

The Mexico 2006 Panel Study
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Abstract

How certain issues become the subjects of political contestation is a crucial question for democratic governance. Building on the success of a major survey research project conducted during Mexico's 2000 presidential race, we will analyze the dynamics of "issue emergence" in Mexico's general election of 2006. We will use these findings to address broader arguments about the nature of representation and accountability in modern democratic systems, with a special focus on emerging democracies.

1. Introduction

We seek funding for a major research project during Mexico's 2006 election campaigns, building on a successful, smaller scale study in 2000. Our project will examine democratic consolidation in Mexico through the lens of electoral politics. Who sets the agenda in Mexican elections? To what extent does this agenda respond to, engage, or ignore ordinary citizens? And what do the dynamics of "issue emergence" mean for democratic representation?

These questions go to the heart of Mexico's new political system. Modern democracy consists of a chain of delegations from citizens to leaders, through which popular preferences are theoretically translated into public policy. Although this process of translation involves much more than elections alone, elections do constitute a key mechanism of democratic accountability and representation (Dahl 1956, Ferejohn 1999, Przeworski et al. 1999). If "the people" cannot make themselves heard in the electoral arena, either directly or indirectly, they are unlikely to exercise much control over public policy.

How electoral campaigns come to focus on a particular set of issues – out of an almost infinite possible set – thus matters crucially for the operation of democracy. The role of elections may be especially important in many new democracies, where democratic norms and institutions outside of the electoral sphere are often less developed. In such a context, campaigns probably constitute citizens' best chance to influence political debate.

The type of issues that receive emphasis in electoral contests also matters for the nature of democratic governance. Campaigns dominated by specific policy debates cast leaders in the role of "delegates", giving them clearer mandates on at least some topics (see Berelson et al. 1954, Campbell et al. 1964). By contrast, if voters are too ignorant to know where parties and candidates stand on particular issues, or to punish elected leaders for changing their stances once in office, then the scope of leaders' discretion will be correspondingly broader (see Stokes 2001, Kaufman and Zuckermann 1998; but see Arnold 1993). At best, campaigns would give leaders broad mandates on government performance, allowing them to act as "trustees" for the population. Electoral contests that focused primarily on candidate image and personality presumably promise even less in the way of effective representation.

Our project will examine the types of issues that emerge as salient over the course of Mexico's 2006 campaign. We will document how the mass public, candidates, political parties, and the media interact to shape the subjects of electoral contestation – taking into account the possibility that political elites may anticipate the preferences of ordinary citizens and of other elites. In particular, we will address the extent to which campaigns remain a "top-down" process in Mexico's new democracy. Ultimately, we hope to understand why electoral campaigns highlight or downplay certain issues, and to assess the implications of these dynamics for

democratic governance. Combined with past research on Mexico's 2000 presidential campaign, data from this project will help to shed light on key issues in democratic consolidation.

The next section of this proposal summarizes recent research on Mexican politics, describing how our proposed project builds upon and extends that research. The third section discusses findings related to issue emergence in developed democracies, and how these findings might or might not apply to emerging democracies (including Mexico). The fourth describes the specific research we intend to conduct. The remaining sections provide detail on costs, project participants, results from past NSF-supported research, and human subject considerations. The final section discusses the effects of reducing the project from its previous scope to its current one.

2. What we know (and don't know) about Mexico's new democracy

The most basic goal of our project is to better understand the nature of Mexico's new democratic system, particularly in the electoral realm. We thus aim to build upon research on Mexican politics, including our own findings over the last decade. This research suggests three broad conclusions.

First, as the Mexico 2000 Panel Study demonstrated, the average voter in Mexico is more susceptible to short-term campaign influences than are most citizens in established democracies (Domínguez and Lawson 2003, McCann and Lawson 2003, Lawson and McCann 2005, Moreno 2003a, Buendía 2004). In particular, the combination of weak partisan attachments with pervasive penetration of and heavy reliance upon mass media leaves a larger number of citizens available for persuasion during a given campaign. We expect the 2006 election to offer further evidence for these claims, underscoring the potential magnitude of campaign effects in new democracies.

Second, and related, Mexico's principal intermediary organizations remain in transition. Over the last two decades, partisan dealignment from the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party has exceeded reattachment to its main rivals, the center-right National Action Party and the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution (Klesner 1993, Domínguez and McCann 1996, Domínguez and Poiré 1999, Klesner 2001, Domínguez and Lawson 2003, Moreno 2003a, Buendía 2004). Mexico's three main parties are still struggling to broaden their constituencies and to construct meaningful links with voters (Crespo 2004). Other organizations that might provide citizens with credible cues about politics are also new or, in the case of most unions, seriously weakened (Middlebrook 2004, Camp 2003). For instance, the mass media have become dramatically more independent, but they remain dominated by two family-owned television networks often suspected of collusive relationships with politicians (Hughes and Lawson 2004, Lawson 2002, Hallin 2000, Trejo 1988). Our study of the 2006 campaign should shed light on the elite-mass linkages that presumably help to orient average voters.

Third, despite the election of Vicente Fox in 2000, Mexico's process of democratization remains far from complete (Grayson 2001, Camp 2003). Ordinary citizens are increasingly detached from politics, and elected legislators remain relatively ignorant of or unresponsive to public opinion (Lawson 2004, Grayson 2003, Camp 2003, Gutmann 2002, McCann and Lawson 2003). Although no political system meets the utopian standards of democratic theory, Mexico's new system hardly involves seeking officials scrambling to respond to the demands of a reasonably engaged citizenry. In this sense, Mexico more closely resembles other emerging democracies in Eastern Europe and Latin America than it does the United States, Canada, and most countries in Western Europe.

Indeed, the challenges confronting Mexican democracy may be even more serious. At least one of the likely presidential candidates remains uncommitted to democratic practices, and a rollback of political reforms is still possible (Lawson 2004, Grayson 2003). In this context, the 2006 race is likely to be as crucial for Mexican democracy as was the election of 2000.

Research to date thus suggests two important avenues for future research. The first of these concerns political transition in Mexico (and, by extension, in other new democracies). How have voters and politicians adapted to a more competitive political context? Are partisan identifications becoming solidified at the mass level, and if so along which lines of cleavage? Is electoral competition creating a democratic “citizenry”? And what can the answers to these questions tell us about democratic consolidation? By collecting detailed information on Mexican public opinion and electoral behavior, as well as by comparing that information with comparable survey data from 2000, we will be well-positioned to answer these questions.

The second set of questions focuses more explicitly on the operation of electoral democracy. Who sets the campaign agenda: parties and candidates, mass media, or the public at large? Are political elites actually responding to citizens’ preferences, and if so, in what sense? And what do the answers to these questions tell us about the nature of representation and accountability in new democracies?

3. What we know (and don’t know) about issue emergence

Although it is not always articulated explicitly, one basic framework underlies most research on issue emergence to date. According to this framework, particular parties and politicians enjoy certain perceived areas of competence that are unlikely to change substantially over the course of a given election campaign (Petrocik 1996). Likewise, politicians and voters are assumed to have fairly fixed views on prominent issues, or at least to know in which direction they would like policy to move (Key 1966, Feldman 1988, Page and Shapiro 1992, Norris 1998, Norris et al. 1999, Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989).¹ In this context, politicians selectively choose to emphasize issues that will present them in the best light (Petrocik 1996, McGinnis 1969, Johnston et al. 1992, Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994, Jacobs and Shapiro 2000, West 2001, Brug and van der Eijk forthcoming, Sellers 1998). In other words, they emphasize themes on which they are viewed as more competent than their opponents, or on which they hold more electorally advantageous positions (see Simon 2002).

Presumably, voters process the resulting campaign messages in making their electoral choices (Campbell et al. 1964, Key 1966, Patterson and McClure 1976, Patterson and McClure 1980, Budge and Farlie 1983, Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989, Johnston et al. 1992, Alvarez 1997, Sellers 1998, Alvarez et al. 2000). In other words, certain issues get more attention than others, and these issues then influence voters’ choices (Nelson 2004). Opinion change over the course of a campaign thus occurs primarily through priming and framing (McCombs and Shaw 1972, Erbring et al. 1980, McGuire 1986, Iyengar and Kinder 1987, Zaller 1992, Jacobsen and Kernell 1981, Jacobsen 1991, Iyengar 1991, Popkin 1994, Johnston et al. 1992, Holbrook 1994, Semetko and Schoenbach 1994, Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994, Kleinnijenhuis and Rietberg 1995, Petrocik 1996, Norris and Gavin 1997, Dalton et al. 1998a, Dalton et al. 1998b, Seller

¹Of course, citizens may be ambivalent or uncertain about many issues, not to mention about where politicians stand on those issues (Alvarez and Brehm 2002, Bartels 1988, MacKuen et al. 1992, Feldman and Zaller 1992, Alvarez 1997, Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989), and levels of knowledge or certainty within the mass public may vary (see Granato and Krause 2000, Krause and Granato 1998). Likewise, politicians may strategically alter their policy positions – or at least how they represent these positions to voters (Downs 1997 [1957], Fenno 1978).

1998; on “second level” priming and framing, see McCombs et al 1997 and Weaver et al. 1994). Although scholars have acknowledged certain caveats to this model of issue emergence in the USA, these deviations are generally seen as modest and not requiring reconceptualization (see Finkel 1993, Ansolabehere et al. 1993, Holbrook 1996, Flanigan and Zingale 2002, Hahn 2003).

Issues, then, become salient in the course of electoral campaigns as a result of strategic interactions between election-seeking politicians. Voters are cast in a reactive role, with politicians setting the agenda. Politicians, however, are limited in the issues that they select by the relative prominence of those issues at the mass level: they must choose topics that are salient enough to generate electoral support. Presumably, they must also avoid stances that are wildly out of step with the electorate on salient positional issues (Campbell et al. 1964: 284-5). Popular preferences thus make themselves felt in the articulation of campaign messages.

This view of issue emergence is supported by several prominent studies in established democracies. In Canada’s 1988 election, for instance, both Conservatives and Liberals focused their energies on the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement; other salient issues were not electorally attractive for either major party (Johnston et al. 1992). Likewise, in the USA, Democratic candidates in the United States tend to emphasize social issues, on which they are viewed as closer to the electorate and more credible than their opponents; Republicans, by contrast, tend to emphasize issues like crime, defense, or tax relief (see Petrocik 1996). Politicians thus strategically select the issues that will best advantage them from a range of possible themes, and their choices shape voters’ preferences.

However compelling this paradigm may be in some established democracies, its applicability to emerging democracies like Mexico is unclear. One caveat concerns voters themselves. Recent research suggests that voters’ preferences and dispositions are less solid in emerging democracies (McCann and Lawson 2003, Colton 2000, Colton and McFaul 2003, Brader and Tucker 2001). For instance, voters’ inexperience with different parties may prevent “issue ownership”. Meanwhile, the absence of credible alternative sources may leave them without much-needed electoral cues. In such cases, politicians would have greater flexibility in selecting the themes on which they campaigned and the policy stances that they adopted (Stokes 2001). Consequently, a purely elite-driven model might better capture the reality of issue emergence than the sorts of popular constraints identified in established democratic systems.

Another caveat concerns the role of the mass media. In some research on issue emergence in established democracies, news outlets are treated as neutral vessels through which politicians’ messages are transmitted to voters. Even in established democracies, however, recent research has highlighted the fact that mass media do not act as simple conduits of information; their routines and interests shape the presentation of news, which in turn influences the public agenda in a number of ways (see, *inter alia*, Zaller forthcoming, Weaver et al. 2004, Hamilton 2003, Scammell and Semetko 2000, Norris 1999, Semetko 1996, Page and Shapiro 1992: 355-99, McCombs et al. 1997, Graber et al. 1998, Herman and Chomsky 1988). Moreover, research on new democracies has amply demonstrated that media outlets are far from balanced purveyors of political information (Skidmore 1993, Mickiewicz and Richter 1996, Wyman et al. 1996, Lawson 2002). Where a small number of outlets command high levels of audience attention, they may exercise a potent influence over issue emergence. Mass media may thus be particularly important players in the vetting and generation of campaign issues in new democracies, either as allies of one set of politicians or as independent actors.

Finally, issue emergence may be influenced by the ways political parties interact with voters (see Whiteley and Seyd 1994, Clarke et al. 1995, Archer and Whitehorn 2001, Miller and

Schofield 2004). Mobilization based on clientelism, for instance, creates a different dynamic than other forms of party-voter linkages (see Stokes 1995, Wantchekon 2003). In Mexico, the nature and extent of partisan mobilization varies across parties and regions (Bruhn 1997, Greene 2002a, Greene 2002b), leading to different patterns of issue emergence.

4. Project design

Our project will examine several types of “issues” during the 2006 campaign: positional issues, valence issues, assessments of incumbent performance, party reputations, and candidate traits.² Among valence and assessment issues, we will concentrate on economic growth, job creation, inflation, public safety, corruption, and perceptions of President Fox. Among positional issues, we expect to focus on topics like the death penalty, energy sector privatization, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the extension of the value-added tax to food and medicine. For each of the positional issues on which we focus, we will measure the positions of the main candidates and parties in the eyes of citizens, as well as the certainty respondents feel about their judgments (see Alvarez 1997, Alvarez and Brehm 2002).

Impressions of the political parties will cover their reputations for corruption, authoritarianism, and economic management. As with positional issues, we will measure the certainty of citizens’ assessments (Alvarez and Glasgow 2000). In terms of candidate traits, we will focus on qualities like honesty, competence, and empathy, which theoretically offer clues about leaders’ behavior in the future (Kinder 1986, Miller et al. 1986, Page 1978, Fearon 1999).

For each of these “issues” or assessments, we will gauge the emphasis placed on them by political elites, mass media, and ordinary citizens. This information will allow us to discern whether candidates or parties “own” certain issues or attributes, and how they attempt to exploit that ownership (see Petrocik 1996, Nelson 2004). By analyzing different periods in the campaign, we will be able to measure how different issues emerge and then fade or increase in salience among political elites, the mass media, and ordinary voters. We will also be able to identify which constituencies lead or follow others over the course of the campaign. Likewise, by comparing the national congressional race (coordinated centrally by the main parties) to the presidential race, we will be able to assess whether party-oriented campaigns focus on different issues than candidate oriented campaigns (see, *inter alia*, Blumer and Semetko 1987). In other words, we will be able to analyze how and why certain issues emerge as the focus of political contestation. Does issue emergence follow the same logic identified in established democracies? If not, how might patterns of agenda-setting – and their effects on voters – be different in emerging democracies? And what does all of this mean for representation and accountability?

Beyond the specific question of issue emergence, our project will also allow us to address other key issues in democratic transition. To this end, we will attempt to measure some of the same indicators of mass attitudes and engagement that were covered in the Mexico 2000 Panel Study. By comparing across the two datasets, we will be able to assess the extent to which democracy is actually being consolidated at the mass level in Mexico. Are democratic norms and styles of participation becoming more entrenched? Have voters grown more sophisticated in

²By positional issues, we refer to policy debates in which there is more than one side – e.g., whether or not to raise taxes. “Easy” positional issues include those that draw heavily on personal experience or deal with core moral values; examples include race, abortion, and the death penalty; “hard” positional issues refer to more complex policy topics, such as privatization, taxation, trade, and social welfare (Carmines and Stimson 1980). By valence issues, we mean those subjects about which there is no disagreement; more or less of a particular policy output is simply better (Stokes 1963, Stokes 1992); examples include economic growth and corruption.

their assessments of parties and candidates? What sorts of mass-elite ties are being formed? Are ordinary citizens being brought into the political process? If so, in what way are they being incorporated? If not, what are the main barriers to civic engagement?

The major components of our project are as follows:

A. Survey research designed to assess mass attitudes toward a range of issues, as well as the extent and causes of attitude change over the course of the campaign. Because we hope to understand the extent to which the mass public leads or is led by other actors, we intend to collect time-series data – that is, multiple snapshots of public opinion over time. In addition, our desire to make causal arguments about how mass attitudes might evolve argues for panel data (Finkel 1995).³ With this in mind, we plan to conduct a three-wave panel survey. We believe that a three-wave panel represents the best balance of our need to distinguish between different periods in the campaign (on the one hand) and our desire to minimize costs and biases from repeated interviewing (on the other).⁴

All three waves will be national in scope. We feel strongly that national-level data will make our study more comparable to data from the Mexico 2000 Panel Study and similar studies in other countries (e.g., Russia, the USA, and the United Kingdom). Our pollster, *Reforma* newspaper, has also expressed a preference for national-level polls.

In order to capture the state of mass opinion before campaigning begins, we plan to conduct our first wave in early October 2005, nine months before the election and just before candidates are formally selected.⁵ The second wave will be held two months into the official campaign season, in February or March 2006. The third wave conducted after the election in July 2006.

We plan to interview approximately 2,400 respondents in the first wave, attempting to re-contact each of these respondents in each wave. Based on past experience, we anticipate a re-contact rate of approximately 70-75%.⁶ Thus, we expect approximately 1,200-1,400 of our original interviewees to participate in all three panel waves.

We hope to “fill out” each wave of the panel with fresh respondents from the same neighborhoods as the panel respondents – approximately 300 per wave – whom we will not attempt to re-contact. This process will generate a series of separate cross-sectional surveys contemporaneous with the panel waves, allowing us to assess the generalizability of trends we observe in the panel. All told, these three waves will comprise approximately 6,600 interviews.

³The main alternative to a panel would be a rolling cross-section (see Johnston and Brady 2002, Romer et al. 2002). Such a design would be attractive in theory, but a large proportion of Mexican households lack telephones, and telephone-based polling is necessary for the rolling cross-sectional design to be cost-effective. We also believe that there is no substitute for a panel in terms of drawing causal inferences at the individual level (see Wooldridge 2002).

⁴In the Mexico 2000 Panel Study, we found little evidence of bias from attrition or contamination in respondents interviewed three or fewer times (Domínguez and Lawson 2003: 345-50). We found some evidence of contamination bias among those who were interviewed four times, and we suspect that five interviews could significantly affect response patterns among less well-informed respondents.

⁵The first wave of the Mexico 2000 Panel Study took place only six months before the election, missing some of the overall swing in vote preferences. Given that polling will begin earlier in the electoral cycle in 2006, we plan to pilot out survey in August 2005.

⁶In the first wave, all respondents will be interviewed in person in their homes; as described below, some respondents in subsequent waves will be interviewed by telephone. Interviewing will tentatively be based on clusters of respondents at sites selected at random from a list of polling stations in Mexico used by the Federal Electoral Institute.

Should NSF be able to provide an additional \$20,000 in funding and *Reforma* newspaper be willing to share costs, we will add a truncated additional wave of perhaps 900 respondents designed to capture the effects of candidate debates in May. This interview will be focused on respondents who have telephones, but it will also include a representative sub-sample of those without land lines. (See table below.)

	Wave 1 (October)	Wave 2 (February)	Wave 3 (July)	Total (3 waves)	Extra wave (May)
Fresh respondents	2,400	300	300	3,000	300
<i>Attempted re-contacts</i>	--	2,400	2,400	4,800	900
<i>Likely yield</i>	--	~75%	~75%	~75%	~75%
Re-interviews	--	1,800	1,800	3,600	~700
Total interviews	2,400	2,100	2,100	6,600	1,000

Because we hope to investigate issue emergence in different political contexts, we will divide our initial group of 2,400 into three pieces: (1) a nationally representative sample of 1,600, (2) an over-sample of 500 people randomly selected from within the Federal District, and (3) an over-sample of rural areas of 300. Combining those interviewees from the Federal District who were selected as part of the national sample with the over-sample, we will have approximately 650-700 people from the Federal District; our total sampled population from rural areas will be approximately the same size. Even given substantial panel attrition, we will thus have a decent-sized (350-400) sub-sample of respondents from rural areas and from the Federal District over multiple panel waves. Thus, we will be able to compare the dynamics of the nation-wide races for president and Congress with the Mexico City mayoral contest and with the patterns of representation in rural areas.

All polling for the project will be conducted by interviewers from the *Reforma* newspaper group, which has survey research operations in Monterrey, Guadalajara, Mexico City, and elsewhere in the country. Since its founding in 1993, *Reforma* has been regarded as Mexico's leading independent newspaper (Lawson 2003), and its polling organization is considered one of the most professional in Mexico. *Reforma's* team regularly collaborates with foreign newspapers doing polling in Mexico (e.g., the *Los Angeles Times*) and with various academic survey research projects (such as the Mexico component of the World Values Survey and the Mexico 2000 Panel Study). The head of this team, Alejandro Moreno, served as Regional Director for Mexico of the World Association for Public Opinion Research. As in the Mexico 2000 Panel Study, *Reforma* will retain the right to publish the results of the surveys during the campaign in exchange for providing polling services at a substantially reduced rate.

All members of the project core group will contribute to the selection of survey items. Alejandro Moreno and Chappell Lawson will coordinate survey administration; Moreno and his staff will oversee the actual polling.

- B. Collection of local-level data.** We believe that combining real-world and perceptual data represents a significant improvement over survey research projects in which responses are not linked to other information (see van de Eijk 2002: 37-39, Marsh 2002, Johnston et al. 2002, Goldstein and Freedman 2000). To this end, we will collect basic demographic information on the county (*municipio*) or borough (*delegación*) in which each respondent resides: urbanization, population density, age/sex composition of the population, education, poverty and marginalization, number of beneficiaries of federal welfare programs, emigration

and remittances, unemployment, local economic conditions, pollution warnings, crime, number of Catholic and evangelical clergy, party in charge of the local government, number of party activists per capita, and union membership. Where possible, we will also collect market research data on income, newspaper circulation levels, internet penetration, and similar information. Presumably, these sorts of factors will influence which issues citizens feel are important and how they respond to campaign messages. Finally, we will collect information on past registration levels, turnout rates, and the partisan composition of the vote in the specific polling place (*casilla*) at which the resident is registered. We will also record the physical distance from the respondent's dwelling to her *casilla*.

In Mexico, it is possible to validate whether individual citizens voted.⁷ After the election, therefore, we will check with the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) registry to determine which of our respondents actually turned out on election day.⁸ All of this information will give us a better picture of the context in which respondents operate, and of how that context might affect their attitudes. One project participant will be in charge of collecting local data and validating turnout.

C. Interviews with political and media elites, including presidential candidates, party leaders, senior campaign staffers, pollsters, broadcasters, and television anchors. These 30-40 interviews will focus on how party platforms and position statements were elaborated; why certain issues were selected for emphasis above others; how closely individual candidates adhere to overall party messages and what disciplining mechanisms exist; the main channels of communication between national leadership and activists or candidates; the extent to which parties and candidates attempted to anticipate voters' preferences or media biases; day-to-day organization of campaigns and news coverage; and general perceptions of the political system. A number of senior project personnel will be involved in conducting these interviews in the course of their normal research.

D. Content analysis of candidate and party discourse, in order to assess what issues candidates and parties emphasized and how they framed the contest. Materials to be analyzed will include stump speeches and press releases, candidate presentations during televised debates, and political advertisements by both candidates and parties (as inventoried by the Federal Electoral Institute). We aim to code approximately 40 speeches for each of the three main presidential candidates, divided over four time periods (i.e., two months before the first survey, between the first wave and the second wave, between the second wave and the third wave, and between the third wave and the fourth wave). Our preferred source for these materials will be the candidates' websites; we will supplement this sample as necessary by contacting campaign staffs directly. We expect that there will be at least one televised presidential debate over the course of the campaign, as well as dozens of political advertisements by national party organizations and presidential candidates.

Coding of the debates will follow the scheme developed by Lawson (2003b), supplemented with additional categories for issue references and updated to take into account coding schemes used by other scholars (e.g., Johnston et al. 1992, Lanoue 1992, Pfau and Kang 1991). Coding of political advertisements will draw on schemes developed by other scholars (see Kaid and Johnston 2001, Kaid 1999, Moreno 2003b, Johnston et al. 1992). In

⁷Because voter lists are centralized at the national level in Mexico, this process is much less complicated and costly than it would be in the United States.

⁸Senior staff at the IFE have offered to cooperate with us on this and other aspects of our project.

all cases, however, they will focus on which issues and attributes receive most emphasis. Coding schemes will be piloted on materials not included in the sample, including broadcasts from earlier campaigns in the case of debates and political advertisements. Sufficient overlap between material coded by different individuals will be built into the design to allow for adequate inter-coder reliability tests.

Lawson will oversee content analysis of candidate discourse and party advertisements.

E. Media content analysis, designed to capture the types of issues that receive attention and the ways in which electoral contests are framed by the media. Given the overwhelming dominance of broadcast television as a source of political information in Mexico (see Lawson and McCann 2005), we will focus primarily on that medium. Coding will be based on the widely-watched nightly news programs on each of the two main national networks (Televisa and Televisión Azteca). Together, these two networks command over 90% market share in both entertainment and news, and ratings for their main nightly news broadcasts dwarf those of all other news-related programming.

Three or four “random constructed weeks” worth of broadcasting per show will be analyzed for each of four periods: the two months preceding the first panel wave, the period between panel waves one and two, the period between panel waves two and three, and the period between panel waves three and four (see Riffe et al. 1996, Riffe et al. 1998). Altogether, we anticipate coding approximately 150 broadcasts, or close to one quarter of the total in each period.

Although television is the dominant means of political communication in Mexico, a small percentage of Mexico’s population also derives some portion of their information from newspapers. Because newspapers tend to be read by potential opinion elites, however, their impact on the framing of electoral contests could be greater than circulation levels might suggest. We thus plan to supplement our content analysis of television with content analysis of the front page of *Reforma* newspaper, which is coordinated with sister dailies in Guadalajara and Monterrey. The dates selected for coding newspapers will be the day after those selected for nightly news broadcasts, yielding enough material for an adequate sample (see Lacy et al. 1995). As discussed below, this content analysis will tie in with our experiment on newspaper influence.

Content analysis of television news programming will focus on time devoted to different issues, framing of issue coverage, number and tone of verbal references to the main parties and candidates, the visual tone of coverage toward the main candidates, and related indicators (see Lawson and McCann 2005). Content analysis of newspapers will focus on analogous measures, including photographs. For both television shows and newspapers, coding schemes will first be piloted on materials not included in the sample. Sufficient overlap between material coded by different individuals will be built into the design to allow for adequate inter-coder reliability tests.

Lawson will oversee analysis of media content (see Lawson 2003a, Lawson and McCann 2005).

F. Products. We anticipate four main products of our project: (i) the data we accumulate; (ii) a series of scholarly presentations; (iii) an edited volume and related articles on the 2006 campaign; and (iv) more theoretically oriented publications on issue emergence, democratic representation, and democratic consolidation.

We will make data collected from this project publicly available within eighteen months of the election – ideally more rapidly.⁹ Data to be made available include all responses from the panel survey; information on the local context associated with each panel respondent; all data from the content analysis; and summaries of in-depth interviews (with identifiers removed). These materials will be posted on a project website until they can be made accessible through one of the main archives (e.g., ICPSR). We view these materials as a public good for scholars studying a range of topics.

Although our project is focused on issue emergence, we anticipate that the data we generate will serve as an important resource for other scholarly investigations. Perhaps most modestly, data from the project will make an important contribution to the increasingly robust literature on Mexican public opinion and voting behavior. Our surveys will necessarily include basic data on demographics, political interest and engagement, media exposure, presidential approval, partisan affiliation, demographic information, and voting intention. Because many of these items were also included in the Mexico 2000 Panel Study, researchers will be able to exploit time-series data in their analyses. Our data will be useful for a range of researchers investigating questions as diverse as the nature of partisan cleavages and the impact of gender on political behavior in Mexico.

Data from the project will also be of use to scholars interested in comparative voting behavior. Over the course of the four panel waves, we expect to include virtually all of the core items in the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems for Mexico. In fact, we should be able to repeat several of these items across different waves, thus allowing researchers to test the reliability of certain questions and the mutability of responses. (We will have most room in the second and third waves, as the first wave will include a large number of demographic questions and the final wave will likely include items on post-electoral conflict.) The inclusion of the CSES battery constitutes a nice side benefit for researchers interested in broader comparative work on elections.

Finally, information generated in this project should be of special interest to experts on political communication, media influence, and campaign strategy. By providing data from an emerging democracy, the content analysis alone should represent a contribution to a growing body of literature on comparative communication strategies, media biases in campaign coverage, and “second-level framing” (Weaver et al. 2004, Graber et al. 1998, McCombs et al. 1997, Semetko 1996, Blumer and Semetko 1987). When combined with the panel survey, it should allow researchers to weigh in convincingly on debates about media effects and campaign influence (see, *inter alia*, McGuire 1989, Zaller 1996, Holbrook 1996, Bartels 1996, Norris et al. 1999, Iyengar and Simon 2000) – just as the Mexico 2000 Panel Study did (Domínguez and Lawson 2003, Lawson and McCann 2005). Some of the methodological advances discussed below should afford researchers even greater leverage on these questions.

We plan to present findings from our project at traditional academic venues, such as the American Political Science Association (APSA), the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), and possibly conferences in related disciplines (e.g., communication, political sociology, or political psychology). We will also hold one conference in Mexico (probably

⁹Data from the Mexico 2000 Panel Study were made available to the public in that same time period.

before the election) and two conferences in the United States (probably just before and just after the election) in which project participants can summarize their research to date.¹⁰

We expect these conferences to lead to an edited volume, in which project personnel will address topics closest to their area of expertise with data from the project.¹¹ We also expect that individual participants will publish separate articles in peer-reviewed journals on their primary areas of research: democratization in Mexico, partisan cleavages, media effects, etc. Finally, a subset of participants plan to write a separate book or series of scholarly articles on issue emergence and popular representation.¹² We expect these publications to make a major theoretical contribution to scholarly thinking about the representation and accountability in modern democratic systems, and how they may differ in emerging democracies.

G. Methodological advances. In the course of our project, we plan to incorporate several innovations that can contribute to the development of research methods in the social sciences. Although these methodological “bells and whistles” are not core components of our project, they do not distract from it, and they add little or nothing in term of cost. Some examples include:

- We will attempt to arrange for the free delivery of newspapers from the *Reforma* group to a randomly selected sub-sample of those panel respondents who live along existing newspaper subscription distribution routes. Ideally, some panel participants will receive a paper daily; some will receive weekly deliveries; and some will receive none at all. We will then be able to estimate the effects of newspaper exposure using an experimental design, as well as to assess the reliability of certain indicators of newspaper exposure. We expect several hundred respondents to be included in this experiment at different points in the campaign.
- A large proportion of Mexican households do not have telephones, introducing substantial bias into telephone surveys. We will randomly divide those panel respondents with access to landline telephones into two groups, one of which will be re-interviewed by telephone in at least one subsequent wave. By comparing individuals in this sub-sample to those with telephones who were interviewed in person, as well as to their own responses in other panel waves, we will be able to analyze how telephone interviewing might influence survey responses (see Burns et al. 2001-2002). Meanwhile, by comparing all respondents with telephones to those without them, we will be able to estimate the aggregate sampling biases in phone surveys.
- We hope to include a number of similar experiments over the course of the panel designed to estimate sampling biases when quotas are used (with half of the sample selected using quotas and half not) and the effects of variations in question wording and ordering.
- Because we will be validating whether respondents have actually voted, we will be able to assess the reliability of different items intended to measure turnout. To this end, randomly selected subsets of respondents in the post-electoral panel wave different

¹⁰Tentatively, the Mexico conference will be organized by the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México; the U.S. conferences will be organized by UT-Austin and Harvard University. Other U.S. universities may also host similar meetings. As in 2000, host institutions will cover the costs of these conferences.

¹¹Stanford University Press has indicated its interest in publishing this volume. (A letter to this effect is attached.) The Rockefeller Foundation’s Bellagio Study and Conference Center has expressed preliminary interest in hosting project personnel under their “team residency” program as we prepare the book manuscript.

¹²Loose “models” include Norris et al. (1999), Brug and van der Eijk (forthcoming), and Johnston et al. (1992).

versions of the turnout question. Validating voter turnout will also allow us to gauge the effectiveness of different turnout filters asked in pre-electoral panel waves, which to date have proven to be of dubious validity in Mexico.

- We plan code the ethnicity of our interviewers, allowing us to gauge the effects of interviewer ethnicity in a context where racial boundaries are more fluid than in the USA. We will also record the gender of the interviewers, allowing us to measure whether the sorts of interviewer-induced effects seen with race on some issues also obtain with gender.
- Novel forms of question wording can be effective in reducing social desirability bias and eliciting accurate responses to complex issues (see King et al. 2003). We plan to employ anchoring vignettes, “sober-second thought” approaches, branched follow-ups, and related techniques in questions about complex issues.

5. Budget

- Survey research: We will conduct a three-wave, national-level panel involving 5,500-7,000 interviews with ordinary citizens in Mexico. The exact number of interviews to be conducted, as well as the precise mix of in-person *versus* telephone interviews, will be confirmed over the course of the project. The Mexico 2000 Panel Study covered approximately 6,800 interviews for around \$400,000, with *Reforma* absorbing roughly half of that cost. We will be conducting slightly fewer interviews in 2006, and the fact some follow-up interviews will be conducted by telephone will help to contain expenses. Overall, the costs to NSF of subcontracted survey research will be \$150,000.¹³ Should NSF be able to provide \$20,000 of additional funding and Reforma be willing to share costs as in other waves, we will also conduct an additional, more limited panel wave.
- Local-level data: The costs of collecting “real-world” data and validated votes will be covered by funding for faculty and staff time (below).
- Content analyses: We estimate that each television news broadcast will take two to three hours to code and that the costs of qualified coders will be \$10 per hour, or \$3,000 total. Content analysis for the front-page of *Reforma* newspaper will add \$1,000. We anticipate that the costs of coding candidate speeches will be \$1,000 (under one hour per speech). We expect that coding of debate presentations, advertisements, and party platforms will cost approximately \$1,000 each. Costs of content analysis will thus total \$5,000. Design of coding instruments will be covered by funding for Lawson; the costs of data entry will be covered by the graduate assistance. The coders themselves will presumably include students from the home institutions of the project participants.
- Interviews: Any costs involved in arranging interviews with elites, designing the interview guide, and conducting the interviews themselves will be covered by the investigators themselves, as part of their normal research. Typing up and disseminating notes from the interviews will be covered by funding for graduate assistance.
- Faculty and staff time: Lawson will require some summer funding to supervise the project (not to exceed \$5,000, including benefits). Other funding will come from alternative sources. One other project participant will receive up to one summer ninth of funding for collecting local-level data and validating turnout (also not to exceed \$5,000 in total). Any additional

¹³Our experience in Mexico suggests that small payments or gifts to respondents who participate in the panel can substantially reduce the attrition rate in a panel study. With this in mind, we anticipate paying the equivalent of \$10 total for each respondent who participates in the entire panel. These costs are included in the \$150,000 figure.

funding for project personnel will come from other sources; Moreno will receive no compensation beyond his *Reforma* salary. To assist in various aspects of the project, we seek graduate student research assistance for one semester plus two summers; MIT will cover an additional semester. (The graduate student RA for the project will be Francisco Flores.)

- Participant support: Participant support in Mexico will be covered by other sources.
- Travel: We will require funding for Lawson to make three short trips to Mexico in anticipation of each panel wave (a total of \$1,500) and for one project participant to make one trip to Mexico for the purpose of collecting local data and validating turnout (a total of \$500). Travel costs for Moreno will be covered by *Reforma*. Travel costs thus total \$2,000.
- Data dissemination: Costs involved in posting the data on the project website and ensuring its timely delivery to an established scholarly archive will be covered by the funding for graduate assistance. However, we request \$500 to advertise the existence of the new data in major scholarly publications and in the programs of the relevant academic conferences. Needless to say, project participants will encourage students at their institutions to use data from the project in their own research.

The project start date will be August 1, 2005. It will conclude two years later.

6. Participants

A core group of project participants will be largely responsible for articulating the intellectual agenda of the project and coordinating its administration. Members of the core group include: Andy Baker (Northeastern University), Kathleen Bruhn (University of California at Santa Barbara), Wayne Cornelius (University of California at San Diego), Jorge I. Domínguez (Harvard University), Kenneth Greene (University of Texas at Austin), Chappell Lawson (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), James McCann (Purdue University), and Alejandro Moreno (Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México and *Reforma* newspaper). The first in-person meeting of the full core group took place at Harvard University's Weatherhead Center for International Affairs in March 2004. At this meeting, participants finalized the overall design of the project, defined roles and responsibilities, reviewed recent innovations in survey research methods, prioritized items for the mass panel and activist surveys, and identified potential funders. This group will reconvene once the budget for the project is fixed – ideally in the summer of 2005 – to finalize details of project administration.

Other participants will help to refine the project and, in some cases, take on responsibility for specific components. Other participants include: Roderic Camp (Claremont-McKenna College), Joseph Klesner (Keynon College), Beatriz Magaloni (Stanford University), Alejandro Poiré (Instituto Federal Electoral and Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México), and David Shirk (University of San Diego). Lawson will serve as Principal Investigator for the project. Baker, Bruhn, Camp, Cornelius, Domínguez, Greene, Klesner, Magaloni, McCann, Moreno, and Shirk are all considered senior personnel. Because he until recently held a senior post at the IFE, Poiré is not listed among the senior project personnel; however, he is considered a substantial collaborator, and a letter confirming his participation is included with the proposal.

We anticipate informal collaboration with a number of academics, pollsters, government officials, and political figures in Mexico who are familiar with our project. Finally, in order to maximize the theoretical and empirical impact of our research, we have reviewed the proposed project and draft survey instruments in some detail with a number of scholars not affiliated with our effort. So far, this group includes approximately thirty academics in the USA, Europe, and

Mexico who specialize in voting behavior, political communication, and Mexican politics. We will continue informal consultations as our project moves forward.

Our project has not been presented to NSF as a multi-institutional grant proposal. In practice, however, it will help to promote and solidify ties among scholars in different academic institutions and different regions of the country. It will also enhance collaboration between researchers in the USA and their counterparts in Mexico. In both countries, we expect to involve graduate and undergraduate students at different institutions in various aspects of the project.

7. Results from prior NSF support

As noted above, our proposed project builds in part on the Mexico 2000 Panel Study (partially funded by SES-9905703). So far, that project has produced one edited volume from an academic press featuring contributions from the main collaborators in the project (Domínguez and Lawson 2003), as well as a number of other scholarly publications (Moreno 2003a, Hughes and Lawson forthcoming, McCann and Lawson 2003, Lawson and McCann 2005, Klesner and Lawson 2001, Klesner 2001), articles under review, conference papers, and graduate theses. Data from the Mexico 2000 Panel Study have been publicly available for two years, and a number of papers and journal articles using data from the project have already been submitted to academic journals by scholars who were not part of the project. All told, articles using data from the project have appeared in or are under review at the following journals: *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *British Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Politics*, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *Electoral Studies*, *Political Communication*, *Political Behavior*, *Latin American Research Review*, *Latin American Politics and Society*, and *Mexican Studies*. Finally, project participants have presented summaries of their findings at academic conferences and in popular media outlets, including various newspaper articles, television shows, and radio programs in Mexico and the United States.

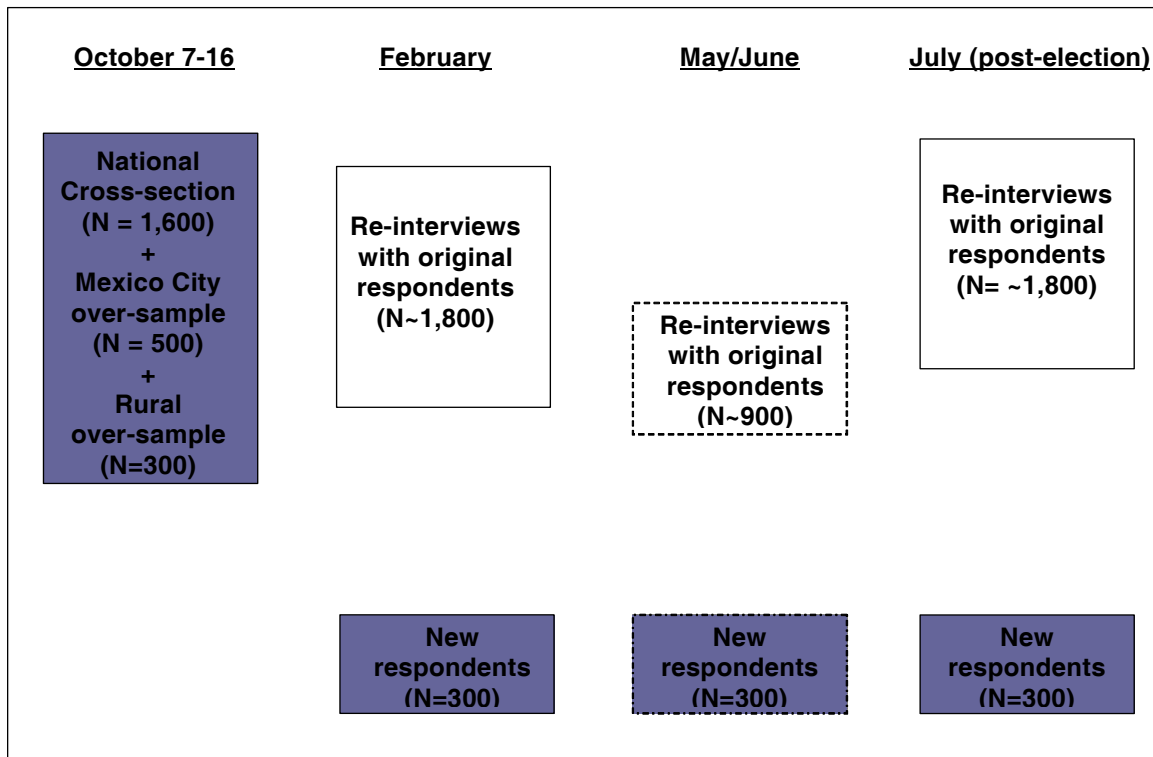
In addition to the Mexico 2000 Panel Study, two project participants have also been involved in separate NSF-funded projects. Greene served as Co-PI on a National Science Foundation Dissertation Improvement Grant entitled “Mexico Party Personnel Surveys” (SBER #9819213). That study produced a database of 1,470 party activists and national leaders from six parallel sample surveys with over 100 questions. It has so far led to one peer-reviewed article (Greene 2002a) and a Ph.D. dissertation that has since become a book manuscript (Greene 2002b). Baker served as Consultant for a major survey research project during Brazil’s 2002 elections (SES #0137088). Data from that project is currently being analyzed. We anticipate important synergies between our proposed project and these earlier endeavors.

8. Human subjects considerations

We expect that our proposal will be exempted from the normal human subjects review process at MIT, as established in Section 101(b) of the Common Rule, and will be given approval on an expedited basis. We have already applied for this exemption and completed the relevant human subjects training.

To protect the confidentiality of respondents’ answers, we will use the same approach as was employed in the Mexico 2000 Panel Study. During the project, we will maintain two databases: (1) an encrypted file with respondent identifiers (name, address, phone number, etc.) and a respondent code number, and (2) a file with the respondent code number and all other information. Only those directly involved in survey administration will have access to the encrypted file, which will be deleted after the project is completed.

Figure 1: Structure of the Mexico 2006 Panel Study



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