

# ACTA POLITOLOGICA

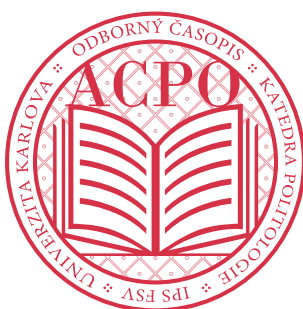
[www.acpo.cz](http://www.acpo.cz)

RECENZOVANÝ ČASOPIS | PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL

2020 | Vol. 12 | No. 3 | ISSN 1803-8220

---

---



BÁRCENA JUÁREZ, Sergio A. (2020). Reinterpreting Theories of Legislative Organization. Committee chair selection in the non-majoritarian stage of the Mexican Cámara de Diputados (1997-2018). *Acta Politologica*. Vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 51–74.  
[https://doi.org/10.14712/1803-8220/20\\_2020](https://doi.org/10.14712/1803-8220/20_2020)

Published: 22/10/2020

*Tento článek podléhá autorským právům, kopírování a využívání jeho obsahu bez řádného odkazování na něj je považováno za plagiátorství a podléhá sankcím dle platné legislativy.*

*This article is protected by copyright. Copying and use of its content and presenting it as original research without proper citation is plagiarism, which is subject to legal sanctions.*

---

---

**Katedra politologie Institutu politologických studií**  
Fakulta sociálních věd Univerzity Karlovy

**Department of Political Science, Institute of Political Studies**  
Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

## Reinterpreting Theories of Legislative Organization. Committee chair selection in the non-majoritarian stage of the Mexican *Cámara de Diputados* (1997-2018)

Sergio A. Bárcena Juárez<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract:

*How are committee chairs appointed in congresses with null reelection rates and no seniority norms? In this article, I propose an analytical model that draws on informational and distributive theories of legislative organization to explain the logic behind chair appointments during the 21 years of non-majoritarian congresses in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies. Since Mexican legislators are term-limited, and caucus coordinators must select committee chairs among a pool of mostly unknown and inexperienced legislators, this assembly represents an interesting case for challenging the postulates of traditional legislative organization theories. After analyzing chair appointment procedures in the Mexican Chamber through an original database comprising biographical, institutional, partisan and electoral information of 3,470 legislators across seven legislative periods (1997-2018), I have found evidence to sustain that – as long as certain internal and external conditions are met (formal decision-making authority of committees, the absence of a partisan cartel and electoral competitiveness) – merit-based appointments expected by the informative theory, as well as constituent-oriented chair selection proposed by the distributive theory, can be met in congresses lacking reelection incentives and seniority norms.*

**Key words:** Mexico; legislators; deputies; diputados; committees; legislative organization; seniority

### Introduction

Congresses with strong committee systems can increase their oversight capabilities while processing a large number of legislative resolutions with high levels of decisiveness and legitimacy (Gilligan & Krehbiel 1990). Since most committees are key players in the legislative process, these organs have access to privileged resources; which is why legislatures, parties and individual legislators find these structures as useful tools for meeting their goals (Cox & McCubbins, 1993; Shepsle & Weingast 1987).

Besides their formal attributions, procedures for assigning legislators to committees are key to determine these organs' relevance and strength. Thus, understanding how committee appointments are made is an investigative enterprise of major importance (Rhode & Shepsle, 1973) that offers an opportunity to understand how resources and rights are

<sup>1</sup> Sergio A. Bárcena Juárez is full-time professor and researcher at School of Humanities and Education, Tec de Monterrey (María Auxiliadora 7, Coapa, San Bartolo el Chico, Tlalpan, Zip code: 14380, Mexico City). Contact: Sergio.barcena@tec.mx. Researcher ID: AAP-7816-2020. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4860-6699>.

handled within a congress, as well as to comprehend the relations between a legislature and the political system (Martin & Mickler, 2019).

The informative and distributive theories of legislative organization have been essential to comprehend the logic behind committee appointments in congresses with reelection-oriented members and seniority rule. However, some legislatures do not contemplate immediate reelection or offer their members with scarce incentives for pursuing it. Likewise, there are congresses that do not grant representatives with individual property rights over committees through seniority, which in turn reduces legislators' incentives for becoming specialists in a certain committee's policy areas.

In the absence of theoretical models applicable to such congresses, recent investigative efforts have tried to expand the discipline's explanatory capacities by designing innovative analytical frameworks that explain committee appointment procedures outside the US context (see Mickler 2018; Chiru & Gherghina 2017; Chasqueti & Pérez 2012; Santos & Rennó 2004).

Drawing on informative and distributive theories, as well as on the principal-agent approach, this article proposes a framework for analysing committee assignment procedures in party-centred congresses where chairs are designated by caucus leaders under significant informational constraints derived from a ban on immediate reelection and the absence of seniority norms.

A party-centred institutional system with no immediate reelection of its members as well as the absence of seniority rule in committee appointments, make the Mexican *Cámara de Diputados* (Chamber of Deputies), a convenient case for challenging informational theory's expectation of experience-based assignments while questioning the distributive theory's assumption of electorally oriented chair selection.

After analysing a dataset that comprises biographic, institutional, partisan and electoral information of 3,470 legislators serving in the Mexican chamber between 1997 and 2018, I find evidence to affirm that in systems with specific signs of democratization – such as electoral competitiveness and legislative multipartism – caucus leaders are encouraged to assign their most experienced and skilled legislators as committee chairs. So, even in the absence of reelection incentives and norms of seniority, the expectation of merit-based appointments posited by informative theory can be met in certain democratic congresses.

I also observe that the intention of legislators to further their political careers in new political positions after their parliamentary mandates motivates them to seek chair positions in those committees that help them cultivate a personal brand among the electorate. Thus, the ban on reelection does not by itself hinder the distributive theory's anticipation of electorally oriented committee chair selection.

Besides its empirical findings (which provide relevant insights on the analysed case), this research piece's pertinence relies on its contribution to legislative organization theory, by proposing alternative explanations on how the core postulates of informational and distributive approaches explain committee chair assignments in non-US political settings. Since this article's conclusion can match that of similar research applied to a wider range of legislatures around the world, the work follows recent attempts to expand the discipline's explanatory boundaries for interpreting a fundamental function of legislatures: the selection of their members to positions of political influence.

The remainder of the article proceeds as follows. First, it discusses the main theories of legislative organization regarding chair appointment procedures under conditions that

increase moral hazard in assignment decisions. Afterwards, it describes the institutional evolution of committee chair selection in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies, from the hegemonic party system to its non-majoritarian period. In the following segment it describes corresponding data and methods used for the study. Finally, after having presented the article's hypotheses, results of the analysis are described in order to sustain a set of conclusions that shed light upon the chair selection process in congresses without seniority and low – or null – reelection incentives.

## Theories of legislative organization in congresses without seniority and restricted reelection incentives

According to Martin & Mickler (2019), traditional theoretical approaches – based on US congressional studies – focus on whether committee assignment procedures serve the purposes of political parties, the chamber or individual legislators. These authors also refer to a more recent tradition of committee appointment studies, which has approached congresses around the world by contemplating the effects of partisan structures in assignment procedures.

Since parties play an important role in most contemporary democratic congresses – particularly in Latin American and European legislatures (Cann 2008; Boyce & Bischak 2002; Whitaker 2001; Cheibub & Limongi 1999; Strøm 1998; Bowler & Farrell 1995), chair appointments without seniority have been interpreted as strategic decisions mainly undertaken by caucus leaders in pursuit of expanding their parties' policymaking and electoral capabilities.

Especially in those congresses where standing committees are salient organs in the legislative process, parties have been found to face strong incentives for controlling committee rosters. Thus, procedures through which caucus leaders allot their legislators clearly affect the parties' chances of shaping public policy, maintaining cohesion and garnering votes for upcoming elections.

Therefore, works focusing on chair appointments in congresses that do not meet the "classic" institutional characteristics of seniority rule and reelection-oriented members of the US Congress (see Mickler 2018; Chiru & Gherghina 2017; Chasqueti & Pérez 2012; Santos & Rennó 2004) have helped in understanding how party leaderships influence committee assignments while shedding light on the way in which partisan elites strategically use their appointment attributions (Martin & Mickler (2019).

The informational efficiency (informative) theory of legislative organization claims that representatives are assigned to committees on the basis of personal specialization. Since congresses are ultimately concerned with the production of high-quality public decisions, the appointment of members with particularized knowledge on the issue areas addressed by committees is a way to ensure that legislatures will have the best-suited profiles for improving the technical content of debates and products and to increase the body's' legitimacy while enhancing its decision-making power vis-à-vis other political agencies (Gilligan & Krehbiel 1990).

A seniority system that concedes privileged decision-making positions as rewards to representatives who have learned the business of a certain committee is fundamental for meeting this theory's assumption of merit-based appointments (Krehbiel 1991). However, as explained by Gaines et. al., (2019: 335) "*if a chamber has rules that impose limits on the number of years someone can be chair or member of a committee, then the incentives to invest time and resources in specialization decrease. A legislator who knows that she will soon have to change committees lacks incentives to invest in becoming a specialist in a particular area*".

Can we expect this type of experience-based assignments in congresses that renew most of their membership after each election and do not contemplate seniority?

According to a recent study of the Romanian legislature, the main incentive for experience-based committee assignments in congresses operating without seniority does not emerge from the floor's intention to legitimize a chamber and strengthen it towards other powers. Instead it comes from party leaders' concern with "*seeing their preferred policy outcomes diverted by more knowledgeable legislators from other parties*" (Chiru & Gherghina 2017: 2). Particularly in non-majoritarian, multiparty congressional contexts where decision-making power is evenly distributed, placing skilled legislators in strategic committee positions is decisive for accomplishing partisan policy goals and reducing the risk of defeat by members of other parties in committee debates.

Besides multipartism and competitiveness, expectations of the informative theory can be met in legislatures that impede reelection and lack seniority norms, when committees are perceived as relevant arenas of the political system. If these organs are formally recognized as procedural gatekeepers of the legislative process, and hold considerable resources as well as oversight powers, caucus leaders will have enough motives for assigning their most proficient legislators as chairs.

On the other hand, the distributive theory of legislative organization assumes that, in order to increase their likelihood of reelection, representatives pursue positions in committees with policy jurisdictions facilitating the provision of benefits that are highly valued by their district voters (Cain et al. 1987; Mayhew 1974). Thus, when legislators have the electoral motivation to advance their constituent interests by delivering locally targeted benefits, committees become crucial for cultivating representatives' personal votes. Nevertheless, in congresses where the procurement of local constituencies is not decisive for maintaining a legislative seat (*i.e.* where reelection is banned), "*legislators are unlikely to try and pursue the kind of activities related to the 'personal vote'*" (Ugues Jr. et al. 2012: 102). In such systems, why would parties or representatives be interested in chairing distribution-oriented committees?

The answer to this inquiry might rely on legislators' incentives to pursue extra-congressional (future) office. Although they cannot be reelected to congress, politicians interested in other public positions available when their legislative mandates have ended are more likely to further their political careers if they consolidated a creditable basis of popular support during their mandates.

In systems where administrative jobs and candidacies are mainly awarded on account of partisan discipline and winning odds (popularity), those representatives interested in remaining in the public sphere have good reasons for engaging in distributive politics while in congress. If a legislator can build strong support bases among the electorate and make the right connections with relevant actors in the system (party leaderships or social structures, for example), she might have better career opportunities. Moreover, if she effectively contributes to improve the partisan label among the electorate, party leaders might build a positive perception on her, and at the same time they might be able to provide enhanced chances of victory in future elections, as well as with a wider range of available office slots.

It must be said that legislators may be interested in chairing constituent-oriented committees as long as these positions provide certain leverage over the committees' resources, agenda and resolutions.

One last concern of this analytical proposal refers to how party leaderships can increase the chances of a party-minded behaviour of their representatives once they assign their legislators to important positions as committee chairs.

Even when agents (legislators) and principals (party leaders) establish a relationship designed to provide predictability in both sides, agents are prone to follow their narrow self-interest as they have access to privileged information and cannot be permanently monitored. Particularly in congresses where caucus leaders lack reliable information about their chair prospects, deviations of the agents' actions from the principals' desires can be expected (Gailmard 2014; Kiewit & McCubbins 1991).<sup>2</sup> Which is why an important body of literature has focused on available instruments that principals have for influencing agent behavior (Waterman & Meier 1998).

Specialists agree upon saying that precision in chair selection of agents is determined by the kind of game that congressional rules outline (Mickler 2018; Crisp et al. 2009; Santos & Rennó 2004; Weingast & Marshall 1998). If such procedures are designed as consecutive games – meaning that party leaders can pick from a very similar pool of legislators in repeated occasions – caucus coordinators will have valuable information about their prospects' prior behaviour in a specific committee or as party members, making it easier to select the best-suited and most loyal candidates (Rasmusen 2006). Conversely, when chair election rules are non-sequential – e.g. the available deck of prospective chairs is different in every process, or if a considerable number of legislators are party newcomers who lack legislative experience – party leaders “*have imperfect information about the preferences, interests, and abilities of all their deputies, which may lead to adverse selection problems and potential losses*” (Aparicio & Langston 2009: 6).

From what has been stated in lines above, the selection of loyal, skilful profiles becomes particularly relevant in competitive congresses with low reelection rates, where party leaders lack reliable information about most of their chair prospects and must make these relevant appointments under considerable levels of uncertainty.

One institutional device that can help increase coherence between legislators' individual goals and partisan objectives, is the possibility of withdrawal. When leaders are endowed to manoeuvre positions of their legislators, the potential reward of being assigned as chair or member of an attractive committee (and conversely the threat of being removed or demoted to a less relevant seat) become important incentives for legislators to develop a party-minded behaviour (Jones 2001; Bowler 2000; Hedlund & Hamm 1996; Jewell & Patterson 1986). Once again, the effectiveness of this mechanism depends on how attractive committees (or at least some of them) are for legislators, whether due to the opportunities they can provide to influence policy decisions or to establish significant relations with constituents and other relevant actors

Along with chair appointment powers, parties may also rely on electoral, economic and procedural provisions in the system for guaranteeing a disciplined behaviour of their members. If individual career advancement is highly dependent on partisan structures, or if

---

<sup>2</sup> Such condition, known as shirking, stems from the fact that principals and agents may have differing preferences. Shirking can have different faces: when the agent does not make all the efforts expected from the principal to reach a certain goal; when the agent makes decisions that affect the principal's utility; when the agent conceals information that the principal needs to know in order to make a decision; or when the agent seeks to reach objectives of its own (or of other principals) rather than the ones of the initial principal.

access to congress staff, finance and an effective engagement in the legislative process are controlled by partisan leaderships, shirking might be less common (Bowler 2000).

Yet another method for avoiding interest discrepancies is the selection of agents with similar preferences to those of the principals (Lupia & McCubbins 1994). Since delegation means agents must make choices based on their own judgment, a principal might expect a like-minded agent's actions will be relatively compatible with his preferences. Thus, when caucus leaders lack precise information of their legislators (as their previous behaviour in specific committees or as party members), these coordinators must rely on proxy indicators found in available information about the agents' prior behaviour in other areas to reduce the odds of choosing rogue, incompetent legislators that may compromise the party label.

### **From single-party dominance to multipartism; the evolution of chair assignments in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies**

Mexican committees have been historically recognized as gatekeepers of the policymaking process. Articles 56 and 60 of the 1934 General Congressional Rules (*Reglamento para el Gobierno Interior del Congreso de 1934*) mandated that every bill sponsored by the President, state legislatures or federal legislators had to be issued to a committee for a review (*dictamen*), and no bill (except for urgent initiatives) could have a floor discussion without previous approval of a committee majority.

Later, in 1979, the chamber enacted a new Law of Legislative Procedures (*Ley Orgánica del Congreso General de 1979*) which defined standing committees as key elements of the democratization process giving them a permanent status with jurisdictions parallel to governmental offices, as well as a yearly budget and access to specialized staff. All without losing their pre-existing gatekeeping prerogatives (Álvarez & Gracia 2019).

However, the presence of a hegemonic party, which for almost 70 years controlled the chamber's most important organs and procedures (including the appointment of committee chairs), restricted the standing committees' oversight and decision-making capabilities by acting as a congressional cartel (Mártínez, 1998).

After the 1997 mid-term election, the National Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI*) lost the congressional majority it had held since 1929. Without a party controlling the main congressional organs and decisions, committees were finally able to use their legal attributions. In Nacif's (2002: 275) words, "*the lack of a single-party majority in the Chamber has rendered the committee stage more significant in terms of the end result of the legislative process*".

Since congressional rules and practices had been designed for a majoritarian chamber, leaders of the main political parties represented in the 57<sup>th</sup> Congress (*LVII Legislatura, 1997-2000*) were compelled to design a new, multi-party institutional arrangement adopted in the General Law of Legislative Procedures of 1999 (*Ley Orgánica del Congreso General de 1999*).

For once, the Grand Committee (the chamber's former governing body controlled by PRI's most influential members during the hegemonic era) could no longer assign committee members in a discretionary fashion. Instead, the 1999 rules created the Political Coordination Board (*Junta de Coordinación Política, JCP*), a plural body integrated by leaders of every party fraction.

According to the 1999 norms, during the first month after the inaugural session of each 3-year congress (*Legislatura*), party leaders represented in the JCP must publish

a document stating which committees will be chaired by each party. The only formal benchmark of this process is that parties must receive a share of committee seats and chairs in roughly equal proportion to their floor presence. Thus, at the beginning of each congress, members of the JCP contend for securing those standing committees viewed as crucial for advancing their respective partisan agendas. Which is why these decisions have not been free from conflict in recent Mexican history.

For example, at the beginning of the 59<sup>th</sup> congress (2003–2006), the chamber almost went into a stalemate when, just a few hours shy from the deadline, JCP members approved the distribution of the 42 committee chairs after a week of intense interparty disputes. On that occasion, Deputy Pablo Gómez – caucus leader of the leftist party *Partido de la Revolución Democrática, PRD* – denounced the other two major parties (*Partido Acción Nacional, PAN* & *PRI*) for colluding to block PRD from chairing high priority committees. In the end, coordinators were able to build a majority for approving the distribution of committees and the agreement was supported by two-thirds of the floor.

Once party leaders have agreed upon their respective caucuses' share of committee chairs, coordinators must draft a list (later submitted to a floor vote) containing the names of legislators within their respective parties who will serve as chairs.

The ban on immediate reelection operating since 1933 outlines committee chair selection as a non-sequential game where principals and prospective agents change every legislative period. Considering that only 17.5% of the 4,263 legislators serving in the federal assembly between 1997 and 2018 had previous experience in the chamber, Mexican party coordinators must draft their chair rosters facing considerable information voids as they must choose some relevant positions from a pool of mostly unknown candidates, including rookie legislators, members of opposing intraparty factions and sometimes people without any kind of political expertise.

Insomuch as Mexican legislators are barred from immediate reelection, chairing a committee might, at first glance, not seem a promising venture. Yet, these assignments must be certainly attractive since at the beginning of each congress legislators compete against their fellow partisans for chairing those standing committees that may help them build policymaking leverage and/or gain visibility. PRI appointment negotiations of the 58<sup>th</sup> Congress (2000–2003) make a good example of such confrontations.

During a meeting held a week before the official deadline for chair assignments, a heated discussion came up around the criteria that the PRI caucus leader (Deputy Beatriz Paredes) should consider when selecting committee chairs. Some members argued that PRI legislators who had accessed the chamber by winning the citizen vote in their districts had made a capital contribution to the party in a year when PRI suffered one its biggest setbacks. As a reward, they reasoned, SMD representatives should chair as many committees as Proportional Representation or PR (*representación proporcional*) list elected deputies – which historically got the more numerous and highly valued chairs in that party.

A week after bitter clashes between PRI newcomers (mostly SMD) and the old renowned party elite (concentrated in PR lists), Deputy Paredes granted a historic 40% of the party's chairs to SMD legislators (Arroyo, 2000).

One of the main reasons for this competition among party members is that legislators holding a chair are allowed to manage their committee's agenda, hire staff members, keep a record of all documentation, and call Executive officials to testify. According to Aparicio & Langston (2009: 2) "*most federal deputies want a leadership post on a committee*



*because of the extra pay that leadership brings, because they can win greater media exposure, and because they will be able to form alliances with a greater number of co-partisans and with members of other parties”.*

After deciding upon these nominations within their caucuses, parliamentary leaders are allowed to make any number of chair substitutions they deem necessary throughout the legislative period. Between 2009 and 2018, without considering those legislators who requested permission for quitting their seats (mainly to compete for or occupy another political position), almost 25% of the standing committee chairs in the Mexican chamber were removed and substituted by caucus leaders.

One of these cases was Deputy Teófilo García Corpus (PRI), appointed as chair of the Indigenous Affairs Committee at the beginning of the 61<sup>st</sup> Congress (2009-2012). However, on March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011 he was dismissed from the charge by his caucus leader a few days after different PRI federal legislators from the state of Oaxaca requested his removal, blaming him for losing the state elections of 2010.

Besides the formal competence to discretionally substitute committee members, parties have other relevant powers that may help inducing the disciplined behaviour of their members.

Seeking to revamp Mexican democracy, in 1977 president José López Portillo constitutionally recognized political parties as legitimate expressions of Mexico’s growing pluralism, giving them access to public finance, the state’s media, as well as an official registration with equities and resources of their own (Carpizo 1980). As most of these formal features remain in the system, and independent candidacies were not recognized until 2015, political parties are still the main gateway to the chamber (Béjar 2006).

Since the aforementioned (1977) reform, the assembly has functioned with a mixed-member electoral system. While Single Member District or SMD (*mayoría relativa*) candidates must win in one of the 300 districts across the country, PR candidates are drawn from party lists. As the 200 PR seats in the chamber are assigned considering each party’s SMD vote share, candidates at the top of each party’s list have higher probabilities of accessing the assembly. Thus, while local party elites and subnational actors (such as governors) have an important say in candidate nominations for SMD representatives (Cantú & Desposato 2012; Langston 2010), the proportional tier allows party leaders to “*reserve safe seats (top positions on the party list) for those politicians who will play leading roles within the legislative faction*” (Lehoucq et al. 2005: 40).

As mentioned in the theoretical segment of this article, a requirement for congresses without reelection to meet the postulates of distributive theory is the opportunity – and intention – of politicians to pursue a political career after their parliamentary mandates.

Apart from deceased legislators and representatives whose information after leaving congress was unavailable, I detected 232 (7%) parliament members who definitely retired from politics between 1997 and 2018. Of the other 3,238 profiles, 1,511 (47%) deputies ran an election for new office while the rest occupied (or attempted to occupy) bureaucratic positions.

Evidently, the vast majority of analysed Mexican legislators (93%) intended to continue a political career after their legislative terms. But, unlike the hegemonic era – when belonging to the majority party was enough for securing a political future outside the chamber – representatives seeking to further their careers in the non-majoritarian period of the Mexican Congress (1997–2018) were forced to appear as serious electoral contenders

for parties to grant them with new candidacies (Méndez 2004). Indeed, after studying the careers of legislators from the major political parties elected between 1997 and 2009, Kerevel (2015) found that the most relevant actors in defining the post-congressional fates of Mexican deputies are the local and national party elites.

Such scenario motivates representatives to establish significant relations with district constituents so party leaders can perceive them as relevant electoral contenders. And chairing a committee – with all the perks this position represents – is definitely a way through which politicians can consolidate their personal reputations (Béjar, 2009). Likewise, as standing committees in the Mexican chamber are policy gatekeepers, some of which allow the provision of valuable goods to local constituencies, selecting chairs represents a strategic opportunity for political parties to gain control over specific policy areas while obtaining electoral rent through voter services provided by their legislators.

## Hypotheses

The non-majoritarian conformation of the Mexican legislature between 1997 and 2018 has increased pressure on party leaders to assign experienced, skilled and loyal members as committee chairs at the risk of seeing their partisan programs defeated in committees.

Party coordinators are supposed to use their appointment powers for assigning a restricted number of caucus members as committee chairs, expecting them to support co-partisan legislation, block opposition bills and procure the apportionment of parochial goods to local constituencies in benefit of the party.

Nonetheless, even when political parties in the Mexican Chamber have ample powers to influence legislators' behaviour (discretionary removal, access to resources and a monopoly on candidacies), a non-reelection rule operating since 1933 as well as the absence of seniority rule impel Mexican caucus leaders to lean on informational proxies of their legislators – such as sector knowledge, party credentials or legislative experience – for detecting the best-suited chairing profiles. However, according to the principal agent-theory, proxy-based choices make principals incur into higher risks of adverse selection, since information about their prospect agents is unspecific and less reliable than in consecutive games (Chiru & Gherghina 2017).

Based on the previous arguments, I expect party leaders to rely heavily on proxy-based career indicators of legislators for assigning them as chairs. In such sense:

*H1. Sector knowledge, party service and political, legislative as well as the administrative experience of representatives will be among the main traits party leaders look for in caucus members for assigning them as committee chairs.*

After the hegemonic party system started to show signs of decay during the nineties, important traits – as electoral fairness, competitiveness, an effective division of public powers, political decentralization and multipartism – started to emerge as signs of the new Mexican democracy. In such context, belonging to PRI could no longer guarantee by itself a promising political future. Therefore, both parties and individual politicians started to seek for spots and to develop behaviours that would place them in the good graces of the electorate. Therefore, seeking to improve the partisan label among local constituents, party leaders in

the democratic stage of the Mexican political system have incentives to assign experienced and loyal members to those committees that can channel valuable goods in critical districts where voters are active and the party lacks electoral support. Likewise, legislators have incentives for chairing committees that allow them to build a personal brand among prospect electorates, and therefore:

*H2. Experienced, knowledgeable SMD caucus members with a proven party service and coming from highly competitive districts will be more likely selected as chairs of distributive-oriented committees.*

## Data and methods

In order to contrast the impact of the different factors influencing committee chair selection in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies, I designed a dataset containing biographic, institutional, partisan and electoral characteristics of 3,481 Mexican Federal Deputies who served in the chamber between 1997 and 2018. This count excludes *suplicantes* who were legislators that substituted the original representatives which accessed at the beginning of each congress. Information was retrieved from the official webpages of the Mexican Congress (*Cámara de Diputados* and *Sistema de Información Legislativa*).<sup>3</sup>

As party coordinators are formally allowed to remove committee chairs from their caucuses at any time during a legislative period, the correct moment for analyzing chair assignments under uncertainty in a congress without seniority rule (which is one of this manuscript's goals) is during the first selection round. Which is why data for my first dependent variable came from the JCP agreements (*Acuerdos de la Junta de Coordinación Política*) published in the first month of each 3-year legislative period. Legislators who appeared in these agreements – meaning they were officially named committee chairs at the beginning of each legislature – were coded as “1”, while those representatives who were not initially selected by caucus coordinators for chairing a committee were coded as “0”.

To develop the second dependent variable, I followed Raymond & Bárcena (2019) and identified constituent-oriented committees as those having a recognizable constituency with targeted, particularistic interests in the type of legislation they address.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, in case an SMD legislator was assigned for chairing a committee with a jurisdiction that matched her district's socio-demographic and/or economic characteristics, the appointment was considered distributive-oriented, thus coded as “1”, otherwise as “0”.<sup>5</sup>

Replicating Chiru & Gherghina (2017), I operationalized sector knowledge by comparing each legislator's educational, professional and political background with the issues addressed by the committees in which they served. If one trait in a legislator's background matched the jurisdiction of at least one committee in which she served, the case was coded as “1”, and otherwise “0”. In the search for educational backgrounds, I considered

<sup>3</sup> Available <http://www.diputados.gob.mx/> and <http://sil.gobernacion.gob.mx/portal>

<sup>4</sup> Distributive-oriented committees were: Agriculture, hydraulic resources, border affairs, indigenous affairs, forestry, migratory affairs, urban development, rural development, education, cattle-raising, fisheries, social development, health, labor, tourism and household.

<sup>5</sup> District socio-demographic and economic attributes were retrieved from two sources: the state and municipal database system (SIMBAD), available: <https://sc.inegi.org.mx/cobdem/index.jsp>; and the geo-electoral scale census statistics of 2005, 2010 and 2015 available at <https://gaia.inegi.org.mx/geoelectoral/>

legislator's majors, B.A., M.A., Ph.D. diplomas and other specialization studies. In the field of political experience, I searched for local, federal or partisan offices held for at least one year in areas related to the legislators' committees. Likewise, I included as specialized knowledge a legislator's previous experience (of at least one year) in unions, professional and popular associations, NGOs or political pressure groups in affinity with their committees' main subject. In the case of experienced legislators, I looked up their previous service as members, secretaries or chairs of committees (as long as they served for more than half of the congress they were elected for) in the same jurisdiction of their current committee assignments. Finally, professional backgrounds considered representatives' past service in the private sector.

To have a clearer understanding on the coding of sector knowledge, take for example the case of Deputy Santiago Padilla (PRD), who chaired the Health committee in the 57<sup>th</sup> Congress (1997-2000). He graduated as a surgeon from the Autonomous University of Guadalajara and, a few years later, received a diploma in gynaecology. Even though he had not held a legislative or a political position regarding health issues, his experience in the matter regarding this committee places him as a congressman with sector knowledge.

Another example is the case of Deputy Carolina Viggiano Austria (PRI), who chaired the household committee in the 63<sup>rd</sup> Congress (2015-2018). Although she did not major in a discipline related to vulnerable groups, social exclusion or urban planning, when she occupied a seat in the 58<sup>th</sup> Congress (2000-2003) her party assigned her as a member of the household committee. Such experience made me code her as a legislator with sector knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

List rankings of PR candidates as well as district-level electoral data were retrieved from Mexico's National Electoral Institute (INE).<sup>7</sup> After estimating the vote distance (in percentages) between first and second places in the 300 district elections for each period, I calculated the mean values. Cases with 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place vote differentials above the mean, plus one standard deviation, were defined as competitive in a dummy variable.

Finally, I recorded an average of 44.8 committee assignments per period, ranging from 41 in the 59<sup>th</sup> (2000–2003) to 57 in the 63<sup>rd</sup> (2015–2018). To account for changes in the possibility of chair appointments related to increases in the number of available positions in each period, I also controlled each model for "congress".

As mentioned in lines above, the committee chair selection process in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies is formally divided in two procedural segments. After determining which committees each party will chair through initial negotiations in the JCP, leaders must select which of their caucus members will chair their parties' committee share. Table 1 shows that, during the period under analysis, coordinators of the three major Mexican parties (PRI, PAN & PRD) had to appoint on average 9% of their legislators as committee chairs; in caucuses that ranged from 51 and up to 239 members.

---

<sup>6</sup> In case the committee would not allow to establish a clear connection with an academic discipline (e.g. federalism, Mexico City, municipal development, interior affairs, and federal comptroller's office) only legislative and administrative experience were considered to determine whether a legislator had sector knowledge.

<sup>7</sup> Available: <https://www.ine.mx/>

**Table 1: Caucus size and committee chair assignment by congress (1997-2018)**

Congress	Caucus size /party share of committee chairs			
	PRI	PAN	PRD	Others
57 <sup>th</sup>	239/19	119/11	123/10	11/2
58 <sup>th</sup>	202/16	206/14	51/4	25/3
59 <sup>th</sup>	222/18	150/11	97/8	23/4
60 <sup>th</sup>	105/11	256/13	125/10	55/7
61 <sup>st</sup>	235/19	142/13	70/5	41/6
62 <sup>nd</sup>	203/20	113/14	99/10	74/9
63 <sup>rd</sup>	206/28	109/11	60/3	122/15
<b>Average percentage of legislators assigned to a char per caucus</b>	<b>9.42%</b>	<b>8.58%</b>	<b>7.77%</b>	<b>14.20%</b>

**Note:** Caucus sizes do not consider party leaders.

**Source:** The author’s own elaboration with data from the Mexican Chamber’s official webpage. Available <http://www.diputados.gob.mx/>, and the System of Legislative Information. Available: <http://sil.gobernacion.gob.mx/portal>.

While prior studies have examined chair appointments in the Mexican federal chamber, these works consider relatively short time spans, failing to capture longitudinal variations in the effects of biographic, institutional, partisan and electoral variables over committee chair assignments – as I attempt in this text (Vázquez & Díaz 2019; Kerevel & Atkeson 2013; Ugues Jr. et al. 2012; Aparicio & Langston 2009). Also, statistical models used in these research pieces have not been the most adequate techniques for studying grouped data with binary outcomes, which is the case of chair assignments in the Mexican legislature.

Considering these factors, and since the second phase of the chair assignment process in the Mexican Chamber involves competition among co-partisan legislators, I opted for analyzing the 21 years of multiparty Mexican congresses through fixed effects conditional logit models, which are statistically appropriate when binary outcomes are nested into different groups with significant internal variances (Beck 2020).

## Analysis

Before introducing analytical models, the next table depicts the main descriptives of independent variables. Dichotomous predictors are expressed in terms of percentages while scale variables appear as mean values.

**Table 2: Main descriptive statistics of independent variables**

PR tier	1,388 (39.9%)
Years in party	14.29
Federal gov. experience	1,054 (30.35%)
State gov. experience	1,569 (45.19%)
Municipal gov. experience	1,747 (50.31%)
Federal leg. experience	610 (17.56%)
State leg. experience	1,290 (37.15%)
Sector knowledge	1,085 (31.25%)

Female	916 (26.38%)
List rank	5.92
Competitive district*	1,194 (57.29%)

N=3,472

**Note:** \*Percentage calculated over the 2,084 Single Member Districts.

**Source:** Author.

While the first logistic model in table 3 (full model) accounts for all legislators in the chamber, models 2 and 3 of table 3 test effects of specific variables in each of the two tiers of the Mexican electoral system. Finally, model 4 regresses only constituent-oriented chair appointments. Since PR deputies serve wide constituencies (some representing up to 8 states), this last model considers only SMD legislators – whose constituencies were districts of approximately 300,000 inhabitants.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 3: Determinants of committee chair appointments in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies (1997-2018). Logistic regression models**

Predictor	Model 1 (Full)	Model 2 (PR, all committees)	Model 3 (SMD, all committees)	Model 4 (SMD, distributive committees)
PR tier <sup>(a)</sup>	1.534*** (.184)			
Years in party <sup>(b)</sup>	.557 (.154)	.357** (.125)	.769 (.268)	.232 (.154)
Federal gov. experience <sup>(a)</sup>	1.542*** (.188)	1.682*** (.268)	1.343 (.294)	1.043 (.425)
State gov. experience <sup>(a)</sup>	1.299 (.1185)	1.049 (.212)	1.669 (.285)	1.051 (.322)
Municipal gov. experience <sup>(a)</sup>	1.096 (.181)	1.048 (.198)	1.178 (.275)	1.304 (.420)
Federal leg. experience <sup>(a)</sup>	2.038*** (.363)	1.576 (.432)	2.319*** (.402)	2.190** (.543)
State leg. experience <sup>(a)</sup>	1.071 (.144)	1.378 (.255)	.930 (.143)	.894 (.210)
Sector knowledge <sup>(a)</sup>	2.427*** (.422)	2.954*** (.533)	1.962** (.519)	3.121*** (1.089)
Female <sup>(a)</sup>	.612*** (.084)	.443*** (.103)	.885 (.202)	.611 (.206)
List rank <sup>(c)</sup>		.919*** (.025)		
Competitive district <sup>(a)</sup>			.706 (.147)	.474** (.133)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.077	.115	.061	.087
Log pseudolikelihood	-894.169	-378.687	-454.423	-180.143
N	3,470	1,398	2,065	1,793

**Note:** Odd rates reported from logistic regression models with robust standard errors clustered by legislator in parentheses. \*\*p<0.005, \*\*\*p<0.001.

The sum of PR and SMD legislators is not equal to the total N, since some district and list-ranking data was unavailable.

(a)= categorical (dichotomous) variable indicating presence of referred quality

(b)= 0-1 scale variable where legislator(s) with the highest number of years as official member(s) of party *i*, had a “1” score, and legislator(s) with the least number of year(s) as member(s) of party *i* had a score of “0”.

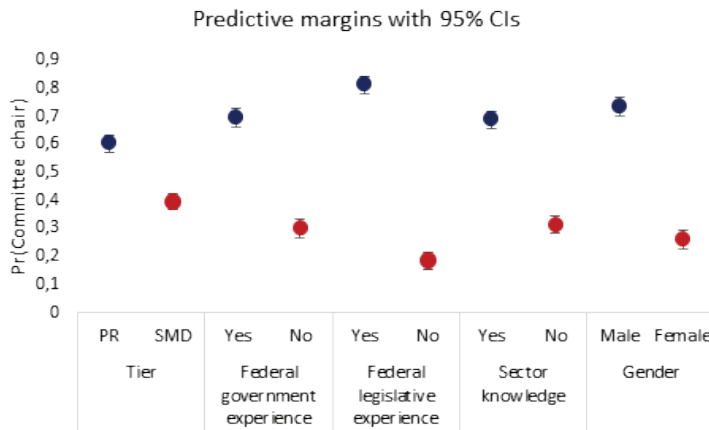
(c)= 1-40 a scale variable depending on the place of legislators in PR party closed-lists.

**Source:** Author.

<sup>8</sup> Available at: <http://gaia.inegi.org.mx/geoelectoral/viewer.html>, and <https://sc.inegi.org.mx/cobdem/>

To further examine this data, the following graph limits the analysis to only those statistically significant variables in model 1. Results reveal that, holding other predictors at their means, male, PR elected representatives with parliamentary and administrative experience at the federal level as well as congressmen with sector knowledge scored higher predicted probabilities of chairing a committee than their counterparts with inverse traits or lacking expertise in the aforementioned areas.

**Graph 4: Mean values of relevant biographical traits for chair appointment. Marginal fixed effects based on full model 1**

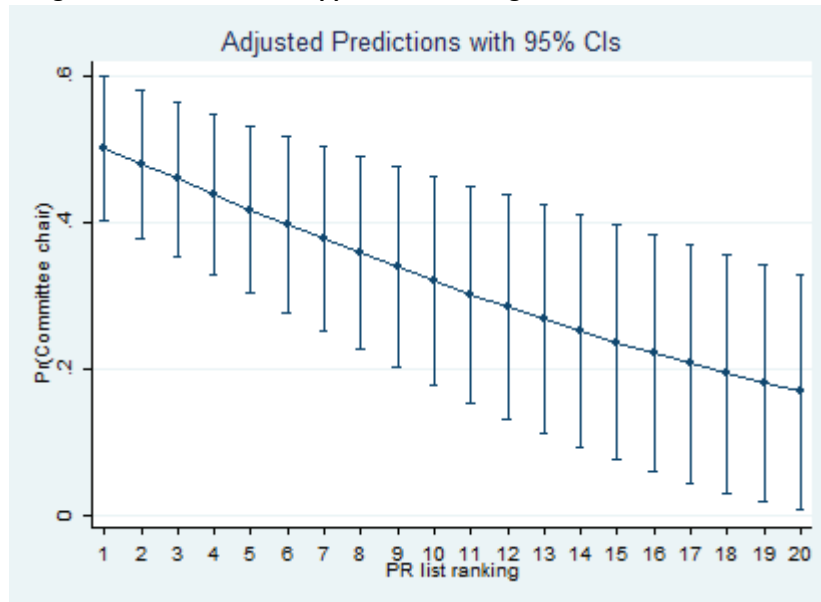


**Source:** The author’s own elaboration with data from the Mexican Chamber’s official webpage. Available <http://www.diputados.gob.mx/>, and the System of Legislative Information. Available: <http://sil.gobernacion.gob.mx/portal>

Graph 4 demonstrates that chairing probabilities for PR elected deputies were over 60% while SMD legislators recorded a mean of chairing probabilities below 40%. Since “national party leaders hold relatively greater power over the placement of names on the proportional representation (PR) lists” (Aparicio & Langston 2009: 6), proximity of legislators with national partisan elites appears to be a crucial indicator that caucus leaders consider when appointing chairs. It is interesting to note that years of party militancy had no statistical effect over nominations, meaning that caucus leaders find in the electoral tier a more reliable credential than lengthy partisan careers of legislators.

As the “list rank” variable in model 2 reported a significant statistical effect over chair nominations of PR legislators, I calculated its marginal effects using each legislator’s position in the party list as an independent variable. As seen on graph 5, those deputies that accessed the chamber among the top 3 places of PR party lists had an average probability of chairing a standing committee of around 50%, while legislators in the 3 bottom places of the lists had less than 20% predicted probabilities of being nominated as committee chairs at the beginning of their legislative periods. Such finding suggests that list rankings are not arbitrary decisions. Instead, they work as signals that national elites emit for communicating their caucus leaders, who are those legislators expected to occupy leadership positions and act as the vanguard of the party in congress.

Graph 5: List ranking and committee chair appointment. Marginal effects model



**Source:** The author’s own elaboration with data from the Mexican Chamber’s official webpage. Available <http://www.diputados.gob.mx/>, and the System of Legislative Information. Available: <http://sil.gobernacion.gob.mx/portal>.

Previous experience at the federal government proved to be a statistically significant predictor in the full model of table 3. Politicians who have held administrative office before winning a seat in the chamber recorded a 69% probability of being selected as chairs of an ordinary committee. In contrast, representatives without such experience scored a 30% probability of chairing a standing committee.

The most significant predictor for chair selection in the full model of table 3 was national parliamentary experience. Deputies who had previously served in any of the two federal chambers had an 81% predicted probability of being appointed as chairs, while inexperienced representatives scored a mean probability of 18%.

After the appearance of non-majoritarian congresses and the end of the hegemonic PRI era, the Mexican Chamber of Deputies became a key arena for political bargaining processes. And since almost 90% of committee reports on bills were accepted by the chamber’s floor without major changes, it was common for committee chairs to be approached by co-partisans, opposition legislators and even the Executive’s office, especially when these actors were interested in pushing a strategic issue through the lanes of congress. Under these conditions, standing committees arose as important veto points in the policy process, while they also became strategic positions for parties and legislators chairing them.

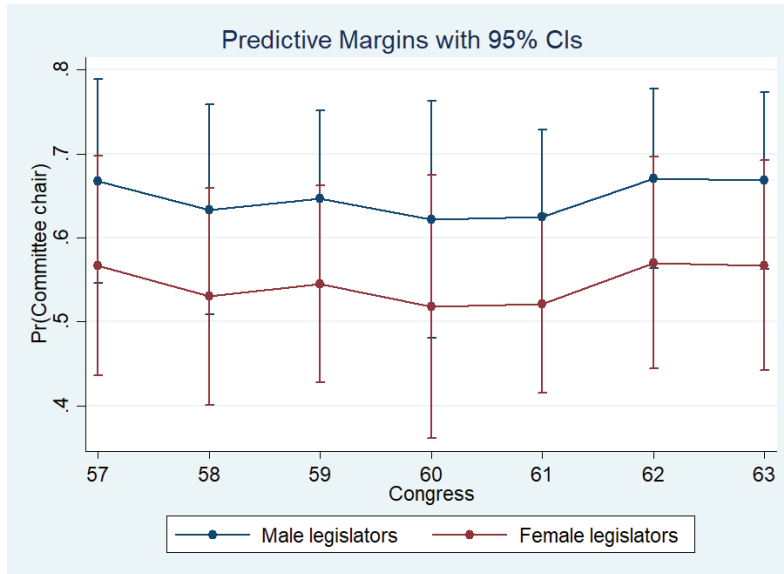
As graph 4 also demonstrates, legislators with previous legislative experience reported 40% higher predicted probabilities of being chosen as chairs in the first month of their congresses. As relevant contacts were expected to happen in committees under a context of political competition for votes and policies, even minor calculation mistakes could be costly. Therefore, caucus leaders entrusted their parties’ committees to caucus members with important connections with federal agencies built through previous administrative careers as well as to legislators that had technical and political skills which had been acquired by previously holding a legislative seat at the federal level.



After gender quotas were implemented in 2002, female presence in the Mexican assembly increased from 22.7% in the 59<sup>th</sup> Congress (2003–2006) to 42.2% in the 63<sup>rd</sup> (2015–2018). Nonetheless, the full model in table 3 reports a generalized marginalization of women to committee chairs when compared to men. Female representatives were 36% less likely to be appointed as chairs than their male counterparts. Expressed in marginal terms and with other predictors at their mean values, men who accessed the chamber had a 73% chance of chairing a committee, while women only reported a 26% predicted probability of such outcome.

Altogether these findings resemble Vázquez & Díaz’s (2019) study in detecting a reduction of chairing probabilities for women. The authors attributed such phenomenon to a strategy of male dominant groups for counterbalancing increases in congressional female presence, suggesting that, as female legislators grew in numbers, they would face greater difficulties to occupy leadership positions. However, after calculating marginal fixed effects by congress in a longer time span than the one studied by Vázquez & Díaz (2019), I found no evidence for supporting their premise. On the contrary, graph 6 shows that congresswomen’s chairing probabilities shifted at a similar pace of male legislators.

**Graph 6: Chair appointment predicted probabilities of female legislators by congress (1997-2018)**



**Source:** The author’s own elaboration with data from the Mexican Chamber’s official webpage. Available <http://www.diputados.gob.mx/>, and the System of Legislative Information. Available: <http://sil.gobernacion.gob.mx/portal>

Different works have noticed that prevailing gender biases in congressional leadership positions as committee chair appointments might be explained by career disadvantages faced by female politicians due to their historical relegation from the public sphere (Kerevel & Atkeson 2013; Chasqueti & Pérez 2012).

My findings reinforce such a hypothesis since Mexican male legislators summed an average of 5 more years in partisan service than women and 2 more years of administrative experience. Table 7 shows that, when compared to males, smaller proportions of congresswomen possessed the most valued biographical characteristics contemplated by party leaders when appointing committee chairs. In terms of statistical significance, the greatest gender distinction was found in the federal legislative experience of deputies.

On the contrary, a similar percentage of women and men reported sector knowledge in the jurisdictional areas of their respective committees. This suggests that even though federal legislative chambers have been male strongholds, female representatives have been able to build specialized parliamentary skills in alternative arenas such as subnational governments, local congresses and their party bureaucracies.

**Table 7: Relevant biographic traits for chair appointment by gender (1997-2018)**

	Male legislators n=2567	Female legislators n=916	Pearson chi2 value (2df)
Federal gov. experience	805 (31.36)	249 (27.18)	5.579*
Federal leg. experience	508 (19.79)	140 (15.28)	9.050**
Sector knowledge	817 (31.82)	280 (30.57)	0.197

\*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.005

**Note:** numbers in parentheses are percentages of legislators possessing the biographic trait of reference with respect to the total number of male and female representatives.

**Source:** *The author’s own elaboration with data from the Mexican Chamber’s official webpage. Available <http://www.diputados.gob.mx/>, and the System of Legislative Information. Available: <http://sil.gobernacion.gob.mx/portal>*

Back to our main table, results in model 3 demonstrate that SMD legislators are requested to have more credentials before being entrusted with a chair position. Indeed, local government experience was a trait only demanded of SMD representatives. Majority elected legislators with a previous subnational government position had 58% greater appointment odds than representatives of the same tier without that kind of expertise. Such outcome points towards informational theory’s proposition of party leaders selecting chairs with good connections in subnational politics. In their commitment to advance partisan agendas, caucus coordinators need agents who can push those issues that require the coordination of local powers (as constitutional reforms). This outcome also suggests that local party elites may be interested in taking part in important decisions made at the federal congress (as chair assignments).

According to Aparicio & Langston (2009: 6), “governors enjoy great influence in the selection of their party’s candidates for the 300 single-member-districts”. As governors (and other local political leaders) depend on federal legislators to provide them with budgetary resources (Kerevel 2015), these actors might constantly lobby caucus leaders for having their ally legislators placed in leadership positions at the federal chamber. Especially after the decentralization process that followed the decline of the hegemonic system, the chamber has not been isolated from local party disputes, shifts in subnational power balance, and the interests of regional leaders (Cantú & Desposato 2012; Langston 2010). Therefore, coordinators must distribute committee chairs in such a way that no important political group at the local level is excluded in order to maintain the caucus’s stability.

Additional to proximity with national and local party elites and federal legislative experience, sector knowledge increased chair selection probabilities for legislators elected in both tiers. What this result advises is once again party leaders trying to make an efficient use of human resources in their caucuses. By nominating legislators with academic training or professional expertise in the remits of a determined committee, caucus coordinators indirectly “boost the party’s image and policy success” (Chiru & Gherghina 2017: 3).

Aside from strategic considerations, the fact that policy specialists and legislative experts have greater chances of holding a chairmanship suggests that external factors related to democratization (such as competitiveness and political decentralization) which motivate parties to nominate policy experts for defending party lines....may have a positive impact over a chamber's institutionalization when representatives seem to have scarce reelection incentives and chairs are not assigned on the basis of committee expertise.

After Mexico entered a stage of electoral competitiveness (Méndez, 2004) and a single party ceased to control the chamber's internal organs and procedures, distributive-oriented committee chairs offered numerous opportunities for "credit claiming" and "position taking" both for parties and legislators. Even when Mexican representatives do not depend on the exact same constituencies to further their careers after leaving congress, some of their original district voters may belong to overlapping electoral locations where deputies can continue their public service. So, in case a legislator wants to run in the next election for major or local congress, the municipality or the subnational district in which she would be competing is probably inserted within her current district. If otherwise, she runs for senator or governor, her original district is circumscribed within the state that she is seeking to represent.

Yet, another argument for legislators to engage in constituency service is that as long as they contribute to improve the partisan label among the electorate, parties might be able to provide them with enhanced chances of victory in future elections, as well as a wider range of available office slots to continue their political career.

This article's hypothesis regarding constituent-oriented committees anticipated a significant effect of biographic and electoral variables over chair nominations expecting experienced and loyal SMD legislators representing critical districts (where their party won by close margins and local constituents scored high turnout rates) to have increased probabilities of chairing these organs.

The last model in table 3 uses appointments to distributive-oriented committees as its dependent variable. This was a dummy variable distinguishing between those committees with a recognizable constituency with targeted, particularistic interests. Thus, if an SMD legislator was assigned for chairing a committee with a jurisdiction that matched her district's socio-demographic and/or economic characteristics, the appointment was considered as a constituent-oriented chair assignment.

My model proves that distributive-oriented committee chairs were preferably assigned to experienced federal legislators with sector knowledge representing districts won by bigger margins. First, while two outcomes matched my theoretical expectations, the inverse relation between chairing odds and district competitiveness over chairing assignments was contrary to what I initially expected. However, these results allow us to advance interesting explanations. For once, years of party militancy – the only proxy indicator of partisan loyalty for SMD representatives – did not affect party leaders' assignment decisions, suggesting that party loyalty is not a highly valued characteristic of legislators for appointing them as chairs.

Legislative experience and sector knowledge proved to be the main predictors of chair appointments, having even stronger effects over constituent-oriented committees. This suggests that coordinators add a special importance to legislators' expertise and knowledge when appointing them chairs that will allow them to distribute goods among their local constituencies.

Finally, the negative relationship between district competitiveness and chair assignments (SMD legislators coming from highly competitive districts reported 55% less odds of

appointment than representatives of non-competitive districts) suggests that the appointment of legislators to distributive-oriented committees was not seen by party leaders as an instrument for gaining new district supporters or improving the electoral position of the party in unsecure districts as expected. One explanation for these results is that the appointment of legislators to distributive chairs can be used for reinforcing bonds in districts where the parties already counted with ample bases of voter support.

However, as Ascencio & Kerevel (2020) found, party leaders are more likely to appoint party loyalists in uncompetitive districts, since it is relatively costless for them to do so. In contrast, party leaders may be more likely to appoint outsiders or popular candidates in competitive districts in order to win more votes. Thus, the measure of district competitiveness may actually be a proxy for party loyalty, which could also help explain this counterintuitive finding.

## **Conclusions**

The most influential theories of legislative organization were originally designed for explaining committee chair appointments in the US context. While the informative theory assumes committee chairs are assigned on the basis of specialization and institutional mark-up rights that individuals acquire through continuous service, the distributive theory presupposes legislators will be interested in chairing committees that can improve their relations with local constituents. Only recently have legislative specialists started to understand the evolution of chair appointment processes in congresses where the “traditional” incentives for developing committee specialization and for establishing connections with district electorates (in search for reelection) are not present.

In congresses where standing committees are important decision-making venues and party leaders (in the absence of seniority) hold the power to determine the membership of these organs, chair allocations may be seen as a set of strategic decisions for advancing their respective agendas. Nevertheless, if rules define committee assignments as non-consecutive games (meaning that committee assignments must be made among a renewed deck of candidates with each period change), party leaders must lean on indirect measures of their agents to reduce probabilities of adverse selection. In other words, non-reelection rules, the absence of seniority and the rotation of political elites make caucus present leaders with important informational constraints when assigning committee chairs.

During the non-majoritarian period of the Mexican Chamber of Deputies (1997–2018), committees emerged as relevant decision-making venues, blessed with gatekeeping prerogatives as well as with access to valuable resources in the chamber. But most importantly, committees were able to exercise their powers after a long period of PRI’s hegemonic dominance. Likewise, competitiveness and congressional multipartism motivated parties and legislators to seek relevant congressional posts as a way to strengthen their political positions.

After analysing biographies of all Mexican legislators serving in the chamber between 2007 and 2018, I found that national party leaderships had an important say in the appointment of committee chairs. These elites mostly used the electoral system to communicate caucus leaders the names of those legislators endorsed for chairing certain committees. Most of these elite-endorsed names appeared in the highest places of PR-tier lists or came from non-competitive districts.

Although party elites played an important role in the chair appointment process, committee chairs were not only handled as rewards for party loyalists. Instead, legislators with parliamentary and governmental experience, as well as members with specific knowledge in the different policy fields, were the recipients of such endeavors while being expected to behave as effective advocates of the partisan agenda in their respective committees. Such results suggest that congresses without reelection-oriented members and no seniority rule can expect to have the experience and skill-based assignments predicted by the informational theory of legislative organization.

In such a sense, experience and knowledge-based appointments – which informational theory relates to stronger, more legitimate legislatures – can be expected in non-conventional settings. Particularly in non-majoritarian contexts where decision-making power is evenly distributed and committees are crucial decision-making venues, placing specialized legislators in strategic committee positions, becomes decisive for parties to accomplish their goals in congresses.

This paper expected that even when legislators are barred from reelection their intention to further their careers in competitive systems where their futures are uncertain (or at least do not depend on one hegemonic party) might lead them to assess demands of voters residing in circumscriptions inside or close to their future areas of electoral interest. It also suggested that, in systems where parties control ballot access and campaign success depends on having party support, legislators might be interested in strengthening the partisan label expecting to have more secure candidacies or a wider range of opportunities offered by their parties once their mandates are over.

After contrasting these expectations with an empirical analysis, I found that more than 90% of Mexican legislators attempted or succeeded in continuing their political careers after their legislative terms. And almost half of these politicians ran for elections afterwards. I also detected that experienced, specialized legislators were more likely to be assigned to constituent-oriented committees, useful for cultivating a personal vote as well as for consolidating party strongholds. Under such conditions, non-reelection oriented legislatures may resemble the principles of distributive theory.

## REFERENCES:

- ÁLVAREZ, Ricardo; GRACIA, Aidée (2019). *El Congreso en la transformación democrática de México*. [online; accessed 2020-06-05]. Available from WWW: <<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/mexiko/15447.pdf>>.
- APARICIO, Javier; LANGSTON, Joy (2009). Committee Leadership Selection without Seniority: The Mexican Case. *Working paper*. Vol, no. 217, pp. 1–33.
- ARROYO, Francisco (2000), “Quiere AN más comisiones sin pagar costos”, *El Universal*, Mexico, 23 September.
- ASCENCIO, Sergio; KEREVEL, Yann P. (2020). Party Strategy, Candidate Selection, and Legislative Behavior in Mexico. *Legislative Studies Quarterly* <https://doi.org/10.1111/lsq.12300>
- BECK, Nathaniel (2020). Estimating Grouped Data Models with a Binary-Dependent Variable and Fixed Effects via a Logit versus a Linear Probability Model: The Impact of

- Dropped Units. *Political Analysis*. Vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 139–145 <http://doi.org/10.1017/pan.2019.20>
- BEJÁR, Luisa (2009). Elites parlamentarias en México. Los presidentes en comisiones. In BEJÁR, Luisa (ed). *¿Qué se legisla en México? El trabajo en comisiones*. México: Porrúa, pp. 65–98.
- BEJÁR, Luisa (2006). *Los partidos en el Congreso de la Unión. La representación parlamentaria de la alternancia*. México: UNAM-Gernika. <http://doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.24484903e.2008.0.18765>
- BÉJAR, Luisa (2014). Cuando el ejecutivo es débil ¿Quién legisla en México? *Política y Gobierno*. Vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 325–247.
- BOWLER, Shaun (2000). Parties in Legislatures. Two Competing Explanations. In DALTON, Russell J.; WATTENBERG, Martin (eds.). *Parties Without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 157–179. <https://doi.org/10.1093/0199253099.001.0001>
- BOWLER, Shaun; FARRELL, David (1995). The Organizing of the European Parliament: Committees, Specialization and Co-ordination. *British Journal of Political*. Vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 219–243. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400007158>
- BOYCE, John R.; BISCHAK, Diane P. (2002). The Role of Political Parties in the Organization of Congress. *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization*. Vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 1–38. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jleo/18.1.1>
- CAIN, Bruce; FEREJOHN, John; FIORINA, Morris (1987). *The Personal Vote: Constituency Service and Electoral Independence*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674493285>
- CANN, Damon (2008). Modeling committee chair selection in the U.S. House of Representatives. *Political Analysis*. Vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 274–289. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pan/mpm036>
- CANTÚ, Francisco; SCOTT, Desposato (2012). The New Federalism of Mexico's Party System. *Journal of Politics in Latin America*. Vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 3–38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1866802X1200400201>
- CARPIZO, Jorge (1980). *La reforma política Mexicana de 1977*. [online; accessed 2020-06-05]. Available from WWW: < <https://archivos.juridicas.unam.mx/www/bjv/libros/5/2107/5.pdf> >
- CARREY, John M. (2003). Discipline, Accountability and Legislative Voting in Latin America. *Comparative Politics*. Vol. 35, no. 2, pp. 191–211. <http://doi.org/10.2307/4150151>
- CASTAÑEDA, Enrique; HERNÁNDEZ, Julián; TLAHUEL, M. de Lourdes (2015). Experiencia, profesionalización, reelección inmediata y trabajo de los legisladores en la Cámara de Diputados (1997-2013). *Díké*. Vol. 9, no. 17, pp. 159–171. <http://doi.org/10.32399/rdk.9.17.127>
- CHASQUETTI, Daniel; PÉREZ, Verónica (2012). ¿Mujeres en los márgenes? Sistema de comisiones y poder de asignación en el Parlamento uruguayo. *Revista de Ciencia Política*. Vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 383–409 <http://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-090X2012000200003>
- CHEIBUB, Angelina; LIMONGI, Fernando (1999). *Executivo e Legislativo na Nova Ordem Constitucional*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora da Fundação Getulio Vargas.
- CHIRU, Mihail; GHERGHINA, Sergiu (2017). Committee chair selection under high informational and organizational constraints. *Party Politics*. Vol. 20, no. 10, pp. 1–12. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1354068817741765>

- COX, Gary W.; MCCUBBINS, Mathew Daniel. (1993). *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- CRISP, Brian F. et al. (2009) The Electoral Connection and Legislative Committees. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*. Vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 35–52. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13572330802666786>
- FINOCCHIARO, Charles J.; JOHNSON, Gregg B. (2010). Committee Property Rights, Executive Dominance, and Political Parties in Latin American Legislatures. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*. Vol. 16, no 2, pp. 151–175. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13572331003740073>
- FORGETTE, Richard G. (1997). Reed’s Rules and the Partisan Theory of Legislative Organization. *Polity*. Vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 375–396. <http://doi.org/10.2307/3235312>
- GAILMARD, Sean (2014). Accountability and Principal-Agent Theory. In BOVENS, Mark; GOODIN, Robert; SCHILLEMANS, Thomas (eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Public Accountability*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 90–105. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199641253.013.0016>
- GAINES, Brian J.; GOODWIN, Mark; HOLDEN BATES, Stephen; SIN, Gisela (2019). The study of legislative committees, *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 331–339. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13572334.2019.1662614>
- GILLIGAN, Thomas W.; KREHBIEL, Keith (1990). Organization of Informative Committees by a Rational Legislature. *American Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 531–564. <http://doi.org/10.2307/2111460>
- HANSEN, Martin E. (2019). Distributing Chairs and Seats in Committees: A Parliamentary Perspective. *Parliamentary Affairs*. Vol. 72, no. 1, pp. 202–222. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsy008>
- HEDLUND, Ronald D.; HAMM, Keith E. (1996). Political Parties as Vehicles for Organizing U.S. State Legislative Committees. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 383–408. <https://doi.org/10.2307/440250>
- JEWELL, Malcolm; PATTERSON, Samuel C. (1986). *The Legislative Process in the United States*. New York: Random House. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1951099>
- JONES, Mark (2001). Explaining the High Level of Party Discipline in the Argentine Congress. In MORGENSTERN, Scott; NACIF, Benito (eds.). *Legislative Politics in Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 147–184 <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511615665>
- KEREVEL, Yann P. (2015). Pork-Barreling without Reelection? Evidence from the Mexican Congress. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 40, no. 1, pp. 137–166. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lsq.12068>
- KEREVEL, Yann P.; ATKESON, Lonna R. (2013). Explaining the Marginalization of Women in Legislative Institutions. *The Journal of Politics*. Vol. 75, no. 4, pp. 980–992. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381613000960>
- KEREVEL, Yann P. (2015). (Sub)national Principals, Legislative Agents: Patronage and Political Careers in Mexico. *Comparative Political Studies*. Vol. 48, no. 8, pp. 1020–1050. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414015574878>
- KIEWET, Roderick; MCCUBBINS, Mathew D. (1991). *The Logic of Delegation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19441053.1992.11770799>
- KREHBIEL, Keith (1991). *Information and Legislative Organization*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.8850>
- LANGSTON, Joy (2010). Governors and “Their” Deputies: New Legislative Principals

- in Mexico. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 2, no.35, pp. 235–258. <https://doi.org/10.3162/036298010791170132>
- LEHOUCQ, Fabrice et al. (2011). Political Institutions, Policymaking Processes, and Policy Outcomes in Mexico. *IDB Working Paper*. Vol, no. 207, pp. 1–68. <http://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1815888>
- LUPIA, Arthur; MCCUBBINS, Mathew D. (1994). Who Controls? Information and the Structure of Legislative Decision Making. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 361–384. <http://doi.org/10.2307/440137>
- MARTIN, Shane; MICKLER, Tim (2019). Committee Assignments: Theories, Causes and Consequences. *Parliamentary Affairs*. Vol. 72, no. 1, pp. 77–98. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsy015>
- MARTÍNEZ, Cecilia (1998). *Las legislaturas pequeñas. La evolución del sistema de comisiones en la Cámara de Diputados de México, 1824-2000*. BA thesis. Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México. México, DF.
- MAYHEW, David R. (1974). *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591297502800316>
- MÉNDEZ, Irma (2004). La transición mexicana a la democracia: competitividad electoral en México, 1977–1997. *Perfiles Latinoamericanos*. Vol. 12, no. 24, pp. 43–65.
- MICKLER, Tim A. (2018). Who Gets What and Why? Committee Assignments in the German Bundestag. *West European Politics*. Vol. 41, no. 2, pp. 517–539. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2017.1359461>
- NACIF, Benito (2002). Understanding Party Discipline in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies: The Centralized Party Model. In MORGENSTERN, Scott; NACIF, Benito (eds.). *Legislative Politics in Latin America*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 254–284. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511615665.010>
- PAOLI, Francisco J. (2000). La nueva Ley Orgánica del Congreso. *Cuestiones Constitucionales*. Vol, no. 2, pp. 135–157. <http://doi.org/10.22201/ij.24484881e.2000.2.5584>
- RASMUSEN, Eric. (2006). *Games and Information: An Introduction to Game Theory*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell.
- RAYMOND, Christopher; BÁRCENA, Sergio A. (2019). Constituency Preferences and Committee Selection in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies. *Journal of Latin American Studies*. Vol. 61, no. 4, pp. 95–117. <https://doi.org/10.1017/lap.2019.26>
- RIVERA, Abel (2004). Cambio institucional y democratización: la evolución de las comisiones en la Cámara de Diputados de México. *Política y Gobierno*. Vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 263–313.
- RHODE, David W; SHEPSLE, Kenneth A. (1973). Democratic Committee Assignments in the House of Representatives: Strategic Aspects of a Social Choice Process. *American Political Science Review*. Vol. 67, no. 3, pp. 889–905. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1958631>
- SANTOS, Fabiano; RENNÓ, Lucio (2004). The selection of committee leadership in the Brazilian chamber of deputies. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Vol. 10, no. 1, 50–70. <http://doi.org/10.1080/1357233042000318873>
- STRØM, Kaare (1998). Parliamentary Committees in European Democracies. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*. Vol.4, no.1, pp.21–59. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13572339808420538>
- SHEPSLE, Kenneth A; WEINGAST, Barry R. (1987). The Institutional Foundations of Committee Power. *The American Political Science Review*. Vol. 81, no. 3, pp. 85–104. <http://doi.org/10.2307/1960780>
- TEHERÁN, Jorge; JIMÉNEZ, Sergio (2003). Repartirá el pleno camara las comisiones. *El Uni-*



- versal*. Mexico, 23 September.
- TEHERÁN, Jorge; JIMÉNEZ, Sergio; HERRERA, Jorge (2003a), “Divide a la Cámara el reparto de comisiones”, *El Universal*, Mexico, 26 september.
- TEHERÁN, Jorge; JIMÉNEZ, Sergio (2003b). “Reparten comisiones en la Cámara Baja”. *El Universal*, Mexico, 29 September.
- UGUES, Antonio; MEDINA, Xavier; BOWLER, Shaun (2012). Experience Counts: Mixed Member Elections and Mexico’s Chamber of Deputies, *The Journal of Legislative Studies*. Vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 98–112. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13572334.2012.646711>
- VÁZQUEZ, Carlos; DÍAZ, Alejandro (2019). Poder e influencia en contextos de prohibición de reelección consecutiva: el caso de la Cámara de Diputados de México. *Revista de Ciencia Política*, Vol. 39, no. 3, pp. 517–546. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0718-090X2019000300517>
- WATERMAN, Richard W.; MEIER, Kenneth J. (1998). Principal-Agent Models: An Expansion? *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*. Vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 173–202. <http://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a024377>
- WEINGAST, Barry; MARSHALL, William J. (1988). The Industrial Organization of Congress; or, Why Legislatures, Like Firms, Are Not Organized as Markets. *Journal of Political Economy*. Vol. 96, no. 1, pp. 132–163. <http://doi.org/10.1086/261528>