**When Voters Help Politicians: Understanding Vote-Buying Dynamics through Voters’ Point of View**

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**Abstract:** Current studies explain voters’ compliance to vote-buying exchanges by suggesting either that voters are forced to deliver their vote or that they hold positive views of vote-buying candidates. In Sertão of Bahia, Brazil, however, voters freely support vote-buying candidates that they perceive as unreliable patrons. This article argues that voters’ perceptions of their political reality need to be taken into account to explain vote-buying dynamics. Based on original ethnographic research, this paper describes how voters perceived the widespread practice of vote buying as threatening both their interest in securing long-term assistance from politicians and the power of their vote. Voting for highly vote-buying candidates, who were perceived to be likely to win, was one of the strategies voters implemented to challenge these public understandings. Voters framed their vote as a help they lent to politicians to get elected to office and used this support to gain leverage to seek politicians’ assistance beyond the electoral period. By focusing on voters’ views, this study shows how voters’ perception of their politic reality shapes their electoral strategies.