



Who Receives Electoral Gifts? It Depends on Question Wording: Experimental Evidence from Mexico

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Abstract

This research shows that prior studies have been based on a survey methodology that systematically underestimates vote buying. Survey questions that rely on filter questions and include the phrase “in exchange for your vote” make respondents less likely to self-report receiving gifts during political campaigns. In turn, direct questioning that help respondents remember whether they received an electoral gift makes them more likely to report it. The findings of this paper suggest that prior vote-buying surveys have underestimated the amount of clientelism by political parties in Latin America. When following our proposed question wording, our research finds that the clientelistic linkages between parties and voters are stronger than previously considered.

Keywords Survey research · Public opinion · Survey experiments · Vote buying · Latin America · Clientelism

Introduction

This research focuses on the transaction of political favors in which politicians offer material incentives to citizens in exchange for their vote—a specific form of clientelism (Schedler 2004; Stokes 2007; Gans-Morse et al. 2014). Recent studies have

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shown that political campaigns, particularly in Latin America, distribute a variety of electoral gifts (Gonzalez Ocantos et al. 2012; Kiewiet de Jonge 2015; Nichter and Palmer-Rubin 2015). This group of studies has been particularly attentive to survey strategies measuring vote buying since it is subject to social desirability bias increasing levels of measurement error. In this study, we focus on an alternative source of measurement error—question-wording effects, which have been overlooked by the vote buying literature. This study shows that prior studies have been based on a survey methodology that systematically underestimates the percent of respondents who self-report receiving electoral gifts during campaigns in Latin America. In doing so, our paper aims to understand vote buying in the context of new democracies, particularly in Latin America, and advance the existing literature on survey research methodology, clientelism, and campaigns.

Based on the Mexican case, this study presents experimental and non-experimental evidence showing that when surveys rely on question wordings that (1) include the phrase “in exchange for your vote” and (2) rely on a filter question (e.g. *did you receive a gift or favor from a political party? YES/NO*), voters are less likely to self-report receiving electoral gifts during campaigns. In turn, direct questioning that helps respondents remember whether they have received an electoral gift and excludes the qualifier “in exchange for your vote” makes respondents more likely to report them. Such phrasing does not add conceptual precision or lead voters to only self-report receiving gifts that are likely to constitute a clientelistic exchange; rather, they make respondents less likely to report receiving gifts.

The findings of this paper have important implications for the study of clientelism. While recent literature has proposed novel experimental designs to measure vote buying, the findings of this paper suggest that when non-experimental designs take question wording into account, they provide important information about how widespread clientelism is. The findings of this paper also suggest that prior vote-buying studies have underestimated the amount of clientelism by political parties in Latin America. When using our proposed question wording, our research finds that the clientelistic linkages between parties and voters are stronger than previously considered.

Vote-Buying and Question-Wording Effects

The relationship between citizens and politicians entails a wide range of exchanges of goods and services, including programmatic and non-programmatic distributive policies (Stokes 2005). In the case of non-programmatic distributive policies, rules are not public, and policies can fall into the hands of political parties. Such partisan bias in distributive policies can be directed toward specific groups of individuals (laborers, the elderly, etc.) or involve the sharing of collective goods or services for which the distributor demands political support. This paper focuses on clientelism or the exchange of benefits for the political support of groups of individuals. It constitutes a system in which politicians, mostly through party machine politics, offer

goods to voters with the expectation that the latter will return the favor with political support (Schedler 2004; Stokes 2005; Stokes et al. 2013; Gans-Morse et al. 2014).

As pointed out by recent studies on clientelism (Gonzalez Ocantos et al. 2012; Kiewiet de Jonge 2015), there is an important discrepancy between qualitative and quantitative studies on vote buying in Latin America. While qualitative studies find this practice to be widespread (e.g. Auyero 2000; Stokes et al. 2013; Szwarcberg 2015; Zarazaga 2014; among others), studies relying on surveys tend to uncover lower levels of this practice. To understand such a discrepancy, the literature has highlighted that, since vote-buying constitutes a sensitive behavior, directly asking respondents if they receive electoral gifts produces social desirability bias: the tendency of respondents to present themselves in a favorable way to interviewers by underreporting undesirable attitudes or behavior (DeMaio 1984; Nadeau and Niemi 1995).

To correct for such survey-taking behavior, survey researchers adopt question strategies that provide respondents with a sense of privacy that make them more likely to elicit truthful responses. This is why recent vote-buying studies have relied on experimental strategies, such as list experiments, which seek to reduce such bias (Gonzalez Ocantos et al. 2012; Kiewiet de Jonge 2015; Greene 2018; among others). However, in this paper, we focus on an alternative source of measurement error that has been overlooked by most of the vote-buying literature, which can explain the discrepancy between qualitative and quantitative studies: question-wording effects. Similar to other topics such as partisanship (Blais et al. 2001), attitudes towards government spending (Rasinski 1989), belief in climate change (Schuldt et al. 2011), and birtherism (Krosnick et al. 2014), among others, we show that prior studies' wording strategy for measuring vote buying affects how people answer the question and results in underestimating the proportion of voters who receive electoral. In the following lines, we bring attention to the problematic role of including the qualifier "in exchange for your vote" and filter questions, two elements that are used by most vote-buying studies but that make respondents less likely to self-report receiving electoral gifts during campaigns. To our knowledge, the vote-buying literature has paid some attention to the first element—though it has not systematically studied it—and no attention to the impact of filtering, which has important consequences for question response, as found by the survey research literature (e.g. they increase the proportion of non-responses, Schuman and Presser 1981; Bishop et al. 1983).

The Mexican party system is an ideal case for analyzing wording effects on current measures of vote buying. Parties are fairly strong¹ (Mainwaring 2017) and have strong organizations for distributing electoral gifts during campaigns (Magaloni 2006; Langston 2017). Despite the expectation that programmatic linkages between parties and voters would be strengthened after Mexico's transition to democracy

¹ In the 1990–2015 period, the Mexican system, along with Uruguay, the Dominican Republic, and Chile registered almost perfect stability of the main contenders in Latin American presidential elections. When additional indicators are added (interparty electoral competition and stability of parties' ideological positions), Uruguay, Mexico, and Chile constituted the most stable systems in Latin America (Mainwaring 2017).

(De la O 2015), clientelism has persisted as a campaign strategy. While the once hegemonic party, the PRI, continues to rely on machine politics built during decades in power (Magaloni 2006; Greene 2007) opposition parties increasingly engage in clientelistic practices (Nichter and Palmer-Rubin 2015; Beltrán and Castro Cornejo 2019). However, different studies suggest variations on the amount of clientelism. While some studies find that one fifth of voters receive electoral gifts during campaigns (Lawson et al. 2013; Kiewiet de Jonge 2015), other studies suggest that up to half of the electorate receives gifts from parties and candidates (2015 National Electoral Study, CSES; Beltrán and Castro Cornejo 2019).

Survey Research and Vote Buying: Review of Polls

A clear measurement of vote buying should not only offer an accurate estimate of the proportion of voters who receive gifts during campaigns, but also allow researchers to differentiate between electoral gifts that are likely to constitute vote buying and those that are less likely to do so. To undertake this, it is important to identify the conditions under which a transaction of political favors—in which politicians offer material incentives to citizens in exchange for their vote—happens. In his overview of 15 vote-buying studies, Nichter (2014) finds that an essential component of any definition of vote buying is that it constitutes an exchange. During campaigns, parties tend to deliver material inducements to individuals seeking support in the upcoming election. To ensure that voters comply with vote-buying exchange, qualitative studies have found that political machines and brokers tend to monitor voters' behavior (Brusco et al. 2004) and enforce compliance through deep insertion in voters' social networks (Stokes 2005).

In terms of distributed benefits, all definitions of vote buying studied by Nichter (2014) include offers of cash in exchange for political support. In turn, twelve of the fifteen studies include goods and services. For example, in their study about vote buying in Argentina, Brusco et al. (2004) included food, clothing, medicine, mattresses, construction material, and utility bill payments, etc. However, since timing is an important element of vote buying, scholars typically exclude benefits that are distributed after election day (Lehoucq 2007; Schaffer and Schedler 2007). As such, post-election benefit such as employment, social programs, transportation to the polls, or public program benefits are less commonly considered vote-buying by most studies (with important exceptions: Stokes et al. 2013, Diaz-Cayeros et al. 2016).

To analyze vote buying, quantitative studies relying on survey data aim to estimate the percentage of voters who receive electoral gifts during campaigns. While not an exhaustive list, Table 1 provides an overview of question wording used in recent studies. While there are subtle differences in each survey's research strategy, these studies share two key elements: (1) a question that functions as a filter (*e.g.* *Did you receive a gift or favor from a party or candidate in exchange for your vote? YES/NO*) and (2) the phrase “in exchange for your vote”—with the exception of the Mexico CSES wording (2015), Brusco et al. (2004), and Gonzalez Ocantos (2012), which suggests that researchers have thought about the convenience of including such a phrase though not in a systematic way.

Table 1 Question wording in recent studies

Studies	Cases	Question wording
Brusco et al. (2004)	Argentina 2001	In the campaign, did you receive something from a candidate or party?
Gonzalez Ocantos et al. (2012), Gonzalez Ocantos et al. (2014), Kiewiet de Jonge (2015)	Nicaragua 2008 Mexico 2009 Honduras 2009, Uruguay 2009, Chile 2009, Bolivia 2009, Bolivia 2010 Guatemala 2011 Argentina 2011 Nicaragua 2011 Argentina 2010 (L.APOP)	During the electoral campaign, did you receive a gift or favor from a political party or candidate? During the electoral campaign, did you receive a gift or favor from a political party or candidate <i>in exchange for your vote</i> ? Did you receive a gift or favor from a party or candidate <i>in exchange for your vote</i> ? Did you receive a gift or favor from a party or candidate <i>in exchange for your vote</i> during the electoral campaigns in September? Did you receive a gift or favor from a party or candidate <i>in exchange for your vote</i> during the campaign for the elections in October? Did you receive a gift or favor from a party or candidate <i>in exchange for your vote</i> during the last electoral campaign? In recent years and thinking about electoral campaigns, has a candidate or someone from a political party offered you something, like a favor, food, or any other benefit or object <i>in return for your vote or support</i> ? Has this happened often, sometimes, or never? In the last few weeks, has anyone done a favor for you or offered a gift or service <i>in exchange for your vote</i> ?
Lawson et al. (2013)	Mexico 2012 (Mexico Panel Survey)	In the last few weeks, has anyone done a favor for you or offered a gift or service <i>in exchange for your vote</i> ?
CSES Mexico and original study	Mexico 2015 and 2017	During the last political campaign, did you receive a gift or favor from the [PARTY] candidate [NAME OF CANDIDATE]? (FOR EACH PARTY/CANDIDATE)

A useful way to analyze these wordings is through the four stages of survey response: comprehension, recall, judgment, and response (Krosnick and Presser 2009). The first element of past survey question strategies, the use of the qualifier “in exchange for your vote” is intended to improve comprehension. The decision to include such a phrase is theoretically appropriate since, as previously mentioned, vote buying constitutes an exchange. Such a phrase invites voters to only report gifts received by respondents as part of a clientelistic exchange. However, one potentially problematic aspect of this survey strategy is that it assumes that voters are able to judge and distinguish between gifts that are intended to buy their vote and those that may have a different purpose such as political communication (e.g. pens, t-shirts, and hats). We test this assumption in the next section of this paper. Another potential implication of including this phrase is increasing social desirability bias in the response stage. “In exchange for your vote” primes respondents to report their participation in a clientelistic exchange with parties—a sensitive matter—which is likely to increase non-response.

The second element of past survey strategies constitutes the inclusion of a filter question. In this particular survey strategy, recall does not seem to constitute a primary concern. Filter questions screen respondents who are eligible for follow-up questions (Schuman and Presser 1981; Bishop et al. 1983). If the respondent answers “yes,” the interviewer asks a follow-up question inquiring what electoral gift (or gifts) the respondent received and from which party. If respondent replies “no” to the filter question, the interviewer moves on to another topic. This means that the survey interviewer has only one chance to ask respondents about vote buying during the interview. Past survey research literature has found that including filter questions decreases the proportion of respondents that are eligible for follow-up questions (Schuman and Presser 1981; Bishop et al. 1983) vis-à-vis asking the question directly. Filtering may be necessary when surveys analyze obscure topics as filtering avoids forcing respondents who do not have an opinion on which to base their opinion on. In less obscure topics, it may have an undesirable outcome, significantly increasing non-responses even when respondents have a formed opinion (Schuman and Presser 1981; Bishop et al. 1983). For example, Blais et al.’s (2001) and Castro Cornejo’s (2019) studies on partisanship find that relying on filters question makes respondents less likely to self-identify as partisans even though they may consider themselves closely tied to a political party. This tendency is particularly relevant in topics where a negative response might be socially desirable, for example, self-identifying as “independent” when, in fact, voters lean towards a political party (Keith et al. 1992). As suggested by these studies, filtering makes it “too easy” for respondents to say “no.” For these reasons, from a survey research perspective,² a better practice is to avoid filtering about topics like vote buying, in which respondents may prefer to reply “no” and move on to another topic.

Rather than including a single filter question—therefore, having the research rely on just one survey question—our methodology relies on a multiple-question

² Survey research studies also suggest that filtering triggers a “survey burden” (Eckman et al. 2014). In other words, filtering increases respondents’ tendency to choose the response that does not prompt a follow-up question in order to shorten the interview.

Table 2 Question wording (multiple-question strategy)

One question for each party	During the last political campaign, did you receive a gift or favor from the PAN candidate [NAME OF CANDIDATE]? During the last political campaign, did you receive a gift or favor from the PRI-Green Party candidate [NAME OF CANDIDATE]? During the last political campaign, did you receive a gift or favor from the PRD candidate [NAME OF CANDIDATE]?
Follow-up question (for each party)	Can you tell me what you received?" [UP TO THREE RESPONSES]

Table 7 in the Appendix reports question wording in English and Spanish

strategy. We conceive of a survey as a conversation in which interviewers need to engage respondents. Our methodology includes a question about electoral gifts from each political party competing in the election. This strategy aims to increase recall and improve judgement by asking them to remember every interaction they had with each party (e.g. specifically whether they received a gift from each political party, see Table 2 below). While our strategy is primarily concerned with question-wording effects, we also aim to reduce social desirability bias at the response stage by asking respondents if they received electoral gifts from a battery of specific parties—for example, in the case of Mexico, the PAN, the PRI, the PRD, MORENA, and minor political parties. Unlike most vote-buying surveys (see Table 2), by following this logic, respondents do not need to explicitly specify which political party gave them gifts (as they would by answering the question “*from which political party?*”) Instead, we ask whether respondents received a gift from a specific party (e.g. *during the last political campaign, did you receive a gift or favor from the PRI?*) and respondents only need to answer “yes” or “no.”³ As previously mentioned, this strategy also has the benefit of the entire interview not relying on a single filter question.

A benefit of non-experimental survey questions—unlike list experiments—is that it is possible to include a follow-up question intended to inquire about the specifics of the gift(s) voters received. This is consistent with Nichter’s (2014) recommendation for a check against false comprehension/judgement since non-clientelistic gifts can inflate the rates of reported vote-buying. Since parties tend to distribute a considerable amount of promotional materials during political campaigns (e.g., pens, pencils, t-shirts, etc.), we separate gifts that are not intended to buy the vote, a strategy also followed by Kiewiet de Jonge (2015).⁴ These types of goods are consistent with Nichter’s classification of “non-binding” goods that parties distribute “in the

³ In the results section of this paper, we test if (1) in an attempt to mitigate social desirability effects, some respondents might simply cover up “vote buying” practices by their party by mentioning opposition parties and (2) by being asked the “vote-buying” question multiple times some respondents might be forced to say “yes.”

⁴ For example, Kiewiet de Jonge’s (2015) analysis separates campaign giveaways, such as buttons, pins, calendars, hats, and t-shirts in Nicaragua, Mexico, Honduras, Uruguay, Chile, Bolivia, Guatemala, and Argentina.

hopes of generating goodwill that will yield electoral returns during the next election.” Unlike clientelist vote buying, since these gifts are part of the parties’ political communication strategy recipients do not commit to voting in a particular way in exchange for benefits. Particularly in the case of Mexico (but not exclusively), parties and candidates distribute campaign merchandise with party logos as a communication strategy. In fact, such promotional strategies are not illegal under Mexican law. Parties use public funding to pay for these gifts, which are handed out at campaign rallies. Parties also mail these gifts to voters’ households for free as a marketing strategy (Beltrán and Castro Cornejo 2019). In other words, there is no contingent exchange (or even implied conditionality), which constitutes an essential component of any core definition of vote buying (Nichter 2014).

The two different survey wordings lead to different results. Table 3 shows the proportion of respondents who self-reported receiving electoral gifts in the most recent vote-buying studies in Mexico. There are several important things to consider. First, the results of our surveys report a larger proportion of respondents receiving electoral gifts than other survey projects. For a direct comparison, it is possible to evaluate the difference between both question wordings about the 2012 Mexican presidential election. The 2012 National Electoral Study (CSES) included a filter question that estimated that 21% of the electorate received at least one electoral gift during the campaign. We conducted an original survey during the same time period relying on the multiple-question strategy aiming to assist in recall by asking respondents to remember each interaction they had with each political party.⁵ The multiple-question strategy estimates that 27% of the electorate receives at least one electoral gift (Table 4). While this data cannot establish cause and effect, it suggests that the structure of the question is a source of measurement error as it affects the proportion of voters who report receiving gifts even though the surveys were conducted during a very similar period of time, were nationally representative, and were conducted by the same polling firm, sharing the same sampling methodology. In the next section of this study, we present the results of a survey experiment in order to estimate cause and effect.

Second, while it is not the main focus of this paper, for transparency,⁶ we report in Table 3 the estimated proportion of respondents that received electoral gifts by list experiments included in the same studies. The table also reports the difference between vote buying estimates provided by list experiments versus by a direct question. This difference should be positive given that list experiments are expected to reduce social desirability bias (and respondents have more incentives to report such behavior). However, Table 3 shows that in each of the surveys we conducted during the 2012 and 2015 elections, direct questioning found a larger percentage of voters received electoral gifts than list experiments did. The difference between both

⁵ The 2012 National Electoral Study was conducted on July 13–19. The original survey was conducted on July 11–15. The same polling firm conducted both surveys.

⁶ In conversations with colleagues, we know for certain that many list experiments are not published when they provide unexpected results; therefore, we report the results for transparency and to highlight that sometimes list experiments do not seem to work in the expected way (consistent with recent literature: Holbrook and Krosnick 2010 and Coutts and Jann 2011).

Table 3 Results in recent studies (% of voters who received electoral gifts)

Study	Year	Election	Direct question		Includes “in exchange for your vote” (or similar)	Received gifts (%)		Difference (LE – DE) (%)
			Single (S) or multiple (M) question strategy	Direct question (DE)		List experiment (LE)		
Multiple-question strategy (Beltrán and Castro Comejo 2019)	2017	Gubernatorial ^a	M	19		Not included		
	2015 ^b	Legislative (CSES)	M	50		8		-42
		Gubernatorial (CSES)	M	41		2		-39
CSES	2012	Mayoral (CSES)	M	58		5		-53
	2012	Presidential	M	27		7% ^c		-14
Lawson et al. (2013)	2012	Presidential (CSES)	S	21		Not included		
	2012	Presidential	S	3 (1st wave) 5 (2nd wave)	Yes	8 (1st wave) 21 (2nd wave)		5 16
Kiewiet de Jonge (2015)	2009	Legislative	S	9	Yes	23		14

^aIn 2007, we conducted a survey to estimate vote-buying in one state: the State of Mexico

^bThe 2015 National Electoral Study is part of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES). The first survey focused on the legislative election and is representative at the national level (N = 2400). The second survey was conducted only in the states that held subnational elections: gubernatorial (N = 1,100) and mayoral (N = 1,300) elections. The vote buying questions were included in half of the sample

^cIn the 2012 presidential election, three list experiments were included (one list experiment for each major candidate). Since we suspected that including three list experiments during the survey would be too demanding, we only included one list experiment in the next survey projects

Table 4 Single question vs. multiple-question strategy (2012 presidential election)

2012 national electoral study (N = 2400)		2012 original survey (N = 1200)	
% Received at least one gift (%)		% Received at least one gift (%)	
Total (w/ filter question)	21	PAN	9
		PRI	20
		PRD	7
		Total (count)	27

Table 7 in the Appendix reports complete question wordings in English and Spanish

estimates is negative and significant. This difference relates to the high level of self-reported vote buying we obtain but also the fact that list experiment is not performing as theoretically expected (estimating larger prevalence of vote buying than direct questioning). In fact, these results are consistent with recent studies on sensitive survey techniques that find that list experiments provide unexpected results that contradict direct questioning or estimate negative prevalence of sensitive behavior (e.g. measuring voter turnout in Holbrook and Krosnick 2010; Coutts and Jann 2011).⁷ In fact, this is not uncommon in vote buying studies. Kiewiet de Jonge (2015) conducted list experiments in several Latin American countries and similarly found that direct questioning estimates a larger percentage of voters receiving electoral gifts than do list experiments (see Table 8 in the Appendix).⁸

As previously mentioned, these results suggest that non-experimental designs that take into account question wording and best practices in survey research can provide important information about vote buying in addition to list experiments. In the next section, in order to estimate the effects of question structure (our multiple-question strategy vs. filtering) as well as to include “in exchange for your vote” on self-reporting electoral gifts, we present the results of a survey experiment to be sure that confounding variables are not driving our findings.

⁷ These results are also consistent with recent studies that rely on sensitive survey techniques such as randomized response (RR). Bockenholt and van der Heijden (2007) find that the complexity of the method (and the cognitive taxing process required) can make randomized response (RR) difficult to use with populations with lower levels of education. Consistent with Bockenholt and van der Heijden (2007), we find that the list experiment in Mexico tends to underestimate engagement in this sensitive behavior among lower educated respondents (see Fig. 1 in the Appendix).

⁸ Kiewiet de Jonge (2015) finds that such differences are an outcome of variations in social desirability bias. These variations can be attributed to awareness of social norms about the acceptability of vote buying, sensitivity to interviewer perceptions of socioeconomic status, and variation in the types of goods distributed in different countries.

Survey Experiment Design

We conducted an original survey experiment during the 2017 gubernatorial election in the State of Mexico (Estado de México). This state is the most populous in Mexico and is historically a bastion of the PRI, where the party has never lost at the gubernatorial level. The State of Mexico is considered the “crown jewel of governorships” not only because it has the largest voter registration (11 million voters), but also because it serves as a major indicator of the parties’ electoral strength a year before the presidential election. As such, the PRI considered a victory in this state essential, using their historic machine politics (Magaloni 2006; Greene 2007; Langston 2017) to mobilize the electorate.

In order to estimate the proportion of voters who received electoral gifts, we fielded a survey experiment a week before election day (May 26–29). The face-to-face survey was conducted by the polling firm BGC Beltrán, Juárez y Asocs with a sample of 1000 respondents. The sample was divided into three randomly assigned groups, which vary the wording of the vote-buying question. Randomization guaranteed that all of the treatment groups in the sample were identical on average for both observable and unobservable characteristics. Accordingly, any systematic difference in respondents’ answers provides an estimate of the impact that the wording had on respondents’ probability of reporting electoral gifts (the treatments appear balanced across observed covariates, see Table 9 in the Appendix).

As in our previous studies, the first treatment includes a question about each political party, asking respondents if they received an electoral gift (four separate questions: PAN, PRI, PRD, and Morena). The second treatment includes the same wording but adds the phrase “*in exchange for your vote.*” Finally, the third treatment relies on the question wording used in most vote-buying studies, which includes a filter question (see Table 5).⁹

Results

First, we present the results from treatments 1 and 3 in order to isolate the effect of filtering. Consistent with the observational data reported in this paper and prior survey research studies, our question wording (treatment 1: direct questioning without a filter question) finds that a larger proportion of the electorate self-reports receiving electoral gifts compared to treatment 3, which relies on a filter question as most vote buying studies do: 19% versus 10%, a difference of 9% points. The differences are sizable and not due to random chance ($p < 0.01$, Table 5). Treatments 1 and 3 do not include the phrase “in exchange for your vote,” making them directly comparable.

⁹ Ideally, the experiment would have included a fourth condition, which would have had both the phrase “in exchange for” and the filter question. However, given the N of the survey, the study was too small to accommodate that condition. Given the findings, it is highly likely that such phrasing would have reported the least percentage of voters receiving electoral gifts.

Table 5 Survey experiment: question-wording effect (Mexico 2017) statistical significance compared to treatment 1

	Treatment 1 (N = 335)	Treatment 2 (N = 332)	Treatment 3 (N = 333)
	Our wording: DURING the current gubernatorial campaign, have you received a gift or favor from the [PARTY] candidate [NAME OF CANDIDATE'S] campaign?	Adding “ <i>in exchange for your vote</i> ” During the current gubernatorial campaign, have you received a gift or favor from the [PARTY] candidate [NAME OF CANDIDATE'S] campaign <i>in exchange for your vote</i> ?	Filter question: during the current gubernatorial campaign, did you receive a gift or favor from a political party or candidate?
% voters who received a gift	19%	11%***	10%***

***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.10

Table 7 in the Appendix reports question wordings in English and Spanish
 Table 10 in the Appendix reports the complete logistic regressions

A plausible interpretation of our results is that, by including multiple questions, some respondents may have provided inaccurate answers (e.g., reporting that they received gifts even when they did not). However, we believe that this was not the case. As previously mentioned, treatment 1 included a follow-up question that asked respondents what gifts they received. For example, 96% of respondents who self-reported receiving electoral gifts from the PRI were able to specify the gift (4% did not remember). This is also the case among respondents who reported receiving gifts from the PAN, PRD, and Morena (see Table 11 in the Appendix). In Table 11, we also report the results from the 2012 presidential election and 2015 midterm election which rely on the same survey strategy. The results are very similar: “don’t know” answers are minimal, with the vast majority of respondents specifying the gifts they received.

Another possibility is that by being asked about vote buying multiple times some respondents might feel forced to say “yes.” However, we have not found evidence to support this explanation. Among voters who received gifts, on average, they self-reported receiving 1.2 gifts (std dev = 0.4). In other words, 15% of voters reported receiving one gift and only 4% reported receiving two gifts (from two different parties) even though we included four independent questions asking if they received any gifts from the four major gubernatorial candidates. In Table 12 in the Appendix, we replicate this analysis with the data from the 2012 presidential election and the 2015 midterm election: the results did not substantially differ. For example, among voters who received gifts in the 2015 midterm election, on average, they self-reported receiving 2.2 gifts (std dev = 1.2), even though we included seven questions to help respondents remember whether they received an electoral gift from the seven political parties competing in that election.

A third alternative is that some respondents—particularly partisans—might try to cover up “vote buying” by their party by mentioning other parties’ clientelistic practices. The results, however, do not provide evidence of such behavior. In almost every case, voters were more likely to self-report receiving gifts from their preferred party in clientelistic exchanges. The only exception is the case of the PRI. Both PRI and MORENA partisans were equally likely to self-report receiving gifts from the PRI (see Table 13 in the Appendix). In Table 13, we also replicated this analysis with data from the 2012 presidential election and the 2015 midterm election: the results did not differ. Without exception, voters were more likely to self-report receiving gifts from their co-partisan candidate than from an opposition candidate or party. Therefore, given the lack of evidence from the different surveys conducted in Mexico, we are confident that the multiple-question strategy is not increasing bias based on voters’ partisanship: respondents do not avoid reporting clientelistic behavior by their co-partisan candidate and strategically reporting such practices by an opposition candidate/party—quite the contrary. In fact, these results are consistent with vote buying studies finding that parties tend to target partisans when delivering gifts during campaigns (Nichter 2008; Stokes et al. 2013). These results are also consistent with past survey research studies that suggest that filtering makes respondents less likely to answer survey questions since the structure of the question makes it easier for respondents to reply “no” and move on to another topic. As such, we are fairly confident that the question wording used in treatment 1 is closer to the

“true” proportion of voters who receive electoral gifts than the wording in treatment 3.

In order to test the effect of including “in exchange for your vote,” we compared treatments 1 and 2, which are identical except for this phrase. As expected, the difference between treatments 1 and 2 is statistically significant: 19% compared to 11% ($p < 0.01$; an 8% difference). These results show that respondents behave differently in response to the addition of “in exchange for your vote.” As previously anticipated, an important question relates to respondents’ ability to distinguish between gifts aimed at buying votes and those less likely to constitute a clientelistic exchange. For these purposes, we coded the responses to the follow-up question “what gift did you receive?” into two categories for each treatment condition: (1) electoral gifts that are likely to constitute a clientelistic exchange, following Nichter (2014), including gifts such as cash, *despensas* (groceries), gift cards,¹⁰ etc. and (2) campaign merchandise (t-shirts, hats, glasses, etc.), which are less likely to constitute vote buying. As we explained in the previous section, some gifts are used to buy votes but are merely part of a political communication strategy. In Mexico, parties tend to distribute significant amounts of campaign merchandise during political campaigns (e.g., pens, pencils, t-shirts with party logos, etc.), which is consistent with Nichter’s classification of “non-binding” goods. As previously mentioned, parties use public funding to pay for these gifts which are handed out at campaign rallies to attendees. Moreover, many of the items listed are often distributed by mail to voters’ households free of charge as a marketing strategy—not by brokers or campaign representatives—as found by recent research in Mexico (Beltrán and Castro Cornejo 2019). Therefore, the distribution of campaign merchandise seems to lack conditionality or even imply the conditionality necessary for a clientelistic exchange since there is no invitation or exchange when parties distribute these gifts, which constitutes an essential component of any definition of vote buying (Nichter 2014).

Although marginally referenced by voters (less than 1% reported social programs), we also include social programs even though post-election benefits are less frequently considered as vote-buying by the literature. However, since these types of gifts are commonly distributed in Mexico and many Latin American countries (Stokes et al. 2013; Diaz-Cayeros et al. 2016), we code those gifts as clientelistic goods. We provide further information about the gifts that were coded in the two categories in Table 14 in the Appendix. In the following analysis, we only consider the gifts distributed by the PRI because respondents rarely self-reported receiving gifts from the PAN,¹¹ PRD,¹² or Morena.¹³ Instead, most respondents reported receiving gifts from the PRI during the campaign (overall $N = 105$): treatment 1, 14% ($N = 48$); treatment 2, 9% ($N = 29$); treatment 3, 8% ($N = 28$).

¹⁰ During the campaign, the PRI distributed cards (“*tarjetas rosas*” or “pink cards”) which promised households a government sponsored stipend. The stipend was conditional on whether if the recipient of such a card voted for the PRI candidate. According to several news outlets, activists distributed those cards in exchange for voters’ personal information.

¹¹ PAN ($N = 13$): Treatment 1: 1% ($N = 4$); Treatment 2: 2% ($N = 6$); Treatment 3: 1% ($N = 3$).

¹² PRD ($N = 25$): Treatment 1: 5% ($N = 16$); Treatment 2: 1% ($N = 2$); Treatment 3: 2% ($N = 7$).

¹³ MORENA ($N = 6$): Treatment 1: 2% ($N = 6$); Treatment 2: 0% ($N = 0$); Treatment 3: 0% ($N = 0$).

Contrary to expectations that the phrase “in exchange for your vote” helps respondents improve comprehension, we do not find evidence to support this. Among voters who report receiving gifts, we find that the proportion of respondents that reports receiving campaign merchandise in treatments 1 and 2 does not differ substantially (59 and 63%, respectively). This is also the case regarding gifts that are more likely to constitute vote buying (58 and 45%, respectively) suggesting that respondents do not distinguish between clientelistic and non-clientelistic gifts, even when treatment 2 explicitly includes the phrase “in exchange for your vote.” It is important to highlight that the percentages do not add up to 100 since we accepted up to three responses.

Since we believe that these results constitute one of the main contributions of this research and in order to simplify interpretation (and be able to compare results across treatments), Table 6 reports the percentage of voters who received clientelistic gifts and campaign merchandise compared to the total number of respondents in each group. When excluding the phrase “in exchange for your vote” (treatment 1), we can conclude that 8.3% of voters received gifts that were likely to buy their vote (cash, gift cards, construction materials, etc.). In contrast, when adding the phrase “in exchange for your vote” (treatment 2), we estimate that 3.9% of voters received gifts aimed at buying their vote (half of the results estimated by treatment 1: $p < 0.05$). In other words, treatment 1 (8.3%) reports a higher vote-buying estimate than treatment 2 (3.9%) even though treatment 2 includes the phrase “in exchange for your vote.”

These findings suggest that the total N of electoral gifts is reduced by adding the phrase “in exchange for your vote” (fourth row in Table 6: total number of electoral gifts) but not gaining conceptual precision. The phrase “in exchange for your vote” does not make voters report receiving only those electoral gifts that constitute vote-buying even though this is the stated goal of including such a qualifier. Respondents in treatment 2, in fact, tend to report slightly more campaign merchandise than clientelistic gifts (third row, Table 6), even though the wording invited them to report only gifts aimed at buying their vote. This means that we are not gaining conceptual precision, but losing important pieces of information when adding such a phrase. This survey behavior is likely caused by the phrase priming voters to admit involvement in a sensitive behavior, which tends to increase non-response. These results also suggest that traditional survey strategies that include such a phrase provide not only lower rates of reported vote-buying (due to filtering), but also inflated rates since many respondents report receiving gifts that should be classified as non-binding gifts (promotional campaign merchandise)—even though the phrase “in exchange for your vote” invites respondents to only report gifts that were part of a clientelistic exchange.

An important consideration relates to the consequence of removing the phrase “in exchange for your vote,” which can lose the potential link (in respondents’ minds) between receiving a gift from a party and voting for it: the last chain of the clientelistic exchange. If respondents are strictly following the phrase, they should report

Table 6 Type of electoral gifts distributed by the PRI (among respondents in each treatment condition)

Question wording	Treatment 1. Without phrase (N=46) (%)	Treatment 2. Includes "in exchange for your vote" (N = 32) (%)
Statistical significance between treatment 1 and treatment 2		
Gifts that are more likely to constitute vote-buying (clientelistic exchange)	8.3**	3.9
Gifts that are less likely to constitute vote buying (campaign merchandise)	8.5	5.5
Difference between (clientelistic exchange – campaign merchandise)	-0.2	-1.6
Total electoral gifts	16.8	9.4

Treatment 3 reports only marginal responses to the open-ended question

Table 15 in the Appendix reports the complete logistic regressions

***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.10

gifts only if they received a gift in exchange for casting their vote for that party. However, as we report in Table 16 in the Appendix, voters self-report receiving a gift from a party without voting for it even when that phrase is included. In fact, vote choice does not substantively differ among voters who received gifts from the PRI in treatment 1 (in which the phrase is not included) and treatment 2 (which does include the phrase). As in the previous case, “in exchange for your vote” does not seem to add conceptual precision to the survey question; rather, the phrase decreases the percentage of voters who report receiving electoral gifts.

In summary, these results suggest that survey research strategies that rely on filter questions and use the phrase “in exchange for your vote” are problematic. In the first case, survey studies relying on filter questions significantly increase non-response since that particular survey strategy makes it easier for respondents to reply “no.” The inclusion of the phrase “in exchange for your vote” seems theoretically appropriate (since vote-buying constitutes an exchange); however, as found in this study, voters are not able to differentiate between receiving electoral gifts aimed at buying their votes in a clientelistic exchange from campaign merchandise that is part and parcel of a marketing strategy. By adding this phrase, recent vote-buying studies have inadvertently underestimated parties’ clientelistic outreach in Latin American elections. In contrast, when the question wording excludes this phrase, a higher percentage of respondents report receiving electoral gifts. With this information, researchers can evaluate if such exchanges are likely to constitute a clientelistic exchange, allowing them to report a more accurate vote buying estimate.

Discussion

Our findings contribute specifically to survey research studies and more broadly to the literature of comparative politics. Previous quantitative studies relying on survey data did not find vote buying to be as widespread in this region as previous qualitative studies have suggested. The findings based on our survey methodology are more consistent with cases studies that have highlighted the strong clientelistic linkages between parties and candidates in Latin America (Auyero 2000; Levitsky 2003; among others).

Our research cautions against the use of filter questions when measuring sensitive behaviors, as they make voters more likely to provide negative answers even though they have participated in a sensitive behavior. In turn, we suggest including direct questions that intend to assist in recall by asking respondents to remember each interaction, in this particular case with a political party, which makes respondents more likely to self-report receiving electoral gifts. Moreover, we find that qualifiers that are intended to improve comprehension do not make voters more likely to self-report receiving clientelistic gifts. Rather, they make respondents less likely to self-report receiving electoral gifts. Such qualifiers seem to suggest that a clientelistic exchange took place which may contribute to increasing social desirability bias.

Instead, we suggest that interviewers should register any type of gifts distributed by parties or candidates. With this information, researchers can discern if gifts are likely to constitute a clientelistic exchange or if they are “non-binding” goods that parties tend to distribute for free to promote their campaigns.

Future research should study the conditions under which a clientelistic conditionality emerges between brokers and voters. While survey studies can provide an estimate of the proportion of the electorate that receives electoral gifts, focus groups and/or ethnographic work can increase our understanding on the variation of this conditionality depending on the type of gifts reported by respondents. While this study operationalized electoral gifts as a dichotomous variable, it would be possible with qualitative research to understand it as a continuum from weak conditionality (pens, pencils, t-shirts, etc.) to higher levels of conditionality in which groceries, backpacks and school supplies, watches, construction materials, cash, and other commonly distributed gifts can be categorized. Qualitative research can also shed light on the perceived conditionality that voters attach to gifts, since it is likely that some voters—for example, depending on levels of socioeconomic status—differ from others in their subjective perceptions. However, regardless of the operationalization of such a conditionality, our study aims to decrease non-response—caused by filtering and the phrase “in exchange for your vote—so that survey studies can provide a more accurate depiction about the clientelistic linkages between voters and parties, specifically providing more information to researchers about the amount and type of electoral gifts distributed by candidates during campaigns.

Based on data collected in four surveys conducted in Mexico during different elections, our findings suggest that question wording shapes respondents’ willingness to self-report receiving electoral gifts. How this result generalizes to the rest of the region remains an open question. This study encourages further replication in other Latin American countries. However, we believe that the findings of this paper (e.g., experimental and non-experimental evidence) are sufficiently compelling so that it would be extremely surprising if question wording does not play any role in the rest of Latin America. Similarly, we believe that these findings also speak to other regions of the world. For example, Afrobarometer has included the following question to measure vote buying: “*And during the [YEAR] elections, how often (if ever) did a candidate or someone from a political party offer you something, like food or a gift, in return for your vote?*” Given the findings of this paper, it is highly likely that this question wording underestimates the proportion of voters who received electoral gifts. The question wording relies on a single question strategy and includes the phrase “in return for your vote.” This

study encourages further replication in additional countries and regions around the world.

Future studies may also consider alternative explanations for conditions that make respondents less likely to self-report receiving electoral gifts. For instance, it is plausible that respondents may be more reluctant to answer these questions in omnibus surveys—typically used in academic research—which are usually longer than the electoral polls on which our evidence relies. Omnibus surveys contain comprehensive modules beyond electoral behavior, including broader topics that survey research firms incorporate from several clients (multiple clients share the cost of conducting the survey). Respondents in these surveys may be more likely to choose answers that shorten the interview, particularly on sensitive topics—such as vote-buying—especially when the structure of the question allows them to be let off easily.

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Appendix

See Fig. 1 and Tables 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16.

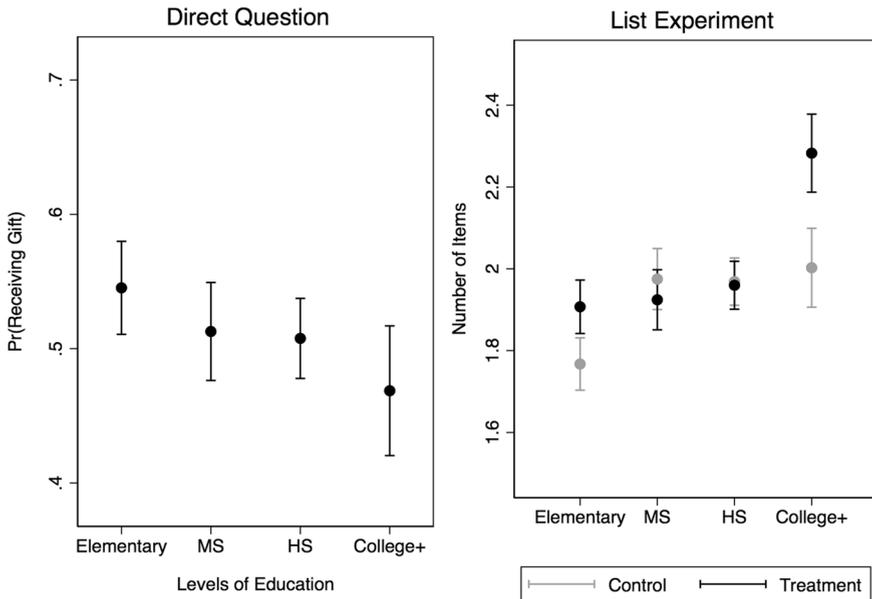


Fig. 1 Electoral gifts across levels of education (Mexico 2015, CSES). Direct question: dependent variable = receive at least one gift from any political party

Table 7 Question wordings

Survey	English	Spanish
Mexico 2012 (CSES)	During the last campaign, did any of the presidential candidates' campaign or political parties give you a gift? IF YES From which party or candidate?	Durante esta campaña electoral, ¿alguno de los equipos de campaña de los candidatos presidenciales o partidos políticos le dio algún regalo o no? SI/NO ¿De qué partido o candidato?
Mexico 2012 (original survey)	During the last political campaign, did you receive a gift or favor from the PAN candidate [NAME OF CANDIDATE]? Can you let me know what did you receive? [up to three responses] During the last political campaign, did you receive a gift or favor from the PRI-Green Party candidate [NAME OF CANDIDATE]? Can you let me know what did you receive? [up to three responses] During the last political campaign, did you receive a gift or favor from the PRD-PT-Movimiento Ciudadano candidate [NAME OF CANDIDATE]? Can you let me know what did you receive? [up to three responses]	Durante la campaña electoral pasada, ¿recibió usted algún regalo o ayuda de parte de la candidata del PAN, Josefina Vázquez Mota? ¿Podría decirme qué es lo que recibió? [Registrar hasta tres respuestas] ¿Recibió usted algún regalo o ayuda de parte del candidato del PRI y Partido Verde, Enrique Peña Nieto? ¿Podría decirme qué es lo que recibió? [Registrar hasta tres respuestas] Recibió usted algún regalo o ayuda de parte del candidato de la alianza PRD-PT-Movimiento Ciudadano, Andrés Manuel López Obrador? ¿Podría decirme qué es lo que recibió? [Registrar hasta tres respuestas]
Mexico 2015 (CSES)	During the legislative campaign, did you receive a gift or favor from any of the candidates running for Congress from the..... (POLITICAL PARTY)? [up to three responses] During the gubernatorial campaign, did you receive a gift or favor from the candidates nominated by the (POLITICAL PARTY)? [up to three responses] During the mayoral campaign, did you receive a gift or favor from the candidates nominated by the (POLITICAL PARTY)? [up to three responses]	Durante la campaña electoral para diputados federales, ¿recibió usted algún regalo o ayuda de parte de alguno de los candidatos a diputado federal del [PARTIDO POLITICO]? [Registrar hasta tres respuestas] Durante la campaña electoral para gobernador, ¿recibió usted algún regalo o ayuda de parte del candidato del [PARTIDO POLITICO] a gobernador? [Registrar hasta tres respuestas] Durante la campaña electoral para presidente municipal (jefe delegacional), ¿recibió usted algún regalo o ayuda de parte del candidato del [PARTIDO POLITICO] a presidente municipal? [Registrar hasta tres respuestas]

Table 7 (continued)

Survey	English	Spanish
Mexico 2017 (treatment 1)	<p>During the current gubernatorial campaign, have you received a gift or favor from the PAN candidate's [NAME OF CANDIDATE] campaign? Can you let me know what did you receive? [up to three responses]</p> <p>Have you received a gift or favor from the PRI-Green Party-New Alliance-Social Alliance candidate's [NAME OF CANDIDATE] campaign? Can you let me know what did you receive? [up to three responses]</p> <p>Have you received a gift or favor from the Morena candidate's [NAME OF CANDIDATE] campaign? Can you let me know what did you receive? [up to three responses]</p> <p>Have you received a gift or favor from the PRD candidate's [NAME OF CANDIDATE] campaign? Can you let me know what did you receive? [up to three responses]</p>	<p>Durante la actual campaña electoral para gobernador, ¿usted ha recibido algún regalo o ayuda de parte de la campaña de la candidata del PAN, Josefina Vázquez Mota? ¿Podría decirme qué es lo que recibió? [Registrar hasta tres respuestas]</p> <p>¿Usted ha recibido algún regalo o ayuda de parte de la campaña del candidato del PRI, Verde, Nueva Alianza y Encuentro Social, Alfredo del Mazo? ¿Podría decirme qué es lo que recibió? [Registrar hasta tres respuestas]</p> <p>¿Usted ha recibido algún regalo o ayuda de parte de la campaña de la candidata de MORENA, Delfina Gómez? ¿Podría decirme qué es lo que recibió? [Registrar hasta tres respuestas]</p> <p>¿Usted ha recibido algún regalo o ayuda de parte de la campaña del candidato del PRD, Juan Zepeda? ¿Podría decirme qué es lo que recibió? [Registrar hasta tres respuestas]</p>

Table 7 (continued)

Survey	English	Spanish
Mexico 2017 (treatment 2)	<p>During the current gubernatorial campaign, have you received a gift or favor from the PAN candidate's [NAME OF CANDIDATE] campaign <i>in exchange for your vote</i>? Can you let me know what did you receive? [up to three responses]</p> <p>Have you received a gift or favor from the PRI-Green Party-New Alliance-Social Alliance candidate's [NAME OF CANDIDATE] campaign <i>in exchange for your vote</i>? Can you let me know what did you receive? [up to three responses]</p> <p>Have you received a gift or favor from the Morena candidate's [NAME OF CANDIDATE] campaign <i>in exchange for your vote</i>? Can you let me know what did you receive? [up to three responses]</p> <p>Have you received a gift or favor from the PRD candidate's [NAME OF CANDIDATE] campaign <i>in exchange for your vote</i>? Can you let me know what did you receive? [up to three responses]</p>	<p>Durante la actual campaña electoral para gobernador, ¿usted ha recibido algún regalo o ayuda de parte de la campaña de la candidata del PAN, Josefina Vázquez Mota, A CAMBIO DE SU VOTO? ¿Podría decirme qué es lo que recibió? [Registrar hasta tres respuestas]</p> <p>¿Usted ha recibido algún regalo o ayuda de parte de la campaña del candidato del PRI, Verde y Nueva Alianza, Alfredo del Mazo, A CAMBIO DE SU VOTO? ¿Podría decirme qué es lo que recibió? [Registrar hasta tres respuestas]</p> <p>¿Y usted ha recibido algún regalo o ayuda de parte de la campaña de la candidata de MORENA, Delfina Gómez, A CAMBIO DE SU VOTO? ¿Podría decirme qué es lo que recibió? [Registrar hasta tres respuestas]</p> <p>Durante la actual campaña electoral para gobernador, ¿usted ha recibido algún regalo o ayuda de parte de la campaña del candidato del PRD, Juan Zepeda, A CAMBIO DE SU VOTO? ¿Podría decirme qué es lo que recibió? [Registrar hasta tres respuestas]x</p>
Mexico 2017 (treatment 3)	<p>During the current gubernatorial campaign, have you received a gift or favor from any political party or candidate? IF YES Can you let me know what did you receive? [up to three responses]</p> <p>From which political parties or candidates?</p>	<p>Durante la actual campaña electoral para gobernador, ¿usted ha recibido algún regalo o ayuda de parte de algún partido o candidato? SI/NO ¿Podría decirme qué es lo que recibió [Registrar hasta tres respuestas] ¿Qué partidos o candidatos le dieron estos regalos o ayudas? [Registrar todas las respuestas]</p>

Table 8 Direct questions and list experiments results in recent studies (Kiewiet de Jonge 2015)

Study	Country	Election	Direct question		Received Gifts (%)		Difference (LE – DE) (%)
			Single (S) or multiple (M) question strategy	Includes “in exchange for your vote” (or similar):	Direct question (DE) (%)	List experiment (LE) (%)	
Kiewiet de Jonge (2015)	NIC (2011)	General	S	Yes	1	8	7
	ARG (2011)	Presidential	S	Yes	1	7	6
	GUA (2011)	General	S	Yes	3	14	11
	BOL (2009)	Legislative	S	Yes	5	5	0
	BOL (2010)	General	S	Yes	8	0	-8
	CHI (2009)	General	S	Yes	6	1	-5
	URU (2009)	Presidential	S	Yes	1	-2	-3
	HON (2009)	General	S	Yes	4	22	18
	MEX (2009)	Legislative	S	Yes	9	23	14

Table 9 Balance across groups

Multinomial logistic regression		
DV: treatment groups		
Category base: treatment 3 w/filter question		
	State of Mexico	
	(1) Without "In exchange for your vote"	(2) Including "In Exchange for your vote"
Female	0.12 (0.16)	0.06 (0.16)
College +	-0.20 (0.21)	-0.07 (0.20)
Age 26-40	0.05 (0.23)	0.04 (0.23)
Age 41-60	-0.24 (0.23)	-0.13 (0.22)
Age 61 +	0.02 (0.26)	-0.30 (0.27)
Constant	0.01 (0.22)	0.05 (0.21)
Observations	999	999
Pseudo R ²	0.00	0.00

Standard errors in parentheses

***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.1

Table 10 Question wording effect (State of Mexico)

Logistic regression	
DV = receive/did not receive any gifts	
	Gifts
Treatment 2	-0.59*** (0.22)
Treatment 3	-0.72*** (0.23)
Constant	-1.47*** (0.14)
Observations	1000
Pseudo R ²	0.02

Standard errors in parentheses

***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.10

Table 11 Open-ended question: “what did you receive?”

% of “don’t know” responses OR unspecified gift

	2012	2015	2017 (treatment 1)
Number of questions	3	7	3
PAN	1%	2%	0%
PRI	1%	2%	4%
PRD	0%	3%	0%
Morena	–	4%	–
Green Party	–	2%	–
Mov Ciudadano	–	4%	–
Other	–	2%	–
Mean (among voters who received at least one gift)	1.3 gifts receive (std dev = 0.6)	2.2 gifts received (std dev = 1.2)	1.2 gifts received (std dev = 0.4)

Table 12 Number of gifts received during the campaign (direct question)

	2012	2015	2017 (treatment 1)
Number of questions	3	7	3
Cero gifts	73%	49%	81%
One gift	20%	18%	15%
Two gifts	6%	17%	4%
Three gifts	2%	10%	–
Four gifts	–	4%	–
Five gifts	–	1%	–
Six gifts	–	1%	–
Seven gifts	–	0%	–
Mean (among voters who received at least one gift)	1.3 gifts received (std dev = 0.6)	2.2 gifts received (std dev = 1.2)	1.2 gifts received (std dev = 0.4)

Table 13 Number of gifts received during the campaign (direct question)

Mexico 2017: State of Mexico (treatment 1)

Received gifts from...	Party ID				
	PAN (6%)	PRI (25%)	PRD (10%)	Morena (11%)	Indep (45%)
PAN	6	3	2	0	0
PRI	18	23	15	24	7
PRD	0	6	22	3	3
Morena	0	6	0	4	0

Mexico 2015: midterm election

Received gifts from...	Party ID				
	PAN (16%)	PRI (28%)	PRD (11%)	Other (10%)	Indep (37%)
PAN	40	22	18	27	14
PRI	29	48	31	38	28
PRD	14	13	39	20	13
Green Party	19	24	23	34	22
Morena	3	6	7	14	6
Mov Ciudadano	5	5	6	9	6
Other	1	2	3	5	1

In 2015, Morena participated for the first time in a national election. Only 2% of voters self-identified with that party. In that same year, only 2% of voters self-identified with the Green Party. Only 4% of voters self-identified with Mov Ciudadano and other minor parties.

Mexico 2012: Presidential Election

The party identification question was not included in the questionnaire. The following table presents results across vote choice (as a proxy). The results remain the same: most respondents self-report receiving gifts from their preferred candidate

Received gifts from...	Vote choice		
	PAN (22%)	PRI (47%)	PRD (23%)
PAN	15	8	8
PRI	18	25	24
PRD	6	6	14

Table 14 Type of gifts distributed by parties (Mexico 2017: State of Mexico)

Examples	
Gifts that are more likely to constitute vote-buying (clientelistic exchange)	Groceries (despensas), gift cards, cash, money, "economic support," social programs, and construction material
Gifts that are less likely to constitute vote buying (campaign merchandise)	Bags, t-shirts, hats, glasses, and umbrellas

Table 15 Question wording effect (State of Mexico)

Logistic regression		
DV = receive/did not receive any gifts		
	(1) Vote buying GIFTS	(2) Campaign merchandise GIFTS
“In exchange for your vote”	- 0.75** (0.34)	- 0.47 (0.31)
Constant	- 1.65*** (0.48)	- 1.91*** (0.46)
Observations	666	666
Pseudo R ²	0.02	0.01

Standard errors in parentheses

***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.10

Table 16 Among voters who receive electoral gifts from the PRI (Mexico 2017: State of Mexico)

Vote choice	Treatment 1 (N = 335) During the current gubernatorial campaign, have you received a gift or favor from the PRI candidate Alfredo del Mazo’s campaign?	Treatment 2 (N = 332) During the current gubernatorial campaign, have you received a gift or favor from the PRI candidate Alfredo del Mazo’s campaign <i>in exchange for your vote?</i>
PAN	13%	11%
PRI	38%	38%
PRD	10%	20%
Morena	26%	24%
Other	7%	2%
Non-response	7%	5%
Total	100%	100%

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