

UC Riverside

UC Riverside Previously Published Works

Title

Trust in elections, vote buying, and turnout in Latin America

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1xr1j5mg>

Journal

Electoral Studies, 32(4)

Authors

Carreras, Miguel
Irepoglu, Yasemin

Publication Date

2013-12-01

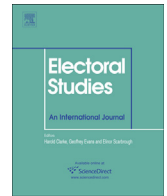
Peer reviewed



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Electoral Studies

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/electstud

Trust in elections, vote buying, and turnout in Latin America



Miguel Carreras, Yasemin İrepoğlu*

University of Pittsburgh, Department of Political Science, 4600 Wesley W. Posvar Hall, Pittsburgh, PA 15260, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 9 July 2013

Accepted 10 July 2013

Keywords:

Trust in elections

Electoral integrity

Turnout

Vote buying

Latin America

ABSTRACT

Although national elections in Latin America are now described as reasonably free and fair by international observations teams, electoral processes are still affected by a series of malpractices (unequal access to the media and public resources, registration problems, vote buying). These irregularities negatively affect citizens' trust in elections. In this paper, we analyze the consequences of low trust in elections and exposure to vote buying practices on electoral participation in Latin America. Using data from the 2010 wave of LAPOP surveys, we find that perceiving that the election is unfair reduces the willingness to participate in national elections, but receiving material incentives during the campaign has the opposite effect of increasing electoral participation. We also show that the effect of trust in elections on turnout is larger in countries where voting is not mandatory.

© 2013 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Over the last thirty years, electoral processes in Latin America have become significantly cleaner. Outright electoral manipulation is rare, and Latin American countries have adopted a series of reforms to ensure free and fair elections (Donno and Roussias, 2012; Foweraker and Krznaric, 2002). However, serious irregularities still affect electoral processes in the region, such as the lack of clear and enforceable electoral rules, registration problems, unequal access to the media, and vote buying. The perception of these irregularities is amplified by a freer media, and by political losers who want to divert attention from their own responsibility. This reality produces a high level of distrust in electoral processes in Latin America.

The literature on electoral integrity in Latin America has focused its attention on the institutional side of the problem (Barrientos, 2011; Eisenstadt, 2004; Foweraker and Krznaric, 2002; Hartlyn et al., 2008). In this paper, we focus instead on the attitudinal and behavioral consequences of electoral

misconduct. More specifically, we look at the impact of trust in elections and exposure to vote buying on electoral participation.

The paper will proceed as follows: First, we will discuss the real and perceived ills of Latin American elections, describing specific electoral malpractices that are still encountered in different countries in the region. We will also discuss how these malpractices affect electoral trust in the region. Then, we will present our theory about the consequences of electoral distrust and exposure to vote buying practices for electoral participation, from which we derive a series of testable hypotheses. Following the research design, we present our results. We find that when citizens perceive elections to be unfair, they tend to vote less. However, exposure to vote buying has the opposite effect of increasing electoral participation. Finally, we show that the impact on trust in elections on turnout is contingent on compulsory voting laws.

We make three contributions to the comparative electoral behavior literature. First, we demonstrate that trust in elections is a strong determinant of electoral participation. Second, we show that not all aspects of electoral misconduct lead to a decrease in voter turnout. Citizens who receive material incentives during the campaign are more likely to vote than those who do not. Third, we show that institutional

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 412 482 8166.

E-mail addresses: carreras_miguel@hotmail.com (M. Carreras), yaseminpitt@gmail.com (Y. İrepoğlu).

variables, such as compulsory voting, interact with one of the individual-level effects analyzed in this paper.

2. Real and perceived ills of Latin American elections

The quality of electoral processes in Latin America has increased considerably since the beginning of the Third Wave of democratization. Although the rule of law is still imperfect, many national elections in Latin America are now described as reasonably free and fair by scholars and international observation teams. Undeniably, the formal institutions of procedural democracy have spread in Latin America in the last thirty years (Foweraker and Krznic, 2002). Independent electoral institutions have been established in several countries (Barrientos, 2011; Eisenstadt, 2004; Hartlyn et al., 2008). Despite these undeniable improvements, electoral processes in many Latin American countries still suffer from a series of malpractices. In this paper, we define *electoral malpractices* as irregularities in the administration of elections which violate the relevant local laws and a series of widely accepted democratic norms and international standards. These irregularities may reflect deliberate wrong-doing by election officials or negligence in the part of state institutions, and can take place at any stage of the electoral process (except the vote count). A brief review of the reports issued by the international organizations monitoring elections in Latin America and other secondary sources clearly shows that Latin American elections suffer from different electoral malpractices.

2.1. Unequal access to the media and public resources

One of the most common malpractices in Latin American elections is the unequal access to media and money for different parties. In fact, one of the main concerns in electoral processes in the region is the limited broadcast airtime allotted to opposition parties. Incumbent parties tend to be much more present in the media because they can use public resources to buy political advertising (OAS, 2003, 2006b). Most countries do have election laws that seek to provide equitable media access for all the contenders. But the bigger parties often find ways to circumvent these rules. In other cases, incumbent governments use the public media to provide a biased coverage of the campaign tilting the balance in favor of the incumbent candidates (Carter Center, 2008: 6).

2.2. Registration problems

Democratic norms require that all citizens have equal rights to participate in elections. This right is often compromised in Latin America due to the inability of some Latin American states to ensure an accurate voter registration. The voter roll still has serious deficiencies in many Latin American countries, leaving thousands of voters disenfranchised (Carter Center, 2003; OAS, 2005). These technical problems are mostly due to negligence or state inefficiency, rather than to a clear intent to influence the outcome of the elections. However, citizens who are not able to register or who are exposed to stories about these registration deficiencies in the media may lose confidence in the electoral process as a whole.

2.3. Vote buying

Once citizens have formed their preferences, they must be able to freely express them on election day without facing outside pressures. Vote buying is an external pressure on voters which is prevalent in Latin America (Auyero, 2000; Calvo and Murillo, 2004; Fox, 1994; Martz, 1997). Vote buying can be defined as “the proffering to voters of cash or (more commonly) minor consumption goods by political parties, in office or in opposition, in exchange for the recipient’s vote” (Brusco et al., 2004: 67). Vote buying practices represent a clear violation of electoral fairness. On the one hand, vote buying distorts the spirit of democratic elections which should foster programmatic linkages between parties and voters, rather than material exchanges.¹ On the other hand, vote buying practices create an imbalance between parties that have access to material resources (e.g. incumbent parties) and parties deprived of these resources.

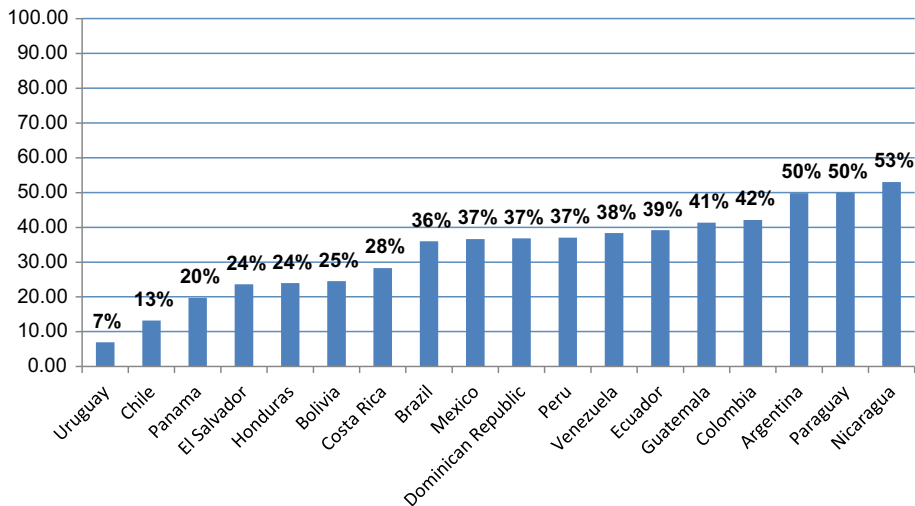
2.4. Political losers and perception of electoral fairness

We have discussed so far a series of irregularities that mar electoral processes in Latin America. The perception that elections are unfair is partly linked to these irregularities, but it also emerges from the complaints of the losers in the elections. Political losers often exaggerate the electoral malpractices of the winners in order not to accept their own responsibility in the electoral defeat and to retain the support of their electoral bases (Hellinger, 2011: 442–445). Even elections that are widely recognized as free and fair by several observation teams are sometimes denounced as manipulated by the candidates that lose. For instance, Hipólito Mejía only conceded defeat in the most recent presidential elections in the Dominican Republic in May 2012 after denouncing that the elections had been manipulated by the incumbent government. These claims appear to have been exaggerated by the runner-up for political reasons (Malamud, 2012).

3. Low trust in elections in Latin America

In the previous section, we showed that Latin American citizens are exposed to a series of important irregularities during elections. We also pointed out that claims of electoral malpractices are often exaggerated by political losers and by opposition media linked with the defeated parties. Hence, it is not surprising that trust in elections is quite low in Latin America despite the significant improvements in the quality of electoral processes in the region since the beginning of the third wave of democratization. As we can see in Fig. 1, the percentage of citizens who distrust elections is very high in many Latin American countries. Confidence in elections is relatively high in only two countries (Chile and Uruguay). In most countries, a substantial segment of the citizenry (between 35% and 50%) expresses low trust in elections.

¹ On the different types of linkage between parties and citizens, see Lawson (1980) and Kitschelt (2000).



Note: In order to construct this table, we calculated the percentage of people in each country who score 1-3 in the 1-7 trust scale.

Fig. 1. Percentage of Citizens Who Distrust Elections, LAPOP 2010. Note: In order to construct this table, we calculated the percentage of people in each country who score 1–3 in the 1–7 trust scale.

While trust in elections in Latin America appears to be low at first glance, it is necessary to compare these figures with the level of confidence in electoral processes in other regions before reaching definitive conclusions. Table 1 reports the average percentage of citizens who have broad distrust in elections across countries in different regions. We also report the regional averages. In order to construct this table, we used data from the 2010 wave of LAPOP surveys and from the first wave of Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) surveys.²

The information reported in Table 1 shows that distrust in elections is much higher in Latin America than in the other world regions. One third of Latin American voters do not have confidence in elections, and distrust is even higher in some specific countries (see Fig. 1). The situation is completely different in consolidated democracies. Only 5% of respondents on average do not trust the electoral process in Western Europe and North America. The highest level of distrust was displayed in Spain with 9.8%, whereas this number was as low as 1.2% in Germany. In Eastern Europe and Russia, the average electoral distrust is 16.73%. Thus, even in a region where democracies are new and fragile broad electoral distrust is much lower than in Latin America. Trust in elections also appears to be low in Asia, but in no Asian country does the level of distrust approaches the level of Latin American countries such as Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Argentina. The average distrust in Asia is also significantly lower than the average distrust in Latin America.

² The question wording in the different surveys is not the same but both questions tap confidence in elections. LAPOP surveys simply ask if citizens trust elections (1–7 scale), whereas CSES surveys ask whether respondents think that the last elections were conducted fairly (1–5 scale). Broad distrust is operationalized in the following way: respondents who answer 1–3 in the LAPOP surveys and respondents who answer 1–2 in the CSES surveys.

4. Trust in elections, vote buying, and turnout: theory and research hypotheses

So far, we have shown that Latin American elections tend to suffer from a series of irregularities. Although outright electoral manipulation is rare in the region (Donno and Roussias, 2012), less serious forms of electoral misconduct abound and they negatively influence citizens' trust in electoral processes. As discussed above, trust in elections is low in most Latin American countries. In this section, we consider the impact of electoral malpractices (and the perception thereof) on electoral participation.

4.1. Distrust in elections and turnout

We subscribe to a modified rational choice perspective that emphasizes the importance of voters' motivation to explain electoral participation (Whiteley, 1995). In line with previous research (Franklin, 1999, 2004), we argue that citizens participate only when they *perceive* that their vote may have an impact on the election results and the policy outcomes that result from the election. In the words of Franklin (2004: 6), electoral participation is not "about how people approach elections; rather, it is mainly about how elections *appear* to people". When citizens perceive that elections are unfair, they may prefer to stay at home on election day because they believe that their vote will have no impact on the electoral results and on the direction of public policies. As Birch (2010: 1603) summarizes in a recent contribution "if voters fear that polls are corrupt, they have less incentive to bother casting a vote; participating in a process in which they do not have confidence will be less attractive, and they may well perceive the outcome of the election to be a foregone conclusion."

In addition to its direct impact on turnout, trust in elections may have an indirect impact via efficacy. The

feeling of political efficacy can be described as the perception citizens have of being capable of acting effectively in the political arena. Efficacious citizens perceive that they are capable of influencing government and politics (Craig and Maggionto, 1982; Finkel, 1985: 892–893).³ In modern representative democracies, citizens can be politically active in different ways. They may freely discuss about politics, join civic associations, participate in party activities, and engage in peaceful political demonstrations. However, the political activity *par excellence* in a representative democracy is participating in elections. Modern democracies are competitive elitist systems. Citizens are ruled by others, but select these rulers with their votes (Manin, 1995). In the words of Manin et al. (1999: 50), “governments make thousands of decisions that affect individual welfare; citizens have only one instrument to control these decisions: the vote.” While citizens cannot directly influence political decisions, elections serve as a key mechanism of political representation and accountability (Fearon, 1999; Manin et al., 1999). When citizens do not trust elections, they are less likely to feel politically efficacious. Since elections are the main mechanism to influence political decisions in modern representative democracies, citizens who perceive that elections are rigged are indeed less inclined to think that political institutions respond to citizens’ demands. In turn, citizens who do not feel efficacious are less likely to go to the polls on election day (Karp and Banducci, 2008; Norris, 2002).⁴

In spite of the long history of manipulated elections and the irregularities that currently affect electoral processes in many Latin American countries, very few studies have analyzed the impact of perception of fairness on electoral participation in Latin America. In a pathbreaking article, McCann and Domínguez (1998) demonstrated using survey data that perception of electoral fraud was negatively related with voter turnout in Mexico in the early 1990s. We expect then that trust in elections and electoral participation are negatively related in Latin America. However, unlike most European and North American countries, many countries in Latin America have compulsory voting rules. One of the most robust findings of the literature on voter turnout in Latin America is that electoral participation increases substantially when voting is mandatory (Fornos et al., 2004; Pérez-Liñán, 2001). Moreover, previous

³ The concept of “political efficacy” comprises two different dimensions: “internal” and “external” efficacy. Whereas internal political efficacy refers “to beliefs about one’s own competence to understand, and to participate effectively in, politics”, external political efficacy refers to “to beliefs about the responsiveness of government authorities and institutions to citizen demands” (Niemi et al., 1991: 1407–1408). We do not have a good theoretical reason to expect electoral misconduct to be associated with citizens’ capacity to understand the political world – “internal” efficacy –, so our theoretical discussion and our empirical analysis will focus on “external” efficacy.

⁴ We run some statistical analyses using data from LAPOP 2010 that confirm that citizens with low trust in elections tend to have lower feelings of political efficacy. The results show that respondents who believe that elections are free and fair are more likely to feel that they can have an impact on the functioning of political institutions, and to perceive that political leaders listen to what they have to say. The results of these models are not presented here but are available upon request from the authors.

Table 1
Broad distrust in elections in different regions.

Country (year of survey)	Proportion of respondents with broad distrust in the electoral process (%)
Latin America (LAPOP data)	
Argentina (2010)	49.85
Bolivia (2010)	24.52
Brazil (2010)	35.99
Chile (2010)	13.21
Colombia (2010)	42.10
Costa Rica (2010)	25.06
Dominican Republic (2010)	36.87
Ecuador (2010)	39.17
El Salvador (2010)	23.67
Guatemala (2010)	41.35
Honduras (2010)	23.96
Mexico (2010)	36.63
Nicaragua (2010)	53.02
Panama (2010)	19.78
Paraguay (2010)	49.96
Peru (2010)	37.05
Uruguay (2010)	7.01
Venezuela (2010)	38.36
<i>Regional average</i>	33.20
Western Europe and North America (CSES data)	
Canada (1997)	5.20
Denmark (1998)	2.20
Germany (1998)	1.70
Iceland (1999)	6.20
The Netherlands (1998)	1.90
Norway (1997)	3.10
Portugal (2002)	7.00
Spain (1996)	9.80
Sweden (1998)	4.20
Switzerland (1999)	4.90
Great Britain (1997)	3.60
United States (1996)	9.90
<i>Regional average</i>	4.98
Asia (CSES data)	
Hong Kong (1998)	18.50
Japan (1996)	27.10
Korea (2000)	30.70
Taiwan (1996)	14.00
Thailand (2001)	37.40
<i>Regional average</i>	25.54
Eastern Europe, Russia, Baltic Region (CSES data)	
Belarus (2001)	27.50
Czech Republic (1996)	4.60
Hungary (1998)	4.90
Lithuania (1997)	26.20
Poland (1997)	9.30
Romania (1996)	9.20
Russian Federation (2000)	22.80
Slovenia (1996)	11.30
Ukraine (1998)	34.80
<i>Regional average</i>	16.73

studies have shown that the impact of individual resources and motivations on electoral participation is weaker when voting is compulsory (Gallego, 2010). If voting is mandatory and enforced, even citizens who perceive that the elections are unfair will participate in order to avoid sanctions, such as the impossibility to work in public administration. Hence, we anticipate that the size of the impact of perception of electoral fairness on the decision to turnout will be contingent on whether voting is voluntary or mandatory. The first hypothesis of this paper follows from this discussion.

H1: Citizens who have low trust in elections are less likely to participate in the elections, and the size of this effect is contingent on compulsory voting laws.

4.2. *Vote buying and turnout*

Although we hypothesize that the perception that elections are not fair reduces the likelihood of electoral participation, we consider that one specific form of electoral malpractice –vote buying– should have a positive impact on turnout instead. Although the main objective of vote buying networks is to alter the electoral results in a way that suits the patron, they also work as a tool of electoral mobilization. The “twin nature of vote buying” is characterized by electoral manipulation and electoral mobilization (Schaffer, 2007: 4–8). Even if voters may receive the benefits and vote as they choose, the existence of strong clientelistic networks is likely to increase the incentives for citizens to go to the polls. Nichter (2008) uses formal theory and empirical evidence from Argentina to show that party machines target “unmobilized strong supporters” rather than “weakly opposed voters” (see Stokes, 2005). Since it is much easier for vote buying machines to supervise whether citizens vote than how they vote, the “turnout-buying” model suggests that machines are likely to have a positive effect on electoral participation by mobilizing supporters that would have stayed at home otherwise (Nichter, 2008). In some US states, such as California, voters are allowed to receive incentives for voting, as long as the incentives are not offered to induce a voter to vote for a particular candidate or ballot measure. However, political leaders often distribute incentives strategically increasing turnout among population groups that are more likely to support them (Hasen, 2000: 1355–1356). This example again suggests a positive relationship between “vote buying” and turnout. In many Latin American countries, political parties develop strong and long-term *clientelistic networks* at the community level (Auyero, 2000; Fox, 1994; Martz, 1997). These networks are especially active during election time and are very effective at mobilizing poor people to vote. Hence, we expect citizens immersed in vote buying networks to have a higher probability of voting than the rest of the respondents.

H2: Citizens exposed to vote buying are more likely to participate in the elections.

4.3. *Individual-level factors*

Besides including measures of trust in elections and vote buying, the statistical models will include several control variables which have been shown in previous research to be linked with electoral participation. We will first consider a series of socio-demographic characteristics. The socio-economic status (SES) model of voter turnout has consistently shown that income and education are positively associated with electoral participation at the individual level. Individuals with a higher socioeconomic status are more likely to turnout than poorer and less educated citizens (Leighley and Nagler, 1992; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980). Previous research indicates that individuals with a higher SES tend to vote more because they are better informed and

have more free time to participate in political activities. Another essential socio-demographic characteristic is age. Older citizens are more likely to vote than their younger counterparts (Niemi and Barkan, 1987; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980). Young voters may be disoriented by the different electoral options, thereby preferring to abstain. Political experience is acquired over time as citizens face concrete policy issues and learn about the different programs political parties propose to solve the problems they face.

A series of motivation variables –besides trust in elections– may also have an impact on the propensity to vote. The most obvious motivational variable is interest in politics. Citizens who are not interested in political issues are more likely to abstain because they are not concerned about the outcome of the election (Carreras and Castañeda-Angarita, 2013). Political information also tends to increase citizens’ motivation to participate in the elections. Previous research has shown that more informed citizens are more likely to vote because they feel more confident about their electoral choices (Ghirardato and Katz, 2002). Party identification is another important motivational variable. Citizens who are attached to a political party obtain a much higher “expressive” benefit in the elections than those who fail to form political preferences (Schuessler, 2000). Moreover, partisanship often works as a “heuristic” for voters, helping them to make sense of the different electoral options (Campbell et al., 1960).

Finally, voters’ insertion in mobilization networks may have a positive effect on electoral participation (Verba et al., 1995). Political discussions often occur in non-political institutions of adult life (the working place, voluntary associations). Hence, these institutions might nurture political interest and increase awareness of the issues at stake in the elections (Verba et al., 1995). Moreover, several studies show that large social networks produce politically relevant social capital (i.e. expertise and political information), which in turn increases the likelihood that citizens will participate in the elections (La Due Lake and Huckfeldt, 1998).

4.4. *Institutional and contextual factors*

Although this analysis focuses at the individual level, it looks at cross-national data so it is essential to control for contextual and institutional variables in the model. In this paper, we pay special attention to compulsory voting. Comparative research has indeed demonstrated that the incentives to vote are stronger when voting is mandatory. This relationship is strongly supported in the literature, and many works estimate the impact between ten and fifteen points (Blais and Aarts, 2006; Fornos et al., 2004; Jackman, 1987). However, other studies argue that compulsory voting is only meaningful when it is enforced (Panagopoulos, 2008). Voting is mandatory in many Latin American countries, but the enforcement level varies significantly across countries (Fornos et al., 2004).

The type of election also matters. Voters are more likely to vote in competitive elections because they perceive that their vote can influence electoral outcomes (Caldeira and Patterson, 1982). Relatedly, concurrent elections increase the importance of voting because they affect the electoral outcomes of two elections instead of one and help voters to

identify which candidates represent their interests (Fornos et al., 2004).

Finally, we will include in our analysis two other structural factors (the degree of democracy, and GDP per capita) that have been associated with turnout in previous research (Blais and Dobrzynska, 1998). Electoral participation may thrive in more consolidated democracies where political rights are more widely respected. Economic development should lead to an increase in turnout because it makes people more informed and engaged in the political process (Powell, 1982).

5. Research design

5.1. Data

Data for the subsequent empirical analysis are drawn from the 2010 Americas Barometer. The survey is administered by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) at Vanderbilt University. The LAPOP surveys are constructed very carefully so as to maximize their representativeness (see Appendix 1 for more technical information). The big advantage of LAPOP surveys to understand public opinion trends in Latin America is their broad comparability. The same questions are asked to respondents in different countries across Latin America, which facilitates a comparative analysis. The 2010 edition of LAPOP includes eighteen Latin American countries.⁵

The dependent variable in our statistical analyses is voter turnout. In the first set of models (models 1 and 2), we use a dichotomous measure of the respondents who voted in the last presidential elections: 1 = yes, voted; 0 = no, did not vote. In the second set of models (models 3 and 4), we use the following question: “If the next presidential elections were being held this week, what would you do?” We recoded the variable as a dummy: 1 = vote (incumbent, opposition, or null vote), 0 = not vote. Although the first dependent variable (turnout in previous presidential elections) has less measurement error –it measures actual turnout rather than intended turnout–, it is problematic to analyze the impact of current voter’s attitudes and perceptions (e.g. trust in elections or efficacy) on past behaviors. Hence, both sets of models are necessary to assess the impact of electoral malpractices on turnout.

The main independent variable in this analysis, electoral trust, was constructed on the basis of the following question: “To what extent do you trust elections?” Responses were given based on a 1–7 scale, where ‘1’ indicates “not at all” and ‘7’ indicates “a lot.” Although it is difficult to assess construct validity, we are confident that the item we use is really tapping what we want to measure. The level of abstraction required from respondents in this question is low. It may be challenging for respondents to answer questions regarding trust in more abstract concepts such as

“democracy” or “political institutions.” Elections are very concrete institutions and the vast majority of respondents probably have a clear idea of what the question entails.

Another important independent variable in our study is “vote buying”, which was constructed using the following question: “In recent years and thinking about election campaigns, has a candidate or someone from a political party offered you something, like a favor, food, or any other benefit or thing in return for your vote or support? Has this happened often, sometimes or never?” The question was intentionally designed to minimize censoring due to social desirability, by not asking whether the respondents took the offer. This strategy is often used in studies of other illegal and stigmatized practices such as corruption (e.g. Seligson, 2006).⁶

5.2. Model estimation

In this article, we use data from the Americas Barometer 2010 to explore variation in electoral participation and to test our hypotheses about the impact of electoral distrust and exposure to vote buying practices on turnout. First, we run logistic regression models to assess the effect of trust in elections and vote buying on the decision to vote. The use of logistic regressions is appropriate because our variable of interest –voter turnout– is a dichotomous variable. In the logistic regressions (models 1 and 3), we also include dummy variables for each country to measure whether significant national characteristics (unexplained by the model) lead to different levels of system support.⁷ The second set of models (models 2 and 4) employs multilevel modeling to try to tease out the country-level factors that have an impact on electoral participation. In particular, we use a mixed-effects model for binary responses because the grouping structure of the data consists of two levels of nested groups (individuals nested in countries).

6. Results

The results of the turnout models are revealing. As expected, trust in elections is positively associated with turnout. In other words, citizens who perceive that the elections are fair are more likely to go to the polls. The coefficient for the variable “trust in elections” is positive and statistically significant in the four models in Table 2. This confirms the findings of previous studies (Birch, 2010).

Our analysis also brings an important nuance, by showing that people who are exposed to a specific form of electoral misconduct –vote buying– are more likely to participate in the elections because they are monitored by efficient electoral machines (see models 1 and 2). Interestingly, however, this effect is not sustained in the long term. Citizens who were exposed to vote buying in previous elections appear to lose confidence in future electoral

⁵ The statistical analysis will be conducted with data from 18 countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

⁶ All the other variables used in the statistical models below are described in Appendix 2.

⁷ Estimates of the country dummies are not reported but the full model is available upon request from the authors.

Table 2
Determinants of electoral participation, LAPOP 2010.

Variables	Reported turnout		Intention to turnout	
	(1) Logistic (fixed effects)	(2) Random intercept	(3) Logistic (fixed effects)	(4) Random intercept
Electoral malpractice				
Trust in elections	.059*** (.011)	.059*** (.011)	.124*** (.013)	.125*** (.013)
Exposure to vote buying	.097*** (.037)	.096*** (.037)	-.083* (.045)	-.084* (.045)
Socioeconomic resources				
Income	.004 (.010)	.005 (.010)	.014 (.012)	.015 (.012)
Education	.290*** (.029)	.291*** (.029)	.061* (.035)	.061* (.035)
Age	.661*** (.018)	.661*** (.018)	.030 (.021)	.031 (.021)
Motivations				
Political Efficacy	-.025*** (.010)	-.024** (.010)	.033*** (.012)	.034*** (.012)
Interest in politics	.122*** (.021)	.122*** (.021)	.441*** (.028)	.441*** (.028)
Party identification	.554*** (.045)	.555*** (.045)	1.394*** (.066)	1.393*** (.066)
Political information	.108*** (.019)	.107*** (.019)	.085*** (.024)	.084*** (.024)
Networks				
Employment status	.453*** (.037)	.451*** (.037)	.229*** (.047)	.228*** (.047)
Civic engagement	.197*** (.021)	.198*** (.021)	.136*** (.027)	.136*** (.027)
Country-level factors				
Compulsory vote		.500** (.210)		.773*** (.251)
Concurrent elections		.899* (.474)		.577 (.579)
Closeness		.022* (.012)		
GDP per capita		-.000 (.000)		-.000 (.000)
Polity IV		-.112 (.101)		-.161 (.126)
Constant	-2.740*** (.136)	-2.818*** (.892)	-.921*** (.168)	-.407 (.911)
Random effects intercept		.434*** (.077)		.569*** (.108)
Observations	23,364	23,364	18,250	18,250

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

processes and become more cynical. The results in models 3 and 4 actually show that citizens who received material incentives to participate in previous elections are less likely to vote in future contests.

The control variables also predict electoral participation in the expected direction. Unsurprisingly, older and more educated individuals are more likely to participate in national elections. The coefficient measuring age has the expected direction but is just short of statistical significance in the “intention to turnout” models. The effect of age may be weaker in these models because many young voters may declare an intention to vote for one party in future elections, but then stay home on election day. Motivational factors also matter. Citizens who are efficacious, politically

interested, informed, and identified with a political party are more motivated to vote.⁸ Immersion in mobilization networks encourages electoral participation. Individuals who hold a stable job and citizens who are members of non-political associations have a higher propensity to vote. Finally, a series of contextual and institutional variables also influence electoral participation in Latin America. Electoral participation tends to be higher when elections are concurrent, voting is mandatory, and the result of the election is close.

Table 3 shows the predicted probabilities of voting in Latin America at different levels of the independent variables, when all the other variables are held at their median values. The predicted probabilities reveal that two socio-demographic variables (age and education) are the best predictors of reported turnout in Latin America (see Carreras and Castañeda-Angarita, 2013). Intention to participate is better explained by a series of attitudes that capture the motivation of voters to go to the polls.

In both sets of models, however, trust in elections has a substantial impact on the likelihood of voting. According to the “reported turnout” model, those who have high trust in elections have a 90.2% probability of voting whereas citizens with low trust in elections have an 86.6% probability of voting only. In the model measuring intention to vote in the future presidential elections, the gap between citizens who trust elections and those who do not is larger. Citizens with high trust in elections have an 89.1% probability of voting, whereas citizens with low trust in elections have a 79.4% probability of voting. This effect is similar in size to the impact of all the other motivation variables in the model (political interest, party identification, political information). This suggests that electoral irregularities have a negative effect on participation when they are visible enough as to affect public confidence in the electoral process.

Table 3 also reveals that a specific form of electoral malpractice –vote buying– has the opposite effect of increasing the probability of turnout. The predicted probabilities in Table 3 show that citizens who were never exposed to vote buying have a predicted probability of voting of 79.7%, whereas citizens often exposed to vote buying have a predicted probability of voting of 82.2%. This effect is considerable, but weaker than the impact of most of the other variables in the model. However, given the tendency of individuals immersed in clientelistic networks not to report it (Gonzalez-Ocantos et al., 2012), it is plausible that the effect is actually stronger than what the analysis reveals. Interestingly, the effect of vote buying is different in the long term. While citizens are more likely to vote when they receive material incentives during the campaign, exposure to vote buying reduces long term electoral participation. The predicted probability of declaring an intention to vote in the next presidential elections is 74.4% for citizens who were never exposed to vote buying in recent electoral cycles, but only 71.1% for citizens often exposed to vote buying practices.

⁸ The coefficient for the efficacy variable is negative and statistically significant in models 1 and 2, but it is problematic to assess the impact of current attitudes on previous behaviors so we focus on models 3 and 4 for the interpretation of motivation variables.

Table 3

Predicted probabilities of electoral participation in Latin America, LAPOP 2010.

Value on the independent variables	Predicted probability Reported turnout	Predicted probability Intention to turnout
All variables at their median	88.5	84.8
Low trust in elections (1)	86.6	79.4
High trust in elections (7)	90.2	89.1
Never exposed to vote buying	88.5	84.8
Sometimes exposed to vote buying	89.4	83.7
Often exposed to vote buying	90.3	82.6
Low education	81.2	81.9
High education	91.1	84.4
Age 18–24	67.5	84.0
Age 25–34	80.0	84.4
Age 35–49	88.5	84.8
Age 50–64	93.7	85.2
Age > 64	96.6	85.6
Low political efficacy (1)	88.9	83.9
High political efficacy (7)	87.5	86.5
Low political interest (1)	87.2	78.3
High political interest (4)	90.7	93.1
Identified with a party	93.0	95.8
Not identified with a party	88.5	84.8
Low political information (1)	83.4	80.0
High political information (5)	88.5	84.8
Unemployed	83.1	81.7
Employed	88.5	84.8
No membership in civic organizations	86.3	83.0
Membership in one civic organization	88.5	84.8
Membership in two civic organizations	90.4	86.5
Membership in three or more civic organizations	91.9	88.0

This finding suggests that voting is not habit forming (see Gerber et al., 2003) when it responds to material incentives. Unless they are re-mobilized by vote buying machines, citizens who received material incentives to participate in past elections are actually less likely to vote in the future. On the one hand, receiving material incentives may decrease citizens' trust in electoral processes. Citizens exposed to vote buying practices are more aware that parties commit several irregularities during the electoral process, and may become disenchanted with democratic politics and elections – unless of course they keep receiving material incentives to vote. On the other hand, the results may simply reflect that individuals who cast a vote because of vote buying are not likely to be dedicated voters in the first place. For many of these voters, the only way to get them to the polls is to give them a payoff.

7. Compulsory voting and trust in elections: interactive effects

The literature on voter turnout in Latin America has repeatedly shown that the level of electoral participation is higher in countries in which voting is mandatory and sanctions for non-voting are enforced (Fornos et al., 2004; Pérez-Liñán, 2001). Our hierarchical models again confirm the link between compulsory voting laws and turnout. Previous research suggests that the individual

Table 4

Determinants of electoral participation (interactive model), LAPOP 2010.

Variables	Reported turnout Random intercept model
Electoral malpractice	
Trust in elections	.100*** (.017)
Exposure to vote buying	.096** (.037)
Socioeconomic resources	
Income	.005 (.010)
Education	.295*** (.029)
Age	.663*** (.018)
Motivations	
Political efficacy	-.025*** (.010)
Interest in politics	.122*** (.021)
Party identification	.553*** (.045)
Political information	.108*** (.019)
Networks	
Employment status	.449*** (.037)
Civic engagement	.198*** (.021)
Country-level factors	
Compulsory vote	.669*** (.221)
Compulsory vote*Trust in elections	-.042*** .013
Concurrent elections	.893* (.484)
Closeness	.023* (.012)
GDP per capita	-.000 (.001)
Polity IV	-.103 (.103)
Constant	-3.060*** (.914)
Random effects intercept	.471*** (.083)
Observations	23364

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

motivation to participate in the elections is influenced by institutional factors, such as compulsory voting (Gallego, 2010). Hence, we expect that the impact of trust in elections on electoral participation is contingent on whether voting is compulsory. In order to test this hypothesis, we run an additional mixed-effects (random intercept) logistic regression model including an interaction term between a level-2 variable (compulsory voting) and a level-1 variable (citizen's trust in elections). As in the previous models, compulsory voting is measured as a trichotomous variable.⁹ This model is presented in Table 4.

⁹ This variable measures whether voting is voluntary (0), compulsory but not enforced (1), or compulsory and enforced (2).

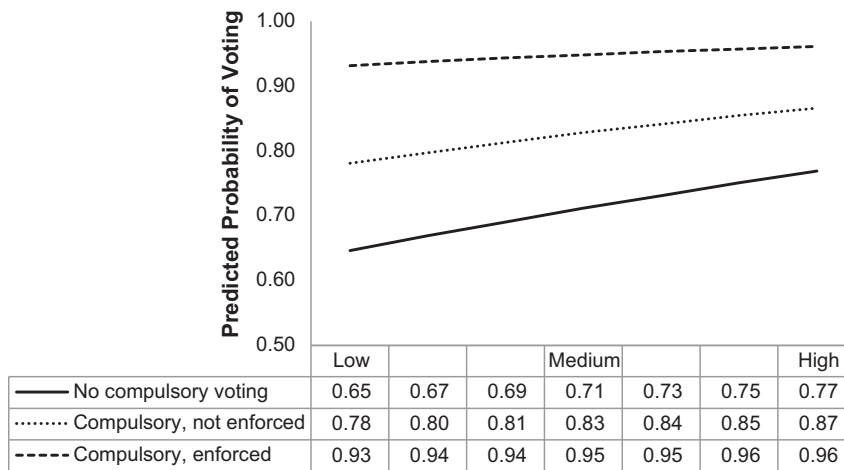


Fig. 2. Predicted probability of voting by trust in elections and compulsory vote, LAPOP 2010.

The multi-level model results reported in Table 4 show strong support for our contention that compulsory voting rules condition the impact of perceptions of electoral fairness on the decision to vote. The coefficient for the interaction term is negative and statistically significant, which suggests that trust in elections is a much stronger predictor of electoral participation in countries where compulsory voting laws do not exist.

In order to estimate more precisely the attenuating role of compulsory voting rules, we calculated the predicted probabilities of electoral participation, interacting compulsory voting laws and trust in elections.¹⁰

As can be observed in Fig. 2, the effect of electoral trust on turnout is weaker in countries where voting is mandatory. In countries where voting is compulsory and sanctions for non-voting are enforced, the predicted probability of going to the polls only increases from 93% for citizens who do not trust elections to 96% for citizens who perceive that the elections are fair. In countries where voting is voluntary, such probability increases from 65% for trusting individuals to 77% for non-trusting individuals. In sum, the impact of trust in elections on the likelihood of voting is much stronger in countries where voting is not mandatory.¹¹

8. Conclusion

The literature on electoral misconduct has focused its attention on the institutional side of the problem. In this article, we explore one of the consequences of electoral malpractices (and the perception thereof) for political behavior. We first describe the different problems that affect the quality of elections in Latin America. We conclude

that section by showing that a substantial segment of Latin American citizens does not trust elections. In the rest of the paper, we analyze the effect of one form of electoral malpractice (vote buying) and the lack of confidence in elections on electoral participation in the region.

Our finding that low trust in elections has a negative impact on turnout is in line with previous research. But we make two additional contributions. First, we show that not all forms of electoral malpractice lead to a decline in electoral participation. On the contrary, citizens exposed to vote buying are more likely to go to the polls than the rest of the population because vote buying machines are able to monitor turnout. Second, the impact of trust in elections on electoral participation is contingent on institutional variables. We showed that in countries where voting is mandatory the effect of perception of electoral fairness on turnout is weaker as disenfranchised citizens also vote to avoid sanctions.

Our conclusions have an important policy implication. The low trust in electoral processes in Latin America is paradoxical because elections have become significantly cleaner in the last thirty years. Given the negative impact of the perception of electoral malpractices on citizens' efficacy and electoral participation, it is essential that governments and nongovernmental organizations effectively inform citizens of the progress made to combat electoral manipulation. Effective communication channels are needed. For instance, the fact that independent electoral commissions successfully monitor elections in many countries needs stronger emphasis. The public at large should be made aware of their existence, and of the key role they play to ensure democratic elections even in dysfunctional democracies.

Appendix 1. Technical information about LAPOP surveys

Data for the empirical analysis in this article are drawn from the 2010 Americas Barometer. The survey is administered by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) at Vanderbilt University. The LAPOP surveys are constructed very carefully so as to maximize their

¹⁰ This figure was constructed on the basis of the interactive model in Table 4. We calculated the predicted probabilities of electoral participation at different values of trust in elections and compulsory voting laws, and holding all the other variables at their means.

¹¹ We estimated a similar interactive model to assess whether the impact of exposure to vote buying is also contingent on whether voting is compulsory. The results did not show any interactive effect in this case. This additional model is available upon request from the authors.

representativeness (see Appendix 1 for more technical information). The sampling process involves multi-stage stratification by country, and then sub-stratification within each country by major geographic region to increase precision. Within each primary sampling unit (PSU) the survey respondents are selected randomly. The survey's selection of respondents applies quotas for sex and age at the household level. Selection at every other stage is done randomly based on proportion to size. The surveys are conducted in Spanish, but local language translations of the questionnaire are also available (Mayan translations for Guatemala, Quechua and Aymara for Ecuador and Bolivia, and Portuguese in Brazil). More technical information about each survey can be obtained in the website of the Latin American Public Opinion Project: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/core-surveys.php>.

Appendix 2. Operationalization of independent variables (LAPOP surveys, 2010).

Variables	Survey items
Age	Recoded into 1 = 18–24, 2 = 25–34, 3 = 35–49, 4 = 50–64, 5 = 64 and older
Campaign participation	There are people who work for parties or candidates during electoral campaigns. Did you work for any candidate or party in the last presidential elections? (recoded into yes = 1, no = 0)
Education	How many years of schooling have you completed? (recoded into 0 = no education, 1 = primary school, 2 = secondary school, 3 = higher education)
Employment status	How do you mainly spend your time? Are you currently... (1) Working? (2) Not working, but have a job? (3) Actively looking for a job? (4) A student? (5) Taking care of the home? (6) Retired, a pensioner or permanently disabled to work (7) Not working and not looking for a job? (recoded into working = 1&2, all the other options = 0)
Gender	Recoded into 1 = male, 0 = female
Identifies with incumbent	Which political party do you identify with? (recoded into 1 = identifies with incumbent party, 0 = no party ID or identifies with an opposition party)
Income	Into which of the following income ranges does the total monthly income of this household fit, including remittances from abroad and the income of all the working adults and children? [10 deciles based on the currency and distribution of the country] (no income = 0...maximum income = 10)
Membership in voluntary associations	0–3 scale of membership in five voluntary associations (religious organizations, parents' associations, community associations, professional associations, political parties). A score of 3 was given to respondents who attend regularly (once a month or more) the meetings

(continued)

Variables	Survey items
	of at least three of these associations. A score of 0 was given to respondents who do not attend meetings of any of these associations. Scores of 1 (one association) and 2 (two associations) were given to respondents who attend meetings of some (but not all) of these associations.
Party identification	Do you currently identify with a political party? (recoded into yes = 1, no = 0)
Political information	About how often do you pay attention to the news, whether on TV, the radio, newspapers or the internet? (recoded into 1 = never...5 = daily)
Political interest	How much interest do you have in politics: a lot, some, little or none? (recoded into 1 = none, 2 = little, 3 = some, 4 = a lot)
Political knowledge	Scale composed by the three political knowledge questions in the LAPOP survey (presidential term length, number of provinces in the country, and name of the president of the United States). 0 = all answers wrong, 1 = one correct answer, 2 = two correct answers, 3 = three correct answers.
Urban/rural	Recoded into 1 = urban area, 0 = rural area
Vote for incumbent	Who did you vote for in the last presidential elections of 2008? (recoded into 1 = voted for incumbent, 0 = voted for another party or abstained)

References

- Auyero, J., 2000. *Poor People's Politics: Peronist Survival Networks and the Legacy of Evita*. Duke University Press, Durham, NC.
- Barrientos, F., 2011. *Gestión Electoral Comparada y Confianza en las Elecciones en América Latina*. Instituto Nacional de Administración Pública, México, D.F.
- Birch, S., 2010. Perceptions of electoral fairness and voter turnout. *Comparative Political Studies* 43 (12), 1601–1622.
- Blais, A., Aarts, K., 2006. Electoral systems and turnout. *Acta Politica* 41 (2), 180–196.
- Blais, A., Dobrzynska, A., 1998. Turnout in electoral democracies. *European Journal of Political Research* 33 (2), 239–261.
- Brusco, V., Nazareno, M., Stokes, S., 2004. Vote buying in Argentina. *Latin American Research Review* 39 (2), 66–88.
- Caldeira, G.A., Patterson, S.C., 1982. Contextual influences on participation in US state legislative elections. *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 7 (3), 359–381.
- Calvo, E., Murillo, M.V., 2004. Who delivers? Partisan clients in the Argentine electoral market. *American Journal of Political Science* 48 (4), 742–757.
- Campbell, A., Converse, P.E., Miller, W.E., Stokes, D.E., 1960. *The American Voter*. Wiley, New York.
- Carreras, M., Castañeda-Angarita, N., 2013. Who votes in Latin America? A test of three theoretical perspectives. *Comparative Political Studies* forthcoming.
- Carter Center, 2003. *Guatemala Election Observation 2003 (Final Report)*. Carter Center, Atlanta, GA.
- Carter Center, 2008. *Final Report on Ecuador's Approbatory Constitutional Referendum of September 28, 2008*. Carter Center, Atlanta, GA.
- Craig, S.C., Maggiotto, M.A., 1982. Measuring political efficacy. *Political Methodology* 8 (3), 85–109.
- Donno, D., Roussias, N., 2012. Does cheating pay? The effect of electoral misconduct on party systems. *Comparative Political Studies* 45 (5), 575–605.
- Eisenstadt, T.A., 2004. Catching the state off guard: electoral courts, campaign finance, and Mexico's separation of state and ruling party. *Party Politics* 10 (6), 723–745.

- Fearon, J.D., 1999. Electoral accountability and the control of politicians: selecting good types versus sanctioning poor performance. In: Przeworski, A., Stokes, S.C., Manin, B. (Eds.), *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*. Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Finkel, S.E., 1985. Reciprocal effects of participation and political efficacy: a panel analysis. *American Journal of Political Science* 29 (4), 891–913.
- Fornos, C.A., Power, T.J., Garand, J.C., 2004. Explaining voter turnout in Latin America, 1980 to 2000. *Comparative Political Studies* 37 (8), 909–940.
- Foweraker, J., Krznicar, R., 2002. The uneven performance of third wave democracies: electoral politics and the imperfect rule of law in Latin America. *Latin American Politics and Society* 44 (3), 29–60.
- Fox, J., 1994. The difficult transition from clientelism to citizenship: lessons from Mexico. *World Politics* 46 (2), 151–184.
- Franklin, M.N., 1999. Electoral engineering and cross-national turnout differences: what role for compulsory voting? *British Journal of Political Science* 29 (1), 205–216.
- Franklin, M.N., 2004. *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies since 1945*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Gallego, A., 2010. Understanding unequal turnout: education and voting in comparative perspective. *Electoral Studies* 29 (2), 239–248.
- Gerber, A.S., Green, D.P., Shachar, R., 2003. Voting may be habit forming: evidence from a randomized field experiment. *American Journal of Political Science* 47 (3), 540–550.
- Ghirardato, P., Katz, J.N., 2002. *Indecision Theory: Quality of Information and Voting Behavior*, Social Science Working Paper 1106R. California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, CA.
- Gonzalez-Ocantos, E., de Jonge, C.K., Meléndez, C., Osorio, J., Nickerson, D.W., 2012. Vote buying and social desirability bias: experimental evidence from Nicaragua. *American Journal of Political Science* 56 (1), 202–217.
- Hartlyn, J., McCoy, J., Mustillo, T.M., 2008. Electoral governance matters: explaining the quality of elections in contemporary Latin America. *Comparative Political Studies* 41 (1), 73.
- Hasen, R.L., 2000. Vote buying. *California Law Review* 88 (5), 1323–1371.
- Hellinger, D.C., 2011. *Comparative Politics of Latin America: Democracy at Last?* Routledge, New York.
- Jackman, R.W., 1987. Political institutions and voter turnout in the industrial democracies. *American Political Science Review* 81 (2), 405–423.
- Karp, J.A., Banducci, S.A., 2008. Political efficacy and participation in twenty-seven democracies: how electoral systems shape political behaviour. *British Journal of Political Science* 38 (2), 311–334.
- Kitschelt, H., 2000. Linkages between citizens and politicians in democratic polities. *Comparative Political Studies* 33 (6–7), 845–879.
- La Due Lake, R., Huckfeldt, R., 1998. Social capital, social networks, and political participation. *Political Psychology* 19 (3), 567–584.
- Lawson, K., 1980. *Political Parties and Linkage: a Comparative Perspective*. Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Leighley, J.E., Nagler, J., 1992. Individual and systemic influences on turnout: who votes? 1984. *Journal of Politics* 54 (3), 718–740.
- Malamud, C., 2012. PLD vs. PRD: elección con un voto cantado. *Infolatam*, Madrid.
- Manin, B., 1995. *Principes du gouvernement représentatif*. Calmann-Lévy, Paris.
- Manin, B., Przeworski, A., Stokes, S.C., 1999. Elections and representation. In: Przeworski, A., Stokes, S.C., Manin, B. (Eds.), *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*. Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Martz, J.D., 1997. *The Politics of Clientelism: Democracy and the State in Colombia*. Transaction, New Brunswick: NJ.
- McCann, J.A., Domínguez, J.L., 1998. Mexicans react to electoral fraud and political corruption: an assessment of public opinion and voting behavior. *Electoral Studies* 17 (4), 483–503.
- Nichter, S., 2008. Vote buying or turnout buying? Machine politics and the secret ballot. *American Political Science Review* 102 (1), 19–31.
- Niemi, R.G., Barkan, J.D., 1987. Age and turnout in new electorates and peasant societies. *American Political Science Review* 81 (2), 583–588.
- Niemi, R.G., Craig, S.C., Mattei, F., 1991. Measuring internal political efficacy in the 1988 national election study. *American Political Science Review* 85 (4), 1407–1413.
- Norris, P., 2002. *Democratic Phoenix: Reinventing Political Activism*. Cambridge University Press, New York.
- OAS, 2003. *Informe de la misión de observación electoral en Guatemala: Elecciones Generales 2003*. Organization of American States, Washington, D.C.
- OAS, 2005. *Report of the Electoral Observation Mission in Bolivia: Presidential and Prefects Elections 2005*. Organization of American States, Washington, D.C.
- OAS, 2006b. *Informe de la misión de observación electoral sobre las elecciones legislativas, municipales y de parlamento centroamericano de la República de El Salvador*. Organization of American States, Washington, D.C.
- Panagopoulos, C., 2008. The calculus of voting in compulsory voting systems. *Political Behavior* 30 (4), 455–467.
- Pérez-Liñán, A., 2001. Neoinstitutional accounts of voter turnout: moving beyond industrial democracies. *Electoral Studies* 20 (2), 281–297.
- Powell, G.B., 1982. *Contemporary Democracies: Participation, Stability, and Violence*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Schaffer, F.C., 2007. Why study vote buying? In: Schaffer, F.C. (Ed.), *Elections for Sale: The Causes and Consequences of Vote Buying*. Lynne Rienner, Boulder.
- Schuessler, A.A., 2000. *A Logic of Expressive Choice*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Seligson, M.A., 2006. The measurement and impact of corruption victimization. *World Development* 34 (2), 381–404.
- Stokes, S.C., 2005. Perverse accountability: a formal model of machine politics with evidence from Argentina. *American Political Science Review* 99 (3), 315–325.
- Verba, S., Schlozman, K.L., Brady, H.E., 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Whiteley, P.F., 1995. Rational choice and political participation — evaluating the debate. *Political Research Quarterly* 48 (1), 211–233.
- Wolfinger, R.E., Rosenstone, S.J., 1980. *Who Votes?* Yale University Press, New Haven.