

Consolidating Mexico's Democracy

*The 2006 Presidential Campaign
in Comparative Perspective*

Edited by
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ambivalent—economic behavior during elections under a dominant-
ism, but the 2006 election has probably reversed that. Economic vot-
strong determinant of the election results, and campaign efforts to
favorable economic assessments paid off for the incumbent party. Are
now an efficient way to punish or reward government performance,
more responsible governments? If so, is that a sign of more maturity
new democracies? Moreover, have politicians and voters learned about
tics of performance and used it rationally in elections? The evidence
apter, based on the Mexican 2006 campaigns, indicates that this may
be the case.

Welfare Benefits, Canvassing, and Campaign Handouts

Alberto Díaz-Cayeros, Federico Estévez, and Beatriz Magaloni

This chapter analyzes the effects of social assistance programs, campaign handouts, and canvassing on Felipe Calderón's razor-thin victory in the 2006 elections. Many interpret the close contest as the outcome of an ideological battle between two radically different visions that divided Left from Right, rich from poor, and North from South. From this perspective, the 2006 election was an exercise in determining future directions for the nation, with a clear choice between right-wing continuity and left-wing populism. In our view, the triumph of the National Action Party (PAN) would not have materialized without the support of ample sectors of the urban poor, who voted for the Right as a result of two highly effective programs aimed at them, Oportunidades and Seguro Popular. The PAN also resorted to intense canvassing and distributed some gifts to voters prior to elections. However, in contrast to the powerful effects of welfare benefits, our results show that canvassing and gifts had, at best, marginal effects on the vote. One broadly comparative implication of our findings is that, in contrast to opportunistic clientelist transfers, welfare-enhancing social policies can and do generate significant longer-term dividends, including creating partisan loyalties among the poor.

Accusations were repeatedly leveled at the Fox government regarding the manipulation of Oportunidades throughout campaign season. In particular, the Civic Alliance (Alianza Cívica), one of the most influential nongovernmental poll-watching organizations, had been warning for months that the PAN was using federal social programs to buy votes (Alianza Cívica 2006). This perception was seconded by Fundar, a nongovernmental organization providing budget information and analysis and charged with public oversight in budgetary

matters (Fundar 2006). The accusations could not be taken lightly, to the extent that they came from credible sources. Civic Alliance must be credited with having created the most prominent network of poll-watchers in Mexico, vital for the transition to democracy. And Fundar played a key role in improving transparency and accountability in the federal budgetary process.

President Vicente Fox and the Social Development Ministry (Secretaría de Desarrollo Social, or SEDESOL) had the foresight to anticipate these types of accusations, and as a result engaged in a strategy of what was called *blindaje electoral*, namely, providing safeguards in advance to shield federal social programs from electoral manipulation (SEDESOL 2005). One of these measures included a prohibition against expanding the programs' coverage during a federal election year. Furthermore, in order to assess whether there was coercion or vote buying through social programs, SEDESOL reached an agreement with the United Nations Development Program (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, or PNUD) to carry out a thorough study of the way in which these programs operated during the electoral period, including a survey of beneficiaries and nonbeneficiaries of the various social programs already in place (PNUD 2006).¹

Our position in this debate is that Oportunidades and Seguro Popular made the PAN's victory in 2006 possible, but that voters acted out of their own free choice. Vote buying and credit claiming are complementary facets of democratic politics. However, their scope is quite wide, ranging from voters responding voluntarily to programmatic appeals and entitlement programs to voters supporting a party out of fear of losing their benefits, as happens with clientelist manipulation (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2005). The key difference between these two modes of electoral exchange lies in the implicit threats involved in clientelism. The possibility of coercion is embedded in the institutional design of any given program. However, the programs studied here differ dramatically from the discretionary policies of social transfers that prevailed in the past in Mexico in two main respects.² For the first time, beneficiaries are selected according to objective criteria based on poverty indicators, rather than following a strictly political logic. Second, politicians can no longer withdraw the transfers at will if beneficiaries happen to support the "wrong" political party. These features alone place the two programs closer to the programmatic end of the vote-buying spectrum.

The first section of this chapter presents an overview of the transformation of Mexican social policy under Vicente Fox. The second portion is a methodologi-

cal discussion, justifying our modeling choices. The remainder focuses on empirical analyses of the effects of Oportunidades, Seguro Popular, and targeted campaign gifts and canvassing.

Social Policy under the PAN

During the autocratic era in Mexico, major social programs were designed to grant ample discretion to the government, which in turn used social transfers to reward partisan supporters and mobilize voters in elections. In a country where the incomes of more than half of the population fall below the poverty line, the ruling party's control of these programs and other state resources gave it tremendous advantages over the opposition. In 1997, the establishment of Progresa (Programa de Educación, Salud y Alimentación, or National Program for Education, Health, and Nutrition), the precursor of Oportunidades, represented a watershed in the design of social policy in Mexico (Levy 2006; Levy and Rodríguez 2004). Progresa reduced the government's discretion in the selection of beneficiaries, which is now made on the basis of poverty criteria rather than political loyalties, and in the irreversibility of benefits, which currently can be withdrawn only when beneficiaries no longer meet the income-related or behavioral requisites for retention in the program. With Progresa, Mexico witnessed the advent of social entitlements for its poorest sectors.

Progresa consisted of three complementary elements: (1) a cash transfer, intended primarily for food consumption; (2) a scholarship, to cover the opportunity cost of children's labor so they could stay in school; and (3) nutritional supplements. From September 1997 through 2000, Progresa was implemented mainly in rural areas.

After numerous international policy evaluations supported Progresa's effectiveness in reducing extreme poverty, the Fox administration opted to continue with the program. They rebaptized it with a new name, Oportunidades; greatly expanded its rural coverage program; and extended its benefits to the cities, as well. At the end of 1999, Progresa had reached approximately 2.6 million families, or about 40 percent of all rural households. By December 2005, coverage under Oportunidades had doubled, to almost 5 million families, one-third of whom resided in urban or semiurban zones. Today, more than half of all families living in poverty are recipients of these transfers.

Progresa/Oportunidades is an example of what is known as a conditional cash transfer (CCT) program, in which the government provides money to poor

families, conditional upon certain verifiable actions—typically, investments in children's human capital and basic preventive health. There are various advantages of CCTs relative to other social transfer programs. First, they are highly effective at targeting the poor. Most CCT programs combine geographic and household targeting, where areas are selected first, based on poverty indexes, and then individual households are chosen, based on either microcensus information (for rural Progreso and rural Oportunidades) or on demand (for urban Oportunidades).

The second advantage of CCTs is that they have both an immediate income effect for the beneficiary household, reducing poverty and inequality, and a generational effect, as the conditional component pushes poor families to invest in the formation of human capital. Progreso originally required minimum daily school attendance and regular medical checkups. Oportunidades added bonuses for school attendance and participation in health-awareness seminars.

Third, CCTs significantly reduce discretion in allocating benefits, leaving less room for political manipulation of the funds. Monies are distributed according to technical criteria that combine geographic targeting with a household assessment mechanism called proxy means testing (using multidimensional indicators that are correlated with poverty). In addition, benefits cannot be discretionally assigned and withdrawn, which is precisely what sets these apart from clientelist transfers.

In addition to Oportunidades, the Fox administration introduced Seguro Popular, an ambitious program created to extend health coverage to the uninsured (King et al. 2007; Lakin 2005). This program was intended to remedy the truncated nature of health care delivery, which grants access only to those working in the formal sector of the economy; according to the 2000 census, some 58 percent of Mexico's population falls outside of this coverage. The Seguro Popular program began in five states in 2001, and by 2005 it had been implemented in all thirty-one states and the Federal District, covering almost 3 million families. In contrast to Oportunidades, which is centrally administered by the federal government, Seguro Popular is decentralized; coverage and spending still vary widely among states. Moreover, issues remain concerning how well it targets potential participants. Despite these shortcomings, Scott (2006) calculated the incidence of benefits distribution under Seguro Popular and concluded that the new insurance program is more pro-poor than any other health care service except for Oportunidades. He further argued that piggy-backing Seguro Popular onto the poverty relief program, thus allowing automatic enrollment for fami-

lies that are already registered in Oportunidades, can only improve its efficiency in targeting the poor.

Given the unequal nature of access to primary health care services in both the public and private sectors, Seguro Popular is intended to provide coverage for households without the resources to pay for medical care, especially for emergency room treatments and protracted ailments. Registration is voluntary, but free insurance is conditional on means-testing. Subsidized contributions are required from households with incomes above the poverty line, but since the program is tied in with Oportunidades, this still results in much lower transaction costs for individual participants. Scott (2006) notes that the selection process has legal loopholes that allow uninsured Mexicans to be enrolled at the organizational level, which perhaps can contravene means-testing requirements and be conducive to particularistic politics and rent-seeking. However, there is a certain degree of protection, as federal outlays subsidizing the insurance program require formal intergovernmental agreements with and matching funds from state governments. By late 2005, all lower-level governments had entered the Seguro Popular program, but some imposed different priorities or restrictions on its implementation. For example, in the Federal District, López Obrador agreed to the program's deployment in only two of the capital's sixteen boroughs, where demand had far outstripped the local government's public health system. Notwithstanding such obstacles, the federal government mounted effective registration campaigns throughout the country, state by state, and by election day almost 3 million households were covered by Seguro Popular. The program's rapid expansion, and its emergence as a campaign issue in the spring (when López Obrador advised against voluntary enrollment), raise the obvious question of how effective, in electoral terms, it was for the governing party.

Electoral Effects of Oportunidades and Seguro Popular in 2006

Our central claim is that support for the PAN among beneficiaries of Oportunidades and Seguro Popular, concentrated within the poorest half of the electorate, was a striking component of Calderón's victory against the Left. Since its founding, the cornerstone of the PAN's programmatic reputation has been democratic reform, complemented—in the era of hyperpresidentialism under the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)—by an enduring distrust of central government and its highly discretionary, and thus corruption-laden, fiscal

management. Anticentralism, with a strong dose of antitax militancy, is hardly conducive to building a reputation for fostering redistributive policies.³ Thus the notion that the PAN might appeal to poorer sectors of the electorate on the basis of its social development policies and the delivery of benefits through targeted, formula-based, and means-tested programs is somehow counterintuitive. However, it is our contention that electoral incentives pushed the PAN to design social policies that would assist the poorest sectors of the electorate without increasing the tax burden on its traditional middle-class constituencies.

The political payoffs of these social transfers, which are discussed in the rest of this chapter, produced critical support for the PAN among portions of the electorate that might otherwise have voted for the Left. Our analysis provides simple descriptive statistics of the political differences between the beneficiaries and nonbeneficiaries of both programs in table 12.1. These are frequencies and averages taken from the national exit poll fielded by *Reforma* in early July, with a sample of 5,807 voters from 137 precincts around the country. Roughly 19 percent of the respondents declared themselves to be registered in Oportunidades, and 15 percent in Seguro Popular (with about 8% reporting dual registration).

If one were to examine only the average vote shares for the three main presidential candidates among nonbeneficiaries of either program, a close tie between Calderón and López Obrador emerges, with Madrazo in distant third place overall. Among beneficiaries of the programs, however, Calderón outpaced López Obrador by double digits (reaching a maximum in his twenty-point lead among dual beneficiaries). Any of these spreads would have been enough to tilt the national election in Calderón's direction. Furthermore, the recipients of social policy benefits, on average, consistently rewarded Calderón with higher feeling thermometer ratings than his two rivals, reported stronger levels of partisanship and support for the PAN, and had more positive retrospective evaluations in general than nonrecipients. To the extent that (1) pocketbook evaluations undergird poor voters' assessments of government performance and their partisan attachments and (2) these retrospective elements, in turn, influence candidate preference, the raw data from the exit poll would appear to indicate an important cushion of support for the PAN from poor voters who directly benefited from social development and poverty reduction programs.

To explore the systematic effects of these social policies on voting behavior, however, one has to address key methodological issues that stem from the fact that program participants are not selected randomly, but on the basis of certain sociodemographic characteristics that are, in turn, causally related to voting

Table 12.1 Political attitudes and vote choice by enrollment in social welfare programs

	Oportunidades beneficiary?		Seguro Popular beneficiary?		Double beneficiary
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Vote choice					
Calderón	37.2	32.3	40.6	31.9	42.4
López Obrador	25.9	31.7	22.9	31.9	21.7
Madrazo	23.1	17.9	22.3	18.4	23.9
Rating differential (-9 to 9)					
Calderón-					
López Obrador	0.86	0.46	1.32	0.40	1.32
Calderón-Madrazo	1.44	1.13	1.53	1.12	1.66
Partisan identification					
PAN	31.2	23.9	33.7	23.8	37.7
PRD	18.3	17.5	14.5	18.2	13.4
PRI	23.5	20.3	23.4	20.4	23.9
Independent	26.9	37.9	28.4	37.1	25.1
PAN scale (-2 to 2)	-0.17	-0.23	-0.06	-0.25	0.03
Presidential					
approval (1-4)	3.16	2.77	3.17	2.8	3.27
Pocketbook					
evaluations (1-5)	3.48	3.11	3.42	3.14	3.56
N	1,117	4,690	864	4,943	486

Source: *Reforma*, exit poll, July 2, 2006.

decisions. Because of these endogenous factors, assessing the impact of Oportunidades and Seguro Popular on voting behavior is challenging. Both programs are targeted toward the poor, who generally have not supported the right-wing PAN but leaned instead toward the other two alternatives, the former ruling party and the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD).⁴

Thinking in terms of medical research and experiments helps conceptualize some of the problems involved in studying these types of policy interventions. To estimate the effects of a drug or medical treatment, ideally one would like to have two individuals who are identical in all respects (age, diet, gender, lifestyle, ethnicity, etc.) except for the treatment (e.g., the drug). Medical research solves this issue through experimental design, where a group of people with similar characteristics are randomly selected and divided into two groups, the treated group receiving the drug and the other, or control, group receiving a placebo.

Experiments in the social sciences are harder to design. First of all, many

of the outcomes we are interested in cannot be controlled within the limited framework of experimental settings.⁵ Secondly, experiments always raise questions of external validity. Progresa, envisioned by a former academic well trained in economics, was originally designed to allow for experimental evaluations. Communities with similar characteristics were identified at the onset of the program, but only a randomly selected group began to receive benefits immediately, while the others were incorporated fifteen months later.

Tina Green (2005) and Ana De la O (2006) took advantage of the program's randomization and the delay in extending it to certain target areas to assess the effects of Progresa on turnout and voting choices in the 2000 presidential election, but they arrived at opposite conclusions. Green found that Progresa had no effect on voting choices, while De la O observed that it affected turnout by five percentage points and increased the incumbent's vote share by four points. One of the difficulties with reconciling these results is that in order to get leverage from the experimental design, these studies ended up comparing localities with very different characteristics.⁶ Green's (2005) highly nuanced study first identified 3,739 communities (out of 105,749) where the area covered by the electoral polling stations coincided with the boundaries of the locality. Within this sample, she then compared the treated locales (i.e., those incorporated into Progresa) with the untreated ones. Green's selection strategy yielded highly atypical places where the PAN received very low levels of support (around 20%). De la O (2006) carefully crafted a randomized experimental setup utilizing 505 Progresa-affiliated localities, where 300 of them had received benefits for twenty-one months before the election, while the rest had only done so for six months. Given this design, both groups were receiving transfers before the presidential election in 2000. So the inference from her results is about the effects of the duration of the treatment on voting decisions, rather than effects of the treatment itself.

Unlike these two studies that got leverage from the Progresa randomization, we relied on national observational data coming from *Reforma's* exit poll for the 2006 elections. Cornelius (2002, 2004) also depended on similar surveys to assess the effects of Progresa on voting choices in 2000. However, the problem with the conventional parametric estimations he uses, in which dummy variables for being a beneficiary of a social program or receiving visits or gifts from a political party are used as independent variables, is that this creates a natural nonrandom selection of observations for those variables. Therefore, inferences

drawn from conventional parametric estimations can be rendered unsound, because of selection bias.⁷

By using surveys to examine the electoral payoffs of social transfers, we can explicitly model the selection process to create something akin to an experimental situation. That is, we can contrast treated and untreated individuals by selecting two almost identical persons—at least in terms of the nonrandom set of characteristics that make them subject to being chosen in the policy intervention—with one receiving the treatment and the other not. Specifically, we draw upon our joint study (Díaz-Cayeros et al. 2008) that uses a nonparametric technique, propensity-score matching, to pair individuals along these lines. The treatment variable in this quasi-experiment is being an Oportunidades or Seguro Popular recipient. This nonparametric test has several advantages, including that the estimation does not depend upon specific assumptions of linearity or other aspects of model dependence (Ho et al. 2007; Imai 2005; Rosenbaum and Rubin 1983).⁸

Calculating a propensity score is straightforward; one estimates a probit or logit of the determinants for the treatment. In our study, we followed the advice of Ho et al. (2006) and chose the most parsimonious specification for covariates for the propensity score, which, while satisfying the balancing property, included all the control variables expected to influence the treatment and excluded variables that were not good predictors of the treatment, in order to retain estimation efficiency. The covariates for this propensity score calculation included individual-level indicators related to the sociodemographic characteristics of respondents, geographic variables pertaining to the physical environment they inhabit, and aggregate characteristics of the municipality.

In matching, the indicator of interest is a measure of the mean impact of the treatment. In this case we were interested in comparing the mean probability of voting for a given party between a treated group and its matched nontreated group, known as the average treatment effect on the treated (ATT). Given the assumption of unit homogeneity, the outcome for the nonparticipant can be taken as an indication of what would have happened holding all other relevant variables constant. In this sense, the hypotheses tests do not control for covariates, since they are already incorporated into the selection of observations to be compared.

Table 12.2 displays the results from our work, presenting difference-of-means tests between treated and untreated respondents matched according to

the nearest neighbor and differentiated by the calculated propensity scores for inclusion in one of the two social programs. The table also contains simple means tests obtained from the raw data, which are plagued with the endogeneity problem discussed above. Thus, a comparison between pre-matched and post-matched means tests reveals the inferential virtues of the propensity-score matching technique. Not controlling for selection into the two programs, and not matching individuals on traits that enter into that selection, runs the risk of finding practically all political variables significantly associated with the one under consideration, participation in the social programs Oportunidades and Seguro Popular (see the columns labeled "Pre-matching" in table 12.2).

Once propensities are matched, beneficiaries of the poverty-relief program Oportunidades were 11 percent more likely to vote for Calderón than nonbeneficiaries with very similar propensity scores—that is, individuals with the same sociodemographic and community-level characteristics. At the same time, beneficiaries of this program were 7 percent less likely to vote for López Obrador, and indistinguishable from nonbeneficiaries in their support levels for Madrazo. These leanings among beneficiaries are reinforced by (1) marked increases in the feeling thermometer differentials between Calderón and both López Obrador and Madrazo combined, (2) stronger attachments to the PAN at the expense of other partisan ties and (especially) nonpartisan status, and (3) more positive evaluations of government performance and personal well-being. Thus the data strongly support our claim that Oportunidades gave Calderón a crucial boost at the polls among poor voters who might otherwise have supported López Obrador.

The impact of Seguro Popular was similar, in this case increasing the propensity of an individual to vote for Calderón by 7%. Coverage under this health-care program also lent itself to greater identification with the PAN and to better evaluations of government performance and personal finances, although the magnitudes of all these effects were smaller than those for the poverty alleviation program. Seguro Popular was only slightly less effective than Oportunidades in raising voters' support for Calderón and identification with the PAN, but it was substantially weaker in generating positive assessments of government performance and candidate attributes. Despite considerable overlap between the beneficiaries of both programs, Seguro Popular is much more urban than the poverty relief program, and its political geography is distinct.

Although the electoral bonus of financial redistribution through Oportunidades favored the PAN, it is notable that the party responsible for the program's

Table 12.2 Effect of receiving welfare benefits on political attitudes

Correlate	Oportunidades		Seguro Popular	
	Pre-matching	Post-matching	Pre-matching	Post-matching
Vote choice				
Calderón	.05***	.11***	.09***	.07**
López Obrador	-.06***	-.07***	-.09***	-.04
Madrazo	.05***	.00	.04***	-.00
Rating differential				
Calderón–				
López Obrador	.40***	.63**	.92***	.59*
Calderón–Madrazo	.31**	.59**	.41***	.28
Partisan identification				
PAN	.08***	.11***	.11***	.08***
PRD	.01	-.04	-.04**	-.02
PRI	.04***	-.03	.04***	-.02
Independent	-.11***	-.05**	-.09***	-.03
PAN scale	.06	.26***	.19***	.21***
Presidential approval	.39***	.40***	.39***	.18***
Pocketbook evaluation	.37***	.40***	.28***	.15***

Source: *Reforma*, exit poll, July 2, 2006.

Note: Cell entries represent differences in means between those who receive welfare benefits and those who do not, calculated for various indicators of partisan preferences or political attitudes.

*Significant at the 10% level **Significant at the 5% level ***Significant at the 1% level

creation and early administration, the PRI, was left untouched by the dynamics of the program's influence on voting decisions. Six years of accumulated change in the program's operation under the aegis of the PAN—the rival party that ejected the PRI from control of the federal government—affected neither the Oportunidades beneficiaries' support for the PRI's presidential candidate nor their level of partisan attachments to this party. This was especially true for the rural electorate, which monopolized Progresá transfers until 2000. Hence the 2006 campaign announcements by Madrazo and other leading PRI figures, trumpeting authorship of the original program and committing the party to its continuation. It is equally true, however, that the PRI received no reward from the program's current recipients. It is entirely possible that the program's expansion of non-urban coverage under Fox neutralized what was a strong electoral premium for the PRI from rural beneficiaries of Progresá in the 2000 presidential contest.

Canvassing and Campaign Handouts

Calderón's slim victory, we have shown, can be plausibly accredited to the social policies implemented by the Fox administration that allowed his party to attract support among the poor, a group that otherwise could have been expected to vote for the PRD candidate. Many of those receiving benefits from Oportunidades and Seguro Popular approached the elections feeling more satisfied with their personal well-being, credited the president and the PAN for these material improvements, and gave their votes to Calderón as a result. In effect, the PAN did manage to buy off segments of the poor through its social assistance programs. Nonetheless, that is not at all the same as clientelism.

Campaign handouts, however, are a different story from the well-institutionalized welfare benefits of Oportunidades and Seguro Popular. Campaign handouts are opportunistic gifts—money, foodstuffs, t-shirts, livestock—that have limited effects on voters' welfare but are given out during the election season in an attempt to influence voting decisions. This final section explores the effects of canvassing and campaign handouts in the 2006 elections. We asked two basic questions. To whom did the PAN direct its canvassing efforts and deliver its handouts? And did either of these influence voting choices?

To explore these questions, we made use of the Mexico 2006 Panel Study,⁹ which allowed us to track changes in voting decisions and opinions during the course of the campaign. The selection bias problem discussed in the previous section is not limited to beneficiaries in targeted social programs, but can also be found in lesser interventions during the campaign, such as canvassing and handouts. For example, political parties might choose to canvas or reward some voters over others precisely because these individuals have characteristics that render them susceptible to switching their vote. Thus canvassing and campaign gifts are not randomly assigned to voters, but depend on traits that are plausibly correlated with their voting choices. However, any links between, say, canvassing and voting choice might only reflect the underlying socioeconomic or partisan characteristics that led party operatives to target certain voters, rather than the direct effect of the attention given to them. To deal with the problem of selection bias, we again employed propensity-score matching. We first modeled the selection procedure (i.e., what makes an individual more likely to be canvassed or given a handout). We then matched individuals with similar predicted propensity scores that differed only in the treatment (i.e., were they beneficiaries of one or both of the two social programs, or not). Lastly, through difference-

of-means tests, we compared their likelihood of voting for the incumbent party.

With respect to canvassing, the panel study revealed considerable door-to-door campaigning.¹⁰ Of the respondents from the national sample who participated in all three panel waves, 24 percent reported having been contacted by representatives of at least one party or candidate. All three parties canvassed actively, although the PAN and the PRI enjoyed a slight edge (14.2% and 14.4%, respectively) over the PRD (11%). Both the PAN and the PRD did considerably more canvassing in the cities (16% and 13%, respectively) than in rural areas (9% and 8%, respectively). The PRI, by contrast, appeared to canvass almost as intensively in each type of community (14% in rural areas and 16% in urban ones). All these facts reflect the size and traditional geographical strengths of the Mexico's main parties (see chapter 2 in this volume).

Campaign handouts were infrequent, at least as revealed by the respondents; only 8 percent reported having received gifts, money, food baskets, or some kind of help from any party during the course of the campaign. Unsurprisingly, the PRI was more prone to resort to these clientelist practices than its rivals—approximately 5 percent of those sampled received handouts from the PRI, more than from the PAN (2.7%) and the PRD (1.5%) combined.

To uncover the logic of canvassing and handouts, we modeled the probability that the PAN contacted an individual or gave him or her a campaign handout.¹¹ The results suggested that the PAN concentrated on reaching its own core supporters, which we identified as those who, in October 2005 (at the start of the campaigns), reported identifying strongly with that party. There is also evidence that the PAN canvassed more intensively in states governed by its representatives, again conveying the idea that canvassing was more prevalent among core supporters. Finally, the PAN concentrated its efforts among lower income groups, but not among beneficiaries of Oportunidades. This implies an urban focus for the party's canvassing, in line with its core constituencies.

In terms of handouts, the PAN attempted to buy off the support of marginally opposing voters, which we defined as those who reported weak partisan identifications with the PRD or the PRI in the first wave of the panel. This pattern reflects the expectations for swing-voter opportunism (see, for example, Dixit and Londregan 1995 and S. Stokes 2005). The model also suggested a bidding equilibrium, in which parties channeled gifts to voters who were already targeted by other parties. Indeed, the coefficients for handouts by the PRI and the PRD were both positive and statistically significant, suggesting that all

parties gave handouts to swing voters rather than core supporters. In lieu of income, the handout model included dummies for ownership of various items (cable television, telephone, car, and stove with an oven), possession of which presumably differentiated the lower middle class from poorer strata. While not statistically significant, the plus signs suggested that campaign handouts from the PAN were not aimed at the poorest voters.

To assess the impacts of canvassing and handouts, we proceeded as before, using differences-in-means tests between treated and untreated respondents, differentiated by calculated propensity scores that came from the models described above. The first three columns of table 12.3 refer to the effects of canvassing. First off, canvassing had no favorable effect for Calderón in the national vote and in the urban subsample. Among rural voters, canvassing by the PAN affected Calderón's candidacy negatively, and these voters appeared to support López Obrador even after the PAN approached them. However, canvassing had a substantial impact on changes in voting decisions throughout the course of the campaign. For example, canvassing led to a more than 10 percent increase in the probability that a voter would switch his or her voting intention from López Obrador, Madrazo, or another candidate to Calderón. Again, this was not the case for rural voters, who did not switch their support to the PAN even when canvassed. Door-to-door canvassing also decreased the probability that a voter would abandon Calderón for any other candidate during the campaign, although the size of this effect was moderate. Canvassing had a marginal effect in increasing partisan loyalties over the course of the campaign in favor of the PAN, but only in the cities. By contrast, rural voters canvassed by the PAN did not switch partisan loyalties toward the PAN, but instead converted to the PRD. However, between the first and third waves of the panel, canvassing did increase the feeling thermometer differentials among rural voters, tilting them in favor of Calderón and against López Obrador. Lastly, canvassing impacted other facets of this group's voting behavior. Although it did not appear to increase turnout, canvassing seemed to increase political interest among rural voters.

With respect to campaign handouts from the PAN (column 4 of table 12.3), there was generally a negative impact from opportunistically targeting independents and marginally opposed voters. Handouts did not increase voting support, strengthen partisan sympathies, or enhance a candidate's image. Indeed, vote-buying efforts seemed to backfire. Possibly such opportunism went against the grain of the party's reputation, as with the Radical Party in Argentina (Calvo and Murillo 2004).

Table 12.3 Tracking the electoral effects of canvassing and campaign handouts

	Canvassing			Handouts
	National	Urban	Rural	National
Vote				
For Calderón	-.00	.07	-.17*	-.16
For AMLO	.06	.00	.32**	.05
For Madrazo	-.03	.02	-.11	.13
Change in choice (waves 1 to 3)				
Converted to PAN	.11***	.14***	-.13*	-.06
Converted to PRD	.00	-.01	.07	-.02
Converted to PRI	-.04*	-.05*	-.15**	-.02
Abandoned PAN	-.04**	-.02	-.04	.00
Abandoned PRD	.04	.04	-.03	.00
Abandoned PRI	-.14***	-.10***	-.06	-.11
Change in party ID				
In favor of PAN	.06	.07*	.12	-.28**
In favor of PRD	.03	.01	.17*	.13*
In favor of PRI	-.05*	.04	-.12*	.13*
Political mobilization				
Political interest	-.10	-.15	.46**	-.14
Turnout	.03	.01	.03	-.13*
Change in rating differential				
Calderón-AMLO	-.19	-.34	2.47**	-2.88***
Calderón-Madrazo	-.37	-.10	-.13	-3.12***

*Significant at the 10% level **Significant at the 5% level ***Significant at the 1% level

The delivery of welfare-enhancing benefits through targeted social programs and sustained policy innovation matters for a governing party's electoral prospects. In 2006, the urban beneficiaries of the Fox administration's two major social policy initiatives, Oportunidades and Seguro Popular, rewarded the PAN with crucial votes that very likely represented their margin of triumph at the national level.

The influence exerted by Oportunidades and Seguro Popular on voting decisions in 2006 was logically tied to a retrospective calculation by voters that partially neutralized prospective possibilities. What is ironic in 2006 is the reversal of partisan identity for these two aspects of vote-buying, with the Right delivering on policies that were not associated with its historical reputation versus the

Left's credibility in promising changes in distributive policies in the future. In the end, the average beneficiary reasoned along the lines of "Better a bird in the hand than two in the bush." The Spanish version exaggerates the discount rate of the future: *más vale pájaro en mano que cien volando* (better a bird in the hand than a hundred flying). In keeping with this folk wisdom, effective vote-buying is usually based on tangible benefits from the past rather than welcome promises in the future.

The PAN's claiming credit for social policy benefits, we believe, is what propelled poor people receiving help from Oportunidades and Seguro Popular to support that party. Beneficiaries of these social programs were significantly more satisfied with their personal finances and with the way the president was handling the economy than were similarly poor individuals who did not receive these welfare benefits. As a result, the former were more likely to support Calderón, even when his party lacked a reputation for welfarism. While electoral clientelism and vote coercion cannot be ruled out in the 2006 campaigns, the evidence presented here makes it highly improbable that voters were pressured into supporting the PAN through fear of losing these benefits. Beneficiaries' favorable reaction to the party in power may indicate successful vote-buying by the incumbents, but it is likely to be vote-buying of the positive sort.

Without these two innovations in its social policy, the PAN would have been unable to garner support among a crucial sector of the electorate who otherwise might have preferred the PRD, or even the PRI. In contrast to the effects of the welfare-enhancing Oportunidades and Seguro Popular programs, the PAN's campaign handouts had no impact on voting decisions. As the swing voter model demonstrated, the PAN disproportionately assigned campaign handouts to marginally opposed voters. However, Mexican voters were able to distinguish between the two types of benefits—welfare-enhancing and opportunistic—and rewarded the PAN only for the former.

Canvassing was a more effective way of influencing voters than campaign handouts. The PAN canvassed most heavily among its core supporters, that is, those who reported strong identification with this party at the onset of the campaign. Although canvassing had no effect on their voting decisions, it was highly effective at convincing these supporters to remain loyal to the party's candidate until the end. Overall, our results uncovered more sophistication among Mexican voters than had been conventionally assumed. They were capable of discerning good from bad vote-buying, thus responding to welfare-enhancing policies rather than to opportunistic campaign handouts.

Our findings raise some broad comparative implications about social policies and voting behavior in Latin America, where governments in several countries have instituted conditional cash transfer programs akin to Oportunidades. Our results suggest that well-designed welfare programs to alleviate poverty can produce significant electoral payoffs for incumbent parties, not only from the Left, but also from the Right.

aloni and Poiré 2004. For a nuanced analysis on what it means to vote strategically, albeit in a Westminster-style parliamentary system, see Johnston et al. 1992, 1998.

30. Other items in the questionnaires for the panel study could have been used, such as the respondents' second-choice preference in wave 2 or their expectation (at the time of wave 2) that their preferred candidate would lose the election. Yet very few respondents provided a second-choice preference or admitted that their top choice would be likely to lose the election, rendering it virtually impossible to construct an index inclusive of all these variables. It is worth mentioning, however, that of 73 people that provided a valid response to the question on who was their second choice for president in wave 2—and who did not choose Calderón as their first selection in the same wave—52 percent named Calderón as their second choice. This contrasts with 24 percent of 84 respondents who did not choose López Obrador as their first choice in wave 2 but for whom he was their second choice. The interpretation is that, in fact, Calderón was the number-two choice for more voters. Yet ultimately voting for the candidate who was ranked second at an earlier point is not evidence, by itself, of strategic voting, since voters may have been genuinely persuaded during the remainder of the campaign.

ELEVEN: The Activation of Economic Voting in the 2006 Campaign

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1. For a brief description of the Mexico 2006 Panel Study, see chapter 1, note 1. For data, survey instruments, and field notes, see <http://web.mit.edu/polisci/research/mexico06/>.

2. "A Survey of Mexico," *Economist*, November 18, 2006, 9. This article reports a loss of 700,000 jobs, mainly in the *maquiladora* sector.

3. Variations between the panel study and the exit poll may reflect not only differences in the composition of both the voting population and the electorate at large, but, more importantly, a disparate set of timeframes in the question itself. The exit poll asked respondents how they thought economic conditions then compared with those during the previous year, whereas the panel study asked about economic conditions during the Fox administration. In the July 2006 survey wave, this latter question elicited a 42 percent positive economic response, versus favorable judgments from only 33 percent of the voters in the exit poll that same year.

4. Similar questions on the economy were not included in the second round of interviews, conducted in April/May 2006.

5. The aggregate stability in the Mexico 2006 Panel Study does not allow us to see the individual-level variations that are always expected in panel design. In this case, economic evaluations from 63 percent of the respondents in waves 1 (October 2005) and 3 (July 2006) remained stable, 18 percent indicated improvement, and 19 percent were worse. The latter two sets of opinions cancel each other out.

6. From then on, Calderón's campaign constantly referred to better living standards—*para que vivamos mejor* (so that we live better).

7. These and other collections of political ads for the 2006 presidential election can be seen at www.youtube.com.

TWELVE: Welfare Benefits, Canvassing, and Campaign Handouts

1. Díaz-Cayeros was commissioned to analyze the evaluation survey.

2. For example, the National Solidarity Program (Programa Nacional Solidaridad, or Pronasol)—the hallmark poverty-relief program of the Salinas government (1988–94)—was extremely discretionary, resulting in insufficient allocations based on poverty criteria, highly partisan skews in benefit flows, and transient welfare improvements for benefited localities (Díaz-Cayeros et al. 2008).

3. Elite- and mass-based survey evidence for the PAN's rightist stance on fiscal and redistributive issues in the late 1990s can be found in Magaloni (2006) and Estévez and Magaloni (2000).

4. In the same vein, inferring the effects of other social programs (such as Progresá) on support for the former ruling party by simply employing respondents' reported benefits as an independent variable could lead to erroneous conclusions because of strong endogeneity, given the fact that the rural poor who were selected to participate in the program already disproportionately supported the PRI. For a full discussion of this problem, and an analysis of the effects of the National Solidarity Program and Progresá on voting behavior that corrects for endogeneity, see Díaz-Cayeros et al. 2008.

5. The conditions of Wantchekon's (2004) fascinating study of Benin are very hard to replicate.

6. The different findings might also be related to econometric strategies. Tina Green (2005) uses a regression-discontinuity framework, while De la O (2006) estimates a first-differences regression model.

7. This is a classic problem of selection bias that is not generated by the research design, but rather by the observational, as opposed to the experimental, nature of the data being studied.

8. In this technique, assumptions of linearity are not necessary, because matching is done nonparametrically. The challenge is to find a scale (i.e., the *propensity score*) under which the assumption of nonconfoundedness holds (Imbens 2003). There is no direct test that can assure that this assumption holds. We follow common practice in making sure that the propensity score of the treated and the control groups have a similar distribution (what is known as the *balancing test*).

9. See chapter 1, note 1. Data from the Mexico 2006 Panel Study, and further details about it, are available at <http://web.mit.edu/polisci/research/mexico06/>.

10. For details, see the Mexico 2006 Panel Study's supplemental materials for chapter 12 (<http://web.mit.edu/polisci/research/mexico06/book.html>).

11. Ibid.

THIRTEEN: Images and Issues in Mexico's 2006 Presidential Election

I thank Chappell Lawson, Jorge Domínguez, James McCann, and Andy Baker for comments on earlier drafts. All errors are, of course, my own.

1. Chapter 1, note 1 provides a short description of this project. For details and data, see <http://web.mit.edu/polisci/research/mexico06/>.

2. This figure includes those respondents who switched to and from "undecided," as well as those who initially supported a candidate but failed to vote. Approximately one-