Clientelism and Indigenous Identity in Mexico:

The Experience of Vote-Buying Practices Among Indigenous Populations

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A Seniors Honors Thesis Submitted to the Department of Political Science

University of California, San Diego

March 30th 2025

Acknowledgments

First, I am eternally grateful to my thesis advisor, Simeon Nichter, whose work on clientelism inspired the content of this thesis. His knowledge of the field, advice, and words of wisdom truly helped me in the writing process. Thank you for all your incredible resources and willingness to walk through this new process with me, week after week, even when I struggled.

I would also like to thank Professor James Fowler and Lagina Gause for their support and expertise throughout this seminar.

To Alex Zhao and Tereza Petrovicova, PhD candidates, whose assistance on coding and analysis helped me tremendously as I maneuvered my way through STATA regressions. Thank you for making the complexities of coding less frightening as I continued to learn.

I would like to thank my dear friends and sisters who pushed and motivated me throughout this process, who dedicated their time to listening to my ideas and never once doubted me. LML.

I would like to thank Jedidiah Lingenfelter for his support and encouragement, for reading all of my drafts and identifying areas for improvement.

Finally, thank you to my Mom, Dad, and Brother for supporting me throughout University and this thesis. Their motivation and push led me to write this thesis; I could not have done it without them.

This thesis is dedicated to the Indigenous people of Mexico,

Auh ayc polihuiz ayc ylcahuiz yn oquichihuaco yn intlillo yn intlapallo yn intenyo yn imitolloca yn imilnamicoca

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1. Introduction

Clientelism remains a widespread political practice in which goods or services are exchanged for a vote (Hicken 2011). This complex political bond is founded on a mutual agreement in which a patron, an individual seeking to purchase a vote – whether it be a politician or broker – provides material benefits such as money or health care in exchange for the vote of a client (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 2002). In this transaction, the patron holds leverage over a client as they remain in control of the goods and services a client might need (Roniger 2009). Clientelism often hurts democratic processes as a citizen's vote may become conditional on the availability of benefits given by a patron; instead of voting on the basis of a politician's overall performance. In other words, the vote becomes a quid pro quo (Roniger 2004).

The exchange of goods and services for a vote is not a new practice within Mexico, as clientelism is often prevalent in elections (Stokes 2021). As noted by Cantú (2019), the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) distributed gift cards to voters and told them that the gift cards would be activated if they won that election, offering an incentive to vote for the party by providing a benefit. However, this case is just one of many that have been recorded within the Mexican political system. Indeed, clientelism, and characteristics such as poverty associated with these exchanges, are well documented. However, there remains a marginalized group within Mexico that is rarely discussed in the literature regarding clientelism in Mexico: Indigenous citizens.

Indigenous Mexicans are one of the many ethnic groups within the diverse nation of Mexico; however they remain one of the most discriminated and marginalized groups within the country (Flores, Navas, Rodrigues, Vaquez 2024). Despite making up almost a quarter of the

Mexican population (INEGI 2020), there remains little literature about Indigenous individuals and elections, even more so on the effects of clientelism. As the Indigenous population remains a significant proportion of the population, it is essential to understand their political dynamics within Mexico and how these dynamics might affect various aspects of their lives and influence election campaigns, participation, and outcomes.

This thesis seeks to address the literature gap by exploring the relationship between clientelism and Indigenous status in Mexico. My research focuses on indigenous populations and factors such as poverty, education, and rural residency, which the literature suggests are key factors correlated with a higher likelihood of being involved in clientelist exchanges. As stated by Flores-Crespo (2007), Indigenous populations are more likely to suffer from low income. Lack of accessibility to education, and residing in more rural and isolated locations, may render Indigenous individuals more vulnerable to clientelism and vote-buying practices. Using regression analysis, I will test hypotheses regarding the relationships between these characteristics, clientelism, and Indigenous status. Furthermore, this thesis will explore clientelism within Indigenous majority municipalities, to examine whether municipalities in which many Indigenous reside may be better equipped to protect their Indigenous citizens from clientelist exploitation.

By analyzing these factors and possible determinants of clientelism, this study explores whether Indigenous citizens are more likely to be targeted by clientelist exchanges, relative to non-indigenous citizens. I will contribute to the literature by analyzing Indigenous susceptibility and examining the factors of income, education, and rurality as predictors of clientelism in Mexico. This analysis aims to provide broader insights into the correlates of clientelist exchanges, and whether lessons from abroad apply to Mexico.

For the purposes of this thesis, it is essential to discuss what determines whether or not one is Indigenous. Throughout the history of Mexico, many definitions have been made regarding what renders one Indigenous, including the language spoken by the individual (Villarreal 2014). But using language as an identifier of ethnicity is problematic, because those without sufficient proficiency in an Indigenous language are often not counted as Indigenous, despite their Indigenous background (Villarreal 2014). So, for the purposes of this thesis, I will use data regarding self-identification from Mexico's census data. My thesis, however, is not meant to take a firm stand on the definition of Indigenous status, but rather to provide insight about the effects of clientelism amongst the Indigenous population. However, it is important to note that other researchers may employ different definitions, based on language for identification or other factors.

Nevertheless, this thesis aims to explore further the interactions between Indigenous populations and politicians, to deepen our understanding of clientelist exchanges within this community. Specifically, to understand more thoroughly the relationship between Indigenous status and the receipt of clientelist handouts, as well as between Indigenous status and correlates found by the literature to be associated with an increased likelihood of involvement in clientelism. By conducting this study, I hope to create new avenues for research within the study of Indigenous populations in Mexico, shedding light on experiences Indigenous Mexicans face, especially regarding elections and corruption.

2. Literature Review

Clientelism is deeply ingrained in the political fabric of many institutions, including Mexico, by shaping electoral outcomes and reinforcing power imbalances through the exchange of goods and services. While existing literature writes extensively on clientelism and the characteristics most noted to increase the likelihood of experiencing clientelism, such as poverty, education, and rurality, it largely (though not exclusively) overlooks whether it is more prevalent among Indigenous populations. In a research study done by Johnson (2019), it is suggested through survey panels that ethnicity and darker complexion are correlated with a higher likelihood of clientelist exchanges, causing electoral discrimination amongst darker-skinned individuals and their governments, in particular within Indigenous and Black communities in Latin America. As the study explains, these communities remain stunted in their representation within their government, and clientelist practices targeting them due to their complexion widen this representation gap. However, this study accounts for darker-skinned individuals within the broader scope of Latin America, not Mexico.

As Johnson's research accounts for multiple countries with a strong focus on skin tones, this study aims to focus on Indigenous groups in Mexico -- regardless of their skin color. Indigenous communities are diverse and the color of their skin, language, and local culture varies from one region to another. So, although Johnson’s research on skin tone helps to motivate the study of whether there are higher rates of clientelism amongst Indigenous citizens, it does not account for the diversity and the multitude of Indigenous groups, specifically within Mexico.

2.1 Clientelism In Mexico

Mexico and its politicians are no strangers to clientelism. As reflected in the 2012 Mexican Panel Study, 63% of respondents believed that politicians buy votes in their communities (Nichter and Palmer-Rubin 2015). As mentioned in the Introduction, Mexico's PRI party was found to be distributing gift cards for votes, a practice mirrored by opposing parties despite criticizing the PRI for the same methods (Cantú 2019). However, these practices are not isolated to the 2012 election; clientelism was a heavy contributor to the PRI's 71-year reign over Mexico from 1929 to 2000 (Stokes 2021). The PRI relied extensively on clientelism, patronage, and voter fraud to remain in control. Even as the PRI's grip on Mexican politics loosened, clientelism remains a feature of Mexican politics (Stokes 2021).

Research suggests that clientelism is more common in developing nations due to higher rates of poverty and economic dependence (Hickens 2011). As Levy (2001) mentioned, Mexico has experienced past and current struggles within its development and democracy, particularly the country's economic struggle and the poverty Mexican citizens face. In Mexico, over 43% of the population faces poverty (World Bank 2023), which may increase the chance of clientelism exchanges within the country. However, Nichter (2018) notes that due to poverty and economic vulnerability within Mexico, citizens may rely on vote-buying to afford medical expenses or basic necessities such as groceries. Therefore, as also written in Ravanilla and Hicken (2023), impoverished people are more likely to be targeted by clientelism, and with the evidence above, Mexico overall experiences a higher likelihood of clientelism due to income and economic status alone.

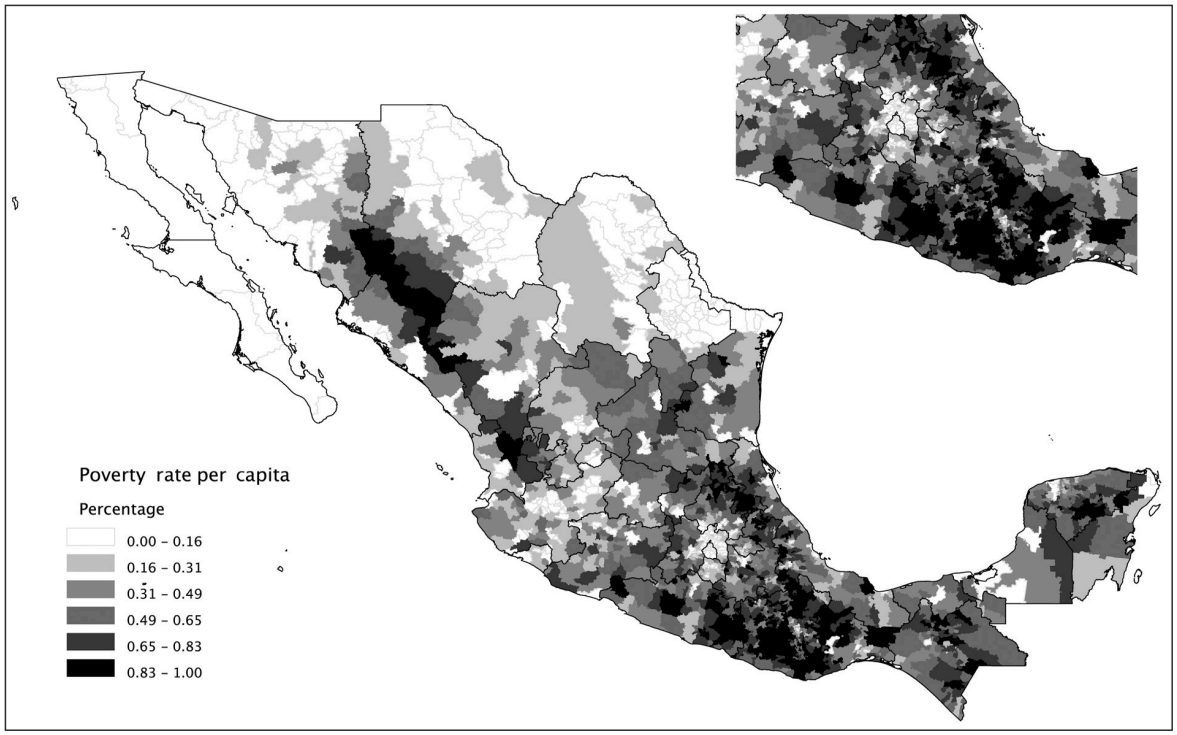
This dynamic between poverty and the need for material goods perpetuates the cycle of clientelism, shaping the role of the political landscape for over five decades. By situating

Indigenous individuals within this broader context, my thesis seeks to explore and expand on the experience of clientelism in marginalized communities.

2.2 Indigenous Demographics

Indigenous people in Mexico make up a significant number of those who live in poverty, as well as those who reside in rural locations. In the case of Indigenous peoples in Mexico, municipalities with high Indigenous populations tend to disproportionately have extreme and moderate forms of poverty, and they also tend to be rural (Patrinos, H.A., and Panagide, A. 1994).

Figure 1. Poverty Per Capita (Coneval 2002)



As shown in the figure above, poverty is highest in Southern and Northern Mexico, which are also the states with the highest percentage of Indigenous people (Diaz-Cayeros et al., 2016). These states include Oaxaca, Yucatan, and Chiapas, where the respective Indigenous population is 70%, 65%, and 37% of the state population (INPI 2020). This geographical and socioeconomic distribution of poverty furthermore helps to explain why Indigenous people experience poverty at disproportionately higher rates compared to their non-indigenous

counterparts (World Bank 2023). Given this poverty, Indigenous citizens may be more likely to experience clientelism, as suggested by the broader literature on the role of poverty in clientelism (e.g., Stokes 2005).

Beyond economic hardship, Indigenous peoples are also underrepresented in the Mexican legislature and government as a whole. As the Latin American Public Opinion Survey (LAPOP) reports, despite making up a significant portion of Mexico's total population, Indigenous people only constitute about 2.8% of total seats, forming a representation gap of 81% (2016). This representation gap reflects systemic political marginalization, which clientelism may further exacerbate as clientelism can impact the democratic representative process (Lovell and Spirova 2019).

2.3 The Role of Indigenous Majority Districts

Before discussing clientelism more extensively, I first provide context about Indigenous-majority districts, in order to provide context for why they might plausibly help to insulate Indigenous citizens from clientelism (discussed below).

Usos y Costumbres is a popular form of government within Indigenous-majority states such as Oaxaca, where governance occurs through community assemblies (Eisenstadt 2022). Within this framework, traditional forms of governance are used in place of general Mexican politics, where leaders are selected through community assemblies and councils of elders (2022). This traditional system of governance emphasizes collective action and community participation that can more effectively govern indigenous majority districts than modern political systems (Magaloni et al. 2019).

In a study on *Usos y Costumbres* conducted by Magaloni et al. (2019), they found that municipalities governed with traditional frameworks had better mediation, which led to the equal distribution of resources among Indigenous communities. Along with an equal distribution of goods, communal decision-making was a positive experience for individuals within the municipality. Another study by Magaloni (2021) showed the benefits of traditional forms of government due to the resilience that Indigenous communities faced against corruption via cartels and police forces. Overall, using *Usos y Costumbres* may benefit Indigenous populations by protecting them from corruption and bringing fairness to resource distribution, all of which could arguably help prevent clientelism within these communities.

3. Theory

In this thesis, I explore whether Indigenous Mexicans are more likely to experience clientelism than non-Indigenous Mexicans, and also explore specific characteristics that the literature suggests may influence the likelihood of receiving clientelist benefits. More specifically, my core hypotheses are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Indigenous Mexicans are more likely to have demographic characteristics associated with a greater likelihood of receiving clientelist benefits.

This hypothesis explores whether Indigenous Mexicans are more likely to have demographic traits that the existing literature suggests are associated with greater involvement with clientelism. To evaluate this claim, I build on the literature to propose three sub-hypotheses that focus on three specific demographic characteristics: poverty, low education, and rural residency. By analyzing each of these sub-hypotheses, I aim to assess Hypothesis 1:

Hypothesis 1a: Indigenous Mexicans are more likely to be poor, and poor individuals are more likely to receive clientelist benefits.

As written in Nichter (2018), clientelism is most prevalent in low-income countries, where politicians distribute benefits disproportionately to poor citizens. This relationship can be due to factors such as the decreasing marginal utility of income and risk aversion. These two concepts imply that poor citizens value material benefits more than their ideological preferences. Individuals would rather have a guaranteed outcome in the form of immediate material benefits, over a more significant outcome that may not be certain, such as policy change and reform (Magaloni 2006). Stokes (2005) also provides similar findings in which individuals who

experience high rates of poverty are more susceptible to vote-buying tactics, which offer material benefits that may fulfill short-term survival needs such as groceries and medication.

According to studies conducted by the National Council of the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (Coneval), Indigenous populations within Mexico are nearly twice as likely to experience both extreme and moderate forms of poverty compared to non-indigenous Mexicans. Precisely, while 9% of the non-indigenous population experiences extreme forms of poverty, over 41.4% of Indigenous experience the same. Similarly, moderate poverty affects 41.4% of Indigenous people, compared to 37.4% of non-Indigenous Mexicans. These statistics highlight the disproportionate economic disadvantages faced by Indigenous communities.

Given the established literature and these descriptive statistics, Hypothesis 1a examines whether – in the survey data I examine – Indigenous Mexicans are indeed more likely to be poor, and poor individuals are indeed more likely to receive clientelist benefits.

Hypothesis 1b: Indigenous Mexicans are more likely to have low levels of education, and Mexicans with low levels of education are more likely to receive clientelist benefits

A study on Indonesia by Pradhanawati, Tawakkal, and Garner (2018) suggests that individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to reject clientelist benefits due to the concept of "voting with your conscience," compared to lower-educated individuals. Formal levels of education in that study are also strongly related to lower tolerance of corruption. Analogously, Mexicans with higher education levels may be more likely to be less tolerant towards clientelism and view these exchanges negatively. Also as noted in a study by Mizuno and Okazawa (2025) they suggest the concept of a weak-state trap, were politicians rely heavily on clientelism instead of investing properly into factors such as public education which keeps individuals poorly educated and reliant on clientelism, hence creating a weak state.

According to Coneval (2012), Indigenous Mexicans are less likely to complete a primary or secondary education compared to their non-Indigenous peers. In other words, Indigenous Mexicans are more likely to experience lower levels of education. Coneval also suggests that this educational disadvantage stems from the absence of institutional initiatives to improve their access to quality education. An example is the state of Chiapas, which has one of the highest populations of Indigenous individuals within Mexico, but due to historical government neglect has low accessibility to education Sanchez (2023).

Given the literature's findings and these descriptive statistics, Hypothesis 1b examines whether – in the survey data I examine – Indigenous Mexicans are indeed more likely to have low education, and individuals with low education are indeed more likely to receive clientelist benefits.

Hypothesis 1c: Indigenous Mexicans are more likely to live in rural areas, and Mexicans in rural areas are more likely to receive clientelist benefits

Stokes (2005) and Nichter (2008) explain that communities in small rural municipalities and towns are more likely to be targeted by clientelism. This is due to the notion that communities found in more isolated areas can more easily be monitored by patrons, which provides cost-effective targets of clientelism. As these towns have fewer residents, it is easier to establish which person might hold a specific political belief, making the task of buying an individual's vote more accessible.

According to a study conducted by Bada and Fox (2021), census data in 2010 reveals 61% of the Indigenous population in Mexico lived in predominantly rural municipalities. Almost a quarter of the rural population was made up of Indigenous people, whose areas also experienced low rates of migration. An example is the state of Oaxaca, where over 60% of their population

self-identifies as Indigenous. This state is known to be one of the world's most rural and isolated regions (World Bank 2013). This provides further evidence that Indigenous people within Mexico reside in rural areas.

Given the literature's findings and these descriptive statistics, Hypothesis 1c examines whether – in the survey data I examine – Indigenous Mexicans are indeed more likely to have lived in rural areas, and individuals who live in rural areas are indeed more likely to receive clientelist benefits.

Hypothesis 2: Across Mexico, Indigenous citizens are more likely to receive clientelist benefits than non-Indigenous citizens with similar demographic characteristics.

Next, I hypothesize that even when holding the demographic characteristics of income, education, and rural residency constant, Indigenous individuals will experience higher rates of clientelism than non-Indigenous Mexicans. Historically, Indigenous individuals have faced systematic marginalization since the formation of Mexico, resulting in political and economic disadvantages. The Mexican government has made minimal efforts to both acknowledge and protect Indigenous identity, instead favoring policies that would create a more homogenous population with Mexico (Muñoz 2015). An example of these minimal efforts is their limited institutional protection, which can be seen by the failure of the 1996 COCOPA agreement. This agreement sought to define Indigenous self-determination and political rights; however, politicians and the Mexican government fell short in its implementation, which left Indigenous communities unsatisfied and unprotected (Cultural Survival).

This lack of political protection may lead Indigenous communities and individuals to be more prone to clientelist exchanges, as little is done to protect them from the already overwhelming disadvantages that can make them a target to clientelism. For these reasons,

Hypothesis 2 examines whether – in the survey data I examine – Indigenous Mexicans are more likely to receive clientelist benefits, even when holding the demographic variables discussed above constant.

Hypothesis 3: In municipalities with a higher population of Indigenous citizens, Indigenous citizens are less likely to receive clientelist benefits than Indigenous citizens elsewhere.

This hypothesis considers not just a citizen's characteristics, but also a key municipal-level variable: the share of the population that is Indigenous. As noted above, an important study by Magaloni, Cayeros, and Ruiz (2020) discusses the concept of *Usos y Costumbres,* in which citizens are in charge of provisioning goods and conflict mediation as a form of participatory government. From this research, there is evidence to suggest that Indigenous-majority districts governed by traditional practices exhibit more effective provision of goods, accountability, and community cooperation, which leads to beneficial decision-making and better voting representation. This form of self-governance used in Indigenous-majority municipalities may in turn protect Indigenous individuals from clientelism. In this system, governance is provided by the community and local councils, not by the Mexican government. Collective decision-making and emphasis on community welfare may be associated with a more significant challenge for patrons to buy votes, as it may be harder to exploit a community that governs itself. As such, I predict that Indigenous individuals in Indigenous-majority municipalities will be less likely to experience clientelism than Indigenous individuals elsewhere.

4. Methods

4.1 Data

To test these hypotheses quantitatively, I analyze data from the 2014 Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), a prominent dataset that provides a direct question about the frequency of clientelist exchanges. This survey, conducted by door-to-door interviews administered across all 31 states and the federal district, provides a comprehensive view of clientelism in Mexico. It provides information on key variables and about each respondent's Indigenous identification.

To account for data within states and municipalities regarding the percentage of the Indigenous population, I use census data from the Mexican National Institute of Indigenous Peoples (INPI). This data set provides official documentation on the number of individuals who do or do not self-identify as Indigenous within each municipality and state. This census data is essential for Hypothesis 3, which considers whether each municipality in the LAPOP data set is an Indigenous or non-Indigenous majority.

4.2 Variables

The key variables employed in this study are as follows:

- *Received Clientelist Benefit*: My key dependent variable is whether the participants surveyed have ever received a material benefit in exchange for their vote. More specifically, "And thinking about the last presidential elections of 2012, did anyone offer you a favor, gift, or benefits in exchange for your vote?" To facilitate the analysis, I employ a binary variable coded 1 if the participant received a benefit, and 0 if the participant did not.
- Indigeneity: Whether one identifies as Indigenous is my key independent variable for this study. To use this variable from its corresponding question, a new binary variable was generated: those who did not identify as Indigenous were coded as 0, and those who did were coded as 1. In the survey there are multiple categories in which a participant could choose from such as White, Mestizo, Black, and Mulatto which were all put in the category of 0.

The two variables above will be used within all regressions and models to test hypotheses. They are essential in determining whether Indigenous respondents experience clientelism, and if they have a higher likelihood of these experiences compared to individuals who are not Indigenous. These two variables provide insights into clientelism among Indigenous citizens. Next, I introduce three controls:

- Monthly Income: To test Hypothesis 1a, this variable proxies a participant's poverty level by the monthly income received, which ranges from zero to more than 11,150 pesos per month or $552 U.S. dollars.

- Years of Education: To test Hypothesis 1b, this variable reflects the level of education of the respondent. The years range from no schooling to technical/university level.
- Rurality: Respondents of the survey were coded as rural or urban by the individual conducting the survey. The definition used for whether an area is rural or urban was determined by the Mexican government, as noted in the questionnaire. If an individual lives in a rural area, they are coded as 1; otherwise, they are coded as 0.

These three variables are the primary control variables used in all table regressions and models. They are used to determine whether these characteristics are associated with higher levels of clientelism generally and whether Indigenous individuals disproportionately have these characteristics. Another key variable is: Indigenous-majority District: This variable is from the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples of the Mexican government. It reveals how many Indigenous people reside in each municipality and state. This variable is used to explore Hypothesis 3, by generating an interaction term with Indigeneity (see below). In particular, I examine whether municipalities surveyed by LAPOP have a population of 50% Indigenous or more.

Controls

In addition, several other variables are used to control for other factors besides those stated in the hypotheses, which may also affect clientelism. It is essential to consider these variables to avoid possible omitted variables bias, and they may provide additional insights.

- Gender: In the survey, participants answered whether their gender. This binary variable is coded as 1 for female and 0 for male.
- Age: The questionnaire asked respondents what year they were born in; this variable was then recorded to show their age instead of birth year.

4.3 Models

This study employs Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regressions, using linear probability models (LPMs) to test hypotheses. For robustness, numerous specifications include municipal or state-level fixed effects. The dependent variable (whether an individual received clientelist handouts) is binary.

One important step in this study is the inclusion of municipal or state fixed effects to account for factors that vary across – but not within – districts. For instance, political or judicial institutions that differ across municipalities or states may influence clientelism within these areas. By including municipal or state fixed effects, the analysis can provide further insight and reduce concerns – but does not eliminate them altogether – regarding omitted variables bias that may affect the observed relationship between Indigenous identity and clientelism.

In Model 1, I employ an OLS regression model, which includes key independent variables of income, education, and rural residence, examining their association with (a) Indigenous identification and (b) the receipt of clientelist benefits. These variables are used to test Hypothesis 1 and its three corresponding components (Hypotheses 1a, 1b and 1c). Municipal or state fixed effects are included in the specification accounting for any possible unobserved factors that are constant across respondents within the district. Next, Model 2 uses OLS regression models to examine Hypothesis 2, regarding whether Indigenous status is associated with the receipt of clientelist benefits. More specifically, it examines if, while holding the variables above constant, indigenous peoples are more likely to receive clientelist benefits than non-indigenous survey participants.

To test Hypothesis 3, Model 3 introduces the variable of Indigenous-majority districts[1] and employs the following interaction term:

$$\text{Indigenous} \times \text{Indigenous Majority District}$$

The variable Indigenous-majority district contains municipalities with at least 50% of their population as Indigenous. To create the interaction term, I used the variables Indigenous and Indigenous Majority District, in order to examine whether the association between clientelism and Indigenous individuals differs across municipalities with high versus low shares of Indigenous citizens. This regression includes state fixed effects.

[1] District and Municipality are used interchangeably in the study.

5. Results and Discussion

Before interpreting the regression results, the table below contextualizes the variables used within each regression to test the hypotheses. The summary statistics table provides statistics for both independent and dependent variables. The categorical variables within the dataset, such as Indigenous identity, gender, and rural residence, are described using binary terms. However, several other variables are continuous, including monthly income and age.

The summary statistics also reveal disparities in the number of respondents for each question corresponding to the variable. The table indicates that the number of observations varies as not every person surveyed responded to each question. This discrepancy could affect the outcomes of the regressions.

Table 1: Summary Statistics of Key Variables

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Received Clientelist Benefits	1535	0.15	0.36	0	1
Indigenous	1535	0.11	0.31	0	1
Age	1529	40.85	15.96	18	88
Monthly Income (Pesos)	1168	8.56	4.03	0	16
Years of Education	1533	9.19	4.38	0	18
Gender	1535	0.50	0.50	0	1
Rural	1535	0.19	0.39	0	1
Total Observations	1535				

Notes: Categorical variables (e.g., Indigenous Status, Gender, Rural Status) are binary (1 = Yes, 0 = No).

5.1 Discussion of Table 2

Table two summarizes the regression results corresponding to the first hypothesis and its three sub-hypotheses. Columns 1-3 investigate whether Indigenous individuals are more likely to possess demographic characteristics – namely, low income, years of education, and rural status -- that the literature finds are associated with an increased likelihood of receiving benefits. In turn, Columns 4-6 examine whether these characteristics correlate with the probability of receiving a clientelist handout. As shown in Columns 7-9, I also examine the relationship between the three demographic characteristics and clientelism jointly, with and without controlling for municipality or state fixed effects.

Table 2: Correlates of Indigenous Identity and Clientelism

	(1) Income	(2) Education	(3) Rural	(4) Received Benefit	(5) Received Benefit	(6) Received Benefit	(7)	(8)	(9)
Indigenous	-1.232***	-1.833***	0.270***						
	(0.354)	(0.365)	(0.040)						
Monthly Income				-0.008***			-0.008***	-0.007**	-0.008**
				(0.003)			(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)
Years of Education					0.000		0.000	0.004	0.002
					(0.002)		(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Rural						0.001	0.001	0.103	-0.018
						(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.105)	(0.031)
Constant	8.705***	9.395***	0.168***	0.230***	0.147***	0.150***	0.230***	0.163***	0.206***
	(0.125)	(0.117)	(0.010)	(0.028)	(0.021)	(0.010)	(0.028)	(0.044)	(0.034)
Municipality Fixed Effects	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
State Fixed Effects	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	1168	1533	1535	1168	1533	1535	1168	1166	1167

Note: The table displays coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses.

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

The results in Table 2 are somewhat consistent with the claim in Hypothesis 1 and its sub-hypotheses. As seen in the table, there Indigenous individuals are significantly more likely to have the demographic characteristics that the literature suggests are associated with an increased likelihood of receiving clientelist benefits. From the results, Indigenous individuals are more

likely to have lower income, have fewer years of education, and live in regions considered to be rural. These results are statistically significant at the $p<0.01$ level.

However, when analyzing whether citizens with these demographic characteristics are more likely to receive a clientelist benefit (Columns 4-9), only income is significantly associated with an increased likelihood of receiving benefit. Its statistical significance of $p< 0.01$ and its negative coefficient suggests that higher income has a negative association with being offered benefits in exchange for a vote. All specifications in Columns 4-9 suggest that income is a highly significant predictor of clientelism. Therefore, the table is consistent with Hypothesis 1a: Indigenous individuals are more likely to experience poverty, and those who are impoverished are more likely to receive benefits.

However, as also seen from the table, although Indigenous people are more likely to have lower education and rural status, these do not appear to be significant predictors of clientelism in Mexico. Although the first part of Hypothesis 1b is supported (Indigenous individuals report having less education), Mexicans with less education are not more likely to receive handouts. The coefficients for education lack statistical significance across all models, including with municipal or state fixed effects. This suggests that lower education is not associated with an increase in one's chances of receiving benefits, which contradicts the second part of Hypothesis 1b.

Similarly, while the table confirms that Indigenous individuals are more likely to live in rural areas (as claimed by Hypothesis 1c), rural residency is not a statistically significant predictor of receiving clientelism benefits. The small coefficients across all models, including with municipal or state fixed effects, suggest that living in a rural area does not necessarily make one more susceptible to clientelism. This implies that while Indigenous people are more likely to

live in rural areas, their rural status is not associated with an increased probability of receiving a handout.

In summary, Table 1 provides strong evidence that Indigenous individuals face more significant economic and academic disadvantages, and they are more likely to reside within rural areas. However, the table suggests that of the three characteristics, income may be the only significant predictor of clientelism in Mexico.

5.2 Discussion of Hypothesis 2

Table 3 directly tests Hypothesis 2, which predicts that Indigenous individuals are more likely to experience clientelism than non-Indigenous people, even when controlling for income, education, rural residency, age, and gender. The results analyze the relationship between Indigenous individuals and the likelihood of receiving a clientelist benefit, controlling for these characteristics. Some specifications also control for municipal or state fixed effects.

Table 3: Correlates of Clientelist Benefits

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Indigenous	-0.008	0.001	0.004	0.008	0.007	-0.031	-0.009
	(0.029)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.036)	(0.041)	(0.036)
Monthly Income		-0.008***	-0.010***	-0.010***	-0.010***	-0.007*	-0.008**
		(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)
Years of Education			0.003	0.003	0.004	0.005*	0.004
			(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Rural				-0.022	-0.019	0.105	-0.015
				(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.106)	(0.031)
Age					0.001	0.001	0.001
					(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Gender					-0.013	-0.003	-0.009
					(0.022)	(0.021)	(0.021)
Constant	0.150***	0.230***	0.211***	0.220***	0.192***	0.118**	0.164***
	(0.010)	(0.028)	(0.032)	(0.034)	(0.050)	(0.059)	(0.049)
Municipality Fixed Effects	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
State Fixed Effects	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	1535	1168	1167	1167	1164	1163	1164

*Note: The table displays coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.*

From the first bivariate specification in Column 1, one's Indigenous status is not associated with the likelihood of clientelism. Across the remaining specifications, Indigenous status is small and statistically insignificant. Even with municipal or state fixed effects, and controlling for income, education, rural, gender, and age, Indigenous individuals are not more likely to

receive clientelist benefits. Overall, the table suggests that indigenous identity does not drive clientelist targeting.

In contrast, the table shows that the most consistent predictor of clientelist exchanges is income. The negative coefficient across all models is highly significant, which suggest that lower income individuals are more likely to receive clientelist benefits. This outcome in the table reinforces the point that low income, rather than one's ethnicity, is associated with a person's likelihood of being targeted for vote-buying. Even when accounting for municipal or state fixed effects, the coefficients remain significant and suggest that low income is associated with the likelihood of receiving clientelist benefits.

For education, the table suggests that there is little relationship between the level of education and the probability of being targeted by clientelism. Across all models, the coefficients are small, indicating that education may not be a contributing factor to receiving clientelist handouts. However, when including municipal fixed effects, the education is indeed significant ($P<0.05$). But this finding is not robust, as it is not observed with only controls or with state fixed effects. Similar findings also hold for rural residency as the table finds that living in a rural area is not correlated with a person's chance of receiving a clientelist benefit, even when including municipal or state fixed effects.

Although not included in hypotheses, it is worth noting that neither age nor gender show statistical significance in terms of being associated with the probability of receiving clientelist handouts. The coefficients across all specifications, including with municipal or state fixed effects, do not indicate that gender or age are associated with a person's chances of receiving a clientelist benefit.

Unlike Table 2 – which was consistent with Hypothesis 1 -- the results in Table 2 are not consistent with Hypothesis 2. That is, Indigenous individuals are not targeted for clientelism, once demographic variables are controlled for. Instead, low income is a significant factor; across all models, this characteristic is associated with an increase in clientelism. This may highlight that clientelist networks may prioritize targeting individuals with distressing economic backgrounds over other characteristics.

5.3 Discussion of Hypothesis 3

Table 4 evaluates Hypothesis 3, which suggests that in municipalities with a majority of Indigenous inhabitants, Indigenous individuals are less likely to receive clientelist benefits than Indigenous citizens elsewhere. As discussed above, the underlying logic is that factors may protect Indigenous populations from being targeted in these districts. The regression model analyzes whether Indigenous people in Indigenous majority districts are less likely to experience clientelism, while accounting for control variables and state fixed effects.

Table 4: Correlate Predictors of Clientelism

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Indigenous	-0.00806	-0.0219	0.00640	0.0104	0.0135	0.0152	0.0138	-0.0113
	(0.0291)	(0.0315)	(0.0374)	(0.0442)	(0.0442)	(0.0443)	(0.0446)	(0.0446)
Indigenous Majority District		0.0406	0.0692	0.0691	0.0686	0.0716	0.0741	0.0295
		(0.0339)	(0.0427)	(0.0483)	(0.0483)	(0.0485)	(0.0485)	(0.0576)
Indigenous X Indigenous Majority			-0.0921	-0.0787	-0.0786	-0.0730	-0.0727	-0.0111
			(0.0688)	(0.0823)	(0.0823)	(0.0825)	(0.0826)	(0.0848)
Monthly Income				-0.00783***	-0.00934***	-0.00981***	-0.00985***	-0.00759**
				(0.00277)	(0.00300)	(0.00303)	(0.00306)	(0.00320)
Years of Education					0.00341	0.00315	0.00410	0.00359
					(0.00256)	(0.00258)	(0.00275)	(0.00268)
Rural						-0.0252	-0.0222	-0.0161
						(0.0282)	(0.0281)	(0.0312)
Age							0.000711	0.000892
							(0.000687)	(0.000680)
Gender							-0.0135	-0.00879
							(0.0215)	(0.0212)
Constant	0.150***	0.147***	0.145***	0.220***	0.201***	0.212***	0.180***	0.160***
	(0.00965)	(0.00980)	(0.00990)	(0.0286)	(0.0316)	(0.0341)	(0.0495)	(0.0491)
State Fixed Effects	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	1535	1535	1535	1168	1167	1167	1164	1164

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Before turning to the interaction, first consider the coefficient for Indigenous identity, which reports Indigenous citizens in non-Indigenous majority districts receive more clientelist

benefits than non-Indigenous citizens (the reference category). It remains statistically insignificant, which aligns with the previous findings of Table 3, in that Indigenous status alone is not associated with an increased chance of being targeted by clientelism.

Now consider the interaction term between Indigenous identity and Indigenous-majority municipality. A significant, negative coefficient interaction would be consistent with Hypothesis 3, suggesting that Indigenous citizens in Indigenous-majority municipalities are more likely to be targeted than Indigenous citizens elsewhere. While the signs are indeed negative in line with the hypothesis, the coefficients across all models -- even when controlling for state fixed effects -- are statistically insignificant. Thus, there is no evidence that Indigenous individuals within Indigenous-majority districts are less likely to receive clientelist benefits than their counterparts elsewhere.

Once again, as supported by the previous table, income remains the most significant predictor of clientelism. Lower income individuals are more likely to experience clientelism and receive benefits than all other characteristics examined. Across all the specifications, income remains significant with $p<0.01$. This finding suggests that economic vulnerability may be the primary determinant of whether a person will be targeted by clientelist exchanges, rather than other characteristics such as ethnicity.

Like prior tables, no significant findings are observed for education, rurality, age, and gender. The coefficients are small and do not support (or disprove) the others' claims that education and rural residency are associated with higher chances of being targeted by clientelism.

Overall, Table 2 provides evidence consistent with Hypothesis 1, fully for Hypothesis 1a and partially for Hypotheses 1b and 1c. Tables 3 and 4 yield no evidence consistent with

Hypotheses 2 or 3. The strongest evidence, while by no means causal, is that clientelism in Mexico exploits individuals with lower incomes, reinforcing the idea that political actors and brokers target economically vulnerable people.

6. Conclusion

This thesis sought to explore the relationship between Indigenous identity and clientelism by addressing three key hypotheses, which focused on investigating the impact of being Indigenous and an individual's likelihood of receiving a clientelist benefit. Through regression analysis of LAPOP survey data, as well as municipal and state-level census data from INPI, this study provides insight into clientelist exchanges within Mexico.

The results and findings of this study reveal that while Indigenous individuals are more likely to have demographic characteristics associated with clientelism in the literature -- including lower income, lower education, and rural residency -- only income significantly predicts one's likelihood of receiving benefits in exchange for a vote. These findings provide support for Hypothesis 1, especially its first sub hypothesis: Indigenous Mexicans experience higher levels of poverty, compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts, and poor Mexicans disproportionately experience clientelist exchanges. However, for Hypothesis 1b and 1c, data are only partially consistent (i.e., these characteristics are associated with Indigenous status, but not clientelism).

Additionally, the study does not support the prediction that Indigenous identity itself increases the likelihood of receiving benefits, even when controlling for other factors and characteristics. Instead, throughout each model and table, poverty remains the most significant predictor of clientelism. This suggests that economic struggles rather than ethnicity or other factors such as education, rural residency, age or gender help to explain who experiences clientelist exchanges in Mexico.

Regarding Hypothesis 3, results do not suggest that Indigenous individuals in Indigenous Majority districts are less likely to experience clientelism than those elsewhere. While the signs are negative, they are insignificant. Additional studies will be needed to explore this relationship further, ideally using more sophisticated techniques to deal with possible omitted variables bias.

These findings are essential for understanding the roles of ethnicity and political targeting in clientelism within Mexico. While Indigenous people face significant monetary and other social challenges, this study provides preliminary evidence that being Indigenous does not appear to attract clientelism. The results suggest that Indigenous individuals are not more likely to experience clientelist exchanges, controlling for their demographic characteristics. Moreover, these preliminary results suggest that despite others' research suggesting that Indigenous-majority municipalities have unique political dynamics differentiating them from different regions, they may not keep Indigenous individuals from being victims of clientelism more often than their peers in other districts. Further research should more rigorously explore the possibility that Indigenous communities and networks may keep Indigenous individuals protected from clientelist exploitation.

While LAPOP provided an excellent source of data, it would be helpful to examine more recent survey data to understand updated viewpoints on clientelist trends within Mexico, especially as political and economic conditions evolve. This was not possible for Mexico as more recent survey waves did not ask about both clientelism and Indigenous status. Additionally, it may help further research to include more Indigenous respondents within surveys to not only increase statistical power, but also to increase the representation of Indigenous individuals and to provide a more detailed understanding of Indigenous viewpoints. Lastly,

another factor to note is that not all survey participants answered every question used for this research, which led to slight variations in the sample size across the variables used within my research.

While more study is necessary to understand the full effect of clientelism within Indigenous communities, this thesis provides more avenues for further research. Although this study provides insight into the relationship between Indigenous peoples and clientelism, further research may include a deeper dive into Indigenous groups and Mexico's overall electoral and political system. Indigenous communities have often been underrepresented in research, especially regarding voting behaviors, patterns, and participation. Expanding this research is crucial for filling current gaps in the literature and developing a further understanding of Indigenous citizens and political institutions.

Continued research may also be beneficial for Indigenous and Indigenous majority districts. My research explores (but does not confirm) the possibility that clientelism may be less successful within these municipalities due to the self-governance and community-based governments seen in Indigenous communities, most notably in the state of Oaxaca. Research could more rigorously assess this possibility and determine whether these factors may shield vulnerable Indigenous populations from having their votes bought. Moreover, every Indigenous community is different, with their own cultures, languages, influence, and societal norms. Future research could take a more localized approach to examine regional differences between certain developments, especially within clientelism and voting systems.

Overall, this thesis hopes to contribute to research on Indigenous political participation and clientelism in Mexico, offering insight into different factors that may influence clientelist benefits. While my findings show high significance of the relationship between poverty and

clientelism, it is worthwhile to explore further the possible resilience of Indigenous communities and their ability to use self-governance to protect their communities from the exploitation of vote-buying. By exploring the unique political experience of Indigenous individuals within Mexico, future research can help ensure that Indigenous complexities and voices are understood and valued within Mexican democracy and its electoral systems.

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