

**Matthew Magner**

**Tentative Title of Dissertation:**

The Dynamics of Vote Buying: Party System Change in Developing Democracies

**Abstract:**

The relationship between voters and political parties is important in a functioning democracy. A voter's identification with a political party can help demonstrate a voter's interests to elected officials and aids in good representation. It may be common for the relationship between political parties and voters to change. However, in newer democracies, it is common for powerful individuals to use political parties to corrupt the relationship, usually by vote buying. When political parties buy votes, it undercuts legitimate representation, and severely limits the transparency of democratic institutions. What explains changing relationships between political parties and voters in emerging democracies? In addressing this question, I compare an empirical analysis of the existing theory of party system change to a new theoretical framework, developed specifically for nascent democracies. The dominant explanation for changes in linkages between voters and parties argues that as identities such as ethnicity shift in society, political parties shift along with them. However, I argue that while the existing theory of party system change is applicable to mature democracies, it offers less leverage in new ones, where vote buying is considerably more commonplace. My theory demonstrates that income and social class can explain whom parties buy votes from in the developing world and how this impacts parties and voters. As income develops over time, vote buying loses its significance and can no longer be used to mobilize middle-class voters. Ultimately, this has broad implications for the development of legitimate representation and the quality of democracy in the developing world.