28

Mexico

Parties and Floor Access in the
Cámara de Diputados

Eric Magar

> In the end, the chamber is a mandarinate
> where the few decide for all. This doesn't
> mean that independent voices cannot
> speak...knowing the Rules goes a long
> way. You can take the rostrum by just
> raising your hand for fact checking, or by
> making suspensive motions, or by
> reserving articles from the report
> (Former deputy from the Left, interviewed
> on condition of anonymity, June 17, 2020)

Introduction

Legislative studies are a relatively young field of Mexican politics. Its growth is remarkable, with new research on candidate selection (Ascencio and Kerevel 2021); elections and redistricting (Magar et al. 2017); the standing committee system (Béjar Algazi 2009); party discipline (Téllez del Río 2018); vote trading (López Lara 2013); pork-barreling (Kerevell 2015); procedure and instability (Heller and Weldon 2003); gubernatorial influences in roll-call voting (Rosas and Langston 2011); constitutional amendment (Casar and Marván Laborde 2014); executive success (Béjar Algazi 2012) and conditions for predominance (Weldon 1997); agenda setting (Casar 2016); the budget process (Weldon 2002), and more.

Yet there is no scholarship on legislative debate in sight. Other than brief and general mentions to the subject, I could find no systematic study of floor access. This chapter takes a step towards filling in this gap by describing the institutions of speech in the *Cámara de Diputados* and performing a systematic examination of the determinants of floor participation.

The case should raise interest beyond area specialists. Mexico has a separation-of-powers constitution that has experienced divided and unified government in recent years. The three-and-a-half party system is distinct from both North American dualism and systems with extreme fragmentation, such as Brazil. And Mexico recently dropped single-term limits for members of Congress. Proksch and Slapin (2015) theorize that personal vote incentives make legislators organize the assembly with high levels of autonomy in floor debate. With little intra-party competition, such incentives were mostly absent in Mexico, but are bound to increase due to electoral reform.

The chapter uncovers a tension between formal and informal speech institutions. Formal rules decentralize agenda power by granting members broad rights of recognition to take the floor and deliver speeches. Informal rules channel debate through legislative parties, leaders managing participation in a centralized fashion. The empirical analysis reveals systematic effects of predictors associated with party hierarchies (such as leaders, committee chairs, and majority status) and predictors tied to individual candidate promotion (such as incumbents elected in single-member districts and the prospect of reelection) in the number and length of the speeches that members of Congress deliver. Focus is on the *Cámara de Diputados* of the bicameral Congress. The chambers have symmetric powers over most legislation, but the Senate is excluded from adoption of the annual budget, and I leave it out. Moreover, due to time constraints, I further narrow the focus to three out of eight Cámara terms since the advent of competitive politics in Mexico. I examine the 60th Legislature (2006–2009), the 62nd (2012–2015), and the 64th (2018–2021) up to the end of the second ordinary year—enough to investigate how the recent removal of term limits affects debate.

Institutional and Party System Background

Mexico is a presidential democracy. For most of the twentieth century a hegemonic party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), held the strings of political influence in a tight grip nationwide. The PRI's electoral fortunes suffered from societal change and formidable economic setbacks in the 1980s, but it was not until 1997 that competitive politics took over (Cornelius 1996; Cosío Villegas 1981; Molinar 1991; Scott 1959). For the first time in over six decades, the PRI lost control of the lower chamber of Congress in that year's midterm election. Then in 2000 the country's long-standing right-of-center opposition, the National Action Party (PAN) won the presidential race.

Along with democracy came two decades of divided government. The executive's control of the legislative process ended abruptly, inaugurating relative balance between the branches (Lujambio 1995; Weldon 1997). The president

retained a prominent role in lawmaking, but genuine negotiation with the oppo-
sition was required to get things done (Béjar Algazi 2012).

The party system of the competitive era had three major and a handful of small
opportunistic parties. Majors included the PAN, the PRI, and a left-of-center
Democratic Revolution Party (PRD). With few excepetions, local competition was
between the PRI and another major party. The PRI retained strongholds from its
hegemonic era in towns and smaller cities, but neither party had particularly strong
ties to social groups (Moreno 2009). Parties would rebuild clientelistic coalitions
from near scratch at every electoral campaign (Díaz Cayeros et al. 2016).

The three-plus party system came crashing down in the critical election of 2018.
After decades of infighting the left split. The faction loyal to Andrés Manuel López
Obrador, known as AMLO, successfully launched the National Regeneration
Movement (Morena), a new party, overcoming redoubtable entry barriers. This
feat paved his way to victory in the presidential race by a landslide. Riding
AMLO's coattails, Morena won a majority in Congress—51 percent of Cámara
seats. A constant feature of the party system that inaugurated the competitive era
was that major parties jointly commanded about 85 percent of deputies, like they
did in the 60th and 62nd terms. Majors lost two-thirds of their joint size in the
formidable Morena swing. Inclusion of the incomplete 64th Legislature (data runs
up to June 30, 2020 which marks the end of the second year) brings the single-
party unified government to contrast with the other terms: a minority president in
the 60th and an informal coalition with opportunistic parties in the 62nd.

Weakness in the electorate lies in sharp contrast to their strength in the
legislature, which parties draw from electoral rules. The formula is mixed-member
plurality—300 deputies are elected every three years by first-past-the-post in
single member districts (SMDs), 200 more by closed-list proportional represen-
tation (PR), all seats contested in races concurrent with the presidential election,
then again at the presidential midterm (Weldon 2001).

What gave leaders their centrality were two other key features. Single-term
limits, which the constitution set on every elected officeholder, diverted all
political ambition to the progressive format (Schlesinger 1966). And centralized
ballot access gives national and state party leaders control of future political
careers (Langston 2008).[1]

Leaders control a stock of selective incentives to reward loyalty. Leaders
distribute their party's share of committee chairs and seats. The Junta appoints
members at the start of the term, and freely makes replacements afterwards by
simple announcement to the floor. This is a key selective incentive to achieve
collective action in the partisan theory of congressional organization (Cox and

---

[1] Reliance in primaries for SMD candidate selection, mostly by the PAN (Ascencio and Kerevel
2021), on occasions by the PRI (Poiré 2002), opens room for exceptions to centralized ballot access.
They deserve closer attention.

McCubbins 1993). Leaders have other carrots and sticks in the form of discre-tionary spending. By one count, leaders of the 60th Legislature (2006–2009, included in the data) routinely received discretionary spending authority over one-fifth of the Cámara's yearly budget—plane tickets, bonus payments, and income tax breaks that could be handed to the rank and file (Casar 2011).

This institutional combination both removes personal vote incentives (Cain et al. 1987; Carey and Shugart 1995) and rewards top-bottom discipline. An indicator is cohesion, which is near perfect across parties. Téllez del Río (2018) computed frequencies with which deputies voted against a majority of their party. Excluding unanimous votes, the mean for the 1997–2018 period is just 2 percent, or 3.4 percent when abstentions are counted as votes against the party majority (p. 25).

Discipline plays a fundamental role in floor access. Formal rules, we see next, make it very difficult to control the flow of legislation without legislative parties. Party discipline operates as an alternative to agenda cartelization in many systems (Prata 2001), including the Cámara.

In a surprising recent development, single-term limits were eliminated for selected offices, including federal deputies. The 2021 midterm election will be the first since the 1930s where incumbents are allowed on the ballot (see Magar 2017 for details). This should introduce a degree of personal vote seeking among a subset of deputies with static ambition. While reformers further centralized nominations by keeping term limits in place for party switchers, this might not fully reign in competitive incumbents. Parties removing quality candidates—such as previous winners of elected office (Jacobson 1997), dynastic candidates (Enríquez González 2018), and what Zaller (1998) calls "prize fighters"—in order to secure nomination of docile newbies, risk losing those districts.[2] I examine the effect of letting static ambition play out on debate in the partial 64th term.

The Institutional Setting of Legislative Debate

A prominent study of agenda setting in Mexico aims the focus on the executive in the legislative arena, and only secondarily on intra-cameral institutions. Casar (2016) characterizes debate in Congress as centralized: "[governing] bodies have the power…to conduct floor debates, including assigning turns and time to speakers" (p. 154). The overview of the structure of legislative debate in this

---

[2] This could explain considerable amounts of constituency service in systems with party-centered campaigns, such as the UK in the 1970s (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987). The personal vote adds a couple percentage points to incumbents in the general election, insufficient to cancel out party tides, but enough to decide swing constituencies. A party can veto the MP's renomination, but risks not holding those seats.

section shows that this view has de facto practice in mind, because formal rules actually decentralize agenda power to a considerable extent.

The Cámara's Rules (Reglamento 2019) has prescriptions for debate, the Organic Law (Orgánica 2019) for congressional organization. There are two assembly governing bodies, the Junta and the Mesa. The *Junta de Coordinación Política* is the Cámara's top decision-making organ. The leaders of all parties with no fewer than five deputies are represented. The majority leader presides the Junta throughout the term. In the absence of a majority party, however, the leaders of the top-three seat holding parties preside the Junta, alternating one year each. The Junta appoints and replaces committee members, prepares each session's order of the day (*orden del día*), and in general makes and enforces party agreements. It decides by majority rule, with members' votes weighted relative to group sizes in the plenary. The majority can control the Junta (cf. Cox and McCubbins 2005).

The *Mesa Directiva* is the chamber's steering board. The Mesa chair is the Cámara president *ex-officio*. The Mesa makeup has consensual traits even when a party has the majority. The Mesa is elected yearly by two-thirds supermajority of Cámara members from Junta-proposed candidates. While Mesa members can re-elect, the chair must rotate between the top three seat-holding parties, one year each.

Agenda control is somewhat decentralized. First, every committee report is guaranteed floor consideration and must be included in the order. Committees have ability to withhold bill reports, granting them a veto over proposals in their jurisdiction. A two-thirds vote in the floor over-rides the veto. If committees were adequate agents of the Junta majority (cf. Cox and McCubbins 1993), they might prevent consideration of unwanted bills. But the Junta is required to distribute relatively powerful committee chairs proportionally among the parties—chairs distribute the committee's staff and spending with great discretion (Casar 2011). And no party can control more than half of committee members, forcing vote-buying or plain cooperation across the aisles. Therefore, some committees are bound to be preference outliers.

Second, the default method for bill consideration in the floor has unrestricted introduction of amendments to the bill reported. Debate takes place in two stages. The entire bill is first examined *en lo general*, then articles are considered indi-vidually *en lo particular* (see Heller and Weldon 2003). Members can freely reserve articles for deletion, amendment, or expansion, denying the Junta a useful procedural tool common in other assemblies: the take-it-or-leave-it rule (e.g., Cox 2006; Dion and Huber 1996).

Third, and most relevant to this chapter, speakers self-select. Individual mem-bers are entitled to take the floor when recognized by the presiding officer, for a duration set by rules or by ad hoc party agreements. And recognition is permis-sive. Introducing amendments to a report, for instance, grants right of recognition to take the floor. True, party leaders assign speakers for the first round of debate

Comp. by: Shanmugapriya   Stage : Proof   ChapterID: 0005126699   Date:10/5/21
Time:12:14:45   Filepath:d:/womat-filecopy/0005126699.3D
Dictionary : NOAD_USDictionary   577

OUP UNCORRECTED PROOF – FIRST PROOF, 10/5/2021, SPi

slots. But they cannot formally preclude others from adding their names to the list of speakers afterwards, making debate resemble first-come-first-served after the party appointees have spoken. The limit is the floor, who can decide to vote the motion or to continue debating.

Table 28.1 summarizes how rules typify limits for different kinds of debate. The first entry are drafters of new legislation, who get first recognition to take the floor in order to persuade fellow lawmakers. The time limit is ten minutes when the draft is a new law, five minutes when it changes existing statutes. Bills whose author has not had a chance to present before the session ends migrate to the next day's order upon author's request viva voce (otherwise they are referred to committee.) The rightmost columns report who selects the speaker—self-selection by drafting a bill, in this case—and who, if anyone, can veto the speaker's recognition—no one here.

Table 28.1 Parliamentary debate types in Mexico

Debate type (in Spanish)	Goal	Duration (mins)	Selector	Veto
1. Introduce legislation (iniciativa)	Author presents the bill			
• A new law		10	member	no
• Amend a law		5	member	no
2. Committee report (dictamen)	Move for floor consideration			
• Debate en lo general vs SQ, chair		10	comm.maj	pres.*
• " " ", Others		5	member	floor
• Negative report		3	comm.maj	pres.*
3. Recognition-granting motions	Contend with speakers or project			
• Amendment (reserva), introducer		5	member	no
• " ", Others		5	member	floor
• Question to speaker (cuestionamiento)		3	member	speaker
• Right of reply (alusiones personales)		pres.**	member	no
• Fact correction (rectificación)		pres.**	member	no
4. Resolutions (puntos de acuerdo)	Position taking			
• Standard, author		10	member	comm. maj
• Urgent, author (obvia resolución)		5	Junta	floor
• Other speakers		3	party	no
5. Current events (agenda política)	Position taking	< 2hrs		
• Junta proponent		10	Junta	no
• Other speakers		5	member	no

* President can delay/prevent speech by granting recommit.

** President sets time limit.

Comp. by: Shanmugapriya   Stage : Proof   ChapterID: 0005126699   Date:10/5/21
Time:12:14:45   Filepath:d:/womat-filecopy/0005126699.3D
Dictionary : NOAD_USDictionary   578

OUP UNCORRECTED PROOF – FIRST PROOF, 10/5/2021, SPi

578   ERIC MAGAR

Other speech types grant right of first recognition differently. Debate *en lo general* grants ten minutes (fifteen in constitutional amendments) to the reporting committee chairperson or designated handler of the report. The only check is not too robust: the Cámara president can delay this intervention by recommitting the bill—and possibly prevent it if the committee kills the bill. *En lo particular* amendments and Cámara resolutions grant first recognition to the proposing member.

Party-selected speakers get five minutes each, in reverse-size order, right after the chair's speech. Persuading to vote against *en lo general* kills the bill. Members who request it then get five minutes each, the president arranging them in rounds, one for one against. After six such rounds, a previous question motion is made: the floor can either proceed to vote, or continue with blocks of three such rounds if the majority allows it. When the report deals with issues of great interest, debate can go on for several hours.

Cámara resolutions (*proposiciones con punto de acuerdo*) are a debate type that is tailor-made for members' position-taking needs. If adopted, resolutions become the opinion of the chamber on some specific issue. But party leader support is a must: resolutions require urgent status (*urgente u obvia resolución*) in order to avoid committee referral and move directly to the floor. Only the Junta can request that the floor grants urgent status to at most two resolutions per session. If granted, the proposer takes the floor for five minutes. Parties then appoint one speaker each, for three minutes. The floor can then decide the previous question to vote the resolution, or open rounds of debate with self-appointed speakers.

Current events (*agenda política*) are party leaders' position-taking venue. The Junta determines up to two themes for debate before consideration of reports and new bills, party leaders appointing one speaker each. The promoting party speaker gets first recognition for ten minutes, others five minutes each, and talk in reverse-size order. Current events debate cannot exceed two hours per session.

Members make motions, by catching the president's eye from their seats, to interrupt the speaker. The president has discretion to deny, or grant up to three minutes to elaborate. Such motions are distinct from points of order (which members can also make, see Reglamento art. 114 for typified motions). They grant recognition to speak. *Cuestionamiento al orador* is to interrogate the speaker, who must also accept the question be made. *Alusiones personales* gives right of reply to alluded members by recognizing them immediately after the speaker ends. And *rectificación de hechos* wind up an additional name at the end of the list of speakers.

Rules of this sort seem ill-designed to prevent plenary bottlenecks (Cox 2006). Even in the presence of a majority party, individual members retain speaking rights that water down the Junta's efforts to cartelize the legislative process. Absent formidable party discipline, preventing dilatory tactics would be enormously difficult. The final section elaborates.

Three former deputies from the larger parties offered quick impressions on internal party speech rules upon request.[3] One commonality (in this very small sample) is the informal erosion of formal individual members' debate rights in favor of centralized speech allocation. The PAN relies on a debate vice-leader (subcoordinador de debate parlamentario) responsible for selecting speakers in debates. When two members wish to speak at once, the vice-leader would let them figure who gets the party's slot in the debate, who then speaks for or against. The PRI leadership sets apart issues of party interest, over which it decides all speakers centrally. Members communicate their wish to speak on unwhipped issues to their state caucus, who seeks authorization to speak with party whips. The left is no exception, leaders micromanaging the party's debate strategy. An important consideration is that rules give parties one speaking slot each in many debates, regardless of size. Distributive conflict over speech is therefore more acute for larger parties, with longer speaker lines. A must for members whom the leadership leaves out is a solid understanding of the Rules. As pointed in the chapter's epigraph, they can make individual speaking rights effective by introducing suspensive motions or amendments, both of which come equipped with recognition to take the floor.

Proksch and Slapin's (2015) scheme, used across chapters in this volume, compares assemblies according to how members gain access to take the floor in order to deliver speeches (p. 79). Their continuum connects two extremes: party-controlled and individual member-controlled floor access. Formal rules place the Cámara towards the individual member-controlled access limit of the continuum; but partisan rules pull it towards the party-controlled access side. Party leaders move the strings of lawmaking. Their influence, however, derives almost exclusively from party discipline (near-perfect across the board) and not from agenda power (which is quite diffuse). The removal of single-term limits ought to make this tension between formal and de facto institutions harder to manage for all parties.

The Determinants of Floor Access in Mexico

Speeches were digitized by the stenographic service (scraped from http://cronica.diputados.gob.mx). I turned text into data with regular expressions—for HTML tag removal, for speaker and speech identification.[4] The dependent variable is a member's participation in plenary debate during each of the legislative

[3] Email exchanges with former deputies identified in footnote 1, June 17, 2020.
[4] Analysis was performed in R (R Dev. Core Team 2011). I relied on libraries lme4, lubridate, margins, MASS, plyr, stargazer, and zoo.

580   ERIC MAGAR

periods observed.[5] The 60th, 62nd, and 64th Legislatures had six, eight, and six periods, respectively, totaling twenty in the data. Four are extraordinary periods, the rest ordinary. Mean days per extraordinary period was 5.3, 31.4 for the ordinary. Debate models control for period type and length.

The units of observation are member periods. I use two specifications of the dependent variable. One is speeches$_{i,p}$ equal the number of days that member i took the floor in period p. Owing to the permissive agenda, speech made from the deputy's seat by means of motions, without taking the lectern, count as debate. As elsewhere in the volume, days when a deputy spoke fewer than fifty words in total are arbitrarily considered non-debate and dropped, adding zero towards the member's aggregates. Since officers do not participate in legislative debate, all steering speech, as when the president recognizes a deputy or the secretary calls a voice vote to dispense reading of the bill, was also removed. So was speech by non-deputies, as in cabinet member hearings. All text remaining is considered debate, members' daily totals added across sessions in the same period to produce aggregates for analysis.

The other specification is words$_{i,p}$ equal the total words that member i spoke in period p divided by the proportion of all session days in period p that i served in the Cámara—members can take leaves of absence and many served less than the full period. So the denominators for members i and j who both spoke 2000 words, but i served uninterrupted throughout period p while j served only half of period p, are 1 and 0.5, respectively, and words$_{i,p}$ = 2000 while words$_{j,p}$ = 2000/0.5 = 4000.

Table 28.2 has a summary of the dependent variable along others of interest. Member-period observations total 9978. The median member spoke once per period, delivering 556 words relative to days in office (544 words per period in absolute terms). At 1300 words per period, means are substantially higher owing to a right-skewed speech distribution. Relevant to the choice of estimation methods, speech data are not evidently over-dispersed (at 3.1, the standard deviation is not that much higher than the mean of 2), so both negative binomial and poisson regression will be used for model fitting. And with nearly two out of five members

---

[5] Common terms have ambiguous meanings in different assemblies. I use Mexican terminology here. A Legislature is a term, the Cámara between two congressional elections. Roman numerals distinguish consecutive Legislatures since the second half of the nineteenth century. This chapter covers the LX, LXII, and LXIV. Legislative years break into two ordinary legislative periods, one covering September through December, another February through April. Extraordinary legislative periods may be convened during the recess in order to consider specific legislation. Analysis aggregates each member's speeches in a given period (merging together all extraordinary periods that year, if any). So members in a legislative year like 2012–2013 (that had no extraordinary periods) have two word aggregates in the dataset, one for each ordinary period; in a year like 2013–2014 (that did), they have three word aggregates in the data. Member-periods are the units of observation in the analysis. And a plenary session is a specific day when diputados met. During ordinary periods, sessions are usually held on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and may be scheduled in other weekdays if the Junta so decides. For instance, diputados met on forty and thirty-one days in the first and second ordinary periods of 2013–2014, respectively, and nine days in extraordinary periods, for a yearly total of eighty session days.

Comp. by: Shanmugapriya   Stage : Proof   ChapterID: 0005126699   Date:10/5/21
Time:12:14:45   Filepath:d:/womat-filecopy/0005126699.3D
Dictionary : NOAD_USDictionary   581

OUP UNCORRECTED PROOF – FIRST PROOF, 10/5/2021, SPi

Table 28.2 Descriptive statistics

	min	median	mean	sd	max	N
N speeches (DV1)	0	1	2	3.1	37	9978
N words/exposure (DV2)	0	556	1326	2665.7	50,291	9978
N words	0	544	1301	2632.2	50,291	9978
Days in office (exposure)	1	29	25.4	12.2	40	9978
Party share	0.4	25	29.3	16.2	51	9978
Years since frosh	0	1	1.7	2.2	17	9978
Previous terms (seniority)	0	0	0.3	0.6	4	9978
Age	21	46	45.9	10.1	78	7453
	0	1	tot	N		
Spoke	40.3	59.7	100	9978		
Majority	84.7	15.3	100	9978		
Leader	98.4	1.6	100	9978		
Chair	88.4	11.6	100	9978		
SMD	39.3	60.7	100	9978		
PAN	73.4	26.6	100	9978		
PRI	73.7	26.3	100	9978		
Left	68.9	31.1	100	9978		
Suplente	94.1	5.9	100	9978		
Extraord	80.4	19.6	100	9978		
Female	63.7	36.3	100	9978		
60th	69.8	30.2	100	9978		
62nd	59.7	40.3	100	9978		
64th	70.6	29.4	100	9978		

(40.3 percent) uttering not a single word in the period, a zero-inflated approach is adopted too.

Debate length is more intuitive when expressed as members' daily totals instead of the period totals analyzed. In the median session, thirty-six different speakers contributed to daily debate, and six days had over one hundred speakers. Considering speakers only, the overall median daily speech length is 606 words. Mild term effects show up—the 60th period-by-period medians slightly above and the 64th slightly below the overall median—but period distributions are, in general, similar. The clearest exceptions are extraordinary periods. Models therefore also control for term and period type effects.

Deputy Valentina Batres holds the record for delivering the longest daily speech in the three terms examined. At 15,932 words, her March 11, 2008 speech is 50 percent longer than the runner-up and has about as many words as *Don Quijote de la Mancha*'s chapters 1 through 7 (forty-five pages in the edition I own). Batres and legislators close to AMLO used dilatory tactics throughout that day's session, delaying the vote of a national geostatistics law. Filibustering was in fact aimed at something other than this technocratic bill: they wanted the Cámara president to amend the day's order to hear about alleged misconduct by the minister of the

Comp. by: Shanmugapriya   Stage : Proof   ChapterID: 0005126699   Date:10/5/21
Time:12:14:45   Filepath:d:/womat-filecopy/0005126699.3D
Dictionary : NOAD_USDictionary   582

OUP UNCORRECTED PROOF – FIRST PROOF, 10/5/2021, SPi

582   ERIC MAGAR

interior. The names associated to outlier member-periods are few: only nine
deputies repeatedly surpassed 20,000 words per period, mostly in the 62nd
term. Routine filibusters in the Cámara are worthy of further study. The impact
of gender in floor access is of interest across chapters. Of 1710 members observed,
39 percent are women. Owing to stricter quotas, 47 percent of the 64th Legislature
were women, up from 28 percent in the 60th (Piscopo 2016). Women's partici-
pation in debate exceeds their numerical presence: despite subrepresentation
among committee chairs and party leaders (but not Cámara presidents), 41
percent of both speeches and total words were delivered by women. A degree of
concentration is also manifest, as women represented 37 percent of unique
speechmakers, who took the floor more often and quite longer.

Figure 28.1 shows the percentage of debate by female members, pooled across
the terms observed, and broken by main parties. Light gray bars are speeches by
female deputies, mid gray bars the total words delivered by female deputies, and
dark gray bars the percentage of women in the legislative party across terms
observed. Relating speech and numerical importance shows that the average
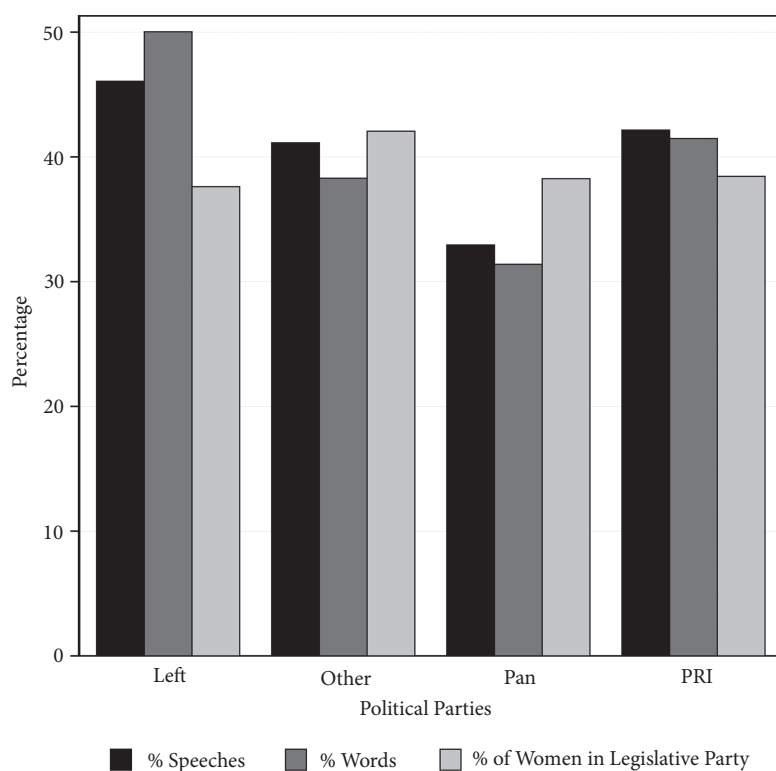woman deputy from the left spoke 63 percent more words overall than their

Figure 28.1 Gender numeric representation and speechmaking in Mexico

male counterparts. The reverse relation holds among PAN deputies but much less acute. The other parties break more or less even. In general, gender differences between parties are mild.

Single-term limits offer little leverage to evaluate seniority effects on floor access. Members wishing to return had to wait one term at least. It is remarkable that, despite this, 14 percent of members had previous federal deputy experience. A hint that the removal of single-terms will not be shunned by lack of static ambition, as often happens. Freshmen spoke 1122 words per period on average, compared to 2019 for members with past terms in Congress. Member periods with one past term made 44 percent more speeches and spoke 68 percent more words than those with none; with two past terms instead of one, 30 percent more speeches and 48 percent more words; but those with more than two past terms gave 33 percent less speeches and 53 percent fewer words than those with two. This drop could be attributable to earlier recruitment of senior members, antedating competitive politics; or it could be due to higher likelihood that senior members occupy positions that might depress willingness to speak despite floor access possibilities.

To analyze participation in floor debates, I fit multivariate regression models to words spoken. In the right side are status variables, member characteristics, and controls. Units are member periods.

Status variables. A dummy for majority status indicates members from Morena in the 64th Legislature—the only party controlling over 50 percent of seats. If debate is an (imperfect) substitute for legislative outcomes, then minority members demand more frequent floor participation (Proksch and Slapin 2015). On the contrary, if members put value on debate per se, the majority may demand it as much as others, possibly with better access to the floor. Next, a dummy for committee chair status. When producing a report, the chair has privileged access to the floor, and this should translate into more speech. A dummy for party leader status completes this set. Leaders allocate party speakers. Whether or not they take advantage of this privilege remains an open question, a good leader ought to distribute the goodies, or risk removal.

Member variables. Aside from woman and seniority, regressors in this group include SMD, a dummy equal one for members elected in single-member districts. Systematic differences in members' pork requests are attributable to the method of election (Kerevell 2015), which may also translate into higher demand for access to the floor. I also interact this regressor with a dummy indicating the 64th Legislature, which dropped single-term limits (SMD x re-election). Other things constant, I expect the personalization of the vote to raise demand for floor access. Party size is the percentage of seats the member's party holds. Larger parties must divide the slot that all parties get to take the floor among more members, and this should show up as a negative regression coefficient. And a dummy suplente controls for substitute members. Regressors exclude members' ages due to incomplete data, and party ideology, which made no difference in the estimates.

584 ERIC MAGAR

Other controls. Also in the right side are dummies for the 62nd and 64th terms (the 60th is the baseline) and another for extraordinary periods. Finally, with the option to take leaves of absence and have suplentes take over, some members served incomplete periods. The exposure is a member's tenure, the number of days served in the period, logged. Higher exposure offers more opportunities for floor access. Unlike other chapters, models exclude party fixed effects, they made no substantive difference in the estimates reported.

Table 28.3 reports the estimation of six different model specifications. In the left side are both flavors of the dependent variable. Count models of speeches were fit with negative binomial regression (1 and 2) and zero-inflated poisson regression (3), while models of words relative to tenure with ordinary least squares (4, 5, and 6). Models 2, 3, 5, and 6 include fixed-term effects to capture any heterogeneity between Legislatures that are pooled together. Model 6 also estimates separate error terms for each member, intended to capture individual heterogeneity. And model 3 accounts for the excess of zeroes in the distribution. The overall fit is correct across models, likelihood ratio tests (not reported) reject the intercept-only model with much confidence.

Interesting patterns emerge from coefficient estimates. Party size exerted a negative and statistically significant effect in member floor access across specifications. This is easier to interpret from OLS coefficients: other variables constant, changing the party size from large (40 percent of seats) to small (15 percent) predicts a drop of 1650 words per member in the period. Martin Luther King took sixteen minutes to deliver his famous "I have a dream" speech, which approximates that word count. I also find a positive, large, and statistically significant effect of majority status, which acts against size. Far from letting legislative accomplishments speak for themselves, majority members take the floor systematically more than those of similar-sized parties. Figure 28.3 demonstrates the discontinuity through simulation with model 2 parameters. As party size crosses the majority threshold the member gets a bonus, delivering a number of speeches comparable to a party with 25 to 30 percent of seats.

Other forms of status also associate positively to floor access, with results somewhat sensitive to model specification. Party leadership exerts a substantially larger effect than majority status on speech length, but much smaller on the number of speeches. Leaders get privileged floor access and appear to specialize in longer speeches, probably on more significant legislation. Committee chairs also deliver more speeches than other members, but controlling for term and member effects bears upon OLS coefficient significance, both substantially and statistically, hinting to important differences in speech length across committee jurisdictions and individuals.

I also find positive effects of seniority and gender that resonate with the bivariate patterns of floor access. The coefficient for women is not robust to random member effects (accounting for zero-inflation also bears on impact).

Comp. by: Shanmugapriya   Stage : Proof   ChapterID: 0005126699   Date:10/5/21
Time:12:14:45   Filepath:d:/womat-filecopy/0005126699.3D
Dictionary : NOAD_USDictionary   585

OUP UNCORRECTED PROOF – FIRST PROOF, 10/5/2021, SPi

MEXICO   585

Table 28.3 Determinants of floor access and words uttered in legislative debates in Mexico

	DV = Speeches in period			DV = Words/exposure in period		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Exposure (logged)	0.99***	1.32***	1.07***			
	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.04)			
Majority	1.20***	0.98***	1.11***	826.87***	1738.55***	1102.46***
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(84.75)	(128.10)	(219.25)
Party leader	0.35***	0.31***	0.22***	2241.56***	1911.89***	1260.70***
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.04)	(202.81)	(199.88)	(302.50)
Comm. chair	0.28***	0.26***	0.12***	289.72***	225.24***	184.63
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(78.23)	(76.64)	(127.37)
Previous terms	0.11***	0.12***	0.10***	210.68***	245.54***	253.18***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(46.37)	(45.33)	(83.10)
Women	0.13***	0.09***	0.04**	136.54***	125.68**	16.18
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(52.64)	(52.14)	(96.83)
Party size	−0.05***	−0.04***	−0.04***	−61.52***	−71.85***	−63.13***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(1.92)	(2.20)	(3.76)
SMD	0.03	−0.06*	−0.01	−48.69	−90.05	−113.31
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(53.48)	(63.34)	(112.33)
SMD x re-elect		0.26***	0.10***		232.39**	−8.32
		(0.05)	(0.03)		(111.13)	(182.94)
Suplente	−0.17***	−0.09	−0.23***	−271.52**	−346.94***	−330.99**
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(106.35)	(103.79)	(137.19)
62nd Leg.		0.25***	0.24***		726.90***	843.14***
		(0.03)	(0.02)		(60.94)	(94.39)
64th Leg.		0.17***	0.16***		−279.10***	316.26**
		(0.05)	(0.03)		(107.10)	(158.53)
Extraordinary		0.67***	0.69***		-−1234.16***	-−1240.27***
		(0.08)	(0.07)		(64.62)	(43.42)
Constant	−1.66***	−2.97***	−1.95***	2874.07***	3064.88***	2805.63***
	(0.08)	(0.15)	(0.13)	(68.55)	(84.01)	(140.25)
Fixed effects	no	term	term	no	term	term
Random effects	no	no	no	no	no	member
Estimation method	negative binomial	Negative binomial	Zero-inflated Poisson	OLS	OLS	Linear mixed-effects
Overdispersion	1.55***	1.65***				
	(0.05)	(0.05)				
Observations	9978	9978	9978	9978	9978	9978
R2				0.14	0.18	
AIC	32689.90	32478.98	34832.82			178880.70

Note: *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01. Standard errors in parentheses.
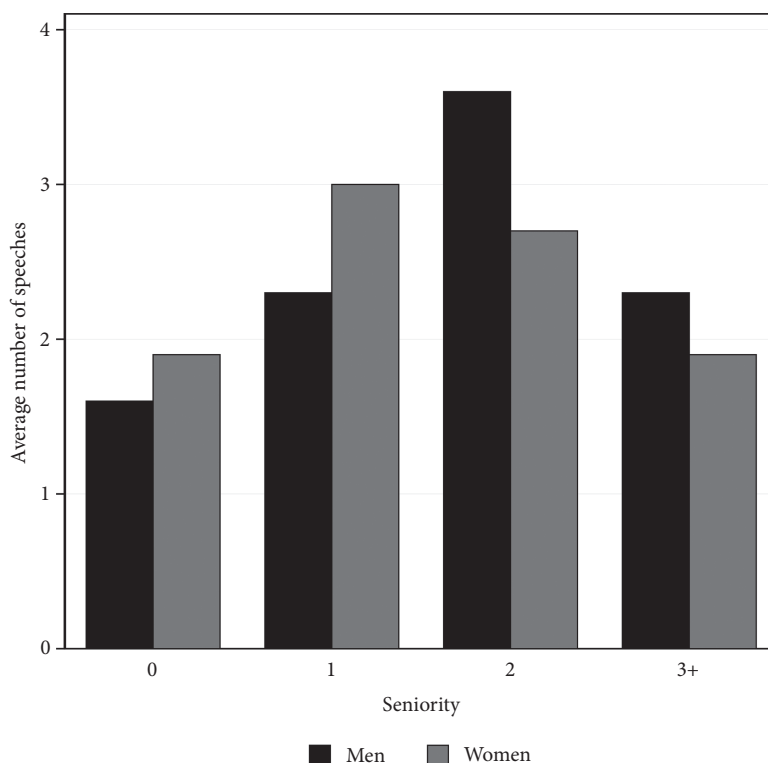
586 ERIC MAGAR

Figure 28.2 Average number of speeches, by seniority and gender in Mexico

This is probably due to the concentration of debate by women highlighted above, some deputies taking the floor disproportionately more than others. Overall, the effect of gender appears to be on par with that of one additional term of seniority in Figure 28.2, which reports average marginal effects.

A null finding of interest involves the method of election. The coefficient for SMD is indistinguishable from zero across models. Average marginal effects aid in negative binomial regression coefficient interpretation: in contrast to PR members and holding all other regressors at their mean, deputies elected in SMDs spoke slightly less, about 125 words in the period; the 95 percent confidence interval, however, barely excludes the zero and this signal therefore could be the product of chance alone. Note, however, the change in slope when interacted with re-election: this marginal effect is not just positive, it fully cancels the negative pull of SMDs. Now a signal is discernible from random noise, even after controlling for majority status (the other big change in the 64th Legislature). Figure 28.3 makes this effect plain, a gap separates confidence intervals of predicted speeches by SMD members who can reelect (darker) and the term-limited (lighter). This finding hints to the
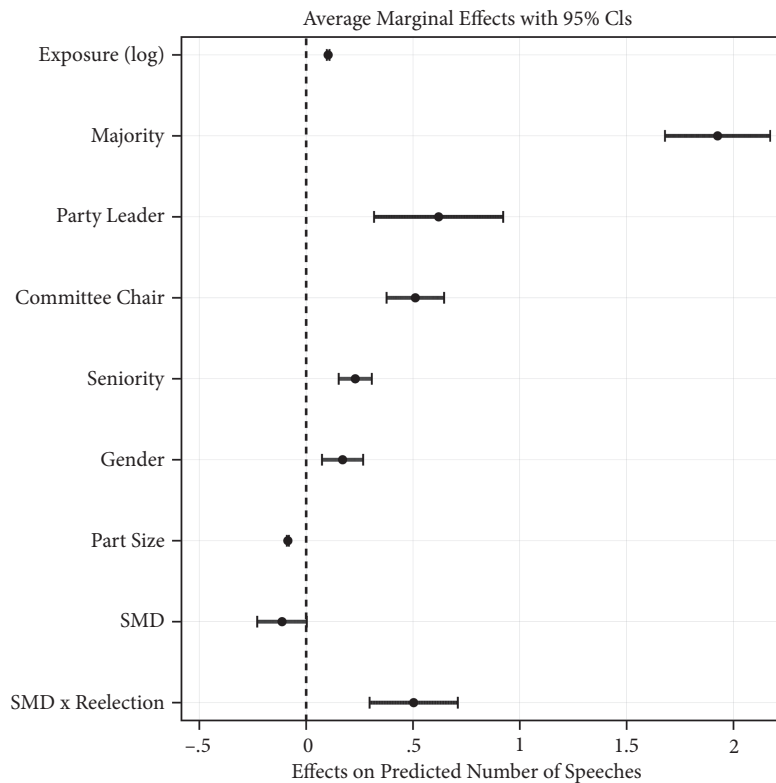
Comp. by: Shanmugapriya   Stage : Proof   ChapterID: 0005126699   Date:10/5/21
Time:12:14:46   Filepath:d:/womat-filecopy/0005126699.3D
Dictionary : NOAD_USDictionary   587

OUP UNCORRECTED PROOF – FIRST PROOF, 10/5/2021, SPi

Figure 28.3 Marginal effects on predicted number of speeches in Mexico

Note: Circles report the effect in the expected number of speeches per period of a unit change in each independent variable, all else at mean values; bars are 95 percent confidence intervals.

invigoration of the personal vote after the removal of term limits and is worthy of more careful examination.

Informal Waterproofing

Where do the Cámara's debate institutions sit relative to other stylized assemblies? Figure 28.4 does a simple comparative exercise by intersecting the permeability of floor access and the degree of informality in the constraints adopted.

Make the Cámara less permeable and more informal, get the UK House of Commons. As plenary time became a scarce commodity with suffrage extension and industrialization, British private members gradually abdicated their parliamentary rights, delegating all-encompassing legislative authority to the cabinet (Cox 1987). But speaking time in the Commons remains formally reserved for individual MPs, who are recognized by a non-partisan Speaker (Blumenau and
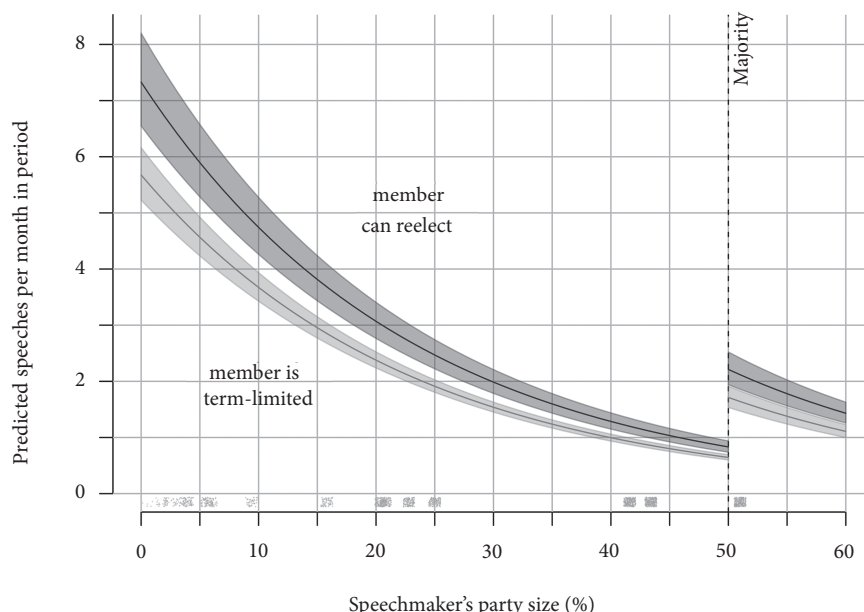
Figure 28.4 Predicted number of speeches by party size in Mexico

Damiani, this volume). Therefore, the efficient secret of British politics that turned backbenchers into legislative nonentities by the mid-1880s was and remains an informal arrangement, a superimposition of party hierarchy over formal procedure. Disruption of the party system inevitably reinstates formal member prerogatives, to some extent at least. To the cabinet ministers' dismay, the Brexit section that split both parties since the 2016 referendum resurrected many of the Speaker's agenda-setting powers that had been dormant for decades—if not centuries (*Economist* 2019) (Figure 28.5).

Make less permeable but more formal, get the US House. The adoption of Reed's rules in the 1880s achieved much the same centralization of agenda power as in Commons—allowing the Speaker to curb the minority's power to delay and to select what bills to consider in what order (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Den Hartog 2004). Particular to debate, the crucial innovation empowered the Speaker to refuse to recognize members seeking to make dilatory motions, making floor access impermeable. Unlike Commons, however, the House has routinely written these constraints in the rules it adopts every two years at the start of each term.

Last, add permeability while keeping informality more or less constant, get the US Senate. Cloture to stop debate requires three-fifth of Senate floor support, against majority for the Cámara's previous question (Gelman and Goplerud, this volume). After a committee reports out a bill, it is automatically included in the calendar, as in the Cámara. However, by precedent, the majority leader, in
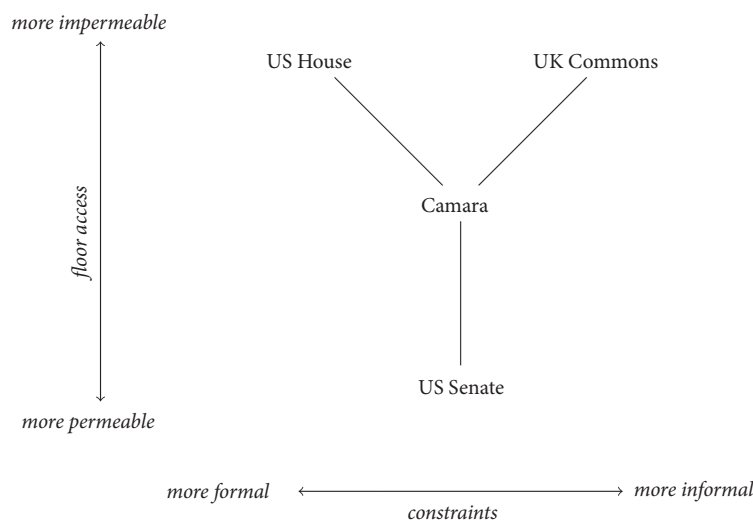
Figure 28.5 Formal and informal restrictions to members' legislative rights in Mexico

consultation with the minority leader, schedules what bill in the calendar shall be considered next (Campbell et al. 2002; Roberts and Smith 2007). Absent this *informal* rule, the leader's negative agenda power would be severely weakened and ineffective.

Why so many assemblies weaken members' legislative rights through informal mechanisms, but retain those rights formally in place is an interesting puzzle. The central intuition in Riker's work offers a clue: every majority is the sum of minorities. There is no guarantee that the tide will not turn in the near future, majorities losing elections or splitting to become minorities. Retaining members' formal rights in place is an insurance policy to remain somewhat relevant when all else fails. Wawro and Schickler (2006) document routine threats to "go nuclear" and remove minority rights in today's polarized Senate, yet the filibuster remains firmly in place.

Conclusions

Tension lies at the heart of legislative debate in the Cámara. On one hand, parties have informally, but effectively managed to reign in members' capacity to take the floor. The effects that the chapter's regression models uncovered for the majority, for leaders, and for committee chairs are all channeled through party structures in the Junta. On the other hand, formal rules grant individual members rights of recognition to take the floor and, we have seen, these take many guises. The effect attributable to SMDs after the removal of term limits is, in all likelihood, associated to renovated personal vote incentives that members face.

Whether or not the informal solution to avoid plenary bottlenecks continues to operate as it has so far in the Cámara is uncertain. Little intra-party competition used to remove personal vote incentives that leads members to differentiate by taking the floor in Proksch and Slapin's model. With the removal of term limits, incumbents with static ambition may soon start overwhelming the system by exploiting the formal autonomy of floor debate in their need to strengthen their electoral connection.

It is important to keep in mind that the place of debate in the legislative process is *after* negative agenda filters. Agenda setting lets leaders prevent consideration of motions when they anticipate debate to go in undesired directions—speakers opening issues that threaten to divide the majority. When and if parties can no longer prevent delays as they have, pressure to reform the rules will inevitably build up. Reform could give leaders strong *ex ante* vetoes to prevent moving unwanted bills to the floor, precluding debate; by removing the formal rights that render floor access so permeable; or both.

Acknowledgments

References

Ascencio, Sergio J., and Yann P. Kerevel. 2021. "Party Strategy, Candidate Selection, and Legislative Behavior in Mexico." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. Forthcoming.

Béjar Algazi, Luisa. 2012. "¿Quién legisla en México? Descentralización y proceso legislativo." *Revista Mexicana de Sociología 74* (4): 619–647.

Béjar Algazi, Luisa, ed. 2009. *Qué hacen los legisladores en México: El trabajo en comisiones.* México City: Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales: Miguel Ángel Porrúa.

Cain, Bruce E., John A. Ferejohn, and Morris P. Fiorina. 1987. *The Personal Vote: Constituency Service and Electoral Independence.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Campbell, Andrea C., Gary W. Cox, and Mathew D. McCubbins. 2002. "Agenda Power in the US Senate, 1877–1986." In *Party, Process, and Political Change in*

Comp. by: Shanmugapriya   Stage : Proof   ChapterID: 0005126699   Date:10/5/21
Time:12:14:47   Filepath:d:/womat-filecopy/0005126699.3D
Dictionary : NOAD_USDictionary   591

OUP UNCORRECTED PROOF – FIRST PROOF, 10/5/2021, SPi

MEXICO   591

Congress: New Perspectives on the History of Congress Vol. 1, edited by David W. Brady and Mathew D. McCubbins, pp. 107–145. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Carey, John M., and Matthew S. Shugart. 1995. "Incentives to Cultivate a Personal Vote: A Rank Ordering of Electoral Formulas." *Electoral Studies* **14** (4): 417–439.

Casar, María Amparo. 2011. "¿Cómo y cuánto gasta la Cámara de Diputados?" *Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, cuaderno de debate* **8**.

Casar, María Amparo. 2016. "Parliamentary Agenda Setting in Latin America: The Case of Mexico." In *Legislative Institutions and Lawmaking in Latin America*, edited by Eduardo Alemán and George Tsebelis, pp. 148–174. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Casar, María Amparo, and Ignacio Marván Laborde, eds. 2014. *Reformar sin mayorías: La dinámica del cambio constitucional en México, 1997–2012*. Mexico City: Taurus.

Cornelius, Wayne A. 1996. *Mexican Politics in Transition: The Breakdown of a One-Party-Dominant Regime*. La Jolla, CA: Center for US–Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego.

Cosío Villegas, Daniel. 1981. *El sistema político mexicano: las possibilidades de cambio*. Mexico City: Editorial Mortiz.

Cox, Gary W. 1987. *The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political Parties in Victorian England*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Cox, Gary W. 2006. "The Organization of Democratic Legislatures." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*, edited by Barry R. Weingast, and Donald A. Wittman, pp. 141–161. New York: Oxford University Press.

Cox, Gary W., and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1993. *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cox, Gary W., and Mathew D. McCubbins. 2005. *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the US House of Representatives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Den Hartog, Christopher F. 2004. "*Limited Party Government and the Majority Party Revolution in the Nineteenth-Century House*." PhD thesis, University of California at San Diego.

Díaz Cayeros, Alberto, Federico Estévez, and Beatriz Magaloni. 2016. *The Political Logic of Poverty Relief: Electoral Strategies and Social Policy in Mexico*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Dion, Douglas, and John D. Huber. 1996. "Procedural Choice and the House Committee on Rules." *The Journal of Politics* **58** (1): 25–53.

Economist, The. 2019. "*John Bercow, Speaker of the Asylum*." Bagehot, January 10.

Enríquez González, José Ramón. 2018. *Dinastías políticas municipales en México*. BA thesis, Intituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México.

Heller, William B., and Jeffrey A. Weldon. 2003. "Reglas de votación y la estabilidad en la Cámara de Diputados." In *El Congreso Mexicano después de la alternancia*, edited

by Luisa Béjar Algazi and Rosa María Mirón Lince, pp. 85–119. Mexico City: Asociación Mexicana de Estudios Parlamentarios—Instituto de Investigaciones Legislativas del Senado de la República.

Jacobson, Gary C. 1997. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*. New York: Longman.

Kerevell, Yann P. 2015. "Pork-barreling Without Reelection? Evidence from the Mexican Congress." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* **40** (1): 137–166.

Langston, Joy. 2008. "Legislative recruitment in Mexico." In *Pathways to Power: Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection in Latin America*, edited by Peter Siavelis and Scott Morgenstern, pp. 143–163. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.

López Lara, Alvaro F. 2013. "Ideología y coaliciones en la Asamblea Legislativa del Distrito Federal." In *¿Quién, cómo y qué se legisla en México?*, edited by Luisa Béjar Algazi, pp. 217–264. Mexico City: UNAM.

Lujambio, Alonso. 1995. *Federalismo y Congreso en el cambio político de México*. México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas.

Magar, Eric. 2017. "*Consecutive Reelection Institutions and Electoral Calendars Since 1994 in Mexico V2.0*." http://dx.doi.org/10.7910/DVN/X2IDWS, Harvard Dataverse [distributor].

Magar, Eric, Alejandro Trelles, Micah Altman, and Michael P. McDonald. 2017. "Components of Partisan Bias Originating From Single-member Districts in Multi-party Systems: An Application to Mexico." *Political Geography* **57** (1): 1–12.

Molinar, Juan. 1991. "El tiempo de la legitimidade." *Elecciones, autoritarismo y democracia en México*. Mexico City: Cal y arena.

Moreno, Alejandro. 2009. *La decisión electoral: votantes, partidos y democracia en México*. Mexico, DF: Estados Unidos Mexicanos, Cámara de Diputados, LX Legislatura.

Orgánica. 2019. "*Ley Orgánica del Congreso de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos (last modified 8 May 2019)*." Secretaría de Servicios Parlamentarios http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/marco.htm (visited June 10, 2020).

Piscopo, Jennifer M. 2016. "When Informality Advantages Women: Quota Networks, Electoral Rules and Candidate Selection in Mexico." *Government and Opposition* **51** (3): 487––512.

Poiré, Alejandro. 2002. "*Bounded Ambitions. Party Nominations, Discipline, and Defection: Mexico's PRI in Comparative Perspective*." PhD thesis, Department of Government, Harvard University.

Prata, Adriana. 2001. *A Study of Party Discipline and Agenda Control in National Legislatures*. PhD Dissertation. University of California at San Diego.

Proksch, Sven-Oliver, and Jonathan B. Slapin. 2015. *The Politics of Parliamentary Debate: Parties, Rebels and Representation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

R Development Core Team. 2011. "*R: A Language and Environment for Statistical Computing*." *R Foundation for Statistical Computing* http://www.R-project.org.

Reglamento. 2019. "*Reglamento de la Cámara de Diputados*." (last modified December 18, 2019) Secretaría de Servicios Parlamentarios http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/marco.htm (visited June 10, 2020).

Roberts, Jason M. and Steven S. Smith. 2007. "The Evolution of Agenda-Setting Institutions in Congress: Path Dependency in House and Senate Institutional Development." In *Party, Process, and Political Change in Congress Volume 2: Further New Perspectives on the History of Congress*, edited by David W. Brady, and Mathew D. McCubbins, pp. 182–204. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Rosas, Guillermo, and Joy Langston. 2011. "Gubernatorial Effects in the Voting Behavior of National Legislators." *The Journal of Politics* **73** (2): 477–493.

Schlesinger, Joseph A. 1966. *Ambition and Politics: Political Careers in the United States*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Scott, Robert Edwin. 1959. *Mexican Government in Transition*. Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press.

Téllez del Río, Julio. 2018. "Legisladores indisciplinados en partidos disciplinados: evidencia de la Cámara de Diputados de México 1998–2018." *MA thesis*, Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, A.C.

Wawro, Gregory J., and Eric Schickler. 2006. *Filibuster: Obstruction and Lawmaking in the U.S. Senate*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Weldon, Jeffrey A. 1997. "The Political Sources of Presidencialismo in Mexico." In *Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America*, edited by Scott Mainwaring and Matthew S. Shugart, pp. 225–258. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Weldon, Jeffrey A. 2001. "The Consequences of Mexico's Mixed-member Electoral System, 1988–1997." In *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds?* edited by Matthew S. Shugart and Martin P. Wattenberg, pp. 447–476. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Weldon, Jeffrey A. 2002. "The Legal and Partisan Framework of the Legislative Delegation of the Budget in Mexico." In *Legislative Politics in Latin America*, edited by Scott Morgenstern and Benito Nacif, pp. 377–410. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zaller, John. 1998. "Politicians as Prize Fighters: Electoral Selection and Incumbency Advantage." In *Party Politics and Politicians*, edited by John G. Geer, pp. 125–185. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.