

Paula Muñoz, *Buying Audiences: Clientelism and Electoral Campaigns when Parties Are Weak*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Figures, tables, appendixes, bibliography, index, 314 pp.; hardcover \$105, ebook \$84.

This book is a gem. Since Stokes's 2005 seminal article, a significant number of contributions have vastly improved our knowledge about how and when clientelism works. As a result, it is hard to find new arguments about the topic. Muñoz's book shows that there is still room for writing an original theory that enables us to understand why and how clientelism works in contexts of weak parties.

Whereas most studies in the region focus on cases with well-established party machines, such as the Peronist party in Argentina, the PRI in Mexico, and the PT in Brazil, Muñoz's book studies clientelism in Peru. Using a deviant case, Muñoz explains why clientelism persists "even though parties had remained inchoate since their collapse twenty years ago" and "political brokers lack long-term party affiliations" (4). Studying clientelism in Peru, Muñoz seeks to extend existing findings and provide a more full-fledged theory of clientelism without organized parties.

*Buying Audiences* seeks to solve an interesting puzzle: why do we observe clientelistic mobilization in the absence of party machines? Existing explanations of electoral clientelism assume the presence of party machines. Clientelistic parties employ armies of brokers who know to whom to distribute resources (core or swing voters), who can mobilize them to attend rallies and elections, and who can monitor voters' responses. Early studies of clientelism assume that to be effective, clientelistic strategies require brokers to mobilize and monitor poor voters' participation. Recent works have begun questioning the need for both brokers and monitoring.

Studying clientelism in Kenya, Kramon (2016) shows a case in which clientelism works without brokers or machines, and others have begun focusing on persuasion—questioning the idea that brokers only monitor voters (see, e.g., Finan and Schechter 2012; Lawson and Greene 2014). Muñoz's book builds on these findings to provide an "informational theory" that explains the persistence of clientelism in unorganized settings.

The book proposes "an informational theory of electoral clientelism" that focuses on the "information that strategic actors use to form their preferences and make electoral decisions. By informing various types of observers about candidates' relative electoral viability and desirability, electoral clientelism indirectly affects electoral preferences and the outcome of elections" (33). "Electoral clientelism, thus, affects vote choices through two mechanisms. First, clientelism during campaigns is crucial to establish candidates' electoral viability. . . . Second, candidates can use electoral clientelism to persuade voters while campaigning" (6). Muñoz's theory provokes us to think about the indirect effects of electoral clientelism. One of the argument's most compelling logical notions is to reframe our way of thinking about clientelism: instead of thinking that candidates use clientelism because they have a machine, Muñoz claims just the opposite: candidates use clientelism because they do not have one. Studying electoral clientelism in contexts where political machines

are absent is interesting in itself, but it is even more critical if we consider the region's trend of party deinstitutionalization.

The author tests the theory using a mixed-method strategy. Focusing on Peruvian elections (2010–11), Muñoz amasses an impressive amount of original data and combines quantitative (nationally representative) surveys, experimental (survey experiments), and qualitative (field research on campaigns, focus groups, interviews, and participant observation) sources to test her arguments. The combination of methods and the knowledge of the case makes this book an excellent example of contextually based, solid empirical work. It provides readers and students of comparative politics an outstanding example of how to employ mixed-method research strategies. The book is also very clear about its scope conditions (discussing them explicitly on pages 225–32). Like most theories of clientelism, the informational theory requires distribution of handouts, poor voters, and low state capacity. Still, what distinguishes Muñoz's argument from existing ones is a context of weakly organized political parties.

My only qualm with the book is with the idea that “once politicians buy poor voters' participation, they can try to persuade the audience about their desirability in three complementary ways: promising local public goods, conveying personal traits, and generating a positive buzz that will outlast the event” (44). While the book uses many quotations from interviews to show how voters shape their perceptions about candidates' credibility after meeting them at a rally, it is unclear to me that credibility is tied to “shaking hands” or “making a good joke” at a rally. The author assumes that rallies enable voters to “know” and “gather information” about candidates' traits, but it is unclear what effects this information has on voters' electoral decisions. For Muñoz, “personal interactions with candidates allow poor voters to devise mechanisms to assess candidate credibility and help ensure they deliver on their promises” (208). On this point, I think the author oversells the effect of party rallies on assessing candidates' credibility, as well as on holding them accountable for their campaign promises.

*Buying Audiences* is a significant contribution to studies of distributive politics in the Global South. It is an obligatory read for students of clientelism, distributive politics, and political parties in Latin America, and it is a must-read for those interested in Peruvian politics. The book also provides a terrific example of how mixed-method research on a single case study can lead to meaningful theoretical and empirical contributions.

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