

RISK-AVERSE PATTERNS OF DEMOCRATIZATION IN MEXICO: A CASE STUDY

by

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(Under the Direction of Markus Crepaz)

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to evaluate whether varying individual levels of risk-aversion are still as efficient of a predictor of voting behavior in Mexico as previous research has demonstrated.

While previous work has argued that risk-averse voters in Mexico tend to vote for the PRI and risk-acceptant voters for opposition parties, this study hypothesizes that notions of the alignment of party identification and perceived risk have become localized to subnational levels of government in Mexico. Mixed support is found for this hypothesis through a multi-stage statistical analysis of responses to the 2010 round of the Latinobarometer and a new state-level measure of dominant party politics. The study concludes with suggestions on how to potentially improve future research on the topics of democratization and voting behavior.

INDEX WORDS: Risk-Aversion, Voting Behavior, Mexico, Subnational Politics, Democratization, Dominant Party Politics, Decision Calculus, Maximum Likelihood Estimation

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For Ferenc.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the past three decades, the wake left by what Samuel Huntington (1991a) famously labeled as the ‘Third Wave’ of democratization¹ has led to the continued fall of many entrenched authoritarian regimes² across the globe.³ While the movement in Central and Eastern Europe can perhaps be sufficiently explained by the collapse of the Soviet Empire, the nations of Latin America pose a more quizzical puzzle that requires a deeper investigation of the human psyche in order to solve. Namely, as several of the authoritarian regimes of Latin America were at least nominally sustained through electoral victories without the overt military backing of an external hegemonic power, why did their well-established power base suddenly begin to unravel after decades of steady control?

A potential explanation might be that the seemingly revolutionary shift was in fact part of a protracted process whereby the perceived risks of party turnover at the national level were lowered at the subnational level by spatially diffusive successful opposition governance. Were

¹ Democratization is defined here as the movement of a political system toward a functioning democracy. The term functioning democracy used here is consistent with Wiarda (2000, 101) as one with “regular and free elections, ... a strong and independent parliament, a strong and independent court system, strong political parties, strong interest groups able to get their viewpoints across, and a strong grass-roots participation in government.” For more on the voting history of Mexico, see Hiskey & Canache (2005); Morgenstern & Zechmeister (2001); Meyer, Sherman, & Deeds (2003).

² The term authoritarianism is used in this study with respect to its institutional rather than military sense. Wiarda (2004, 59-60) differentiates the former from the latter type of regime in that they have civilian rather than military leadership and generally have more respect for human rights. Also, as they are institutionalized systems rather than populist/dictator driven, they are thus more reactive to social change over time and tend to be at least partially democratic or possess the seeds to become so.

³ Huntington coined the term in reference to the explosion of new democratic regimes during the period lasting from 1974-1991 that were previously considered to be non-democratic. See also Huntington (1991b).

this to be the motor driving the movement, however, a separate puzzle must be addressed that inquires whether or not the same risk-averse behavior that perpetuated these electoral authoritarian regimes at the national level has now been transmuted to the subnational level. Specifically, the less risky choice at the voting booth may now be regionally rather than nationally defined. This would prove a perplexing phenomenon indeed as the electoral victories of opposition parties at the national level would mask the continuation of risk-averse politics as usual at the subnational level and thereby perhaps overstate the gains of the democratization movement.

In an attempt to begin to address this research agenda, this study utilizes contemporary Mexico as a crucial case study.⁴ The movement toward legitimate democratization in Mexico has been one riddled with defeats and setbacks wherein the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) in its various iterations monopolized control over the Mexican government from the party's inception in 1929 until the close of the 20th Century.⁵

As the reign of the PRI increasingly exhibited elements of what Evans (1989) terms as the *incoherent absolutist domination* of a *predatory* state rather than the more benign, logical actions of a *developmental* state, its electoral hegemony became more fragile and eventually faltered.⁶ After a slow process of democratization at the subnational level by way of opposition

⁴ A crucial case study is one that must exemplify the theory in order for it to hold, as it resembles a near archetypal form of the theory itself. As this study tests a theory originally generated from the Mexican case, it logically must still hold for the theory to make sense. For a thorough discussion of what makes a crucial case in fact a crucial case, see Box-Steffensmeier, Brady, & Collier, Eds. (2008, 659-663); Seawright & Gerring (2008).

⁵ Wallis (1998)

⁶ Some of the major events that contributed to the party's decline include the Tlatleloco Massacre, the Debt Crises of 1982 & 1994, & The Great Mexican Earthquake of 1985. For more background on these events, see Meyer, Sherman, & Deeds (2003, 613-680); Camp (2007, 280-281 & 408-410); Harvey (2010); Olson & Gawronski (2003, 12-17); Davis (1994, 398-399); Morgenstern & Zechmeister (2001, 94).

parties⁷ winning steadily increasing numbers of elections, the presidency was finally wrested away from the PRI in 2000 with the election of the *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN) candidate Vicente Fox.⁸

The election of Vicente Fox and, thereby, the removal of the PRI from the presidency after seventy-one years of ‘systematic entrenchment’⁹ in the political arena is the moment at which many scholars argue that authentic multi-party democracy was truly institutionalized in Mexico.¹⁰ After just a twelve-year hiatus, though, the PRI was able to regain the presidency in 2012 with the election of its candidate Enrique Peña Nieto.¹¹ While the re-election of a PRI candidate to the presidency after Mexico struggled for so long to remove the yoke of one-party rule might at first seem strange, a closer inspection illuminates that both the party itself and the political climate of Mexico as a whole are very different from that of when the PRI exercised authoritarian control.

Rather than the election of Vicente Fox in 2000 being a revolutionary and singular epochal event susceptible to reversion, it was the culmination of a protracted movement that has firmly taken root in Mexico and led to a transition from hegemonic one-party rulership to an authentic multi-party democracy. Further, it bears reiterating that the PRI of today is not the same party as it was prior to 2000 and it certainly is governing a different Mexico.¹²

⁷ For the purposes of this study, opposition parties in Mexico are defined as those that are not the PRI. The two largest such parties, and the ones most referenced herein, are the PAN and the PRD.

⁸ Meyer, Sherman, & Deeds (2003, 682-683)

⁹ Turn of phrase borrowed from Morgenstern & Zechmeister (2001, 99).

¹⁰ Zechmeister (2008, 650); Hiskey & Canache (2005, 258-259)

¹¹ Camín & Castañeda (2012)

¹² Ibid

The democratization movement in Mexico has been one of grassroots action that cautiously led to more political inclusion over time. While Mexico is currently facing tremendous domestic turmoil with its war on drugs that has led to over 60,000 deaths and innumerable human rights violations, its prospects for governmental plurality and transparency are positive indeed.¹³ As aforementioned, though, caution should be exercised when citing the gains from the pluralization of the political arena as there is potentially a less rosy side to the democratization movement in Mexico.

This study seeks to demonstrate that although the movement away from one-party rule has gained traction, the same risk-averse behavior at the ballot box that allowed the PRI to sustain itself throughout the majority of the 20th Century may still be at work at the subnational level.¹⁴ The central hypothesis of this exploratory research program is that while people with high individual levels of risk-aversion may not necessarily be voting for the PRI in most cases any longer, such political trends may be epiphenomenal to an altered perception of whom the risky candidate is.

To begin to work toward convincingly asserting the claim that democratization is continuing to progress in Mexico albeit under terms of risk-averse behavior, this exploratory study seeks to build upon previous research carried out on the subject by Morgenstern and Zechmeister (2001). Their data were derived from a survey designed and carried out by the *Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas* (CIDE) following the 1997 mid-term elections in Mexico for the purposes of analyzing voter perspectives and decision calculi.¹⁵

¹³ For more information on the drug war being waged between the government and the cartels in Mexico, see Camín & Castañeda (2012); Camp (2012, 277-281).

¹⁴ See Morgenstern & Zechmeister (2001) for an analysis of risk-averse voting patterns in Mexico.

¹⁵ Ibid (106-107)

In order to build upon their work, and thereby begin to ascertain the current state of democracy in Mexico and the affect of risk-aversion on voter decision calculus, this study strikes upon a similar method of research by utilizing responses from the 2010 Latinobarometer survey conducted in Mexico as well as a new state-level measure of dominant party politics.¹⁶ The data were analyzed in a multi-stage statistical treatment with multinomial logistic and binomial logistic regression models. Initial results from this exploratory research program yielded limited support for the subnational risk-averse voting behavior hypothesis. Nevertheless, the null findings of this study still point to the need for further research as they inspire a corollary hypothesis. Specifically, are the negative results of this study a result of the ever-problematic issue of measurement error¹⁷ or did something in the individual level decision calculus among Mexican voters fundamentally change between 1997 and 2010? If either or both of these are the case, future research should seek to shrink the conceptual limitations perpetuated by imprecise data and/or to uncover this new causal mechanism driving vote choice.

The basic structure of the paper will be as follows. First, a brief review of some of the previous work on democratization in Mexico will be introduced and analyzed. Following this, the nature and design of this exploratory project will be presented along with its several hypotheses. Next, a discussion section will present and interpret the results from the models

¹⁶ The Latinobarometer is a professional non-profit organization that conducts public opinion surveys in 18 countries across Latin America. Their research mainly focuses on gauging public perspectives toward democracy, economics, and social attitudes. More information can be found at the organization's website. See <http://www.latinobarometro.org/lat.jsp>

¹⁷ Given the inherent complexity of many of the concepts in social science, translating theories into falsifiable research programs that adequately measure those concepts is a perennial problem within the discipline. Further, as this study primarily utilizes existing survey data that was not explicitly designed for its purposes, there is a possibility that some of the variables of interest are not properly captured within the data. This, then, would run the risk of imprecise analysis of the concepts this study seeks to evaluate. For more on measurement error see King, Keohane, & Verba (1994, 151-168). See also Johnson & Reynolds (2008, 302-344) for a discussion on survey design and implementation and Popper (1968) for a thorough treatment of the necessity of falsifiable theories in social science.

employed to analyze the data. Following this will be a section that explores possible alternative hypotheses of voting behavior in Mexico. Finally, some thoughts and conclusions on the results will be proffered along with avenues for future research. Essentially, as this study aims to evaluate a question as big as whether or not the democratization process in Mexico is occurring in the manner commonly believed, and, if not, what some of the causal mechanisms undergirding it may be, it is asserted that one study's null results should encourage rather than preclude future research.

Further, the need for more research is amplified when it is born in mind that while this study focuses on Mexico specifically, its aim is to locate factors that may be more universal in nature in order to shed light on the operative conditions of the democratization movement as a whole. Given the current thrust of the movement as well as the rush to erect democracies across the globe, a truly substantive understanding of the causal mechanisms at work would likely prove useful to making sense of the pathways to more pluralistic societies based upon democratic ideals and the individual level psychology that drives political transitions from entrenched authoritarianism to authentic democracy.

CHAPTER 2

PREVIOUS WORK ON DEMOCRATIZATION IN MEXICO

Almond and Verba's (1963) groundbreaking work, *The Civic Culture*, argued that despite an increased awareness in civic culture, many aspects of the Mexican political and civic cultures were still mostly authoritarian in nature. In their study, they found that while people personally tended to hold democratic ideals and had a strong sense of national pride, they were generally apathetic toward and distrustful of their government. They hint that some of this apathy is likely derivative of historical legacy and point to the Great Rebellion¹⁸ as the chain of events that perhaps marked the beginning of a widespread sense of political awareness among the citizenry, but they do not probe very far past cursory supposition.¹⁹

In contrast, Booth and Seligson's (1984) study of a large sample of the urban middle and working classes in Mexico found that not only were people predisposed to have personal democratic ideals, but they also favored acting on such emotions through political participation and peaceful protestation. While these findings serve as a strong rebuke to those of *The Civic Culture* by clearly articulating an absence of political and civic apathy among the voting populace in Mexico, it is important to note that Booth and Seligson's study was conducted much

¹⁸ The term 'Great Rebellion' is employed herein as opposed to the better-known terminology of the 'Mexican Revolution.' This follows Ruíz's (1980) coinage of the term to critique the more often used title. He argues it to have been a "cataclysmic rebellion" rather than a revolution. Whereas a revolution fundamentally upsets the power balance between classes, a state's dependence on external entities, and the politico-economic structure in a relatively short period of time, the Great Rebellion in Mexico languished over two decades and only exhibited portions of these ingredients. Further arguments against the usage are found in Knight (2010).

¹⁹ Almond & Verba (1963, 251-253)

later than was Almond and Verba's. By the time of their study, the PRI's powerbase and the party's authoritarian control over the political arena had already begun to erode.

It is likewise important to note, though, that despite their disparate conclusions on the topic of the state of civic and political culture in Mexico both Almond and Verba's as well as Booth and Seligson's studies noted the important role of education in the democratization process and argued it to be a key factor in the growth of a more sophisticated political culture.²⁰

Morgenstern and Zechmeister (2001) build upon these studies and offer an explanation as to how a person's political ideals interact with the democratic electoral process. The authors argue that a majority of voters who choose opposition party candidates in Mexico are chronic risk takers and are thus predisposed to political openness.²¹ Through an analysis of a survey carried out just after the 1997 mid-term elections in Mexico they demonstrate a statistically significant positive relationship between those who are risk-acceptant and those who vote for opposition party candidates.

Further, the authors show that contra previous studies, it is improper to assume that all voters are risk-averse at all times. In other words prospect theory, the idea that choices that lead to small but sure gains tend to be valued over those with larger potential gains but also the risk of possible losses, cannot be generalized from the part to the whole.²² There is inherent differentiation within a population, whether biological or sociological, that leads some to be more predisposed to accepting risks than others. Further, Morgenstern and Zechmeister find that

²⁰ Ibid (501-505); Booth & Seligson (1984, 115-119)

²¹ The authors use the term 'chronic' in order to emphasize the psychological aspect of their measure of risk-aversion. Rather than being a purely epiphenomenal concept, they argue it to be resultant of durable individual levels of dispositions to accept or not accept risks.

²² For a thorough treatment of prospect theory, see Berejikian (2002); Levy (1992).

even risk-acceptant voters are unlikely to vote for a complete unknown. Rather, they argue that a likely cause for the opposition's increasing electoral successes was the decreased risk that a vote for them represented as opposition parties proved themselves capable of governing through previous administrations at the local level.²³

Hiskey and Canache (2005) take this assertion a step further and test its validity through an analysis of the spatial diffusion of opposition voting in Mexico. Their analysis focuses on neighbor effects of opposition electoral victories in the 1980s-1990s and finds that as an opposition party won local elections in one region, its probability to win subsequent elections in geographically proximate regions also rose. In a sense, the authors argue that multi-party representation in Mexico came with a whimper rather than a bang by way of a slow process of spatial diffusion.²⁴

Moreover, Hiskey and Canache argue that a major factor driving the intractability of the democratization process in Mexico was the PRI's ability to manipulate elections.²⁵ Until a chain of events forced the PRI to allow free and fair elections, electoral opposition victories were met in subsequent elections with the PRI's use of any and all means necessary to ensure that it regained the office.²⁶ Once the PRI's ability to suppress dissent and manipulate elections was removed, opposition support grew through the spatial diffusion of electoral victories at the local level.

²³ Morgenstern & Zechmeister (2001, 115-116)

²⁴ For a more thorough treatment of spatial diffusion and neighbor effects see Starr (1991).

²⁵ Hiskey & Canache (2005, 264-265); For a thoughtful discussion on how PRI candidates were able to manipulate elections during the latter period of the party's hegemony, see Langston & Morgenstern (2009).

²⁶ Hiskey & Canache (2005, 264-265); For more information on the chain of events that led to the PRI being coerced by the opposition into allowing free and fair elections, see Camp (2012, 188-201); Reding (1988).

Zechmeister (2008) adds nuance to this point by showing that perceived issue space acts as a conditioning effect on voter behavior. If voters do not perceive a real choice on a given issue, it is unlikely that any counter-issues will meaningfully factor into their voting calculus. Zechmeister attributes the growth of perceived issue space to a combination of means, motives, and opportunities. Essentially, Zechmeister argues that in order for a choice alternative to the status quo to significantly weigh upon a voter's decision calculus, it necessarily must possess the perceived capability of potentially delivering positive gains and beneficial change.

When coupled with the prior work on the growth of political culture, risk-aversion, and the spatial diffusion of opposition victories in Mexico, Zechmeister's study sheds new light on some of the causal mechanisms underlying the democratization process in Mexico. Until contextual and structural factors in Mexico such as the PRI's monopoly over the political system were altered so that a vote for the opposition was no longer seen as a pointless endeavor, it was unlikely that change would come.²⁷ Once opposition parties gained the political leverage to force the PRI to recognize their electoral victories and hold it accountable for its corrupt tendencies, voters began to perceive increased issue space and were thusly more likely to vote for candidates from those opposition parties.

These studies taken together with a conversant knowledge of the history of Mexico present a complex process by which the democratization movement has progressed in Mexico. The interplay between national level events and individual level perspectives mediated by local level politics over several decades led to a more pluralized democratic political arena. As the opposition parties gained more political power vis-à-vis the PRI and thereby forced their way

²⁷ Note that this argument is neither a strictly structural functionalist nor a behaviorist one, but rather a blending of the two. Succinctly, the claim here is not that institutional structure determines the behavior of actors, but, rather, that it serves to constrain reasonable choice sets available to a majority of actors. For an excellent example of this ontological approach applied to commodity states see Karl (1997).

into the political arena, voters responded and slowly began to vote the PRI out of office thusly destabilizing its corporatist network of control as their perceived issue space grew.²⁸

As candidates from the opposition parties were elected at the local level in one area and built a record of capable governance, the risk associated with voting for other candidates of those parties in subsequent elections and in geographically proximate areas declined. These studies suggest that this electoral war of attrition waged by the opposition parties and the people of Mexico against the PRI was a slow and deliberate grassroots movement that eventually culminated in the electoral ousting of the PRI from the presidency in 2000. As such it would logically follow that pluralized democracy has built a powerful base in Mexico through this process and it is unlikely that a singular event such as the election of Enrique Peña Nieto in 2012 would signal the destabilization of that movement.

Historically, the people of Mexico have endured widespread violence and vast economic devastation when they have pushed for change in the face of *mal gobierno*, bad government.²⁹ This destructive blowback felt by Mexican citizens at epochs of political change arguably have become embedded in the consciousness of successive generations of Mexicans and led them to be more acceptant of governmental stability over righteousness.³⁰ Once the PRI was no longer

²⁸ Corporatism as it existed in Mexico tracked very closely to the societal form that is characterized by its being at least nominally participatory and democratic. As this study's central focus is the case of 20th Century Mexico where the PRI crafted a regime that could be accurately classified as corporatist or authoritarian, the terms are used interchangeably herein. Caution should be exercised when applying these terms to other cases however as the Mexican case occupies an uncommon shared space on the theoretical spectrum of these two terms. For a thorough treatment of corporatism, see Wiarda (1997); see also Wiarda (2004, 62-64) for a brief discussion on the relationship between authoritarianism and corporatism.

²⁹ For more background on the destructive nature of Mexico's political past, see Meyer, Sherman, & Deeds (2003, 53-62; 158-159; 270-293; 308-317; 413-459; 471-476; 514-520; 723-724); Rodriguez (1983); Guedea (2000); Chapman (1932); Ruíz (1980).

³⁰ This study does not seek to weigh in on disentangling the relationship between social and biological inheritances from generation to generation. Rather the argument here is that whether learned or inherited, the destructive political

able to provide the politico-economic stability to Mexico that the party's governance was premised upon, people became increasingly disposed to rebel against its rule and punish it for *mal gobierno*. While this point of view echoes the results of previous studies on this topic, it probes deeper into the origins of the malediction and thus provides new insights on the issue.

Further, a careful analysis of the democratization process bears out that the re-election of a PRI candidate in the 2012 presidential election does not necessarily indicate a reversion to the previous political landscape of authoritarian rule. Rather, the majoritarily peaceful nature of the process symbolized a critical juncture, or structural break, from Mexico's previously violent experiences with change.³¹ The pluralization of the political arena has progressed far enough that the PRI itself has changed and is now a competing party within a multi-party system rather than a corporatist regime primarily concerned with sustaining its own hegemonic authority.

history of Mexico likely carries a significant effect on contemporary political behavior. For more work on this somewhat controversial theory of human behavior, see Rosen (2005); Somit (1990); Vasquez (1993, 123-152).

³¹ For an in depth conversation on critical junctures see Collier & Collier (1991, 27-39).

CHAPTER 3

MODELING VOTE CHOICE

In order to demonstrate the growing strength of pluralized democracy in Mexico, this study represents an attempt to build upon previous research and findings on the subject. As just discussed at length, much of the previous research on this issue has shown democratization in Mexico to be a slow moving trend that has gained traction over time as the prospects for political change gradually came to seem less risky to its citizens. This study seeks to evaluate whether or not opposition candidates continue to play a strong role in the political sphere and whether or not a vote for them seems as much of a risk as shown in previous studies.

In addition to accounting for the affect of risk on voting behavior, this study attempts to account for several other variables that might potentially have a significant effect upon voting behavior including retrospective economic assessments, education, age, geography, and subnational political dynamics. By taking these variables into account during analysis, a more transparent view of the state of democracy in Mexico and in which socio-demographic vehicles it is strongest should become apparent. It is argued herein that each of these included variables is important as they might serve to condition the decision calculus that drives vote choice.

The 2010 survey round of the Latinobarometer is employed for this project's analysis as the main source of data as it is a national level survey and thus ensures that the results are generalizable to the entirety of Mexico. The survey's sampling technique was a modified probability sample consisting of 1200 respondents from Mexico.³² The survey was carried out in

³² A complete methodological report on the 2010 round generally or Mexico specifically can be obtained through the Latinobarometer Corporation's website at: <http://www.latinobarometro.org/lat.jsp>.

personal face-to-face interviews in Spanish across the thirty-one states of Mexico and the Federal District. As this study seeks to evaluate subnational trends of democratization, utilizing a nationally representative survey such as the Latinobarometer, then, allows for a more complex final analysis necessary to substantiate some of this study’s hypotheses.

III.A: VARIABLES USED FOR ANALYSIS OF THE 2010 LATINOBAROMETER DATA

In the 2010 Latinobarometer survey, interviewers captured a respondent’s level of age and education continuously. Respondents were asked to self-report their age and level of educational attainment in years. *Tables I through III* below are the tabulated values of these variables as well as the sex categorization of the respondents in the sample.³³

- *TABLE I:*

Respondent Sex Categorization for the 2010 Latinobarometer Survey in Mexico:

Sex	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Male	578	48.17%	48.17%
Female	622	51.83%	100%
Total	1200	100%	100%

Education was included in the model in order to account for any ideological differences that might condition people’s voting decisions. As the PRI has been shown to historically be the ‘*known devil*’ of politics in Mexico, people who have lower levels of education might be more willing to vote for the PRI irregardless of their individual level of risk propensity. More clearly, people at this low end of the educational scale might be unable to make an informed decision about any party besides the PRI whereas those who exhibit higher levels of educational

³³ Note that age and education are measured continuously in the data and are only summarized by groups in the tables below for brevity’s sake.

attainment might have more information about the different parties and thereby be more likely to vote for opposition party candidates irrespective of their risk propensity.

- *TABLE II:*

Respondent Education Levels for the 2010 Latinobarometer Survey in Mexico:

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
None	106	8.83%	8.83%
1-4 Years	136	11.33%	20.17%
5-8 Years	308	25.67%	45.83%
9-12 Years	430	35.83%	81.67%
Some College or Vocational School	73	6.08%	87.75%
Completed College or Vocational School	147	12.25%	100%
Total	1200	100%	100%

- *TABLE III:*

Respondent Ages for the 2010 Latinobarometer Survey in Mexico:

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
18-25	205	17.08%	17.08%
26-35	297	24.75%	41.83%
36-45	284	23.67%	65.5%
46-55	169	14.08%	79.58%
56-65	147	12.25%	91.83%
66 And Older	98	8.17%	100%
Total	1200	100%	100%

The purpose of including age in the model is to pick up on any influence a person's time horizons may have on their voting behavior. Whereas older voters have had more exposure in terms of time duration to the political arena, younger voters can only draw from experiences in the comparatively more recent past. Younger voters, therefore, might be more likely to vote for opposition party candidates as an artifact of growing up in a multi-party political climate whereas older voters might be more inclined to continue to vote for the PRI. Thusly, as with education it is argued here that the failure to include this measure then would run the risk of biasing the

results of analysis and thereby potentially overstate the impact of risk propensity on voting behavior.³⁴

The dependent variable used for the first stage of analysis was vote choice. This was captured in the data by a question where survey respondents were asked: “If this Sunday there were elections, for which party’s candidate would you vote?” As this study seeks to discern both what factors drive the decision calculus of those people who do vote in Mexico and how they choose among competing parties, any respondents who did not vote for one of the three major parties, gave no answer, said they would not vote, or that they would cast a spoiled/null ballot were dropped from the first stage of analysis.³⁵ Dropping these observations reduced the sample size from 1200 to 630. *Table IV* below shows the responses given by respondents in this survey.

- *TABLE IV:*

<i>Party Candidate Respondents Would Vote For:</i>			
Party	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
<i>Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD)</i>	82	13.02%	13.02%
<i>Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)</i>	319	50.63%	63.65%
<i>Partido Acción Nacional (PAN)</i>	190	30.16%	93.81%
Other	39	6.19%	100%
Total	630	100%	100%

³⁴ Further, while the inclusion of these first two variables is somewhat intuitive for the reasons given above, their use herein for analysis is at least partially informed from the findings and assertions of Morgenstern & Zechmeister (2001, 110-111).

³⁵ As is discussed later in the paper, dropping these observations was necessary in order for the model used in the first stage of analysis to be compared to that employed by previous studies. An additional model was run with both the non-voters and those that did not vote for one of the major three parties included as a check for bias. The results of this model did not lead to any different conclusions than the one used in this study.

Respondents were also asked for a retrospective economic assessment of the national economy as well as their own individual situation. The survey question asked respondents how they believe the current state of things compared with that of 12 months prior. They were asked to rate their responses on a scale ranging from 1 to 5 where a low score represented much worse and a high score much better.³⁶ The responses are show below in *Table V*.

These measures were included in this study’s model because as Morgenstern & Zechmeister (2001, 105) assert, numerous previous studies have found that voters in Western style democracies tend to base their current voting decisions at least in part upon past economic situations.³⁷ Both individual and national level assessments are included in order to account for the potential that some voters may make these assessments based on sociotropic motivations while others may do so for egoistic reasons.

- *TABLE V:*

Respondent Retrospective National & Individual Level Economic Assessments:

Assessment	National Level			Individual Level		
	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Much Worse	73	11.76%	11.76%	26	4.15%	4.15%
A Little Worse	195	31.4%	43.16%	127	20.29%	24.44%
About the Same	193	31.08%	74.24%	275	43.93%	68.37%
A Little Better	148	23.83%	98.07%	180	28.75%	97.12%
Much Better	12	1.93%	100%	18	2.88%	100%
Total	621	100%	100%	626	100%	100%

³⁶ In the original data, these variables were coded in the opposite order where a score of 1 represented much better and a 5 much worse. The variables were recoded in inverse order for the purposes of this study.

³⁷ See also Fiorina (1981); Key (1966); Lewis-Beck (1988); Popkin *et al.* (1976).

Additionally, an interaction term between these measures and risk-aversion was included in the model. The motivation for this comes from the idea that how willing a person is to punish governing parties for perceptions of poor economic performance at the voting booth is likely to be conditioned by their propensity to accept risk.³⁸ The argument here is that while a risk-acceptant individual might see it as a clear choice to vote parties incapable of effectively managing the economy out of office, a risk-averse voter might be disinclined to do so.

Specifically:

- *H1: Risk-acceptant voters are more likely punish governing parties for perceptions of poor economic performance than are risk-averse voters.*

III.A.1: USING INTERPERSONAL TRUST AS A PROXY FOR RISK-AVERSION

Finally, respondents were asked a question intended to capture interpersonal trust that read: “Generally speaking, would you say that you can trust most people, or that you can never be too careful when dealing with others?” Those respondents who said they believed they could trust most people were coded as trust-acceptant while those who either stated that they did not know or that they thought you could never be too careful when dealing with others were said to be trust-averse.³⁹ The responses to this question are shown in *Table VI* below.

The trust variable is included in this model as a proxy of individual levels of risk-aversion for both practical and theoretical reasons. In terms of practicality, as this research program is exploratory in nature and aims to decipher a puzzle requiring vast amounts of data

³⁸ The decision to include this interaction term is bolstered by the fact that Morgenstern & Zechmeister include this interaction term in their model as they also believed that how willing someone is to punish candidates for poor economic performance is likely to be conditioned by individual levels of risk-aversion. This hypothesis received partial support from their analysis.

³⁹ For the purposes of analysis herein, trust-acceptant was coded as a ‘0’ and trust-averse as a ‘1.’

that would be quite costly both temporally and monetarily to gather, this initial step is somewhat beholden to the research that has already been carried out. At current, the generalized interpersonal trust question is the closest proxy to risk-aversion available in public opinion surveys in Mexico that also adequately address all of the other variables of interest in this study. While using a proxy to account for risk-aversion is admittedly less desirable than a question designed to capture risk-aversion itself, it is argued herein to be satisfactorily similar in the sense employed for this study to be sufficient.

- *TABLE VI:*

Respondent Perspectives Toward Interpersonal Trust:

Level of Interpersonal Trust	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Trust-Acceptant	176	27.94	27.94
Trust-Averse	454	72.06	100
Total	630	100	100

In terms of theoretical justification, though the two terms are conceptually distinct, they are nevertheless substantively very similar. The main distinction between the two drawn in most of the academic literature is in reference to their disparate levels of relative uncertainty. Houser, Schunk, and Winter (2010, 72) argue that decisions based upon trust exist in a context of strategic uncertainty that closely resembles a principal-agent dilemma. The outcome of the decision made by the principal actor is determined by an unknowable choice made by the agent. The choice to trust the agent is thus made without true knowledge of the odds of the outcome of doing so.

Risk, however, is more akin to a gambling game wherein the actors involved know the relative odds of the game at its onset. Thus, the difference between the two falls to matter of relative uncertainty where risk exists at a lower end of the spectrum and trust a higher one. Despite their conceptual similarity, though, an academic debate has been raging in the fields of

behavioral economics and psychology over the interchangeability of trust and risk-aversion as proxies for one another.⁴⁰

This study takes the position that in the political arena it would be improper to assume that choices, voting decisions in this study's sense, are ever made in a space where the relative odds of a political outcome from said choice are ever wholly known or unknown. Rather, most if not indeed all choices made in the political arena are made under fluctuating levels of uncertainty mediated by timespace context, prior experience with candidates, political parties, and the relative strength and reliability of a political system.

Therefore, there is a tradeoff between using questions of either risk or trust by themselves in a political context. Despite this, as the two are substantively similar to one another and neither can truly represent the factors behind political choices in reality, it is argued here that the use of one should carry a substantial portion of the affect of the other. Going forward though, perhaps the best solution to this problem of operationalization would be to include measures for both variables and an interaction term between the two in the model. As aforementioned, however, as this study is exploratory in nature it is beholden to the data that already exist and leaves this data improvement measure to future research.

Additionally, the interpersonal trust question used in this survey is quite similar to the one utilized by Morgenstern and Zechmeister (2001). As this study seeks in many ways to evaluate the applicability of their findings from 1997 data to the current political climate in Mexico, this is perhaps the most important aspect of how either risk or trust is operationalized in this study. In order to operationalize risk, the survey they used asked people choose which of two common aphorisms they more closely identified with: "Better the devil you know than the saint

⁴⁰ See Alesina & La Ferrara (2002); Ben-Ner & Halldorsson (2010); Houser, Schunk, & Winter (2010); Schechter (2007).

you don't or nothing ventured, nothing gained."⁴¹ Those that either agreed with both statements or chose the 'known devil' were categorized as risk-averse while those that subscribed to the latter statement were said to be risk-acceptant.

The importance of utilizing a question similar to that used by Morgenstern and Zechmeister (2001) for the purposes of this study is that it allows its results to be compared with theirs to evaluate any shifts in the political climate that may have occurred since their study in 1997. They found a strong positive relationship between people who are risk-averse and those that voted for the PRI, but is this still the case? While this may have been true in 1997, I posit that the democratization process has matured since then and, even in an event as large as the presidential election, a vote for the opposition no longer seems as risky or requires as much trustingness. This conjecture leads to two successive hypotheses:

- *H2: There is a weaker relationship between risk-averse voters and those that said they would cast a vote for the PRI in the data from 2010 than in that from 1997.*
- *H3: There is no statistically significant relationship between risk-averse voters and those that said they would vote for the PRI in the 2010 data.*

III.A.2: INCORPORATING SUBNATIONAL POLITICAL DYNAMICS

The effects of the democratization process at the national level in 1997 were still nascent in nature and had greatly progressed by 2010. After having twice elected a president not from the previously dominant PRI party and nearly two decades of capable governance at the local and gubernatorial levels by opposition parties, this study advances that risk-aversion does not factor as heavily into a voter's decision of whether or not to vote for the PRI any longer. Further, this

⁴¹ Morgenstern & Zechmeister (2001, 107-109)

study seeks to demonstrate that, if at all, risk-aversion may have become localized by state to the parties that have come to dominate that region.⁴² Specifically:

- *H4: There is a statistically significant relationship between individual levels of risk-aversion and vote choice, but such a relationship is derivative of the dominant party in that respondent's state.*

While the literature on dominant party systems is vast, it often is also vague as to just what a dominant party is aside from the obvious determinant of a party that exhibits dominance. In the interest of conceptual clarity this study follows Bogaards (2004, 175) definition of a dominant party in its strongest sense as one that “has won a parliamentary majority plus the presidential elections, where present, in three consecutive multi-party elections.”⁴³ Application of this definition to the Mexican case is problematical however as most of its states had only *held* three gubernatorial elections since the alteration of several electoral laws in the early 1990s that led to establishment of a truly multi-party political arena by 2010 occurred.

Thus, the term dominant party is used here in a somewhat weaker sense whereby a party is said to be dominant within a state if its candidate has won at least two out the last three gubernatorial elections within that state. For those states that held four elections by 2010, a party had to have held the governorship for three out of the last four elections to retain its status as dominant in this study.⁴⁴ As this last hypothesis only seeks to evaluate the political behavior of voters in dominant party states, the three states that did not have dominant parties under this

⁴² A state will be coded as having a dominant party if a candidate of the same party affiliation has held the governorship for at least two of its last three *sexenios* (six-year terms for political office in Mexico).

⁴³ For more information on dominant party systems see Sartori (1976); Ware (1996).

⁴⁴ By the time this survey was administered, only the states of Campeche, Colima, Nuevo León, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, and Sonora had held four gubernatorial elections since the alteration of the electoral laws.

definition were dropped from the final analysis.⁴⁵ While this somewhat limits the conclusions this study can draw from its analysis, any substantive impediment this creates is statistically overcome by the fact that 28 of the 31 states as well as the populous Federal District did have dominant parties.

By controlling for dominant party states, this study seeks to tease apart some of distinctions in vote choice that may be missed by an exact replication of Morgenstern and Zechmeister's study alone. While individual levels of risk-aversion are likely to persist as a factor into voter calculus, it is unlikely that the PRI is still recognized as the universal 'devil' voters know given the representational plurality in Mexico. Just as Booth and Seligson's findings that led them to critique *The Civic Culture's* conclusions may have been an artifact of the contextual changes that occurred in Mexico during the time-gap between their two studies, a critique of Morgenstern and Zechmeister's study based solely upon a total replication with more contemporary data would likely be derivative of social change rather than theoretical bankruptcy.⁴⁶

Evaluating the relationship between how individual levels of risk-aversion and subnational politics condition national level vote choices in the case of Mexico is important because it allows for a more complete analysis of the political climate than doing so solely at the national level. While it is expected that the results will show that at the national level voters no longer see the PRI as the 'devil' they know and are thereby more likely to vote for them, such

⁴⁵ Out of the remaining 28 states and the federal district, 20 states were dominated by the PRI, 5 by the PAN, and 4 by the PRD.

⁴⁶ See Booth & Seligson (1984, 106-108, 117-120); Almond & Verba (1963); Between the 1950s and 1980s, there were several events that led to an erosion of the PRI's powerbase and likely contributed to a more active 'civic' culture. For references, see footnote 6.

findings do not necessarily mean that individual levels of risk-aversion no longer condition vote choice in Mexico.

If the expected findings were to hold true and risk-aversion be shown to still be a component of voter calculus at the subnational level, two conclusions could then be drawn from them. First, if no statistically significant relationship between risk-aversion and PRI voting exists at the national level, the results would thereby illustrate that pluralized democracy has taken root in Mexico and destabilized the capabilities of the PRI to return to hegemonic rule out of fear alone. Second, if voter decision calculus is still significantly affected by risk-aversion at the subnational level, the results would imply that although plurality has taken root, the democratic process and electoral system in Mexico continue to be at least partially colored by levels of perceived risk rather than socio-political righteousness.

- *TABLE VII:*

Comparison of Vote Choice Across Two Elections and the 2010 Data:

Party of Candidate	2006 Presidential Election	2010 Survey	2012 Presidential Election
<i>Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD)</i>	36.1%	13.02%	31.2%
<i>Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)</i>	22.7%	50.63%	38.2%
<i>Partido Acción Nacional (PAN)</i>	36.7%	30.16%	25.4%
Other	4.5%	6.19%	5.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%

As a check to ensure that the sampling was truly representative of Mexico, the results from the 2010 data were cross-referenced to actual voting results from the 2006 and 2012 presidential elections.⁴⁷ While this leads to a temporal inconsistency as political choices were

⁴⁷ The parameters for the 2012 election results come from Seelke (2012) and the 2006 election results from Klesner (2007).

indelibly affected by a multitude of factors from 2006-2010 and 2010-2012, it should provide a rough comparison. As generalizing is an inherently probabilistic venture, it is critical to attempt to minimize error and demonstrate construct validity as authoritatively as possible.⁴⁸

Table VII above displays the percentage of votes for candidates from each of the three main parties in the actual 2006 and 2012 presidential elections and also the 2010 survey data. Unfortunately, as the table clearly shows, the data are not consistent with actual election results. However, this phenomenon of the 2010 data is believed to likely be derivative of the large number of respondents that stated they would cast blank or spoiled ballots. While this limits this study's conclusions, the alarming number of vowed non/null voters in the sample (352 in a sample of 1200!) illustrates that this is likely to be largely a matter of decreased sample size rather than bias. Nevertheless this important limitation of the survey data warrants being borne in mind.

Future studies should strive to bridge this gap between the data and actual voting behavior by exploring alternative response techniques for surveys. For example, Morgenstern and Zechmeister (2001, 106) cite a previous study conducted by CIDE that found asking respondents for their vote choice rather than asking them to cast a mock ballot tends to lead to less forthcoming answers. A potential solution for lengthier surveys such as the Latinobarometer might be ask the vote choice question last and ask respondents to anonymously place their surveys in a specified location once they have made their choice.

⁴⁸ Johnson, Reynolds, & Mycoff (2008, 97-99)

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

In order to begin to evaluate the validity of this study's several hypotheses a model designed to replicate that employed by Morgenstern and Zechmeister (2001) was run during the first stage of analysis. This method of analysis was chosen in order to evaluate how well their findings travel across the timespace gap that exists between the 1997 data used in their study and the 2010 data used for this study's analysis.

The model employed for this first stage of analysis was a multinomial logistic regression that was estimated with maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) techniques where a respondent's vote choice (Y_i) is proposed to be a factor of risk-aversion (X_{2i}), retrospective national and individual level economic assessments (X_{3i} & X_{4i}), level of educational attainment (X_{5i}), age (X_{6i}), and an interaction between risk-aversion and retrospective national and individual level economic assessments ($X_{3i} * X_{2i}$) & ($X_{4i} * X_{2i}$). This creates a model that can be written mathematically as:

$$\bullet \quad Y_i = \beta_{1j} + \beta_{2j}X_{2i} + \beta_{3j}X_{3i} + \beta_{4j}X_{4i} + \beta_{5j}X_{5i} + \beta_{6j}X_{6i} + \beta_{7j}(X_{3i} * X_{2i}) + \beta_{8j}(X_{4i} * X_{2i}) + u_{ij}$$

In the model above, u_{ij} represents the stochastic error term and β_{ij} the predicted effects of the independent variables X_i on the value of the dependent variable Y_i . The values of β_i and u_i are indexed by j as the multinomial logistic model predicts separate coefficients for the independent variables for each of the different values of the dependent variable. In order to

calculate substantively meaningful coefficients in this case, one of the values of the dependent variable has to be specified as the reference group and have its values set to zero. Thus, the effects of the independent variables upon the remaining values of the dependent variable are interpreted with respect to the researcher's defined reference group.⁴⁹

Additionally, as is the case with any quantitative statistical analysis, the predicted effects of the independent variables and the value of the stochastic error term are unobserved in the data. More clearly, while the error term is included in the population model displayed above in order to account for the unmeasurable/unpredictable non-systematic factors that might have some affect upon the dependent variable, its actual value is definitionally not directly observed in the data.⁵⁰

These non-systematic factors are expected to vary randomly from sample to sample and are, thusly, impossible, and moreover improper, to account for in a generalized model. Additionally, the effects of the independent variables upon the dependent variable are estimated by the researcher's specified model rather than directly self-evidently true and observed. While these issues of estimation are ubiquitous to any quantitative study, they demand reiteration here in order to avoid overstating the conclusions drawn from analysis.

Also, it is important to note that Morgenstern and Zechmeister analyzed their data by utilizing a multinomial probit as opposed to a multinomial logistic regression model. They assert there to be theoretical justifications for the use of a multinomial probit rather than a multinomial

⁴⁹ In the model used for this stage of analysis, those who voted for the PRI were set as the reference group. This was done for theoretical reasons that are congruent with those of Morgenstern & Zechmeister (2001). Namely, this first stage of analysis in the study seeks to evaluate why people vote for opposition party candidates rather than the PRI, hence making it the natural choice for the reference group. For a thorough discussion on multinomial logistic regression see Long (1997, 149-186).

⁵⁰ For an explanation of non-systematic vs. systematic factors see King, Keohane, & Verba (1994, 55-63).

logistic model in the context of Mexican voting behavior. Specifically, they chose to do so to avoid the independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA) assumption inherent to multinomial logistic regression.⁵¹ In this context, the IIA assumption implies that a voter's preference structure for one party's candidate as opposed to another is fixed and would not be affected by the introduction of a new party's candidate.

While the IIA assumption is admittedly a strong one, it is important to note that as this study is not concerned with party substitution but rather with voting decisions in a context with known dominant parties, as Dow and Endersby (2004, 112-113) argue, its partial violation is somewhat irrelevant. Further, while multinomial probit regression analysis is a theoretically stronger model to evaluate voting behavior in a multi-party system than is the multinomial logistic model, it is often practically weaker as they are notoriously difficult to specify and/or identify. As a prime example of this, in order to identify their model Morgenstern and Zechmeister had to also include measures for economic policy assessment and party identification. As their inclusion was to identify the model rather than to theoretically strengthen it, they did not offer any substantive interpretation of these values.

This study, then, follows Dow and Endersby (2004) by arguing that the relative specifying strength of the multinomial logistic model versus that of the multinomial probit one and the partial irrelevance of the IIA assumption in the context at hand make it the stronger choice for practical application to the data. Despite the multinomial logistic model being practically stronger, though, it should be remembered that a multinomial probit model that did not require sophisticated statistical manipulation to specify would be a theoretically stronger

⁵¹ Morgenstern & Zechmeister (2001, 116-118)

model. *Table VIII* below reports the results of the multinomial logistic regression analysis of the 2010 data.

- *TABLE VIII:*

Multinomial Logistic Estimates of Vote Choice (2010 Data):

Independent Variables⁵²	PAN/PRI		PRD/PRI	
	Coefficient	Std. Error	Coefficient	Std. Error
Level of Risk-Aversion	-1.486	.864	-.025	1.224
Ind. Retrospective Assessment	-.099	.227	.090	.345
Nat'l Retrospective Assessment	.141	.215	-.384	.330
Age	.003	.007	.006	.009
Education	.031	.025	-.037	.034
Risk*Nat'l Assessment	.349	.246	.567	.362
Risk*Ind. Assessment	.089	.266	-.418	.385
Constant	-.816	.865	-.730	1.277
Sample Size (<i>N</i>) = 579	Proportional Reduction in Error = -.37%			
Log-Likelihood = -545.2	<i>Pseudo R</i> ² = .034			
BIC = 1192.2				

** denotes $p < .05$

As the table illustrates, this analysis demonstrates support for hypotheses two and three. Absolutely no statistically significant relationship between individual levels of risk-aversion and vote choice is found in the analysis. In fact, none of the measures included in the model are statistically significant and the model actually has a negative proportional reduction in error (PRE)! As a negative PRE communicates that the model as a whole is actually less efficient than a simple null model would be, this finding implies that either the predictors used are irrelevant and misleading or that there is some sort of specification error. This is problematic, though, as this study is based upon prior academic work that has convincingly demonstrated that these *are*

⁵² Note that as this model employs an interaction term, the coefficients for risk-aversion, individual retrospective economic assessments, and national retrospective economic assessments should be interpreted as conditional rather than unconditional. More clearly, the coefficient for any one of these constitutive measures is conditional upon the term it is interacted with equaling its lowest value. For a thorough discussion of how to interpret interaction terms in statistical analysis see Brambor, Clark, & Golder (2006). See also Berry, Golder, & Milton (2012).

efficient predictive measures of vote choice in Mexico. Thus, these null results serve to lend support to the theory advanced earlier that substantive changes in the political arena have created the need for a model that accounts for subnational political dynamics.

IV.A: RESPECIFICATION OF THE MODEL AS A BINOMIAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION

In order to incorporate a measure of the subnational political dynamics that might be masking the affect of risk-aversion at the national level, the dominant party variable was appended to the 2010 Latinobarometer data. Since the survey data noted the home state of the respondents, I was able to match each respondent with the corresponding dominant party in their state if there was one. As discussed earlier, any respondents who lived in states without a dominant party were dropped from this stage of analysis. To reiterate, this was done as this model does not attempt to make any theoretical claims of understanding how individual level risk-aversion would moderate the political voting behavior of citizens in states with no clear dominant party.

Next, a dichotomous variable was created that was coded as ‘1’ if a respondent’s stated vote choice was equivalent to the dominant party in their state and ‘0’ if their choices were dissimilar. Essentially, this new variable was created with the intention to capture whether a respondent’s vote at the national level is conditioned by dominant party politics at the subnational level. This new variable was useful for this study’s purposes as it accounts for the subnational political dynamics that the multinomial logistic model’s null results suggest are necessary to account for. Also, it allows for the analysis to be carried out with a much simpler binomial logistic regression model rather than a multinomial model.⁵³

⁵³ Note that binary logistic models, like multinomial logistic models, also require the use of MLE techniques for data analysis.

Use of the binomial logistic model for the second stage of examination improves the quality of data analysis both by allowing for greater ease of interpretation and also in terms of statistical methodology as it requires less demanding assumptions and estimates fewer coefficients, thus retaining more degrees of freedom. As one of the fundamental principles of systematic data analysis is maintaining the highest levels of parsimony possible, this simpler model is therefore argued to be both statistically and theoretically stronger for the purposes of this study.⁵⁴

The binomial logistic model employed for this analysis argues that the probability that a respondent will cast a vote at the national level for a candidate representing the dominant party in their home state (Y_i) is a function of risk-aversion (X_{2i}), retrospective national and individual level economic assessments (X_{3i} & X_{4i}), level of educational attainment (X_{5i}), age (X_{6i}), and an interaction between risk-aversion and retrospective national and individual level economic assessments ($X_{3i} * X_{2i}$) & ($X_{4i} * X_{2i}$). This creates a model that can be written mathematically as:

- $$Y_i = \beta_1 + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{3i} + \beta_4 X_{4i} + \beta_5 X_{5i} + \beta_6 X_{6i} + \beta_7 (X_{3i} * X_{2i}) + \beta_8 (X_{4i} * X_{2i}) + u_i$$

As in the multinomial model used in the first stage of analysis, in the binomial model above, u_i represents the stochastic error term and β_i the predicted effects of the independent variables X_i on the value of the dependent variable Y_i . The values of β_i and u_i are no longer

⁵⁴ Parsimony as it is used here follows Gujarati's (2003, 46-47) context specific definition as the standard of using as few predictors as are necessary to sufficiently explain an outcome variable. This understanding of the term should be distinguished from its often-trumpeted perverted form that asserts simpler models are always better than more complex ones. For a brief discussion on the perils of taking the parsimony principle too far, see Koleva & Haidt (2012).

indexed by j as they were in the multinomial logistic model as the dependent variable used here in the second stage of the analysis is dichotomous rather than composed of a series of unordered potential outcomes. Hence the binomial model only estimates one set of coefficients rather than the multiple coefficients that were predicted with the multinomial logistic model used earlier.

Also note that the independent variables utilized in this model are identical to those of the multinomial model. The only difference between the two is the respecified dependent variable that is now dichotomous rather than polytomous and accounts for subnational political trends rather than only capturing respondent vote choice. Employing the same independent variables in this binomial model as were used in the multinomial model allows for a rough comparison of how the altered dependent variable that accounts for subnational political trends either enhances or detracts from the explanatory power of the analysis. *Table IX* below presents the results from the binomial model.

- *TABLE IX:*

<i>Binomial Logistic Estimates of Vote Choice (2010 Data):</i>		
Independent Variables⁵⁵	Coefficient	Std. Error
Level of Risk-Aversion	.302	.799
Ind. Retrospective Assessment	.047	.222
Nat'l Retrospective Assessment	-.192	.209
Age	-.012	.006
Education	-.031	.023
Risk*Nat'l Assessment	.088	.230
Risk*Ind. Assessment	-.090	.250
Constant	.640	.834
Sample Size (N) = 576	Proportional Reduction in Error = 2.59%	
Log-Likelihood = -393.8	<i>Pseudo R</i> ² = .012	
BIC = 838.5		
** denotes $p < .05$		

⁵⁵ The constitutive measures in this binomial model should be interpreted the same as in the multinomial model used in the first stage of analysis.

As *Table IX* illustrates, though a more efficient model, the predictors included in the binomial logistic regression model are again all statistically insignificant. In fact, the predictors for age and education are the only ones that even approach standard levels of significance. While drawing substantive conclusions is a dubious enterprise with non-significant predictors, it bears noting that the sign of the coefficients for age and education are in the direction anticipated.

Further, while none of the predictors in the model are found to be statistically informative, it warrants noting that the binomial model as a whole yields a much lower statistic for its Bayesian information criterion (BIC) than that of the multinomial model. This is encouraging as models estimated by using MLE techniques are understood to fit the data better the closer their returned BIC statistic is to zero.⁵⁶ Moreover, the binomial model yields a positive, albeit modest, PRE as opposed to the negative PRE of the multinomial model. While the binomial model's predictors demonstrate no statistically significant support for hypotheses one and four, these measures of model fit taken together offer limited support to the overarching theory of this study that subnational political dynamics must be accounted for when evaluating vote choice in Mexico in terms of individual levels of risk-aversion.

⁵⁶ The BIC statistic allows for this sort of comparison of non-nested models and thusly adds strength to the argument advanced here for the binomial rather than the multinomial model. For more information on BIC see Long (1997, 109-113).

CHAPTER 5

SINCERE VOTING: AN ALTERNATIVE HYPOTHESIS OF VOTING BEHAVIOR IN MEXICO

This study advances the theory that individual levels of risk propensity condition the voting decision calculus of people in Mexico. Whereas Morgenstern and Zechmeister's research that utilized data from 1997 demonstrated that people who exhibited higher levels of risk propensity were more likely to vote for opposition party candidates, the present research program seeks to evaluate whether or not this conditioning effect has been transmuted to the subnational level due to circumstantial changes of the political arena in Mexico. Succinctly, this study argues that voters with a low propensity for risk still tend to choose the 'devil they know' but this known devil is now localized to state level politics rather nationally defined.

But what if this is not the case? Through a multi-stage analysis of data from the 2010 Latinobarometer, this study was able to demonstrate that the PRI is no longer necessarily the desirable 'known devil' for a majority of risk-averse voters. However, it was unable to garner strong support for its corollary ambition of demonstrating its theory of subnational trends of risk-averse voting behavior. Throughout this paper, several issues have been raised about the quality of the data available for such an analysis and thusly the reliability of any conclusions drawn from them. Due to the strong theoretical rationale that has driven the risk-averse voting behavior hypothesis as it applies to the Mexican case, this study argued that these data issues are likely to be the determinant causes of the null results borne out by the second stage of analysis of the data that accounted for subnational political dynamics.

Nevertheless, it is also possible that even if better data were to be collected, individual levels of risk-aversion might still be found to no longer be a statistically significant predictive measure of vote choice in Mexico. Therefore, just as this study posits that the problems within the data highlighted throughout this paper point to the need for more efficient manners of capturing some of the complex concepts analyzed in this study, the null results herein likewise merit the entertainment of alternative plausible hypotheses of what could be motivating voter decision calculus in Mexico.

Perhaps the most logical of these alternative hypotheses would be that people in Mexico are simply more inclined to vote sincerely rather than strategically given the alteration of the political arena and, connectedly, those votes are more likely to count. More clearly, once the PRI was forced to hold transparent elections and recognize the electoral victories of opposition parties, people's votes for those parties that may have previously been masked by a corrupt voting scheme were allowed to stand and thus translated into opposition electoral success. If this theory were to hold, it would imply that any role individual levels of risk propensity played in vote choice was secondary to the impact of the legacies of electoral fraud perpetuated by the PRI regime during its reign.

This hypothesis is problematic, however, when it is evaluated against the actual electoral record as previous studies have argued the electoral process in Mexico under the PRI regime to have been majoritarily transparent.⁵⁷ In this case, though, it is imperative to note that electoral transparency cannot be equivocated with fairness as numerous studies have pointed out that while the PRI only tended to resort to outright electoral fraud in exceptionally rare and extreme cases, the party's complete throttling of the political arena gave it de facto control of the

⁵⁷ Magaloni (2006)

government.⁵⁸ That is, while PRI candidates tended to legitimately win elections in Mexico during the period of the party's hegemonic control, the elections themselves were premised upon illegitimate institutions.

Nevertheless, if elections were carried out in a transparent manner in a majority of cases, and people overwhelmingly elected PRI candidates time and time again, a hypothesis that proposes the evaporation of pervasive electoral fraud as a determining factor of vote choice runs afoul of Mexico's historical narrative. This hypothesis could perhaps be salvaged, though, if it were modified to incorporate the effect of the corporatist system erected under the PRI that served to tip the balance of power within Mexico to its electoral favor. While it is true enough to claim that elections under the PRI tended to be transparent, with a few notable exceptions, it is, as aforementioned, quite another to argue that they were electorally fair.

As the PRI exercised near total control over the socio-political arena and presided over an economy that boomed for several decades, it was able to effectively exclude opposition parties from relevance in the political arena. A more convincing hypothesis, then, would be that as the economy slowed and evidence of governmental corruption became more prevalent, opposition parties were able to gain more power vis-à-vis the PRI and force their way into the political arena. Once there, the general population responded to the failings of the PRI by voting them out of office and thus institutionalizing multi-party democracy in Mexico.

While this modified theory is deductively plausible, it too encounters issues with the historical past. Firstly, while the PRD was not an effective political party until the mid-1980s, the PAN had been a relevant opposition party since 1939.⁵⁹ Moreover, while the revision of electoral

⁵⁸ See Langston & Morgenstern (2009); Ames (1970). For a more general discussion of elections under terms of authoritarianism see also Gandhi & Lust-Okar (2009).

⁵⁹ Alexander (1973, 49-53)

laws following the fabulously corrupt 1988 presidential election in Mexico cemented the opportunity for opposition parties to compete with the PRI on a more level playing ground, dominant party politics persisted at the subnational level.

Despite the destabilization of the PRI's authoritarian control over the political arena, a vast majority of the states of Mexico still have one party that is clearly dominant within their borders. The alteration of electoral laws seems to have allowed each state to choose their own dominant party instead of being systemically constrained to the PRI in all cases, then, rather than to have substantively increased the pluralization of the political arena. Thus, any study of national level voting alone would thereby mask this continuation of dominant party politics as usual at the subnational level.

Here again, then, this alternative hypothesis requires that we return to the need for the incorporation of subnational political dynamics in order to understand voting behavior at the national level in Mexico. Even if individual levels of risk propensity are no longer a significant predictor of voting behavior in Mexico, clearly something at the subnational level is. Future studies should attempt to account for this ambiguity in the data by continuing to ruminate on what some of the determinant causes of vote choice beside risk propensity in Mexico may be. One such theoretically plausible motivation besides that of risk propensity might be that of perceived issue space as Zechmeister (2008) has proposed and was discussed earlier in this paper.

While it is likely that risk propensity would factor into this mechanism, it is not impossible to imagine a situation in which the two concepts could be sufficiently distinct in a voting behavior context. In addition to collecting data that attempts to waylay the several issues raised throughout this study, then, future research would also benefit from continuing to explore

alternative hypotheses to the risk propensity mechanism and beginning to disentangle the effects of some of the deeply interwoven complex concepts that relate to voting behavior such as perceived issue space and risk propensity.

CHAPTER SIX

THOUGHTS AND CONCLUSIONS

As the elections of 2012 and this study have shown, the democratization process in Mexico has meant more than just deposing the PRI from the presidency. Instead, the movement has done more to qualitatively change the style of government rather than simply those in control of it. Whereas the PRI previously wielded near total control over the politico-economic arena, the Mexican government has transitioned into an era of plurality. While the voters of Mexico may have elected a PRI president in 2012, they almost certainly did not re-elect the old PRI style of government. Even if there were party members within the PRI who wanted to return it to its previous status as a hegemonic power in Mexico, the plurality of party representation in the Mexican Congress of the Union would serve to check the party's control of government.⁶⁰

The 2012 presidential election, then, did not indicate a reversion point and thusly a return to authoritarian style democracy in Mexico. Rather, the process of democratization has continued to progress and, if anything, the election of President Nieto indicates the growing strength of the movement in Mexico. Through a careful multi-stage statistical analysis of vote choice and the affect of risk-aversion, retrospective economic assessments, education, age, geography, and subnational political dynamics on individual decision calculus as measured by the 2010 Latinobarometer, this study illustrated that pluralized democracy has truly become institutionalized in Mexico.

⁶⁰ Camín & Castañeda (2012)

This study's corollary ambition, to stress the importance of not overstating this success by recognizing the possible transmutation of risk-averse voting patterns to the subnational level, received less support. This study's multi-stage analysis lent only partial support to the hypothesis that people in Mexico may still vote for the 'devil' they know, but that 'devil' is now localized to state level politics rather than universally recognized as the PRI. While it is clear that individual levels of risk-aversion are not necessarily a good measure of predicting whether or not people will vote for the PRI any longer as *Table X* below illustrates, it is unclear in the data whether or not subnational political dynamics may now condition which party is seen as the 'safe bet' at the national level.

- *TABLE X:*

Comparison of Risk-Averse & Risk-Acceptant Vote Choices, 1997 & 2010 Data:

Party	1997 Data		2010 Data	
	Risk-Averse	Risk-Acceptant	Risk-Averse	Risk-Acceptant
PRD	21.4%	78.6%	78.05%	21.95%
PRI	62.3%	37.8%	73.04%	26.96%
PAN	28.5%	71.5%	68.42%	31.58%
Total	38.9%	61.1%	72.06%	27.94%

These conclusions should be taken with a word of caution though and, as discussed throughout this paper, the study as a whole should be treated as exploratory in nature. The aim of this project was to instigate an academic conversation as to what mechanisms may be acting upon voter decision calculus in Mexico now that the political arena has become truly pluralized at both the federal and local levels.

Future studies within this research program should seek to refine some of the measurement and data collection issues and alternative hypotheses discussed throughout this paper. Some of the major areas for improvement would be diminishing the conceptual vagary in how individual levels of risk-aversion and interpersonal trust relate to vote choice, crafting and

administering surveys that evaluate vote choice that yield results that more closely track to actual election results, disentangling individual level risk propensity from perceived issue space, and establishing a methodological consensus as to the best and most efficient mode of quantitative data analysis of vote choice in multi-party political environments.

As a final note, it warrants mentioning that despite the PRI's numerous abuses of its socio-political control over Mexico throughout the 20th Century and guilt of frequent corruption in the past, its hegemonic throttling of government also provided the means for Mexico to move toward a more pluralized democracy. Before the PRI, *caudillo*, or strongman, politics were pervasive and governmental control tended to be held by force rather than popular support.⁶¹ While its leadership was clearly repressive and prone to corruption, the PRI did hold regular elections and generally follow the rule of law at least in a nominal sense. Through its corporatist framework, the PRI led Mexico away from *caudillismo* politics and toward authentic democratization.

The conclusions to be drawn from Mexico's path to democracy are by no means *sui generis*. Rather, the implications of this study are that any society of peoples that has a prolonged exposure to strongman politics or single-party hegemony would necessarily track similarly to the path taken by Mexico in terms of the pluralization of their political system. Given the recent destabilization of the socio-political arenas in portions of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East as well as prolonged violence in Sub-Saharan Africa, the lessons provided by Mexico's past are of vital importance and urge understanding. Democratization is a languid behemoth that

⁶¹ Literally, *caudillismo* means strongmen on horses. The term refers to the strongman politics of the day whereby government was held through brute force and military might rather than popular support or righteousness. For more on *caudillismo* see: Meyer, Sherman, & Deeds (2003, 284-293, 308-317, 355-391, 413-459); Chapman (1932); Rodriguez (1983).

cannot be imposed from above or without. Rather, its success requires collective action, popular support, and lowered levels of perceived risk.

Until Mexico was able to transition into a climate where its perceived risks for destabilizing the PRI's authority were lowered by a movement that took part at the grassroots level by a society of people no longer willing to accept *mal gobierno*, political ideals of pluralized democracy floundered in a state of near intractability. The leitmotif of this trend hints that a critical component of the process must be political awareness and that the power of any authentic democracy rests in the hands of its own people. This claim is by no means novel, but the methods by which this study has argued them to ring true are.⁶²

In this age of globalization and democratic transitions, people would do well to pay heed to history. If the case of Mexico is any indication, democracy is not some objective ideal that can be imposed from without. Further, the methods by which it is authentically achieved are not through military might and constitutional prose, but rather through education, public awareness, and grassroots change. Simply put, there is no silver bullet that leads to pluralized democracy overnight.

Rather than a pill to be prescribed, democratization is a slow process by which a society must gradually reduce the perceived risks of change and participate peacefully in altering its government for itself. Without such action, sustainable systems of inclusive democracy become improbable and societies may be condemned to forever continue to bear the deadening weight of ruling minorities rather than experience the collective will of popular majorities.

⁶² For the importance of education see Almond & Verba (1963, 501-505); Morgenstern & Zechmeister (2001, 115); Booth & Seligson (1984, 115-119); Zechmeister (2008, 654-657).

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