia organization does not do this with money. They perform their political work by service” using state bureaucrats (Kurtzman 1935).

The relative availability of state resources should condition the answer to this question. In localities where candidates can access state resources with relative ease, we conjecture that candidates will choose to utilize such resources to structure the relationship to voters. By contrast, candidates will turn to clientelistic strategies that use private resources in localities where political resources of the state are only available with great difficulty. These conjectures revert the expectations about the importance of vote-buying exchanges in the menu of non-programmatic strategies one encounters in the current literature. While much of the existing studies considers clientelistic exchanges premised on vote buying as the “default” strategy used by candidates, we predict that vote buying emerges only as a “second-best” strategy that is deployed when the political resources of the state are unavailable.

The availability of state resources to be captured for clientelistic mobilization should be affected by a variety of political conditions in a locality. In our empirical analysis in the remaining part of the book, we will consider the consequences of three such variables that are relevant in the Eastern European cases in our study. The first variable is the length of incumbency. Longer incumbency is likely to enhance access to a larger pool of state employees who can be mobilized as
brokers. Such employees of the local administration, in turn, can mobilize a host of different policies and programs to incentivize voters.

A second political variable that may enhance the ability of a candidate to access policy resources of the state is co-partisanship with the national incumbent. A resource asymmetry between incumbent and non-incumbent parties is likely to be present in any political system: incumbent parties control more resources that allow them to incentivize and recruit electoral brokers as compared to parties that do not enjoy this presence in office. Co-incumbency with the national political party not only affects the resources available to a candidate, but also the willingness of brokers to supply effort into targeting and enforcing clientelistic transactions.

A third political variable that may affect the ability of a candidate to access state resources for electoral exchanges is the political fragmentation in the locality. In localities where government is unified such that mayors are coupled with a city council with a similar partisanship, candidates are more likely to benefit from greater room to maneuver to politicize state resources for electoral purposes. In these cases, the “horizontal accountability” of mayors to the city council is low. This is not the case of localities with a politically divided administration. In such cases, city council and mayors are likely to heavily scrutinize their respective political activities. These “checks and balances” are likely to limit the ability of mayors to politicize resources of the state. These considerations imply that access to political resources of the state is likely to be higher in localities with unified government.

To sum up, we predict that incumbency, co-partisanship with the national incumbent, and political fragmentation of the city council increase the likelihood of clientelistic strategies that deploy state resources. We regard access to state resources as factors enabling the use of these clientelistic strategies, rather than necessitating their use. In other words, we see factors such as united local government or unification of the city council as increasing the likelihood of the use of particular clientelistic strategies, but not as having a deterministic influence on their use.

Our predictions about the use of clientelistic strategies that deploy private resources follow from the above discussion. More specifically, we expect to find either no relationship between the variables measuring local political control and the incidence of clientelistic strategies that use private resources, or a negative relationship between local political control and private forms of clientelism if public and private forms of clientelism are perfect substitutes. In localities where neither incumbents nor challengers can access the political services of state employees, candidates will have to turn to private resources to organize clientelistic exchanges. In the case of vote buying, candidates will establish networks of brokers hired on spot markets who seek to mobilize voters using in-kind gifts or monetary inducements. Alternatively, candidates can incentivize private actors—
such as employers or moneylenders—who control significant economic resources to act as their brokers, often in longer-term relationships.

2.3.3 Informational costs and benefits

The previous section has drawn on resource-based explanations for clientelism and considered how the absence of local political control affects the ability to use policy resources in clientelistic exchanges. We now turn to informational explanations. We conjecture that political conflicts over the allocation of social policy benefits shape the opportunities and costs for candidates to use clientelism to signal their positions in such conflicts. The relative magnitude of the constituencies in conflicts over the distribution of social policy benefits create different incentives for candidates to choose between clientelistic strategies that use favors as compared to strategies that use coercion. Ultimately, we contend that it is the presence of such social conflict that enables candidates to get away with—or even be rewarded for—the use of clientelism.

Poor communities are often sites of intense distributional conflict. Tensions and hostilities among poor voters often originate in disagreements about the distribution over economic and policy resources that are in scarce supply. Examples of resources that may amplify such poor against poor conflict are access to land, access to a particular social policy, or employment opportunities.

Anti-poverty programs represent an important source of a political conflict among low-income voters. Such conflict pits actual and potential recipients of social policy benefits against persons who fall outside of the eligibility threshold for the particular program or cannot qualify for benefits. In other words, the eligibility criteria for social policy benefits often create a cleavage within the class of low-income voters. We will refer to the constituencies that fall on each side of the threshold defining eligibility for a particular social policy as the coalition favoring social policy expansion, versus the coalition for policy retrenchment. On one side of this conflict, we find low-income voters who either draw on the social policy at the moment or expect to gain access to the program at some future time. These low-income voters who can qualify for social policy benefits under existing policy rules are likely to favor the social policy status quo or its expansion. On the other side of the conflict, we find low-income voters who barely miss the eligibility criteria to receive social policy benefits, due to a combination of demographic or labor market characteristics. Such a constituency may include the elderly (who are usually not eligible for poverty benefits), and the working poor. We refer to this constituency as the retrenchment coalition. The term retrenchment is, inevitably, a shorthand for the complex social policy views of such voters. Because these voters are also low-income, they should not want social policy to be cut back. Instead, they should prefer social policy to be reallocated so that they, the
“deserving poor,” are eligible. Resenting their inability to access desirable social policy benefits, such voters are more likely to favor a change in the eligibility criteria for benefits and a reallocation of social policy benefits rather than the wholesale elimination of the anti-poverty program.

The existence of this distributional conflict between a constituency of low-income voters who welcome the current distribution of social policy benefits and a constituency of voters who are resentful of the current social policy beneficiaries creates opportunities for candidates to use different clientelistic strategies to signal their position on this divisive issue. The use of clientelistic strategies premised on positive inducements allows candidates to signal support for the low-income voters who depend on the current allocation of benefits. The expansion of social policy benefits—even if such benefits are granted in exchange for political support at the ballot box—in contexts where the main anti-poverty programs are supported by a sizable group of voters represents a signal that the candidate supports the policy status quo.

On the other hand, the candidate can choose to exploit the eligibility conditions for the social program coercively by threatening to reduce or eliminate the benefits of social policy beneficiaries depending on their political choices. The candidate may combine these coercive electoral strategies with other forms of harassment of recipients of poverty benefits that disregard the dignity and rights of many low-income voters. The use of such coercive strategies carries a fundamentally different signal than the use of strategies that are based on positive inducements. The use of coercive electoral strategies signals the opposition of the candidate to the current allocation of social policy benefits in the community and, indirectly, a support for policy retrenchment. In choosing coercive strategies, the candidate explicitly sides with opponents to the current allocation of social policy benefits.

Policy positions are just one of the factors that voters consider when evaluating candidates. They also consider general qualities, including personal characteristics, the propensity for corruption, and management capabilities, as well as how competitive the candidate is in the election. When voters view clientelism as a form of electoral corruption, they should also negatively update their beliefs about candidates’ general qualities. This is especially true for general qualities that are more closely related to clientelism, like how corrupt the candidate will be once in office. However, to the extent that candidates are using forms of clientelism that are aligned with voters’ positions on the key issue of social policy benefits, we expect that they should be more forgiving or even view candidates who use clientelism more positively.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, we suggest that there is both a strong and weak version of the informational argument. In the strong version of the argument, clientelism actually provides electoral benefits to candidates who use it with aligned groups of voters. For example, if the strong informational story were correct, then positive forms of clientelism would make voters who support the
current distribution of social policy benefits believe that those candidates are more aligned with their policy positions and have more positive general qualities than candidates who do not use clientelism. In the weak version of the informational argument, voters never update their views positively about candidates who use clientelism, but they update less negatively about candidates who use clientelism that is in line with their social policy preferences. For example, the reputational cost of coercive clientelism would be less negative with voters who prefer that social policy benefits are retrenched and reallocated than with those who want it to be expanded.

Both the strong and weak versions of this informational theory imply that the electoral costs and benefits of different forms of clientelism are affected by the relative size of constituencies favoring policy expansion versus retrenchment at the local level. In localities where the electoral constituency favoring expansion is large, candidates will find the use of clientelistic strategies based on positive inducements attractive. In this case, the candidate uses the clientelistic strategy to indirectly appeal to voters favoring the current allocation of policy benefits. By contrast, in localities where the electoral constituency favoring a reallocation of social policy benefits is large, candidates will favor clientelistic strategies premised on coercion. In using coercive strategies, such as threats to cut access to social policy benefits or to lay off workers who make the incorrect electoral choices, candidates and brokers operating on their behalf pursue two different objectives. On the one hand, candidates seek to capture the vote of these dependent voters and induce such voters to trade the vote in exchange for maintaining a future stream of income. On the other hand, such coercive strategies are a credible signal that the candidate shares the retrenchment coalition’s view that current beneficiaries are unworthy of state support. Such voters may therefore interpret coercive strategies as signals of the resoluteness of the candidate to reallocate social policy benefits to more deserving beneficiaries, and that they are willing to mete out punishments to those unworthy of support.

Clientelistic strategies that use policy resources of the state—such as welfare favors or welfare coercion—provide the most direct ways for candidates to signal their positions on issues that are distributionally divisive. Such signaling opportunities are weaker in the case of clientelistic strategies that make use of private resources, such as economic coercion or vote buying. Nevertheless, the decision of a candidate to ally himself with economic brokers such as moneylenders who in turn coerce low-income voters using their private resources is still likely to signal disregard for the rights of the poorest voters—current social policy beneficiaries—in the community. By contrast, a clientelistic strategy based on positive inducements is likely to signal concern for these groups of poor voters who are the main current beneficiaries of social policy.

To a political strategist, it may seem puzzling that retrenchment voters would interpret coercive forms of clientelism as a signal that candidates support
reallocating social policy benefits to their group. In theory, sophisticated voters should see that candidates who gain the coerced votes of social policy beneficiaries have little interest in retrenching the program. Yet in practice, we find this logic sets a high bar for the political calculations of the average voter. Instead of such a strategic calculation, our theory argues that voters buy into the symbolic politics of abusing and threatening a demographic that is disliked and envied. While this strategy may lose its credibility if the program is not actually retrenched, we suspect that it will take several electoral cycles to become truly ineffectual.

To summarize, our explanation of the variation across localities in the use of different clientelistic strategies brings together two different views of the constraints and benefits of clientelism from the perspective of candidates. On the supply side, we consider that local political control should enable access to policy resources for use in clientelistic transactions. On the demand side, we argue that the propensity of voters to punish or reward candidates for using different forms of clientelism shapes the electoral costs of electoral corruption. We argue that positive and negative forms of clientelism carry different signals of a candidate’s position on the distribution of local social policy. Positive forms of clientelism like policy favors and vote buying signal that a candidate supports the existing distribution of social policy, while negative forms like policy and private coercion signal that the candidate views current social policy beneficiaries as undeserving and is relatively likely to retrench existing programs.

2.3.4 Clientelism and vote-choice: a new micro-level perspective on clientelism

We conclude this chapter by considering some implications of our theoretical approach for understanding voters’ political responses to different clientelistic practices. How do voters evaluate candidates that make use of different clientelistic strategies? What are the most salient factors that account for differences across voters in the way they evaluate different non-programmatic strategies? What are the consequences of voters’ evaluations of different clientelistic strategies for the persistence of electoral clientelism?

Our study provides new micro-foundations for understanding citizens’ responses to different non-programmatic strategies. First, our approach suggests that the share of the electorate affected by clientelistic strategies is broader than the voters who are directly targeted by such strategies. Clientelistic strategies influence two distinct electoral constituencies. The first such constituency are the voters who are directly targeted by clientelistic strategies. At the same time, candidates use clientelistic strategies to appeal to a broader group of voters in the constituency who are not targeted by clientelistic strategies directly, but who learn about different clientelistic
strategies indirectly, from persons who have been targeted by these candidates or from competitors of these candidates. Such voters who are indirectly exposed to clientelistic practices are likely to use this information to update their position about the candidate. This implies that to understand the consequences of clientelism for vote choice, we need to disaggregate carefully how such material and informational effects differ across various groups of voters and across different clientelistic strategies.

Clientelistic strategies convey two types of information about a candidate. First, clientelistic strategies convey information about the personal competencies and characteristics of a candidate. As discussed above, previous studies on clientelism have noted that voters derive information about a candidate’s wealth, generosity, or electoral viability by observing offers of money or gifts. At the same time, clientelistic strategies convey information about the policy positions of candidates. The choice between coercive strategies and strategies premised on positive inducements carries information about the position of a candidate on questions of policy that are distributionally divisive in the locality. Clientelistic strategies differ in the mix of information about competence and policy position they convey. Unsurprisingly, clientelistic strategies that use policy resources of the state should convey more information about the policy positions of a candidate as compared to non-programmatic strategies that use private resources.

To understand the variation in responses to clientelistic strategies, we begin with a discussion of the results of previous studies that have analyzed voters’ responses to offers of vote buying. These findings can be considered as a limit case in a more general theory that allows clientelistic strategies to contain both signals about the competence of a candidate but also information about the policy positions of a candidate. We will discuss this more general explanation next.

How do voters evaluate the competence of candidates that offer money or gifts to voters? As discussed above, scholars of vote-buying exchanges have noted that such clientelistic strategies are used as a signal of the electoral viability of a candidate. In a recent study of vote buying in Kenya, Kramon (2016: 463) argues that such clientelistic offers allow candidates to strengthen their claims of being a “high quality candidate.” He defines “high quality” or competence of a candidate as an aggregate of three attributes, comprising expertise, trustworthiness, and electoral viability. As Kramon explains, “the distribution of handouts allows candidates to improve voters’ perceptions along each of these dimensions, thus helping them establish credibility with respect to the future provision of resources” (464).

Previous studies have found that the level of income is the most significant source of heterogeneity among voters in their responses to non-programmatic strategies. The finding that low-income voters are less willing to punish politicians that engage in clientelistic exchanges is a relatively robust finding reported in
contexts as diverse as Argentina, Brazil, or Kenya, to name just a few of the contexts where such relationship has been found (Weitz-Shapiro 2012; Winters and Weitz-Shapiro 2013; Kramon 2016). Existing studies propose a variety of possible explanations for the relationship linking poverty and a lower tolerance for vote buying, but often lack a convincing strategy that adjudicates among the mechanisms postulated by these explanations. Poor voters, these studies argue, are less willing to punish politicians who engage in clientelism because they have a higher marginal utility for the goods offered as part of these exchanges or because the poor, due to “the pressures of meeting basic needs, are less likely to have the time or inclination to care about the quality of governance” (Winters and Weitz-Shapiro 2013: 426; see also Kurer 2001). Kramon argues that low income voters are more likely to respond favorably to offers of money and goods and elections, because “such electoral handouts demonstrate that candidates understand the needs of their predominantly poor constituents and that they are aware of their responsibility to allocate resources to them” (Kramon 2016: 466). Finally, other studies seek to explain this relationship by invoking the lower tolerance threshold for clientelism of middle-income voters. Weitz-Shapiro (2012: 571) argues that middle income voters are more likely to punish politicians that engage in vote-buying exchanges because they are more likely to view clientelism as an indicator of the low quality of a politician and of their inability to deliver the desirable levels of public goods.

In contrast to these studies, we argue that clientelistic strategies also include information about a candidate’s policy position. The use of anti-poverty programs, unemployment benefits, or conditional cash transfer programs create some opportunities for candidates to dissimulate their clientelistic exchanges and mask these as pro-poor concerns. Voters may process information about the distribution of anti-poverty benefits as indicative of politicians’ concern for low-income voters. On the other hand, candidates may use coercive strategies to signal their commitment to austerity, social policy retrenchment or cutbacks in the social policy entitlements of particular groups. The use of strategies that blatantly and unabashedly disregard the economic and political rights of welfare beneficiaries is a signal of opposition to existing social programs. In using welfare coercion, a candidate may signal an “anti-welfare” position that is closer to that held by political parties on the right.

Let us consider now how voters evaluate these non-programmatic strategies. Our central conjecture is that voters’ evaluations of different clientelistic strategies are mediated by their social policy preferences. We take a broad understanding of social policy preferences to include both preferences towards responsibilities of the government to provide resources to low-income voters, to redistribute income between rich and poor voters, and preferences about which type of poor voters are truly deserving of assistance. Voters’ social policy preferences therefore affect the lens through which voters interpret and judge clientelistic strategies.
Consider first voters’ responses to clientelistic strategies premised on positive inducements. If voters are supportive of the redistribution of resources to the poor through transfers or taxes, they may be less willing to punish politicians who use clientelistic strategies based on positive inducements. We conjecture that voters supportive of an expansive role of the state should be less willing to sanction or punish clientelistic social policies based on positive inducements as compared to retrenchment voters. By contrast, voters opposed to social policy transfers are likely to view such clientelistic strategies less favorably as compared to voters who are supportive of a broad redistributive role of the government.

Similarly, voters’ responses to clientelistic strategies that use coercion are likely to vary depending on voters’ preferences for social policy redistribution. As we have argued above, the use of strategies that blatantly disregard the economic and political rights of welfare beneficiaries may signal the opposition of the candidate to the current allocation of benefits. In using clientelistic strategies such as welfare coercion, a candidate may signal an “anti-welfare” position that is close to the position held by political parties on the right. As a result, we expect that the opposition to redistribution will be an important factor that mediates voters’ responses to this non-programmatic strategy. Voters who hold the belief that the “current allocation of social policy benefits is excessive” or that “recipients of social policy benefits are lazy” will be more likely to positively evaluate such coercive strategies. By contrast, we expect that voters supportive of redistribution will negatively evaluate candidates who use coercive strategies.

Table 2.3 summarizes the main components of our argument about the informational signals of different forms of clientelism. In the left column are clientelistic

### Table 2.3 Consequences of Clientelistic Strategies for Voting Behavior

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<thead>
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<th>Are state resources involved?</th>
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<th>Yes</th>
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<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vote buying</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Policy signal: Current social policy expansion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the inducement coercive?</td>
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<td>Economic coercion</td>
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<td>• Signal strength: Weak</td>
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<td>• Policy signal: Current social policy expansion</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Personal signal: Generosity</td>
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<td>• Target audience: Roma, unemployed</td>
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<td>Policy coercion</td>
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<td>• Signal strength: Strong</td>
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<td>Employed, retired</td>
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strategies based on private resources, namely vote buying and economic coercion, while on the right are policy favors and policy coercion, both based on public funds. The first bullet point under each strategy summarizes our prediction that private forms of clientelism should send weaker informational signals than clientelism financed out of public coffers, particularly when it comes to signals of policy positions. The top and bottom rows differentiate between positive and negative inducements, respectively. The next two bullet points summarize our predictions that positive forms of clientelism signal that the candidate is committed to a policy platform of expanding the current social policy and is personally generous, while negative forms of clientelism signal that the candidate will retrench social policy and act as a strong authority. The final bullet point summarizes the social groups that are likely to view candidates who use these strategies favorably. In the case of positive forms of clientelism, groups that prefer expansion of the current social policy (in our case, the unemployed and Roma populations) should view candidates who use positive inducements more positively, while in the case of negative inducements, groups who have been excluded from the current social policy distribution (the working poor and retirees) should view candidates who use coercive forms of clientelism more positively.

2.4 Relationship to Previous Studies

In this book we depart from existing explanations of electoral clientelism in several important ways. First, our explanation posits thus a different mechanism by which clientelism affects voting behavior compared to previous studies. Existing studies have drawn a very strong distinction between the material incentives offered in clientelistic exchanges and the ideological appeals to voters. Diaz-Cayeros et al. (2016) assume that voters do not have ideological positions such that their partisanship is purely a function of the history of benefits that they receive. Stokes (2005) and Stokes et al. (2013) define voters’ ideological positions as fixed along a one-dimensional left–right scale. Parties’ positions are also fixed and are known by voters. In this framework, when a party offers a material benefit to a voter, it has no impact on the voter’s own ideological position, or on the voter’s perception of the party’s position on issues that she cares about. At the other extreme, Kramon (2016) argues that vote buying is actually not intended to provide a material incentive for voters, but is purely an informational signal about the candidate’s credibility.

Our theoretical framework allows voters to have true policy preferences, and relaxes the assumption that they are not updating their views of candidates based on their experiences with clientelism during the election and pre-election periods. We follow the assumption made by Stokes and her co-authors that voters in
countries with clientelistic exchanges have policy preferences that make them favor one party over another, regardless of the material incentives they’ve received in the past. However, we contend that voters do not have complete information about parties’ positions. As a result, clientelistic exchanges that voters experience first- or second-hand lead them to update their beliefs about how well each party’s programmatic position aligns with their political preferences. In this way, we depart from Stokes by considering the perceived difference between voters’ preferences and parties’ positions as endogenous to clientelistic transactions. Similarly, we depart from the study by Diaz-Cayeros et al. (2016), by allowing the effect of material incentives offered by candidates to voters to be either positive or negative.

Finally, we depart from existing research by identifying a new dimension of voter heterogeneity that conditions how voters judge candidates who use various forms of clientelism. Existing studies have identified demographic characteristics such as high poverty and low education as factors that make voters treat vote buying permissively, or even positively (Gonzalez-Ocantos et al. 2014; Weitz-Shapiro 2014; Kramon 2016). We contend that voters’ social policy preferences may be driving the existing effects on income by mediating the evaluation of clientelistic strategies. Central to our argument is the idea that voters’ willingness to reward or support particular clientelistic strategies is shaped by their demand for enhanced or reduced spending on different social policy programs. Voters who disagree about the appropriate scope of social policy also disagree about the evaluation of candidates that use different types of clientelistic strategies. As a result of this differential evaluation of candidates that use different clientelistic strategies, the use of clientelism may further contribute to the polarization of the electorate.

Our research thus echoes work emphasizing the role of envy and relative deprivation in policy preferences. Social conflict emerges not as a function of absolute levels of poverty, but poverty relative to other local social groups and beliefs about how deserving they are of state support. In this our work builds on a behavioral literature showing that individuals are willing to engage in costly punishment for behavior that they perceive as unfair (Fehr and Gachter 2000; Henrich et al. 2006), and reduce others’ material payoff merely to increase their own relative payoff (Fehr et al. 2008). It also builds on a growing body of evidence from the United States showing that individuals just above the threshold to qualify for a social program may oppose that program because it decreases their status relative to those who are just barely eligible (Kuziemko et al. 2014). Our informational theory suggests that in localities where large groups of voters are ineligible for valuable social policy benefits, social conflict may drive these ineligible voters to put up with harshly coercive forms of electoral corruption that are likely to leave all voters worse off.
2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has formulated the conceptual groundwork for the empirical analysis we will present in subsequent chapters. We have argued that electoral clientelism is a multidimensional concept, encompassing a heterogeneity of different strategies and practices that can be explained by different political logics.

We began by mapping out the broad variation among clientelistic strategies and proposed to classify these strategies along two distinct dimensions. The first dimension considers the source of the resources or powers that are used to influence the electoral choices of voters. Here we distinguish between clientelistic strategies that use state resources and those that involve resources that are financed by political parties or private actors. The most important resources of the state that can be leveraged by candidates for clientelistic exchanges are public employment, policies, or administrative favors. State resources can be used both to incentivize brokers and to influence the electoral choice of voters. The second dimension that we consider is whether the incentive that voters face is a positive offer or a negative threat. These dimensions are important because clientelism that is coercive or based on state resources is likely to have larger negative welfare effects, and is normatively more objectionable. In addition, existing theory suggests that forms of clientelism differentiated along these dimensions are likely to be driven by different local conditions.

Second, we develop a number of propositions that explain the variation across localities in the use of these four non-programmatic strategies. Existing theory suggests that this variation can be explained by the distribution of different political resources that can be deployed by candidates, and by the presence of political conflict over the allocation of access to social policies within the localities. We predicted that clientelistic strategies premised on positive inducements should be more attractive to candidates in localities with low levels of contestation over the allocation of social policy benefits. In localities where distribution of social policy benefits is not politicized, candidates should use clientelistic strategies to incentivize directly targeted voters, and to send the broader pool of voters signals of their redistributive intentions and pro-poor concerns. In such localities, candidates should rely on policy favors or on vote buying, depending on the availability of public resources that can be politicized at elections. By contrast, we have conjectured that candidates find clientelistic strategies that involve coercion attractive in localities where the distribution of policy benefits is contested and where a large group of the electorate resents the current allocation of benefits. In such localities, candidates use coercive strategies to signal their disdain for current social policy beneficiaries, opposition to the current allocation of benefits, and support for retrenchment and the reconfiguration of benefits. Thus, the existence of a distributional conflict over the allocation of social policy benefits explains the choice of clientelistic strategy that differs in the level of coercion.
In the final section of the chapter, we develop a number of theoretical expectations about voters’ evaluation of candidates that engage in different non-programmatic strategies. While clientelistic strategies are normatively undesirable, they create opportunities for candidates to obfuscate their nondemocratic intentions and send signals about their personal attributes or policy positions. We develop a number of expectations about the factors that explain variation in voters’ evaluation of different non-programmatic strategies and argue that individual support for redistribution conditions voters’ evaluations of different non-programmatic strategies. Voters opposed to redistribution are likely to reward candidates that engage in coercive electoral strategies and punish candidates that engage in social policy expansion. By contrast, voters that support a more expansive role of the state in providing for social spending are more likely to reward candidates that use clientelistic social policies premised on favors and punish the use of coercive strategies. Given that clientelistic strategies are conditional on the policy preferences of voters, the use of these strategies contributes to a further polarization in the electorate.

Notes

1. We note, however, that monitoring does not necessarily need to occur at the individual level for an individual exchange to be upheld. As long as a broker has some signal of whether or not a voter makes good on his electoral promise, individual inducements can be used (Rueda 2017).
2. Stokes et al. (2013) and Golden and Min (2013) review and summarize recent studies that have analyzed such political exchanges.
3. While the threat of violence technically falls under our definition of negative sanctions, we do not consider it here because it is not prevalent in the cases under study. In addition, the conditions that would make the resources and informational signals more conducive to physical sanctions would most likely differ from those that are conducive to economic sanctions. To give one basic example, while control of the local welfare administration should facilitate the use of negative economic sanctions, control of the police force or courts might play a more important role in facilitating physical sanctions.
4. In our study, we disaggregate coercive strategies based on the type of resources used by the broker. In an unpublished manuscript, Kitschelt differentiates between two different types of coercive strategies, which he calls act-coerciveness and situative coerciveness. Act coerciveness encompasses relationships when the client is entrapped and includes patron–client exchanges that involve goods such as policy benefits or procurement contracts. In the case of the second type of coercive strategy, situative coerciveness, our ability to classify a transaction as coercive depends on a variety of other contextual factors. These include the availability of alternative suppliers of the good, the relative scarcity of the good, and so on. Kitschelt would classify most coercive strategies analyzed
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in this book as examples of situative coerciveness rather than act coerciveness. We are
grateful to Herbert Kitschelt for clarifying this point.
5. Conroy-Krutz hypothesizes that electoral handouts should increase the attractiveness of
a candidate to the average Ugandan voter, but actually finds that in a survey question
where respondents were asked to choose between two similar candidates, one of whom
unconditionally distributed bags of sugar at his rally, almost two-thirds of respondents
did not support the distributing candidate (2013: 364).
5 Policy Coercion

Social Conflict and Control

Angela is a 55-year-old woman living in VI., a rural locality in southern Romania. She recalls with nostalgia the Communist period, when she worked at the mechanical station of the local agricultural cooperative. At the time we met her, in the fall of 2015, Angela was without employment. Her only source of income was the benefit she received from the social assistance program, an amount that did not exceed 80 RON [approximately 20 dollars] per month. Angela yearns for a regular job to end her dependency on the social assistance program: “I have hands and feet and would like to work to receive the minimum wage, but there are no jobs in this locality” (VI., Interview 1, September 30, 2015).

Angela is not happy with the performance of her political representatives, but she does not voice her dissatisfaction at the ballot box. Angela’s economic dependence on social assistance benefits makes her vulnerable to coercive threats at the time of elections. On a recent parliamentary election day, employees of the city hall rounded her up in a car and took her to vote, even though she was sick and expressed her desire not to vote. She doesn’t remember what candidate or party she voted for, but only remembers she “followed the instructions of those who work in the city hall.” We asked what would have happened if she had refused to vote: “I would have lost all my benefits,” she replied (VI., Interview 1, September 30, 2015). Another respondent in the locality reaffirms the extensive threats made by the mayor in this locality: “The mayor threatened beneficiaries of the social assistance program to cut their benefits if they do not vote for this or that candidate” (VI., Interview 2, September 30, 2015).

In this chapter, we examine the conditions in which politicians use social policy benefits to coerce beneficiaries to change their voting behavior. The politicization of the welfare state is a powerful form of clientelism not only because it expands the resources available to politicians, but also because it is easy to use coercively. Mayors who act as political brokers for candidates competing in parliamentary or presidential elections may threaten voters who depend on access to the workfare program or on public employment in the municipality with interruption of future income streams if they do not vote for the candidate supported by the mayor. Voters who expect this continuous stream of future benefits perceive such threats as losses. Given the importance of such benefits—such as the 140 RON that one receives for basic income support—voters believe that they have no choice but to comply.
Social policy programs in the region have been designed to grant mayors an important role over the allocation of important social benefits. This enables politicians to structure incentives as threats to take away vital benefits on which voters depend. Such politicization of the welfare state can incentivize voting behavior even when monitoring is weak. In both Hungary and Romania, workfare programs represent the main public policies used by mayors who engage in coercive electoral strategies. In Chapter 3 we discussed the origin of these programs and reasons that post-communist governments are increasingly conditioning benefits on work participation. Such changes in the design of social programs are not unique to these two countries, but are instead part of a broader policy shift across the region. These measures were adopted alongside legislation that increased mayors’ discretion over the distribution of social policy benefits and made anti-poverty benefits conditional on work requirements. These changes established the preconditions for the coercive use of the workfare program at elections.

Chapter 2 formulated two families of hypotheses about the factors that affect the cost–benefit calculations of candidates and brokers towards different non-programmatic strategies. Theories focused on the supply side of clientelism predict that the choice between clientelistic strategies that deploy public versus private resources should be affected by the relative availability of such policy resources in the locality. We predicted that access to the policy resources of the state should be more likely in localities where local political conditions provide candidates with control over the allocation of policy benefits.

On the other hand, we argued that different forms of clientelism send signals about candidates’ programmatic positions that can offset the electoral costs associated with clientelism. While clientelistic policies premised on positive policy inducements may signal pro-poor concern or a commitment to a further expansion of social programs, coercive clientelistic strategies allow candidates to signal their policy opposition to the current distribution of social policy benefits and support for retrenchment of existing programs. We have conjectured that the value derived by candidates from these coercive strategies is higher in localities where access to social policy benefits is a source of conflict. Social policy programs that offer highly valuable political resources to a narrow subgroup of policy beneficiaries are likely to engender conflict between those who are eligible for the benefits and those who are not. We refer to this conflict as pitting poor against poor voters. We conjecture that mayors will find non-programmatic strategies premised on coercion particularly attractive in localities where such conflict over the allocation of social policy benefits is high. In these conditions, coercive forms of clientelism are less likely to be punished by voters who are opposed to the current distribution of social policy because threatening to remove policy benefits from the “undeserving poor” is in line with their policy preferences.
In this chapter, we present three forms of evidence on electoral coercion that, taken together, illustrate how and where candidates use electoral strategies premised on welfare coercion when competing in low-income communities. First, we present qualitative evidence from interviews with candidates, brokers, and voters in forty communities in both Hungary and Romania that illustrates in rich detail how welfare coercion is carried out. Our qualitative research documents the variety of “micro-strategies” used by mayors during the pre-election period to create the potential for electoral coercion, and their efforts to incentivize individual voting behavior during elections. Second, we present evidence from a survey experiment showing that voters receive signals of candidates’ policy positions and personal characteristics from the forms of clientelism that they use. Finally, we use evidence from surveys with a total of 3,800 citizens that use list experiments to measure the prevalence of welfare coercion in 180 localities across Hungary and Romania during the parliamentary (Hungary) and presidential (Romania) elections held in 2014.

Altogether, the evidence presented in this chapter suggests that demand-side factors that shape the electoral costs of clientelism are an important predictor of where and how clientelism is used. We first document the use of clientelistic policies that are much more exploitative than assumed in the dominant political economy literature on clientelism. Consistent with the predictions of our signaling theory, voters with anti-workfare preferences are much less likely to perceive candidates who use coercion as having undesirable policy positions and personal characteristics. Finally, we find that the use of coercive strategies is higher in localities where a sizable political constituency opposing the current allocation of welfare benefits exists. In such communities the use of welfare coercion allows mayors to expropriate the votes of vulnerable voters, while getting away with the politicization of policy benefits by signaling to anti-workfare voters a willingness to use an authoritarian management style to reallocate social policy to the “deserving” poor.

5.1 Welfare Coercion in the Menu of Non-Programmatic Strategies

Beginning with research by René Lemarchand (1972) and James Scott (1972b), scholars have recognized the importance of coercion in clientelistic relationships. However, most scholars of clientelism have not differentiated between the use of positive and negative inducements to motivate voters. This is particularly true in the recent political economy literature on clientelism, which has focused heavily on vote-buying transactions that each party enters into willingly (Mares and Young 2016). Positive inducements, a category that includes vote buying, involves offers of rewards such as money, goods, or favors. Negative inducements include
the threat of economic or physical sanctions for an individual’s voting behavior. Such negative inducements include cutting voters off from benefits on which they depend, removing them from their land, or firing them from jobs that are their livelihoods.

As discussed in Chapter 2, coercive strategies differ from inducement-based strategies in fundamental ways. First, these strategies place voters in the domain of losses. In using coercion, brokers threaten to take away a good or a stream of income that voters expect to receive, and on which recipients depend for basic survival. In this way, coercive strategies worsen the baseline condition of a voter. In contrast to offers to buy a vote, coercive strategies are not transactions into which voters can enter freely. Therefore, strategies premised on coercion have more severe normative implications than illicit but consensual exchanges of positive inducements for votes.

More recent approaches to the study of clientelism downplay the importance of coercion in the menu of non-programmatic strategies. The theoretical justification for this omission provided by existing studies is that clientelistic exchanges can be understood as an infinitely repeated exchange between brokers and voters. Coercive strategies are the grim trigger strategy in this infinitely repeated game (Stokes 2005). The implication of such a conceptualization of clientelistic exchanges is that there is no need to study coercion as a separate strategy from the provision of positive inducements. In this framework, both machine operatives and weakly opposed voters find themselves in a Prisoner’s Dilemma, wherein one player’s defection triggers the brokers’ decision to cut the voter off from all future benefits.

But such results rest on two assumptions that can be reconsidered and should be relaxed. One assumption concerns the symmetry in the response of voters to positive inducements versus coercion. In the example discussed above, voters react in similar ways to gains and losses, as both gains and losses enter the utility of voters linearly. As we pointed out earlier, however, findings from behavioral economics suggest that the change in voter utility differs across the domain of gains and the domain of losses such that voters lose more utility from losses than they gain from commensurate gains. If brokers anticipate this asymmetric response, they may try to exploit this loss aversion.

Second, we must reconsider the assumption that the electoral costs incurred by candidates who engage in positive clientelistic inducements and coercion are symmetrical. A variety of studies suggest that politicians may incur differential costs for pursuing positive or negative strategies. One source of asymmetrical costs is voters’ normative beliefs. Using experimental survey-based methods, several studies have shown that voters punish more severely candidates who engage in coercive clientelistic strategies than those who engage in vote buying (Mares and Visconti 2016; Mares and Young 2016).

At the same time, differences across voters may condition the extent to which inducements and coercion are perceived as violating norms. In particular, voters’
economic or social characteristics, or their ideological predispositions, may condition the extent to which voters punish politicians who use inducements and coercion. In many communities, social assistance programs with particular target populations result in conflict between eligible and ineligible citizens. In these contexts, voters may punish candidates who offer highly desirable goods to a particular group if they anticipate that their own likelihood of accessing these goods is low. On the other hand, they may be less likely to punish politicians who threaten to retrench these benefits by cutting beneficiaries from these programs. Such considerations are important in explaining the relative costs politicians face in using social policy resources either as favors or as coercion. In short, candidates will have stronger incentives to rely on non-programmatic strategies premised on coercion in localities with large constituencies of voters who are ineligible for the workfare program.

5.2 Welfare Coercion in Contemporary Elections

James C. Scott noted that there is hardly any linguistic shortage when it comes to expressing the notion of exploitation (Scott 1990: 187). The same can be said about coercion. While welfare and economic coercion are pervasive non-programmatic strategies across the region, respondents use a wide range of terms to describe their experiences. During our first focus group, conducted in Focsani, a town in Vrancea county, Romania, we distributed blank pieces of paper and asked participants to write down various illicit strategies used by candidates at elections and to rank them according to their prevalence. The majority of respondents in this focus group ranked “psychological intimidation” as the most pervasive non-programmatic strategy they experienced. Other voters referred to coercive strategies such as intimidation, harassment, pressure, or subjugation.

Such diversity in language points to the wide heterogeneity in the types of coercive strategies used. We begin with a brief presentation of the variety of coercive strategies that involve state policy resources as part of the exchange between candidates, brokers, and voters. In Chapter 6, we turn to a discussion of strategies of economic coercion. In the case of this strategy, brokers are economic actors (such as landholders, employers, or moneylenders) who threaten voters with worsening the terms of the ongoing economic exchange if voters’ electoral behavior is undesirable. Our discussion draws on qualitative interviews with candidates, brokers, and voters conducted between May 2015 and October 2016 in Hungary and Romania. To protect the confidentiality of our respondents, we anonymize the names of the localities and of the respondents.

The modal form of welfare coercion consists of threats used by mayors and brokers operating on their behalf that access to policy benefits will be cut if voters do not support a particular candidate or if they decide to abstain. Let us consider
some examples that illustrate the use of this strategy. Simona is a 54-year-old woman of Roma origin living in VI., another locality in southeastern Romania. At the time of our interview, Simona received social assistance benefits from the city hall. The situation was different a few years ago. At the time, Simona recalls that both she and her husband came into conflict with the mayor after complaining about irregularities in the distribution of assistance benefits in the locality. The mayor retaliated by cutting their social assistance benefits. For Simona and her family, this was a hard lesson. After this event, she decided that the only solution for survival is “to do what the other Roma people in the locality are doing, show less resistance and ‘shut up’ in order to receive social assistance benefits. There are a few Roma people who have voted for Iohannis [the candidate for presidential election not supported by the mayor], but they have lost access to social policy benefits because of this.” She concludes that “there is nobody in the locality who can stand up to the mayor. He controls everything, the police and the priests” (VI., Interview 2, September 30, 2015).

In the same locality, we encountered Angela, a 74-year-old woman. Like many voters of her generation, Ana recalls the communist period with nostalgia. At that time, she worked for a few years in the mechanical station of the local agricultural cooperative. Similar employment opportunities, she considers, are no longer available. Ana considers that employees of the city hall notice voters like her only on the day of the election. Prior to the election, she recalls, employees of the city hall go through the locality threatening voters that they will be fined and that their benefits will be cut if they do not turn out to vote. “They take me in their car and bring me to vote, like this, despite my cardiac condition.” She recalls having voted in every single election and remembers that, on occasions when she was sick, someone from the city hall rounded her up in a car and brought her to vote. When asked whom she voted for, she replied, “I do not remember. I voted exactly as told by the persons from the city hall” (VI., Interview 1, September 30, 2015).

One way that mayors make coercion more socially acceptable and effective is by justifying it through claims of voters’ failure to adhere to program rules. This is important because, as survey evidence has shown, voters have strong normative preferences against coercive strategies (Mares and Visconti 2016; Mares and Young 2017). We call this form of coercion blackmail because it exploits misconduct by voters to incentivize specific behavior. Mayors implement electoral strategies based on blackmail in two steps. First, during the pre-electoral period, mayors create situations that permit the use of blackmail by engaging in forbearance, or decisions to forgo the enforcement of laws (Holland 2016). Such irregularities may include non-compliance with tax obligations, irregularities in accessing policy benefits, or other violations of the law, such as theft. In the case of workfare coercion, the most common type of forbearance is the non-enforcement of the requirement that recipients work. This forbearance increases the future vulnerability of voters who have committed some irregularity to blackmail.
Second, at election time, candidates and their brokers exploit the vulnerabilities that they have helped create. The use of blackmail involves threats to expose these irregularities and therefore end voters’ ability to engage in the illicit activity, and to oblige them to make repayments or face other punishments for previous offenses. Mayors or state employees remind voters that their past irregularities have been duly recorded and will be punished in future. One such example of blackmail we encountered during our fieldwork is the threat that voters who have avoided their fiscal obligations will owe their entire unpaid tax bill if they vote for an undesirable candidate (R., Interview 4, October 23, 2015). Another example of this strategy is the threat that future access to social policy benefits will be rescinded for voters who have committed irregularities in accessing them.

To illustrate the electoral use of blackmail, consider the example of SM., a locality in Teleorman county, Romania. At the time of our fieldwork, 500 people, or 16 percent of the locality’s population, received workfare benefits. This high number of workfare beneficiaries resulted from the decision of workfare officials to implement only very loosely the work requirements that were demanded by the Romanian workfare legislation. The Romanian workfare legislation (law 416) requires workfare beneficiaries to clean public spaces and help with the renovation of official buildings, such as the school or the kindergarten. The deputy mayor was responsible for monitoring the work performance of social assistance beneficiaries. One former employee of the municipality commented, however, that such verification of work was rare: “The deputy mayor usually gathers around sixty workfare employees in the morning for a project, checks their presence and lets them disappear on the way to work.” This respondent maintained that the decision to grant social assistance benefits without requiring work was a deliberate strategy of the mayor to increase the continuing dependence of workfare employees on the city hall: “It is a form of slavery, a way in which the city hall keeps these persons under control” (SM., Interview 15, April 9, 2015). During elections, the mayor of this locality exploited this vulnerability by reminding workfare employees of the irregularities they had committed in accessing policy benefits. Several respondents commented on the use of such a strategy and reported that the mayor campaigned “based on influence and fear” and that “social assistance beneficiaries are particularly fearful of the mayor” (SM., Interview 1, April 9, 2015).

5.2.1 Pre-electoral strategies

To deploy welfare coercion effectively, a mayor uses a variety of strategies during his mandate. Such strategies seek to deepen the sense of vulnerability of social policy beneficiaries and the belief in their complete dependence on the goodwill of the mayor. In the following, we discuss three such pre-electoral strategies. These
strategies seek to increase voters’ perceptions of the arbitrariness of the mayor, which is likely to facilitate submission and weaken political resistance.

Other strategies deepen the economic dependence of workfare recipients on mayors, which contributes to the formation of quasi-feudal relations of dependency. Finally, mayors pursue a variety of strategies that lay the groundwork for the electoral use of blackmail. Such strategies include tolerating or actively encouraging activities that violate legal provisions with the goal of blackmailing offenders at the time of the election.

5.2.1.1 Projecting external power

Coercive threats are more credible if voters believe that mayors have unlimited discretion over the allocation of workfare jobs and other employment opportunities in the locality. To establish and cultivate this perception, mayors find it advantageous to project an image of capriciousness, arbitrariness, and, often, ruthlessness. Following Scott, we refer to these pre-electoral strategies as efforts to “project external power” (Scott 1990). In Scott’s insightful analysis, coercion rests on the systematic personal humiliation of persons situated in a relationship of dependence (Scott 1990: 112). This weakens voters’ sense of self-efficacy and lowers their propensity to resist. Such systematic humiliation of voters in their everyday interactions with local officials is a common occurrence in many of the rural localities where we conducted our fieldwork.

One way that mayors project external power is by inflicting arbitrary acts of punishment on voters who come into contact with the local administration. Voters of I., in Borsod county, Hungary, refer to the mayor of the locality as tyrannical and arbitrary. One voter in this locality recalls having been dismissed from the public employment program with no prior justification (I., Interview 8, July 26, 2015). In this locality, we also witnessed a violent verbal exchange between the mayor and a workfare employee triggered by the mayors’ objection to an insignificant detail in the behavior of the workfare employees; this dispute resulted in the dismissal of this person from the workfare program (I., Interview 5, July 23, 2015). In SZ., in Heves county, Hungary, one retired voter recalls a similarly capricious decision of the mayor: “My wife had five days left before retiring from her job. The mayor called her telling her that she had to complete these remaining days of work. She requested to maintain her job as a cook at the community kitchen, but was instead sent to the potato fields and asked to work there for the remaining five days” (SZ., Interview 5, July 18, 2015). These arbitrary punishments create a perception that mayors have enormous personal power over voters.

Another component of these attempts to project external power is the verbal humiliation of welfare beneficiaries and other people who come into contact with the city hall. The use of abusive language by local politicians in Hungary has been the object of research by Hungarian sociologists in recent years (Zolnay 2012; Szombati 2016). In a recent study of local discrimination in northeastern
Hungarian localities, Janos Zolnay has shown that local politicians systematically use aggressive racist terms in referring to social policy beneficiaries (Zolnay 2012). Kristof Szombati’s study of right-wing political mobilization in rural Hungarian communities also documents the abusive racist language used by welfare officials during their day-to-day interactions with Roma voters (Szombati 2016).

Respondents whom we encountered in our own research also reported the use of abusive language by public authorities. One workfare employee in SZ., in Borsod county, Hungary, described interactions with authorities in the city hall as “repressive and humiliating” (SZ., Interview 1, July 16, 2015). The mayor of this locality addressed workfare employees using highly charged racist language. In I., a locality in northern Hungary, one respondent reported that the mayor systematically showed “verbal disrespect” to him and other workfare employees. Another respondent in this locality considered that the mayor intentionally humiliated all workfare employees who come into contact with the city hall (I., Interview 5, July 23, 2015). We witnessed one such scene of verbal humiliation of workfare employees during our fieldwork in this locality. At the time, one employee of the workfare program complained to the mayor about the “inhumane working conditions,” including the lack of water and the disrespectful attitude of the brigade leaders who were monitoring their work. He informed the mayor of his intention to report these abusive practices to labor authorities. The mayor responded dismissively to these accusations. He referred to workfare employees as “beggars for work,” and threatened to dismiss them from the workfare program.

5.2.1.2 Monopsony power

In several fieldwork sites, we encountered mayors employing workfare employees in economic enterprises or farms they own. These situations openly violate the provisions of social policy legislation, which makes lack of employment the precondition of access to social policy benefits, yet have significant advantages for mayors. On the one hand, mayors take advantage of significant opportunities for economic profit created by the workfare legislation. Workfare employees, whose wages are paid by tax revenues, are a reservoir of free labor. In addition to these economic gains, mayors also reap political benefits from illegally employing workfare employees: the outside options of workfare employees who enter this illegal employment relationship are significantly worsened. If such irregularity in employment is detected, these employees cannot reapply to the workfare program for two years. As such, a mayor’s decision to hire persons employed in the workfare program is part of a broader political strategy that seeks to worsen the outside options of workfare employees and increase their economic and political dependency on political authorities. These decisions create quasi-feudal relationships of dependency in these localities by reinforcing the perception that the mayor is the only local source of employment.
Consider several examples of this neo-feudal dependency. In VI., a locality in southern Romania, the mayor employed workfare employees on his farm. The mayor here is reported to have dismissed from the workfare program people who refused such offers of employment. In I., a town in Borsod County, Hungary, the family of the mayor owned a cucumber plantation that employed workfare employees from the locality. Workplace conditions on the farm were very harsh, and employees were required to work in very high temperatures and without water (I., Interview 6, July 26, 2015). One of our respondents in I., who is a Roma minority representative on the city council, considers that the mayor does not give employees in the workfare program the alternative to turn down an offer of employment on the farm. Rather, workfare employees consider work on the farm as an obligation to ensure continuing access to social policy benefits (I., Interview 7, July 26, 2015).

In N., a locality in Nograd county, Hungary, the mayor is the owner of a pheasant farm that employs many local workfare employees. One respondent in this locality considers that people who are employed on the pheasant farm are “trapped” due to their dependence on the mayor (N., Interview 1, July 15, 2015). This respondent argues that the economic dependence of these voters on the mayor also creates a political dependence: “People were told that they had to vote for the mayor because of their employment on the farm. If you work on the farm, you will not vote for anyone else because you are living off the mayor” (N., Interview 1, July 15, 2015). Another respondent in this locality restated the theme of dependency. He maintained that “workfare employees are likely to vote for the mayor because he pays them every day” (N., Interview 7, July 17, 2015).

5.2.1.3 Forbearance as the precondition of blackmail

The pre-electoral period is of special importance to mayors who seek to pursue clientelistic strategies premised on blackmail. These mayors turn a blind eye to a variety of illegal actions throughout their mandates. Possible violations of the provisions of the social policy legislation may include decisions to take up illegal employment or not to perform the work required for social assistance benefits. Other legal violations that are not prosecuted include minor theft or the non-payment of taxes. Mayors pursuing strategies premised on blackmail not only tolerate but often encourage these irregularities to exploit voters’ enhanced vulnerability during elections.

Mayors in several localities where we have conducted fieldwork chose to selectively ignore the eligibility rules of social assistance legislation. In R., a locality in Buzau County, Romania, employees of the city hall systematically turned a blind eye to people who maintained employment while claiming social policy benefits. According to the figures reported to us by officials of this municipality, 1,700 persons (or 35 percent of the population) benefit from the workfare program. However, many of these persons also maintain part-time employment
in other neighboring localities while drawing social assistance benefits. The result of a decision not to enforce the provisions of the social policy legislation creates a high number of “captive” workfare employees who are vulnerable to blackmail.

Another irregularity that some mayors choose to tolerate is the nonpayment of taxes. In R., the locality discussed above, local authorities turn a blind eye to the evasion of taxes owed to the municipality. Such noncompliance with fiscal obligations was higher among Roma families. According to employees of the municipality, only twenty-seven out of the 400 Roma families in this town paid water and electricity charges. At election time, city hall employees who operated as brokers were deployed to remind voters about their previous noncompliance with tax obligations. As one broker in this locality explains, “voters know that the current mayor has not asked them to pay their tax obligations in full.” The mayor thus uses the threat that the selection of his political opponent will result in the punishment of previous noncompliance and increase voters’ retrospective tax obligations. This broker contends that this strategy lowers the cost of electoral mobilization. He considers that “Voters in this locality are not very expensive because they understand the indirect payments that have been made on their behalf” (R., Interview 4, October 22, 2015).

A final strategy based on blackmail involves theft. In locality J., where several voters complained about the high rates of theft, the mayor told us that he kept detailed records of legal transgressions (J., Interview 1, September 17, 2015). In fact, this mayor had installed an expensive camera system to monitor and deter acts of theft. However, despite its high costs, the mayor rarely used the system to prosecute theft. In the eyes of a political candidate who had challenged the incumbent mayor, the cameras “have been established to blackmail people. If the people caught stealing vote correctly, they are forgiven. The mayor only checks up on acts of theft that matter for the vote” (J., Interview 6, September 15, 2015).

5.2.2 Electoral strategies

These pre-electoral strategies enhance opportunities for the use of workfare coercion or blackmail as electoral strategies. We now turn to a discussion of the electoral use of coercion. We examine the use of threats and coercion to incentivize voters to turn out and vote for a candidate as well as on post-electoral efforts to verify that voters did not support the “correct” candidate.

Workfare employees are an important constituency that can be mobilized during campaigns. Mayors often require workfare employees to participate in campaign events supporting their candidacy and condition their future access to workfare benefits on the participation in such events. To illustrate this strategy, consider events occurring in the most recent local election in VL., a locality in Vrancea County in Romania. The election was an extremely competitive contest:
the incumbent Socialist mayor faced challenges from two other candidates with roughly equal levels of electoral strength. An electoral event scheduled by the deputy mayor during the campaign brought in Marian Oprisan, a prominent national figure of the Social Democratic Party and one of Romania’s most powerful “regional barons.” To increase participation in this event, the mayor issued a “public invitation” to the meeting. The statement (Figure 5.1), invited all voters to this event, but included a special note warning that access to social assistance benefits would be cut for people who chose not to attend the meeting.

This publicly voiced threat backfired in this locality: the Socialist candidate for mayor lost the race. In our discussion with him, the outgoing mayor defended the deputy mayor’s decisions and contended that “the deputy mayor could have invited them to do other things, such as clean up the building of the city hall. He used, however, this unfortunate wording and those in the media used it against him” (VL., Interview 6, July 13, 2016). The candidate refused to comment on whether the coercive mobilization of workfare employees was an important factor contributing to his defeat.

However, the electoral use of welfare coercion often seeks to accomplish more than just participation in electoral events. Its main goal is to induce workfare employees to turn out and vote for the candidate who controls their future participation in the program. We find ample evidence of such welfare coercion in both Romania and Hungary. The mayor of HA., a town in Baranya County, Hungary, relied on the use of coercion during the parliamentary elections in April 2014 and the local elections in 2015. A former member of the city council of the locality recalled that during the 2014 parliamentary election, workfare employees

![Figure 5.1 Letter from a deputy-mayor threatening the loss of social assistance](http://www.justitiecurata.ro)
were called in by the mayor and threatened that they would lose access to workfare benefits if they did not support the Fidesz candidate. This respondent considered that as a result, “people who had only the income from social assistance knew how to vote. Campaigning is not only about what I can give you, but also what I can take away. This also makes campaigns cheaper” (HA., Interview 6, July 13, 2015).

Such threats are particularly effective in localities where the workfare program presents the only viable employment opportunity. This is the case for many communities where we conducted fieldwork and can be illustrated using the example of K., a locality in Heves County, Hungary. The locality can be accessed only with great difficulty on small roads. The main employer, a local agricultural collective enterprise, closed down nearly a decade ago. The only remaining employers are a water company, a local power station, and the local municipality. In this community, the workfare program offers the only viable source of new employment.

This lack of employment opportunities made it possible for the mayor of K. to use coercive threats to mobilize voters during elections. Before the 2014 local elections, the mayor convened around 200 workfare workers to a gathering publicized as a work-safety meeting (K., Interview 1, July 21, 2015). As one participant in the meeting recalled, “All persons who were present were informed that if they want to continue to hold on to their workfare job, they have to vote for the actual mayor” (K., Interview 1, July 21, 2015). Commenting on this mobilization strategy, the respondent noted that workfare workers acted as “multipliers.” “Communicating the threat to workfare employees was a very effective strategy, as they passed on the threat to their families, multiplying this support for the candidate of the mayor” (K., Interview 1, July 21, 2015). Another respondent also confirmed this account of workfare employees as multipliers. According to this respondent, “The mayor won with the support of employees in the municipality and of employees in the workfare program who were bringing people in” (K., Interview 2, July 21, 2015).

Another respondent in K., currently a city council member in the municipality, considered that such strategies premised on the inducement of fear were electorally effective. Workfare employees, this respondent argued, responded to threats not by rebelling, but by complying with the mayor. We probed further, by asking how the mayor knows who is on her side, given the secrecy of the vote. The respondent answered that the mayor could learn the voting intentions of voters because she “has established a spy system like Rakosi used to have. They are tracking who is talking to whom and where. Lots of people complained that they will not get a workfare job, and the mayor even made the comments that the ones who will not join the party line will not receive employment in the workfare program” (K., Interview 2, July 21, 2015).

We also found evidence of the use of welfare coercion in ND., a locality in Borsod county with a nominally independent mayor. As in many other communities located in this struggling economic region, the workfare program offers the
main opportunity for employment. One of our respondents described the importance of this program for the economic situation in this community: “If this public works program did not exist, then revolution would break out or food riots would happen” (ND., Interview 7, September 24, 2015). At the time of our research, only eighty people were employed in the workfare program, leaving a large portion of the demand for workfare jobs unmet. According to one informant who was employed in the local municipality, around 200 people were in need of employment in the workfare program. Due to their scarcity, workfare jobs were intensely desired. “People fight to access public workfare jobs,” this respondent stated (ND., Interview 1, September 21, 2015). This situation created an opportunity for the mayor to exploit the vulnerability of workfare employees by threatening that those who supported the opposition candidate would lose their employment in the program.

Several respondents in this locality commented on the use of welfare coercion during the 2014 local election. One respondent considered that “workfare employees supported the incumbent mayor out of fear of losing their jobs.” This respondent added that the mayor exploited the belief of workfare recipients that their current and future employment opportunities were entirely conditional on mayoral discretion (ND., Interview 2, September 21, 2015). One of our respondents in this community also competed during the 2014 local elections, but lost the race (ND., Interview 5, September 23, 2015). His discussion of the electoral strategies used by the incumbent mayor extensively details the use of welfare coercion. “The mayor,” this challenger argued, “did not compete on the basis of a clearly articulated platform. The main element of her campaign was to threaten workfare employees that they will lose their employment if they do not vote for her. She could influence voters because they are vulnerable” (ND., Interview 5, September 23, 2015). The mayor also threatened workfare employees that their employment in the program would be terminated if they signed any documents supporting the candidacy of her challenger. This challenger believed that these strategies played a decisive role in accounting for the victory of the mayor. “I think that people employed in the workfare program elected her. They voted for her in order to maintain their workfare job” (ND., Interview 5, September 23, 2015).

As we discussed above, a complementary coercive strategy involves blackmail. Electoral events in J., a locality in southern Romania, provide an illustration of the use of blackmail. Here, the mayor laid the foundations for the electoral use of blackmail by permitting blatant violations of social policy legislation, which could be then exploited. During the pre-electoral period, the mayor turned a blind eye to people who engaged in black market employment while also drawing access to social policy benefits. Many people in J. combined participation in the workfare program with temporary jobs in neighboring urban localities. At the same time, the mayor allowed workfare employees to draw their social assistance benefits without performing work for the community. As one respondent in this locality commented on the use of workfare employment, “there are 330 people who
receive social assistance benefits and need to perform work for the community. But only ten people perform this work every day. The rest of the beneficiaries receive money without working. However, at the time of the vote, these persons are reminded that they have not performed the work” (J., Interview 3, September 15, 2015). The mayor himself acknowledges that these decisions violate the provisions of the legislation, but regards these strategies as a necessary quid pro quo with voters in conditions of extreme poverty. He refers to such forbearance as a “way to reach our little agreements” (J., Interview 1, September 17, 2015).

This forbearance during the mayor’s mandate created opportunities for electoral blackmail during the election. One former opponent recalled that the mayor relied on fifteen to twenty people to mobilize voters during elections. Their mission, the challenger recalls, was “to make people afraid and to remind social assistance beneficiaries that they have access to the social benefits because of the mayor and that they would lose access if they didn’t vote as told” (J., Interview 3, September 15, 2015). Workfare beneficiaries were also reminded that they had received the benefits without working. The mayor also disapproved of workfare employees’ participation in the electoral events of opposition candidates. As his opponent recalls, “When I go campaigning and talk to people, they tell me that they cannot be seen talking to me. They tell me, you know, I will vote for you [lasa ca tot cu tine merg] but I don’t want them to see me with you. If they do so, they will cut my assistance benefits” (J., Interview 4, September 15, 2015).

Candidates combine threats of future employment losses with the electoral (and post-electoral) monitoring of workfare employees to ensure that they support the correct candidate. In several Romanian localities, candidates deployed brokers who attempted to “lock in” the promise of workfare employees, by making them swear on a Bible. The additional strategy sought to increase the perceived costs of defection from the initial promise to vote for a candidate. As one broker describes the strategy, “if you swear on the Bible and then you break your promise, you are dead” (P., Interview 6, September 15, 2015).

Brokers, often employees of the municipality, also use their presence at the voting place to gather information about voters’ preferences and voting intentions. One such broker, who was present at the polling station in this locality, recalls that he used to advise voters to “come and talk to him” when they are voting (MZ, Interview 4, August 21, 2015). But he admits that as president of the voting section, he used significant discretion to try to identify the vote choices made by individual voters. Sometimes, brokers seek to influence voters using harsher and sometimes brutal strategies. One voter we encountered in VI., Romania, recalls his voting experience during the 2016 local Romanian election as follows:

I was not able to put my ballot in the urn before leaving. He [referring to an employee in the municipality] put my ballot in his pocket then he showed it to the mayor. I know that I am finished and I have no future. (VI., Interview 10, September 29, 2016)
Such monitoring of voters at the time they cast their ballots is a much less frequent occurrence in Hungary, as compared to Romania. Nevertheless, we encountered cases in which candidates sought to pierce voting secrecy and observe individual votes. In HE., a locality in Borsod county, the mayor relied on his representatives at the polling station to monitor voters’ choices when they cast their ballot. The specific excuse used by these candidates was that these monitors would help voters who were illiterate make the correct political choice. One respondent in this locality commented on this pressure from the mayor: “If I refused the person accompanying me into the polling place and voted unattended, then my vote would not count” (HE., Interview 3, August 22, 2015). Another respondent countered this interpretation, arguing that such efforts also occurred with voters who were not illiterate and that these voters were urged to support the mayor (HE., Interview 7, August 24, 2015). In V., a locality in Baranya county, voters also reported that mayors used the pretext of “ballot complexity” to accompany voters inside the voting booth and “help” them cast the ballot (V., Interview 2, March 23, 2014).

Mayors also deploy city hall employees in the immediate aftermath of elections to collect additional information about voter’s choices. We asked a mayor in MZ., a locality in southern Romania, how he could ascertain whether voters that were granted favors throughout his administration had reciprocated, given the secrecy of the ballot. He answered, “We know and we also know those who betray us. They talk, we can hear. The boy who goes from house to house to collect taxes and other fees talks to them and asks them, Who is in the race for mayor? Will this mayor be re-elected? If they say he will not be re-elected, then one can be sure they will not vote for us.” His assistant concurred: “We know those who betray us very well” (MZ., Interview 1, August 21, 2015).

5.3 The Programmatic Signals of Welfare Coercion

In Chapter 2, we conjectured that different clientelistic strategies may vary in their costliness to candidates because they signal different programmatic policies to voters. Despite the fact that most voters dislike candidates who use clientelism, voters are much less likely to actually punish, or will even possibly reward, candidates for employing this tactic if it comprises a form of clientelism that signals programmatic priorities in line with their interests. In this section, we present the results of a survey experiment testing how different forms of clientelism affect the way that voters perceive the policy positions and general qualities of candidates. We test whether voters with anti-workfare preferences evaluate candidates who use coercion more positively, and those who use policy favors more harshly, than voters with pro-workfare preferences evaluate them.

In Section 2.3.3, we also distinguished between strong and weak versions of arguments about the informational signals of clientelism. The strong version of the information story posits that the informational signals sent by clientelism are
actually positive for some or all voters, and thus provide benefits on top of the material incentives offered in clientelistic exchanges. The weak version of the informational argument is that certain forms of clientelism may have smaller negative effects on how candidates are perceived than others, particularly with voters who have policy preferences that are aligned with a specific type of clientelism. In this section, we also adjudicate between the strong and weak informational arguments in these Eastern European cases.

We test our hypotheses about the policy signals of clientelism using survey experiments in which we randomly assign voters to candidate descriptions and ask them to assess those candidates on a number of dimensions. In this chapter, we present the results of comparisons of vignettes in which mayoral candidates perform favors involving social assistance for voters in exchange for their votes, to those in which the mayoral candidates do not engage in clientelism. The introduction to the scenarios describes the social assistance program and asks the respondent to imagine a locality that is “similar to your locality” with many low-income people, some of whom are Roma. In the control scenario, the mayor of that locality does not politicize access to the social assistance program. In the favor scenario, the mayor makes access to the social assistance program conditional on political support. In the coercion scenario, the mayor threatens to cut people from the workfare rolls if they do not vote for him. The full text of the three vignettes appears below.

**Introduction (everyone)**

I would now like to have a general discussion about the social assistance program. As you probably know, under the law guaranteeing minimum income, persons with low incomes can receive social assistance benefits. In exchange, they need to work for a number of hours in the interests of the community. Although they have low income, both the elderly and persons employed with formal contracts cannot benefit from the provisions of the law guaranteeing minimum income. Imagine now a place very similar to your locality. There are many low-income people living in this locality. Many of these people are Roma.

**Control Scenario**

Despite receiving a very large number of requests for social assistance benefits, the mayor of this locality decided to offer guaranteed minimum income benefits only to people who can prove that they meet the requirements of the law.

**Favor Scenario**

The mayor of this locality makes access to social assistance conditional on political support. He encourages people who want to get these benefits to vote for him in local elections and vote for his party in parliamentary elections.

**Coercion Scenario**

The mayor of this locality conditions access to social assistance benefits on political support. He has punished people who did not vote for him during the
local elections or who did not support his party during the parliamentary election, by cutting their access to social policy benefits and leaving them without any means of subsistence.

We tested our informational explanation with a total sample of over 500 Romanian respondents in ninety localities in the three counties of Giurgiu, Constanta, and Olt. Giurgiu and Olt border Teleorman county, one of the two counties where we collected the data for our locality-level tests, and have similar demographics.

We begin by examining how voters use the information in the different clientelistic scenarios to draw inferences about the different social policy positions of the respective candidates. In this section, we present an analysis of five different outcomes that relate to how a candidate would spend social policy resources. We aggregate individual survey questions into two indices that measure different dimensions of a candidate’s perceived welfare policy.

**Workfare Retrenchment Index**

- *Against Laziness*: Do you think that this mayor tries to limit the number of people living off state money to avoid paying people to be lazy?
- *Help Elderly*: Do you think this mayor reduces the number of persons receiving social assistance in order to help the elderly?

**Help Deserving Poor Index**

- *Help Poor*: Does this mayor help poor people?
- *Help Emergency*: Would this mayor help persons in your locality in cases of emergency?
- *Job for You*: How likely is it that this candidate would give a job to people like you?

The first two questions ask directly about reducing and limiting social assistance in order to allocate it to other groups. Voters who are opposed to the workfare program should prefer candidates who score high on the Workfare Retrenchment Index, while voters who favor the workfare program should prefer candidates who score low on this index.¹ The second three questions ask about generally helping deserving groups with social assistance. We expect that all voters—those who support and are opposed to the workfare program—should prefer candidates who score higher on this index. In these poor localities, most voters who support retrenchment of current social policy benefits are not voters who do not want any welfare, but rather voters who wish that social policy were reallocated to benefits members of the “deserving” poor like retirees and the unemployed. Thus, they prefer candidates who will give jobs to “people like you [the respondent],” will help in emergencies, and will help those who they believe are truly suffering from economic deprivation. Similarly, voters who favor the expansion of the workfare program should also prefer candidates who will give jobs to people like them, help in emergencies, and help the poor.
Table 5.1 presents the results of our evaluations of these hypotheses. For each of the two outcome indices, we present two different specifications: first, the effect of the clientelism scenarios interacted with the respondent’s anti-workfare preferences; and second, the interaction specification with a set of individual-level controls such as ethnicity, gender, and occupation. Because the continuous variables are standardized with a mean of zero, the main coefficient on the treatment variables can be interpreted as the effect of the treatments when the interaction term is at its average value.

Table 5.1 shows first that respondents perceive both candidates who offer clientelistic favors and those who threaten electoral sanctions lower on both policy dimensions. On average, candidates who offer clientelistic favors are perceived as
0.5 to 0.7 standard deviations lower in terms of how much they would prevent lazy people from accessing welfare, help the elderly, help the poor, and help people during emergencies. Those who threaten sanctions are perceived as 0.5 to 1 standard deviations lower on these policy traits. These across-the-board negative results are reflective of the normative attitudes that voters hold against clientelism, which appears to color their views of candidates along a wide range of dimensions.

Whether these perceived policy positions are good or bad for the candidates, however, depends on the policy preferences of the voters. For voters who favor workfare retrenchment, a higher score on the Workfare Retrenchment index should make a candidate more desirable, because she is perceived as more likely to implement policies in line with those voters’ preferences. For voters who support the workfare program, by contrast, candidates who score higher on the Workfare Retrenchment index should be less desirable. By contrast, we phrased the questions that go into the Help Deserving Poor index to capture policies that all voters should support, such as giving a job to “people like you,” helping people after emergencies, and helping the poor, a subjective and implicitly deserving group. Thus, for all voters, regardless of their position on the Anti-Workfare Ideology scale, candidates who score higher on the Help Deserving Poor index should be more desirable.

We find evidence that the negative effects of clientelism on perceptions of candidates are conditional on the policy preferences of the respondent. Respondents who disapprove of the current distribution of social policy benefits view candidates who use favors as much less likely to reform the workfare program—which should make candidates who use policy favors particularly undesirable for these voters. These anti-workfare voters also view candidates who use coercion as more likely to help the more deserving poor, relative to pro-workfare voters. For voters who are supportive of the workfare program, there is virtually no negative effect of policy favors on perceptions that the candidate will retrench the workfare program. By contrast, the negative effect of coercion is significantly larger than for anti-workfare voters.

Figure 5.2 shows that the marginal effects of the favors scenario depend on the strength of respondents’ anti-workfare attitudes. The black line shows the estimated marginal effect with 95 percent confidence intervals shaded in gray based on the specification presented in the third and sixth columns of Table 5.1. The black coefficients are estimates based on a three-category categorical version of the moderator. The histogram along the x-axis shows the distribution of the moderating variable.

As shown in the left panel of Figure 5.2, the favors scenario has the biggest negative effect on perceptions of the candidate’s welfare policy for people who hold strong anti-workfare preferences. For such respondents, a candidate who offers favors is particularly out of line with their policy preferences on this key distributional issue. For voters who are pro-workfare (more negative on the Anti-
Workfare Ideology scale), the negative effect of favors is much smaller and basically indistinguishable from zero. By contrast, the right panel of Figure 5.2 shows that the negative effect of the coercion scenario on perceptions of how much the candidate would help the “deserving poor” is significantly smaller for people who rank high on Anti-Workfare Ideology. Because we expect that all voters prefer a candidate who will provide jobs to voters like them and help people after emergencies, this heterogeneity implies that the negative effect of policy coercion is attenuated for anti-workfare voters.

Importantly, there do not appear to be any positive signaling benefits to candidates regardless of voters’ positions on the current social policy benefits. This result is also consistent with weak signaling explanations of clientelism. For most voters the effects of policy coercion and policy favors are decidedly negative. However, these results suggest that when candidates use a form of clientelism that is in line with a voter’s policy position, the voter no longer judges the candidate as being more out of line with her policy preferences because of the clientelistic exchange.

In Chapter 2, we have hypothesized that voters draw also inferences about the personal attributes of candidates who engage in clientelistic transactions. To examine these hypotheses, we consider the effects of the scenarios on perceptions of candidates’ general qualities. In this section, our dependent variables are four indices measuring different aspects of the personal qualities of politicians that might affect how they carry out their programmatic priorities. We examine, first,
an index of management quality; second, an index measuring how honest vs. corrupt the politician is; third, an index of personal characteristics measuring perceptions about the politician’s private behavior; and finally, a competitiveness index that measures voters’ perceptions of the likelihood of the candidate winning office. The indices are constructed using the following questions:

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**Management Index**

- **Good Manager**: How good a manager do you think this candidate is?
- **Law and Order**: How capable is this candidate of ensuring law and order in the locality?
- **Solve Problems**: Would this candidate be able to solve problems in town?

**Corruption Index**

- **Honest**: How honest do you think this candidate is?
- **Fight Corruption**: How much would this candidate fight against corruption?

**Personal Qualities Index**

- **Good Christian**: How good a Christian do you think this candidate is?
- **Family Man**: How good a family man do you think this candidate is?
- **Treats People Well**: How well do you think this candidate knows how to treat people?

**Competitiveness Index**

- **Win Others’ Vote**: How likely is it that he would have the votes of some people in the locality?
- **Win Election**: How likely is it that he would win the election?

The Management Index is based on three questions that ask about perceptions of the mayor’s ability to manage the locality, including his ability to generally ensure law and order and to solve local problems. The Corruption Index is based on two questions on respondents’ perceptions of how honest or corrupt the mayor would be in office. The Personal Qualities Index is based on three questions about the personal qualities, like whether the candidate is good by the standards of his religion or family. Finally, the Competitiveness Index is constructed from two questions that measure the expectation that the candidate will win the election. For all of these outcomes, if our theoretical predictions are correct, then we would expect that voters opposing the workfare program would judge mayors who use positive forms of clientelism more harshly on these policy characteristics, and those who use negative inducements less harshly.

The results, presented in Table 5.2, show again that candidates who use favors are perceived as less desirable along a range of positive characteristics relating to management practices and corruption. The effects are largest on the perceived corruption of the candidate, with magnitudes of around 1.1 standard deviations on the favors treatment and 1.25 standard deviations for the coercion scenario, and smallest on perceived competitiveness of the candidate.
Table 5.2 Anti-workfare ideology and the personal quality signals of policy favors and coercion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Management Index</th>
<th>Anti-Corruption Index</th>
<th>Personal Index</th>
<th>Competitiveness Index</th>
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<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clientelism: Policy favors</td>
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<td>-0.78***</td>
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<td>-1.02***</td>
<td>-1.29***</td>
<td>-1.28***</td>
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<td>Clientelism: Policy favors × Anti-Workfare Ideology</td>
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<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
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<td>-0.13</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Standard errors in parentheses.

Models are estimated using OLS. All outcomes are standardized. Favor Treatment is a dummy indicating that the respondent was randomly assigned to the vignette in which the mayor offered a policy favor; Coercion Treatment is a dummy indicating that the respondent was randomly assigned to the vignette in which the mayor threatened to take away policy benefits; the residual category is the vignette in which the mayor refrains from clientelistic offers or threats. Anti-Workfare Ideology is a standardized continuous measure of the respondent’s opposition to the existing state welfare programs. Individual controls include gender, age, income, ethnicity, education, and workfare eligibility.
For some of these outcomes, there is also evidence that the effects vary significantly across respondents with different social policy attitudes. The negative effects of coercion on perceptions of management quality are significantly smaller for respondents with anti-workfare preferences. Figure 5.3 shows that the marginal effect of the coercion scenario on perceptions of management quality is significantly smaller for respondents with anti-workfare preferences. These effects are also consistent across the three sub-indicators, as shown in Appendix C.

On the other hand, there is no significant interaction between either of the treatments and perceptions of corruption, personal qualities, and competitiveness. This suggests that even when respondents are ideologically aligned with the policy signals that a type of clientelism sends, they still perceive it as a form of corruption and that it reflects poorly on personal attributes of the candidate.

Finally, we analyze three outcomes that directly ask respondents to assess how they would vote if they were living in the locality described in the vignette. We caution that measuring propensity to vote for clientelistic candidates is difficult because of the strong potential for social desirability effects. Ultimately, we interpret these effects as indicative of what respondents think they should do rather than an accurate reflection of their behavior. Nevertheless, we include them because we are still interested in whether there is variation by ideology in how respondents think they should vote.

**Figure 5.3** The marginal effect of policy clientelism on perceptions of the management capacity of candidates at varying levels of anti-workfare ideology
We measure hypothetical voting behavior using questions that ask respondents to rate their propensity to vote in three different ways on a five-point likelihood scale:

**Electoral Punishment Index**

- **Win Your Vote:** How likely is it that you would vote for this mayor?
- **Abstain:** How likely is it that you would not vote at all?
- **Lose Your Vote:** How likely is it that you would vote for another candidate?

Table 5.3 presents the results of the analysis of these voting propensity outcomes. We test this hypothesis using an index of self-reported propensity to punish the candidate at the ballot box where higher values indicate less likely to win the respondent’s vote, more likely to abstain, and more likely to lose the respondent’s vote.

**Table 5.3** Anti-Workfare Ideology and Propensity to Punish Candidates Who use Policy Favors and Coercion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electoral Punishment Index</td>
<td>0.74***</td>
<td>0.72***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clientelism: Policy favors</td>
<td>0.80***</td>
<td>0.77***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clientelism: Policy coercion</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clientelism: Policy favors × Anti-Workfare Ideology</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clientelism: Policy coercion × Anti-Workfare Ideology</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Workfare Ideology</td>
<td>-0.50***</td>
<td>-0.60***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Observations | 457 | 433 |
| R² | 0.27 | 0.26 |

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Standard errors in parentheses.

Models are estimated using OLS. All outcomes are standardized. Favor Treatment is a dummy indicating that the respondent was randomly assigned to the vignette in which the mayor offered a policy favor; Coercion Treatment is a dummy indicating that the respondent was randomly assigned to the vignette in which the mayor threatened to take away policy benefits; the residual category is the vignette in which the mayor refrains from clientelistic offers or threats. Anti-Workfare Ideology is a standardized continuous measure of the respondent’s opposition to the existing state welfare programs. Individual controls include gender, age, income, ethnicity, education, and workfare eligibility.
The results in Table 5.3 show first that respondents report being much less likely to vote for candidates who use clientelistic favors and coercion. To put this into real terms, while almost 60 percent of respondents in the control scenario say that it is very likely or sure that they would vote for the incumbent, just 10 percent fall into this category in the favors condition and 7 percent in the coercion condition.¹

Taken together with other pieces of evidence, these results suggest that the potential for electoral punishment may be a serious consideration for candidates considering whether or not to use policy clientelism. The magnitude of these effects should be interpreted with some caution given that social desirability bias might lead respondents to say that they would punish corrupt candidates even if they would not in a real election. However, we find similarly negative electoral effects on policy favors in the conjoint design presented in Chapter 4, and on perceptions of how other citizens will vote in Columns 7 and 8 of Table 5.2. Taken together, these results suggest that the use of policy in clientelistic transactions carries significant electoral costs for candidates with many voters. If these electoral costs are high enough, they may be a more important consideration for candidates than variation in the availability of clientelism resources.

Second, counter to our findings on perceptions of candidates’ policy positions, there is little evidence that revealing hypothetical voting support for clientelistic candidates is conditioned by ideology. Respondents with social policy preferences that are supportive of the workfare program are no more or less likely to say that they would vote for candidates who use favors than those with attitudes opposed to the programs. Respondents opposing the workfare program are no different in their propensity to punish candidates who use coercion. We suggest two ways of interpreting the fact that these voting outcomes are not conditioned by ideology in light of the differential results on attitudes. First, it is possible that although clientelism has differential results on perceptions of candidates, the dimensions that they affect are not important factors in voters’ decisions of whether or not to support a candidate. For instance, anti-workfare voters may perceive mayors who use clientelistic favors as much less likely to scale back the workfare program, but they may nonetheless decide not to vote for those candidates because the workfare program is less important to them than the general level of corruption that the candidate engages in. We find this unlikely in this case given the importance of the workfare program in the economies of the localities in our study.

The second possible interpretation is that there are differential effects on voting behavior, but that these are masked in this analysis by very strong social desirability effects. In other words, while there is no variation in what respondents think they should do when confronted with a clientelistic candidate, there may still be variation in what they would actually do in a real election. This interpretation is bolstered by the fact that we find differential propensity to punish candidates who offer policy favors in the conjoint experiment presented in
Chapter 4. In the conjoint design, which provides a more realistic choice to respondents by presenting two candidates who differ on multiple dimensions, we found that voters who make less than 1,500 RON were no less likely to vote for candidates who offer policy favors.

In this section, we have tested whether different forms of clientelism not only provide material inducements to voters who are directly targeted, but also signal candidate’s positions on a range of important programmatic policies and personal characteristics to voters who observe the clientelistic transaction. In this experiment, voters evaluate candidates who use clientelism more negatively across a range of important characteristics, with coercion generally causing even more negative effects than favors. However, some of these negative effects are conditioned by voters’ social policy preferences. While voters across the board view candidates who use clientelism as more corrupt, less ethical in their personal life, and less competitive, the effect of policy clientelism on perceptions of the candidates’ position on social policy, propensity to help the deserving poor, and management capacity are conditioned by the voters’ social policy preferences. For these important outcomes, voters with social policy preferences that are aligned with the form of clientelism that the candidate uses do not view the candidates who use clientelism less favorably. If these evaluations are important to voters, these results suggest that politicians may be able to reduce the electoral costs of clientelism by using forms that are aligned with voters’ social policy preferences.

Additional qualitative evidence corroborates these findings by demonstrating how voters’ views about which low income residents deserve help from the state influence how critical they are of candidates who use policy coercion. In I., a locality in Borsod county, the mayor engaged in repression and public humiliation of workfare employees. Yet elderly voters who were opposed to the workfare programs were less likely to sanction him for using these strategies. A 60-year-old respondent who also served as member of the city council in the locality did not object to such strategies, considering that “workfare recipients are neither reliable nor responsible” (I., Interview 2, July 22, 2015). In VI., a locality in southern Romania, elderly respondents also approved of mayors’ coercive strategies. Here, one respondent considered that “receiving social assistance benefits by the state is not a good situation; young people wait for social assistance benefits rather than working.” This voter did not disapprove of the abusive and disrespectful attitude of the mayor in his interaction with the workfare employees: “The mayor is a good man,” this respondent considered, and “it is good, from time to time, to teach a lesson to the social assistance beneficiaries (asistatii sociali)” (VI., Interview 4, July 30, 2015). These respondents, critical of the current social policy distribution because it excluded groups like the elderly whom they viewed as more deserving of state support, illustrate how voters who oppose the workfare program can excuse mayors who personalize and politicize access to it because they view its beneficiaries as undeserving.
The results presented here suggest that these heterogeneous effects are important for perceptions of candidates’ policy positions and management style, but not for their personal characteristics or electoral viability. These results are logical, as the manipulation of policy benefits is a very direct signal of how a candidate will administer social policy. They suggest that voters with anti-workfare preferences know that policy coercion is unethical and thus are equally likely to interpret it as a signal that the candidate is more corrupt and less ethical in his personal life. Nevertheless, they are not critical of the management style of coercive candidates, their commitment to helping the deserving poor, or their propensity to reallocate welfare priorities. In other words, voters process the informational signals of clientelism in a sophisticated and nuanced manner. In addition, the material incentives of clientelistic transactions are tightly integrated with voters’ evaluations of the policy positions of candidates.

If welfare policy positions and management abilities are important factors in actual vote choice, these heterogeneous effects suggest that the costs of clientelism for candidates should vary depending on the ideological makeup of the voters in their districts. In places with large populations of voters who are dissatisfied with the current social policy distribution, candidates who use welfare favors will be perceived much less favorably than those who do not. By contrast, in this type of locality, the costs of using welfare coercion in terms of programmatic perceptions are relatively small. In the following section we test whether these individual-level findings scale up into meaningful variation across localities in the use of welfare coercion.

5.4 Variation across Localities in the Use of Welfare Coercion

Does the use of welfare coercion vary systematically across localities? If so, what are the main factors that explain this variation? We turn to the analysis of these questions next. In the theory section we argued that explanations for the incidence of clientelism at the local level can be separated into theories focused on the supply of clientelism, and those focused on the electoral costs. In this section we analyze the extent to which locality-level conditions associated with both of these explanations are associated with variation in the incidence of policy favors across localities.

5.4.1 Research design

We measure the incidence of coercive strategies in different localities by using the results of post-electoral surveys fielded in both Hungary and Romania in the
aftermath of recent elections. For Hungary, we report the result of the survey fielded in May 2014, which sought to measure a variety of illicit strategies deployed during the parliamentary election held during the previous month. For Romania, we report the results of a survey fielded in December 2014, which attempted to measure the incidence of this non-programmatic strategy during the presidential election held in November 2014. The Hungarian survey was fielded in a sample of over ninety communities located in three provinces with a higher-than-average vote share of Roma voters. These provinces are Heves, Borsod, and Baranya. The Romanian survey was fielded in seventy communities located in Teleorman and Buzau, two counties located in eastern and southeastern Romania. We refer the reader to Chapter 3 and Appendix B for additional details about the fielding of the survey.

In both countries, we sought to estimate the incidence of welfare coercion using questions with similar wording. The questions measuring the incidence of welfare coercion included in our survey were embedded in the following lists.

**Hungary**

I am going to read some statements of events that happened or could have happened during elections. Please recall the elections of 6 April, 2014, and tell me how many of these events happened in your locality. You do not need to tell which ones happened exactly, only how many.

- Several candidates visited our locality.
- One of the candidates promised to protect animal rights.
- None of the candidates visited our locality.
- *(Sensitive item)* I was worried that a family member would lose employment in the public works program if I voted for the wrong candidate.

**Romania**

I will read you a number of statements that refer to the recent presidential elections held in November 2014. For each of these statements, I would like you to tell me how many of these events happened here, in this community. You do not need to tell me which of these happened, but only how many.

- I waited in line in order to vote.
- When I went to vote, I saw several persons who were drunk.
- In our locality, the campaign unfolded without any incidents of violence.
- *(Sensitive item)* I was afraid to lose social assistance benefits from the city hall, if I voted for the wrong candidate.

The implementation of our survey was successful. In Appendices A1–A3 we present summary statistics about the distribution of different respondents across the versions of the questionnaires in the surveys administered in Hungary and Romania, respectively. We do not find any statistically significant differences in observable characteristics of respondents across the two versions of the questionnaire.
Table 5.4 presents the results of our surveys estimating the incidence of welfare coercion in our sample. The third column ("Control Mean") presents the average responses to the version of the questionnaire that includes only the control items, while the fourth column ("Treatment Mean") presents the average responses to the version of the questionnaire that includes the sensitive question. By subtracting the mean number of items of respondents who received the treatment version of the questionnaire from the mean items of respondents who received the control version of the questionnaire, we obtain the list experiment estimate of the incidence of the particular electoral irregularity measured in the survey.

The survey allows us to document the incidence of clientelistic strategies premised on welfare coercion in both countries. In Hungary, we estimate that around 6 percent of voters in our survey area have experienced the threat of losing access to the workfare program if they do not support the mayor’s preferred candidate. In Romania, the number of voters who have experienced this strategy is significantly higher at 11 percent.

Figure 5.4 presents the geographic distribution of welfare coercion in the five counties in Hungary and Romania that are included in the analysis. Dots on the map represent localities in which we conducted our survey. Each dot on the map represents a locality where we conducted our survey and is based on twenty individual survey responses in the case of Hungary, or on an average of seventeen individual survey responses in the case of Romania. Darker dots indicate higher estimated incidences of welfare coercion. We have added a small amount of random noise (or "jittered") the locality coordinates in order to prevent identification.

Figure 5.4 shows that, although there are some visible trends across counties in the incidence of welfare coercion, the strategy does not appear to be geographically concentrated. We discuss a number of tests of the validity of our survey design in Chapter 2 and Appendix B. As shown in Appendix B, there are no signs that randomization was carried out incorrectly in tests of balance across treatment assignments for the lists. We also use the Blair and Imai (2012) method to test for design effects, or evidence that responses to the control items on the list change systematically when the sensitive item is present. There is no evidence that the lists are biased by design effects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Control Mean</th>
<th>Treatment Mean</th>
<th>Estimated Incidence</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>1,819</td>
<td>1.02 (1.01, 1.03)</td>
<td>1.08 (1.06, 1.1)</td>
<td>5.8% (2.3%, 9.3%)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>1,495</td>
<td>1.15 (1.12, 1.18)</td>
<td>1.27 (1.24, 1.3)</td>
<td>11.5% (6%, 17%)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
POLICY COERCION: SOCIAL CONFLICT AND CONTROL

(a) Hungary: Baranya County

(b) Hungary: BAZ County

(c) Hungary: Heves County

(d) Romania: Buzau County

(e) Romania: Teleorman County

Figure 5.4 Geographic distribution of policy coercion
We are now ready to examine the correlates of the variation in the use of these coercive strategies across municipalities and across individuals. As discussed in Chapter 3, we take advantage of the nested nature of our data and use a multilevel model to estimate the effect of both locality- and individual-level characteristics on the incidence of welfare coercion (Gelman and Hill 2007). We refer the reader to Section 4.5 of Chapter 4 for a presentation of the equation used to estimate these models.

5.4.2 Results

In Chapter 2 we conjectured that incidence of state coercion was more likely in localities where local political control enables the use of clientelism, and where local social conditions create conflict over welfare resources. Specifically, first we predicted that state coercion should be higher when local political institutions are more tightly controlled by local elites through incumbency, co-partisanship with the executive, and a unified city hall.

Our second prediction is that the incidence of state coercion should be higher in localities characterized by high levels of polarization and intense distributional conflicts over the allocation of employment or workfare benefits. In such localities, the use of coercion allows candidates to capture the votes of low-income voters, while also signaling “toughness” and disrespect for the rights of those being coerced. In communities characterized by intense distributional conflicts, candidates who use coercive strategies expect to incur very low electoral costs from right-leaning voters. While this prediction also applies to forms of coercion involving non-state actors (which we call “economic coercion”), the effects may be particularly strong with state coercion because it is even more obviously linked to welfare conflict.

To test this hypothesis we use measures of local distributional conflict based on demographic conditions. Given that the distribution of workfare benefits is the most significant divisive issue, we operationalize the coalition favoring policy retrenchment (RETRENCHMENT COALITION) to include both employed and low-income retirees. By contrast, the coalition favoring the expansion of the workfare programs (EXPANSION COALITION) is likely to include the unemployed and Roma voters. The signaling argument presented in Chapter 2 generates two hypotheses about the correlation between these coalitions and the use of coercive strategies. First, we expect that the use of coercive strategies will be higher in localities with a larger political coalition favoring retrenchment. Second, we predict that the incidence of state coercion is likely to be higher in localities with by higher incidence of social conflict. We measure the likelihood of social conflict using the interaction of the size of the two electoral coalitions. The interaction takes higher values in cases when both electoral coalitions are high.
We expect to find a positive relationship between this measure and the incidence of coercion.

Table 5.5 presents the results of our analysis of the variation in the incidence of welfare coercion across Hungarian and Romanian municipalities. We estimate three different models with each sample. The first model examines the relationship between the locality-level variables of interest and the incidence of welfare coercion. The second model adds two additional locality-level controls, and the third includes individual-level controls. These covariates include variables that measure the gender, age, and ethnicity of the respondent, and in the case of Romania, the respondent’s education. Columns 1 through 3 present the results for Hungary, and 4 through 6 for Romania. In all specifications, the continuous variables are standardized for ease of interpretation.

We first discuss the relationship between the variables that we hypothesized would increase the ability of local actors to influence voters by politicizing state resources. First, we hypothesized that the index of local political control would be positively related to state-based forms of clientelism including welfare coercion. Table 5.5 shows little support for that hypothesis in both the Hungarian and Romanian cases. Figure 5.5 breaks down the Local Control index into its sub-indicators using the specification in columns 2 and 5 of Table 5.5. When looking at these disaggregated results, we find some evidence that incumbency is associated with welfare coercion in Romania. The coefficients on co-partisanship with the national executive are consistently positive but statistically indistinguishable from zero, and the coefficients on united local government (having the same party in control of a plurality of the city council and the mayor’s office) are very close to zero. Taken together, the disaggregated results also suggest that local political control has little effect on state coercion.

On the other hand, we find some support that poor local economic conditions are associated with higher state coercion, at least in the Hungarian case. Localities in Hungary that are one standard deviation higher in the proportion of their residents who have some kind of debt are almost four percentage points higher in their incidence of welfare coercion. The proportion of residents below the poverty line in Hungary is also associated with higher welfare coercion, although this relationship is not statistically significant. There is little evidence that poor economic conditions are associated with higher welfare coercion in Romania.

Next we turn to the variables that we predicted would weaken the public’s propensity to punish candidates and mayors for engaging in coercive clientelistic strategies. Here we find that the size of the Retrenchment Coalition, composed of the retired and employed population, is positively and significantly associated with the incidence of welfare coercion in both cases. In both cases, a one-standard-deviation increase in the size of the Retrenchment Coalition is associated with an increase in the incidence of welfare coercion of seven to nine percentage points.
Table 5.5 Correlates of Policy Coercion in Hungary and Romania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
<th>(6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>0.07**</td>
<td>0.07**</td>
<td>0.07*</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.09*</td>
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<td>(0.03)</td>
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<td>(Expansion)</td>
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<td>Debt Rate</td>
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<td>1,440</td>
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<td>2,487.35</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Hungary Romania

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Standard errors in parentheses.

Models are estimated using a multilevel model with intercepts varying by locality. The coefficients shown are from interactions with the list treatment indicator. Local Control is an additive index of indicators that take a value of 1 if the locality has a mayor who is an incumbent, a co-partisan with the national executive, or from the same party as the plurality in the city council. Retrenchment Coalition is the average of the standardized proportions of the anti-workfare constituency: the employed and retires. Expansion Coalition is the average of the standardized proportions of the pro-workfare constituency: the unemployed and Roma. Retrenchment X Expansion is the interaction of the pro- and anti-workfare constituencies. Poverty Rate is the proportion of inhabitants who are below the poverty line. Debt Rate is the proportion of survey respondents by locality who reported being in debt. Mayor Margin is the margin of victory of the mayor. Population is the population size. Roma, Female, Age, Employed, Unemployed, Retired, Debt, and Poor are individual-level variables coded from our surveys. All but Age and Poor are binary. All continuous variables are standardized.
Interestingly, there is no significant relationship between the size of the Expansion Coalition and Retrenchment Coalition, our proxy for social conflict over welfare benefits. This may be because welfare benefits are so politicized that even in areas with relatively small unemployed and Roma populations, welfare coercion is not punished by members of the Retrenchment Coalition such as retirees or the employed. Figure 5.6 plots the marginal effect of a one standard deviation increase in the size of the Retrenchment Coalition at varying sizes of the Expansion Coalition.

Figure 5.6 visualizes the results of the coefficients on social conflict presented in Table 5.5. The figure on the left presents the marginal effect in Hungary, and that on the right in Romania. The light gray area represents 95 percent confidence intervals for the linear estimate, while the black dots are the estimated marginal effects of the Retrenchment Coalition when the Expansion Coalition is analyzed as a five-category variable. The grey histogram on the x-axis shows the distribution of the moderating variable. The Hungary plot shows that at almost all levels of the Expansion Coalition, an increase in the size of the Retrenchment Coalition is associated with a higher use of welfare coercion. The effect does get larger as the size of the Expansion Coalition increases, but as Table 5.5 shows this interaction is not statistically significant. In the Romanian case, the marginal effect of the Retrenchment Coalition is positive at most values of the Expansion Coalition and there is no apparent interaction effect between the sizes of the two coalitions.

5.5 Conclusion

Drawing on qualitative interviews with voters, candidates, and brokers in rural communities and on the analysis of new survey data, this chapter has documented
the existence of non-programmatic electoral strategies premised on coercion. We have illustrated a variety of pre-electoral and electoral strategies that allow candidates and their brokers to use social policy benefits to engage in coercion and blackmail at elections.

We also presented two levels of quantitative tests of our hypotheses in this chapter. First, we tested the micro-foundations of our argument that different forms of clientelism send programmatic signals to voters. We found strong evidence that voters are staunchly opposed to candidates who use policy resources in clientelistic transactions, and view them as less desirable on a range of personal and policy dimensions. The large negative effect of policy clientelism on our respondents’ voting intentions suggests that the electoral costs of clientelism may be a significant consideration for candidates seeking to win elections. In addition, we found that these electoral costs might vary across voters. Specifically, voters with anti-workfare preferences view coercive candidates more permissively on some policy and personal qualities, and these same voters view candidates who offer favors more harshly. These programmatic signals affect the extent to which voters expect candidates to effectively represent their interests once in office, particularly on the key local policy issue of the workfare program.

Figure 5.6 The marginal effects of a one standard-deviation increase in the Retrenchment Coalition at varying levels of the Expansion Coalition on Policy Coercion
Finally, we tested the extent to which locality-level characteristics, including the size of demographic groups that hold pro- and anti-workfare preferences, relate to the incidence of welfare coercion at the locality level in both Hungary and Romania. As in Chapter 4, we found little support for theories based on the availability of resources to engage in clientelism. Indicators of local political control are largely unrelated to the incidence of policy coercion. We do find, however, that electoral strategies premised on welfare coercion occur in localities with residents who are opposed to the current welfare distribution and therefore less likely to judge candidates who use policy coercion harshly. This is in stark contrast to the results in Chapter 4, where we find that candidates and their brokers in Hungary are more likely to offer policy favors when demographic conditions reduce social conflict between groups of poor voters. These results lend support to the proposition that clientelistic strategies premised on positive versus negative inducements are driven by different political logics. These logics, in turn, seem to be shaped more by the propensities of voters to negatively update their beliefs about candidates who use various forms of clientelism than the availability of resources that can be used in clientelistic transactions.

These results provide important insight into how clientelism persists, despite its apparent unpopularity with most voters. Our results show that although most voters judge clientelistic candidates harshly, in localities where there is conflict over policy resources, those who are unhappy with the current distribution of social policy benefits are willing to overlook even a strategy as noxious as welfare coercion if they interpret it as a signal that a candidate will act in their interests once in office. As a result, welfare coercion can be used without strong electoral sanctions in localities where demographic conditions create social conflict over social policy spending between the “working” and “nonworking” poor.

Note

1. The substantive interpretations of the other voting outcomes are similar. In the control condition only 11 percent of respondents say they would be very likely or sure to abstain and 24 percent very likely or sure to vote for a different candidate compared to 23 percent and 66 percent in the favors condition.