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The Mexican Voter Transformed: MORENA Success in the Wake of Party System Failure

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The Mexican Voter Transformed: MORENA Success in the Wake of Party System
Failure

2020

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<u>Acknowledgements</u>

<u>Abstract</u>

Over the last two decades Mexican politics have been in constant change and instability after the fall of the PRI. In 2014, MORENA was founded and began to make its presence known with the legislative elections in 2015, winning 35 seats in the legislature. Despite only winning less than 10% of seats in their first national election, MORENA built off these victories to win the national general election and the presidency with former PRD candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO). While easy to attribute this historic victory to the global rise of populism, this project argues that the Mexican case is unique in that this victory goes beyond the populist tendencies of the candidate, but rather the success of a new political party. Through running regression tests on data from survey responses conducted by the Latin American Public Opinion Project and close analysis of the Mexico case, I find that there is support that voters' lack of confidence in political parties paired with dropping partisanship were significant factors in AMLO's presidential victory.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Chapter 3: Mexico History and Background

Chapter 4: Quantitative Analysis

 4.1: Methodology

  4.1.2 El Voto Nulo and Non-Voters

 4.2: Binary Logistic Regression Tests

  4.2.1 2019 Data Set

  4.2.2 2014 Data Set

  4.2.3 2008 Data Set

 4.3: Data Summary

Chapter 5: Andrés Manuel López Obrador

 5.1: Approval Ratings

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Chapter 1: Introduction

      The victory of Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) in the 2018 presidential elections in Mexico was unlike that of any presidential race the country has ever seen. AMLO is the first president since 1929 to not belong to the Partido Revalucionario Institucional (PRI) or the Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN), but instead to the Movimiento Regeneración Nacional (MORENA). First and foremost, AMLO not only made history by winning as a member of a third party, which also won big in the legislature, but also by winning by a landslide margin that lacks parallel in recent elections. AMLO is also the first politically 'left' president of Mexico (BBC Mundo, 2018). Finally, AMLO is one of the most polarizing presidents that Mexico has ever had. When asked, the Mexican people respond that they have high hopes of better protection of human rights, more protection and security for those living in indigenous communities, helping migrants, stricter regulations of drug use, progress in the fight against narcotrafficking, and lower corruption (BBC Mundo, 2018b). While the Mexican voters have maintained these same hopes and expectations for their leaders for at least the past 20 years, in 2018 they changed how they chose to pursue them by electing AMLO as a member of MORENA instead of Ricardo Anaya of the PAN or José Meade of the PRI.

      This project will address the question, "what leads voters to support new political parties in the wake of party system ruptures?" by asking on a more concentrated level, "why did voters choose AMLO as a member of the new MORENA in 2018, but not as a member of the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) in prior elections?". I am researching these questions in order to examine the effects that the rupture of the party system had on Mexican politics after the year 2000. This thesis aims to understand and contribute to an explanation of the manner in which AMLO, with the new MORENA, was able to change the trajectory of Mexican politics

with his historic victory. While it is clear that the PRI ruptured amongst their loss in 2000, the 2018 election demonstrates a complete upheaval of the existing party system in Mexico with MORENA's landslide victories. My findings indicate that the Mexican people are dissatisfied with political institutions in general and are therefore much more willing to lend support to a party that breaks with the previous system. Although Mexico's democracy was still transforming as it settled in the period following the PRI's loss in 2000, all the changes and turbulence were among the three existing major parties. The entrance into the political scene by the MORENA itself appeared, at its beginning, to be the same as any other minority party that would eventually pledge its allegiance to one of the three major parties. However, AMLO still had presidential aspirations, despite his losses in 2006 and 2012.

What would follow the PRI's loss in Mexican politics was, regarding which party would hold office at any given time, suddenly very unpredictable. Not only had the PAN won its first election and given rise to a more complete form of democracy, but other parties began to form and make political headway (Hansen, 2013, p. 210-213). Most notable is the MORENA, founded in 2014. Founded by a former prominent member of the PRD, MORENA branded itself as the party for hope and adopted a leftist ideology that varied greatly from the PRI and the PAN (MORENA.si). This branding was also particularly noteworthy to the Mexican population during a time of frustration with the political institutions because it was done so in a clearer and more successful way than the attempts by the PRD whose identity collapsed without AMLO. This element of unpredictability that was now a part of Mexican politics was applied to both the presidency and majority their legislative branch, and began as a power struggle among the three major parties, the PAN, the PRD, and the PRI. Historically, other minority parties have often aligned with one of these three, especially if they were new, and supported the same presidential

candidates so that it would be primarily a three-way race with any other candidates receiving

extremely minimal portions of the vote. MORENA strayed from this path after their founding in

2014, instead gaining the support of smaller parties that normally give their allegiance to one of

the other major parties. My thesis will advance the literature and research on personalist parties

and politics in Mexico as well as the conditions that allow them to arise and rapidly succeed on a

national level.

I hypothesize that voter behavior changed by deciding to vote for AMLO and MORENA

in 2018 because of their loss of faith in current political parties and the ideologization of the

MORENA party as the most radical left. This loss of faith in current political parties was

founded in the parties' lack of political identity and failure to accomplish what voters wanted

while in office. These failures include, but are not limited to, the failure to address violence,

despite militarizing the war on drugs. As the PRI began to crumble and opposition parties began

winning gubernatorial contests and elections in 1989 (Schedler, 2005, p. 16), often with

candidates that are former members of the PRI, constituents were then able to see for the first

time the governing capabilities of opposition parties. Though the democracy was still far from

perfect, for the first time, voters saw their votes for the opposition count. With this transition

came a change in the way that political campaigns are run. Now that many candidates had started

with the PRI and ended up in other parties like the PAN and the PRD, campaigns became

candidate-centric, so the emphasis was no longer on the candidate's political affiliation since that

was often times very fluid and changed from election to election, but instead on the candidate

themselves. This created a political atmosphere that emphasized the importance of who each

party put up for their candidacy, requiring somebody that was likely to win over the people as

opposed to candidates that had already won over the party members (Schedler, 2005). This

transition to candidate-centric campaigns is one aspect that makes AMLO's victory so much more interesting, because if voters were voting almost solely based on the candidate, then it follows that he would have won during one of his previous attempts with the PRD. For this reason, I will be exploring the role that the MORENA had in AMLO's success, in spite of his previous failures with the PRD.

AMLO's victory in 2018 is significant in the progression of Mexico's democracy for a variety of reasons. Though winning his third time running does not necessarily make him unique among candidates in democracies around the globe, his founding of MORENA and the party itself instead do. The party system rupture that ensued leading up to and in the wake of the 2000 presidential election blew political competition wide open, particularly between the PAN and the PRI. Although the PRD was never able to win a presidential election, their position as a major party achieved unprecedented success, missing the presidency by just a couple percentage points in 2006, with AMLO as their candidate. AMLO's win of the presidency was not only one that came as a member of a new party, but also was the most overwhelming victory of Mexico's democracy. Winning the majority vote in 31 out of 32 states (Election Sources) made AMLO's and the MORENA's 2018 victory historic and unprecedented. The question that I have presented will be an essential consideration of Mexican politics henceforth, as AMLO and the MORENA, as well as the 2018 election, continue to alter the existing party system.

Through regression tests run on survey data from the Latin American Public Opinion Project and close analysis of the Mexican case of the 2018 election as compared to 2006 and 2012, this project finds that the historic success of MORENA can be attributed to the Mexican public's dissatisfaction and increasing distrust in the existing political institutions, particularly the three majority parties. My findings leave more to be discovered in whether the MORENA's

ideological strength was any more beneficial for their victory in 2018 than it typically would be in any democratic election. Partisanship literature indicates that this is generally advantageous in elections, so as the party with the strongest political identity, MORENA's clear ideology was likely a strength, just not enough so to be statistically significant in my regression test. While my two hypotheses were relatively supported by my project, the long-term effects on Mexican politics are still to be observed in forthcoming presidential elections.

Chapter Two: Partisanship

Prior to the 2000 elections, the Mexican electorate was largely divided into two subgroups: the older, rural, uneducated population that typically voted for the PRI, and the younger, urban and typically more educated population. The latter grew up in the era transitioning to democracy and who were able to see their votes for opposition party candidates begin to count in closer presidential elections and other lower level national elections. Moreno (2003) argues that these two groups make their divisions most apparent throughout the late 1980's and the 1990's, but that the latter group voted in higher numbers in 2000, leading to Fox's victory. I now argue that these two groups converge once again in 2018 as voters from both of these two groups, particularly the uneducated population, stray from prior partisan loyalties. The party division lines between these two groups used to be fairly clear, the former was the foundation of the PRI support with the latter divided between the PAN, who held the majority, and the PRD. All the existing majority parties then experienced a substantial loss and abandonment between 2000 and 2002 because the constituents were then seeing and hearing political competition that they never have before, but the PAN's partisan support remains the most loyal (Moreno, 2003), which aided them in maintaining the presidency in 2006 with Felipe Calderón. This chapter will develop the crucial role that partisanship, or the lack thereof, in current Mexican politics and the 2018 election. Partisan ties that once anchored both of these groups to their respective parties were severed while MORENA was able to make sweeping gains with those that have lost their faith in their former parties.

The relationship between partisanship and elections is varied and ingrained within the many democratic institutions across the globe. Partisanship on the individual level is crucial to voters' ability and willingness to participate as it provides direction for those with low political

interest and knowledge. Fuchs and Kinglermann note that "We view the left-right schema as a mechanism for the reduction of complexity, which serves primarily to provide an orientation function for individuals," (as cited in Zechmeister & Corral, 2013, p. 677). Partisanship, as a mechanism to aid voters, serves as sort of a compass that points where voters should look for stances on the issues most important to them. Herein lies the nature of democratic participation, whether it be party identification, ideological placement on the political spectrum, or the act of voting. Partisanship has long helped to determine the political landscapes of democracies and parliamentary systems as parties give voters a political identity much larger than themselves. Though appearing differently under each democratic party system, the ideological spectrum within which political parties operate makes political participation considerably easier and more likely for those without any particular vested interest in the political arena. While partisanship in Mexico is low though, ties to preexisting parties are considerably less advantageous in 2018 than in past elections.

Partisanship literature is the most developed when regarding the two-party system of the United States. *The American Voter* (Campbell et al., 1960) provided the primary foundation for analysis and literature on partisanship and was henceforth the example followed in the volumes of the *Latin American Voter* (Carlin, Singer, & Zechmeister, 2015) and *El votante mexicano* (Moreno, 2003). Both of these volumes discuss the image of partisanship on the regional and then national level as they contrast the classic literature regarding the party system in the United States. Although the American two-party system is rather unique among global democracies, its literary base provides the foundation for partisanship analysis beyond the scope of the two-party system and aids in understanding partisanship's relevance among multi-party systems, as are more popular in Latin America. Partisanship lends itself to positional issue voting as noted in

The Latin American Voter (Zechmeister, Carlin & Singer, 2015). Baker and Greene (2015) discuss in their chapter constituents' behavior regarding voters choosing the candidate whose publicly announced platform most closely matches their own policy preferences, a concept they refer to as positional issue voting. Positional issue voting is typically seen as a partisan act, as one's party is, at least in part, chosen by where they stand on issues important to them. This chapter presents economic factors as the executive motivation for positional issue voting and hypothesizes that issue-voting would be the strongest within democracies with highly polarized party systems, low clientelist effort, and minimal fragmentation (Baker & Greene, 2015). With partisanship in Mexico dropping though, this typically partisan act is now exercised by individuals based on their ideology rather than party allegiance.

Partisanship's relationship with voter identity and political participation can be examined through the lenses of different types of partisanship. Hudson, Mason and Aarøe (2015) discuss the differences between expressive and instrumental partisanship. Instrumental partisanship is a running tally of party performance and alignment with one's views. That is to say, instrumental partisanship is used to describe those that associate themselves with a political party because the party expresses the same or similar stances on issues that matter to them and are performing well as incumbents. Instrumental partisanship is the type that is exercised in the aforementioned positional issue voting. Expressive partisanship, on the other hand, regards partisanship as an "enduring identity strengthened by social affiliations to gender, religious, and other racial or ethnic groups" (Hudson, Mason & Aarøe, 2015, p. 1). Given that expressive partisanship contributes to one's identity instead of one's positional issue stances, expressive partisanship develops the aspect of party affiliation that is socially constructed. According to Hudson, Mason and Aarøe, "campaign action may occur among those that hold a strong position on personal

important salient issues instead of a broader ideology" (2015, p. 4). These two instrumental and expressive explanations of what may inspire voters to actively participate in elections explains two ways in which partisanship and political participation are related.

The divergence that Moreno (2003) discusses between the two main groups of voters provides an example of how the instrumental and expressive explanations of partisanship (Hudson, Mason & Aarøe, 2015) are active in Mexico. The first group discussed, the older and less educated, that continued to vote for the PRI in the 2000 election and beyond demonstrates expressive partisanship. Their partisan ties to the PRI were strong and deeper than any ideological connection. The other group, which is typically younger and has more formal education, demonstrates instrumental partisanship by forgoing the party that their parents and grandparents may have voted for, instead casting their votes in favor of the opposition. Moreno's (2003) acknowledgement that this divergent was not new in 2000 indicates that the voter behavior had not necessarily changed drastically but rather that the second group had won over the first in numbers. I instead argue that the behavior has changed rather than the demographics, indicating that more Mexican voters are voting based on instrumental partisanship instead of expressive.

Various politically salient issues culminate to generate a general disliking for governmental institutions within a nation, whereas good performance on a combination of these issues may strengthen partisanship support. While partisan ties are constantly strengthening and weakening, when they dramatically weaken is when the party system finds itself at risk of rupture. This is also where consideration of the intensity with which one identifies with a party is relevant. Morris Fiorina presents this factor as perhaps his principal theoretical contribution, "strengthening the belief that party identification is not unchanging, however, that is not to deny

that party identification was, effectively the most stable individual political attitude" (as cited in

Moreno, 2003, p. 79). Fiorina acknowledges the fluidity of partisanship among the Mexico

electorate adding dimension to party identity. The dimension of ideological strength encourages

political competition and promotes the growth of third-party popularity, especially among

independents or leaners.

Partisanship's relationship with ideology is an important determinant of how voters align

themselves within a party system. How voters define their own political ideology influences

which party they lend their loyalty to, so a party's strength in one direction on the political

spectrum is beneficial to them in terms of gaining popular support. MOERNA in the 2018

election was the party with the most clearly defined ideology in any direction of the political

spectrum, making it stronger in this regard than the rest of the parties. In most instances, having

stronger ideology, both as a party and as an individual candidate, is advantageous. This is

apparent in both dual party systems, such as the United States, as well as multiparty systems such

as Mexico's. Partisanship and ideology are closely linked, for example, instrumental partisanship

involvement arises in support of important issues or a strong ideological issue-based agenda

(Huddy, Mason, & Aarøe, 2015). Although not all politically salient issues that draw people to

parties are divided along strict ideology lines, this ideological issue-based agenda is what

develops the framework of party divisions. While arguing that partisanship is declining rapidly,

it is important to note that the same is not to be said for ideology among the Mexican public.

Voters are choosing not to identify with political parties due to a lack of trust and confidence in

the institutions themselves and because they are not as ideologically strong, not because of a lack

of interest or self-identity on the political spectrum.

In addition to the collapse of the other major parties, MORENA's ideological strengths made it attractive and accessible to voters. Strong ideologization is advantageous to political parties because it takes the responsibility off of the voters to decipher the parties' stances on matters important to them. As a result, regardless of what the voters consider to be most important when deciding who to vote for, voters are more easily able to identify which party's candidates align with their values. Since I am hypothesizing that the MORENA's ideologization was one of the factors most influential in AMLO's 2018 victory, I am also arguing that the PRD's lack thereof contributed to his prior failures in 2006 and 2012. Voters that lack political interest and knowledge value ideological clarity and strength both in Mexico but also among democracies, and this is where the PAN, PRD, and PRI lacked identity. The MORENA was not only a radical left party during the 2018 election, winning 8 out of 10 left votes (Mattiace, 2019), but also the most radical party in any direction.

Along with partisanship comes opposition to partisanship and established party systems, often in various forms of populism and personalist politics. Another possible explanation of this historic win for the MORENA and AMLO is the global rise of populism. In "The Ideational Approach to Populism", Kirk Hawkins (2017) contrasts this new concept of ideational populism with the three most traditional definitions. Most notable is the structural approach to populism, which is tied to many Latin American regimes. This traditional structural approach to populism is often associated with anti-status quo social movements and dependency theorists. Hawkins (2017) argues instead that ideational populism is still "an approach to economics motivated by anti-status quo ideology or involves an anti-establishment discourse" but acknowledges many forms of redemptive discourse and distinguishes populism as an ideology independent from its effects on politics (514). In addition to party system ruptures, these apolitical effects of

populism as described by Hawkins (2017) can be applied to changes in Mexican politics since 2000. The anti-establishment discourse that Hawkins (2017) mentions is a popular trait in the context of weakening partisanship that largely contributes to dramatic changes in a country's political sphere.

Populism has many faces, two contrasting examples being Venezuela and the United States; one of the primary differences between the two is that those in Venezuela are relatively 'anti-wealth' and therefore, take on a more socialist ideology (Chua, 2018). The United States example, embodied by President Trump, instead attacks the establishment under the premise of working towards the American Dream (Chua, 2018). AMLO and MORENA combine the two of these to form a sort of hybrid of populism that is attractive to the poor and those that are fervently anti-institution. In these examples, President Trump and Hugo Chávez capitalize on the current party dissatisfaction within their countries of disenfranchised voters that feel as though they have been alienated in prior elections (Chua, 2018). Though they both ran as current party members, their radical tactics helped them to appeal to constituents beyond just their co-partisans. Divisions and dissidence within parties are contextualized by popular dissatisfaction with the governmental institution, particularly new democracies such as the case in Mexico. According to Moreno, "one of the characteristics of new democracies seemed to be the presence of a segmented electorate that would use the elections as an authoritative democratic mean: to return or maintain the powers of the State" (2003, p. 110). These segmented electorates provide ample opportunity for populist parties and candidates to arise with enormous success.

Theory and literature regarding partisanship and the various executions of party affiliation is extensive, Campbell et al. (1960) providing a base for further scholarship, such as

Moreno (2003) to build off of. Assisting voters in political participation, partisanship takes many

forms among different electoral systems and looks very different in Mexico today from in the

United States, or even from Mexico 20 years ago. The foundation laid by these previous scholars

has established the backbone of my research that has allowed me to apply understood concepts

of partisanship, ideology, and populism to Mexico's case. As a fluid entity of political science

and modern democratic society, it is important to note and continue research on changing

political parties as they enter and exit relevance on the national level. Partisanship has altered

greatly in Mexico since the beginning of the new democratic period, but, until recently, the three

majority parties had remained the same since the 1980's, when the PRD was founded (Shedler,

2004), until 2014. Following the 2012 presidential election and AMLO's failed second attempt at

the presidency the PRD lost a considerable portion of their partisan support as AMLO headed the

MORENA, thus decimating the already smallest of the three. This blurred party lines going into

the 2018 presidential election as the PRD and PAN supported one singular candidate, thus

maintaining the three-party structure of national elections, however this time with different

parties.

Chapter Three: History and Background

I am choosing to study the 2018 presidential election in Mexico to respond to my question because of Mexico's unique political structure and short history of democracy. As opposed to the form of a two party-system that the United States practices, many Latin American countries withhold a multiparty system. While this is now true for Mexico, and topically has been for the majority of their modern history, prior to 2000 Mexico was a one-party regime. Another unique factor regarding Mexican politics is that, because of their constitution stating that a president may not serve more than a single term, they have been one of the only countries in their region to escape the brutal military dictatorships that plagued many of their Latin American counterparts throughout the Cold War and into the early 1990's. Instead though, the PRI maintained control and enforced their own sort of regime under the guise of democracy, still holding elections, mostly against PAN candidates. Through a long process of party disintegration, election reform, and important members leaving the party, the PRI's grip on power loosened in the 1980's and 1990's. Finally, the last president under the decades-long PRI rule, Zedillo, refused to enforce the same corruption tactics to ensure that his party would win while congressional seats went to the opposition, in spite of election fraud (Camp & Mattiace, 2020). With the transition to democracy well underway, electoral competition, particularly on the national level, altered the political sphere.

1988 is largely considered to be the election year to mark the beginning of the democratic transition as PRI dissidents began to compete much more competitively in national elections. This was the year that opposition support peaked as "Mexicans were united on their general pessimism about the circumstances of Mexico's economy and about its prospects" (Domínguez & McCann, p. 52, 1996). The Mexican people began to take a more personally invested interest

in politics and the performance of their government during the previous administration, under President De la Madrid, that undertook massive projects of restructuring their economy. The dramatic changes that De la Madrid made inspired voters, through issue positioning and strengthening ideologization, to increase their support for the opposition forces and almost topple the PRI. However, because the views on the national economy were still complex and varied, even among social classes, partisanship choices did not yet strengthen enough in the direction of the opposition (Domínguez & McCann, 1996).

PRI partisanship remained the highest of any party, including through the 2000 election, but dropped considerably during the aforementioned transition period. Instead of identifying with a different party though, a large portion abandoned party adherence in general. Klesner notes that "Once the PRI identifiers declined to about a third of the electorate, as they did in the 1990's, independents became a large-enough body of voters to swing an election" (p. 99, 2004). During this transition and the 2000 election the landscape of partisanship altered dramatically to one of much more evenly distributed party identification and lack thereof. Once considerably more even among majority parties, voter distribution strayed from their previous loyalty to the PRI as political interests intensified and the desire for change escalated. Another factor earning consideration during the 2000 election is the electorate's allegiance strength. Not only were voters abandoning the PRI all together, but their support was weakening. According to a Panel Study 'Weak PRI' and 'Lean to PRI' numbers together outweighed Strong PRI 25.3% to 15.8% as of February 2000 (Domínguez & Lawson, 2004). Those weakly with or only leaning towards the PRI were part of the group of floating voters, some of which were then more easily attracted by the opposition.

Though there is already extensive literature on Mexico's democracy and the collapse of

the PRI that preceded the beginning of this true democracy, the 2018 presidential election was so

recent that there is little that discusses the MORENA's newfound role. Their history is short,

having only participated in one presidential election, yet monumental when considering the

current state of Mexican politics. The MORENA was the first to enter the scene as a true populist

party whose tactics spread beyond that of politics and into all the major spheres of society,

claiming to represent the Mexican majority, reaching across various lines of division. With the

great socioeconomic gaps in the country, this was a difficult, yet crucial, facet of the

overwhelming margin of victory from this election. 2018 was also a pivotal year because the

elation resulting from the newfound democracy was officially over, after 2012 seeing the victory

of another PRI candidate, and being 18 years and three elections after the PAN's initial victory.

The PAN was unable to maintain the proper channels of popularity, the PRI was yet another

disappointment with Peña Nieto's administration, and the PRD lacked the fundamental basis of

partisanship to ever win a presidency, and all during a time when partisanship was at an all-time

low. All these factors that resulted from the party system rupture amalgamated in the 2018

election to create ample conditions for a populist party to arise.

Politics in Mexico: The Path of a New Democracy the seventh edition, by Roderic Camp

and Shannan L. Mattiace lays the groundwork for how Mexico is differentiated from the rest of

the region and gives an in-depth history of the political parties and how they have changed,

specifically leading up to this election year. Specifically, After a brief history of the PAN, PRI,

and PRD, Camp and Mattiace conclude that dissatisfaction with incumbent parties, specifically

the PRI in 2018, are rooted in "incompetence, unfulfilled campaign pledges and corruption" (p.

276, 2020), indicating that the voters changing parties was not necessarily unique, instead the short timeline of MORENA becoming the most important political party in just four years.

The National Action Party, or the PAN, has the longest history aside from the PRI, was the majority opposition party prior to Mexico's transition to democracy. Without a steady and consistent ideological banner throughout its existence though, the PAN has always struggled with a clear ideologization. Gaining most of its popularity in narrow urban populations, the PAN's "growth nationally was never dramatic" (Camp & Mattiace, 2020 p. 267), one way in which the PAN's victory varies greatly from that of the MORENA. In order to finally defeat the PRI, the PAN was able to expand their support beyond their usual urban partisan support, but this was largely due to the candidate, Vicente Fox, instead of the party itself. As a result, popular support continued to decline after Fox's administration, barely maintaining enough support to win the 2006 election (Camp & Mattiace, 2020). Camp and Mattiace also note that "the vast majority of new PAN partisans voted for the party because it represented a change from the PRI" (2020, p. 268), so the PAN served as the closest thing to a populist party in Mexico until the founding of MORENA. With the decline of PAN popularity and dissatisfaction with Calderón's administration, the political atmosphere was ideal for the creation of a more stable populist party. By the 2018 election, the PAN had faced an uphill battle due to "voter frustrations with economic conditions and levels of drug-related violence under Calderón" (Camp & Mattiace, 2020, p. 269), so they aligned with the PRD to present one candidate as a desperate attempt at the presidency. This further demonstrated the lack of ideologization and identity within the PAN, both detriments to popular support.

The Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, dominated Mexican politics for 71 years but has since faced many divisions and fractions. Currently, "the party's leadership is broadly

divided into two factions" (Camp & Mattiace, 2020, p. 270), so with even the leadership divided, the party on a broader level lacks unity and identity. Though withstanding the defeat to the PAN better than expected, the PRI was only able to eventually win back the presidency because of the PAN's failure to extend their base beyond their narrow partisanship. Camp and Mattiace maintain that "more so than its two preceding PAN governments in Mexico, Peña Nieto's presidency failed to generate confidence and support, resulting in the lowest presidential approval ratings since presidential polls were introduced" (2020, p. 271), which, in turn, repelled the Mexican people away from the party itself. Peña Nieto's administration, though beginning with a strong base of support similar to prior to their initial loss in 2000, was a last straw of sorts for the Mexican people, leaving them angry with recent administrations and their parties and likewise unmotivated to identify with any particular partisanship.

Camp and Mattiace then note the dramatic change to the party landscape in Mexico following MORENA's founding in 2014 and the subsequent demise of the PRD resulting from AMLO leaving the party. AMLO's abandonment of the PRD after the 2012 presidential election "decimated partisanship support for the PRD," (Camp & Mattiace, 2020, p. 272) and effectively converted most of their supporters into the roots for the MORENA. Though MORENA's history is short, it is impressive. In addition to the presidency, in 2018 they were able to win five of nine gubernatorial elections including the Federal District (Camp & Mattiace, 2020), meaning that their support reached beyond one specific demographic. Although AMLO was able to bring much of his support as a PRD candidate to MORENA, he also won the votes that expanded well beyond reach of the PRD. MORENA made alliances with several minority parties, most notably the Social Encounter Party (PSE), which is historically socially conservative and did not have a strong history voting for the PRD (Camp & Mattiace, 2020). Though alliances with minority

parties, and even other majority parties in the case of the 2018 election, is not uncommon, this particular union is significant to my research because it is one example of demographics that changed their votes between the 2012 election, when they did not support AMLO, and 2018 election where they were aligned with his party.

Finally, Camp and Mattiace discuss the Democratic Revolution Party, or the PRD, and the rise and fall of its relevance within the political scene. Though never winning the presidency, the PRD put forth the runner-up in both the 2006 and 2012 presidential races after spending the majority of their existence as a distant third in polls. That being said though, the PRD often struggled with party identity even within the democratic period, Camp and Mattiace note that "the PRD's ideology is difficult to characterize because the party's ranks are an amalgam of political groups professing views ranging from Marxist to populist" (2020, p. 275). Although AMLO gained much of his popularity as a PRD candidate, only about half of his support came from the PRD partisanship, while the rest were independents and supporters of the other two major parties (Camp & Mattiace, 2020). The PRD's ideological weakness gave the PRD difficulty in gaining a strong constituency and had the most success due to AMLO's personal popularity, so the party was essentially decimated with his departure.

Regarding the voter behavior of converting to different political parties, Langston (2006) notes that when PRI members began to dissent and run for opposition parties in 1987 opposition parties and voters started becoming empowered to challenge and, eventually, take down the "Leviathan" (p. 70). This was when Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Porfirio Muñoz Ledo left the party after a disagreement over who President de la Madrid should nominate for the presidency and such were the first opposition candidates to cause a rift within the party. According to Schedler, (2006) from then on, though much less dramatic then the case in 1987, over thirty PRI

party members left the party to run under opposition parties in gubernatorial elections (p. 71).

Then Salinas narrowly won the presidential race, thus introducing the idea of an opposition win

to not only opposing candidates but also the Mexican people.

The basis of my research on the rupture of the PRI that allowed for the rise and success of

opposition parties comes from the Joy Langston chapter of Andreas Schedler's (2006) Electoral

Authoritarianism the Dynamics of Unfree Competition, entitled "Elite Ruptures: When do

Ruling Parties Split?". Langston (2006) examines why and when ruling parties split and give

way to opposition through analyzing the PRI in Mexico and the KMT party in Taiwan.

According to Langston's (2006) theory, a party split is a hegemony's greatest threat. These

splits, gaining importance and prominence in the 1980's continued through the PRI's collapse as

party members left for other parties. AMLO himself began as a PRI member but experienced

most of his political success prior to the MORENA as a member of the PRD. Following these

fractures within the PRI leading up to 2000, the PRI's basis of support fractured dramatically as

well. Perhaps one of the most significant groups to abandon the PRI during the 2018 election is

uneducated voters. Previously a vote largely monopolized by the PRI, uneducated voters took to

the poles in support of AMLO with him earning 42% of this vote while the PRI candidate Meade

only won 27% (Mattiace, 2019). This is one area where AMLO's support improved significantly

since the 2012 election, speaking to how AMLO's overwhelming popularity as the MORENA

candidate was considerably more far-reaching than with the PRD.

This electoral split then initiated two crucial consequences that would change the entire

electoral landscape in Mexico. The first is that the PRI began to lose several state level elections

to former party members. After 1987 members that were displeased with party decisions or

candidates were finally empowered to leave the party without the fear that the decision would

effectively end their political career. Opposition wins created a multi-party democracy on a state

level that the Mexican people had never had the opportunity to experience in the post-

revolutionary period. The second consequence is that now with more victories by the opposition,

the constituents were able to see the governing capabilities of other parties aside from the PRI.

This was monumental in the eruption of the PRI's hegemonic control. Schedler (2006) ascertains

that voters that were able to judge opposition parties and their candidates now based on

performance were much more likely to vote against the hegemonic PRI (p. 72). These two

consequences of the electoral split following member dissent from the PRI beginning in 1987

laid the ground work for not only the collapse of the PRI's hegemony but also for the insurgence

of new political parties, such as the PRD at the time, and then eventually the MORENA.

Chapter 4: Quantitative Analysis

The majority of my research is based on the analysis of empirical data from the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP). The surveys conducted through LAPOP include a representative sample of the population and are conducted by an established and respected institution, therefore they are the best way to gain an understanding of the opinions shared by the Mexican public. The survey data in this project is from surveys conducted in Mexico in 2008, 2014, and 2019. I selected these years because the questions on the survey are asked in reference to the 2006, 2012, and 2018 presidential elections, the three elections that AMLO ran in. This quantitative section cements my first hypothesis using data reported by Mexican people through indicating variables that are statistically significant to if an individual voted for AMLO, both as a PRD candidate and a MORENA candidate.

4.1 Quantitative methodology

For this project, I plan on implementing a variety of forms of research and analysis. In addition to providing a representative sample of the population, LAPOP also keeps the questions either the same or similar across different years of collection, making my analysis of comparative election years possible. The LAPOP data provides empirical data on the individual level and asks a variety of questions pertaining to each individual's political behavior. This sort of data will aid in assessing what leads individual voters to vote for AMLO in the 2018 election when they did not in 2012 or 2006. LAPOP data is based on individual survey responses from 100 different municipalities, and my project is specifically focusing on variables indicating dissatisfaction with the three main parties, PAN, PRI, and PRD, and institutional distrust. The independent variables vary slightly between years, but are all essentially asking the same questions with slight semantic variation between the years.

First, I am transforming the variable measured under "decision over their vote in the last presidential election" to a dichotomous variable, coding votes for all parties that had a candidate other than AMLO as 0 and those that did a 1. This variable is originally coded so that each party, including minority parties, have their own corresponding number. So, for 2019 I coded those that voted for the MORENA party as 1 as well as those that voted for the PRD for the 2008 and 2014 data sets. Once these variables are transformed, I have a viable dichotomous dependent variable with which I can run regression tests. With SPSS I am able to run binary logistic regression tests to determine the extent to which my independent variables affect whether or not the respondents voted for AMLO. Through this, I will be able to discern which variables are the most appropriate to apply to my research and examine how the statistical significance varies for these variables across the different data sets. Ideally, statistical significance regarding a relationship of this kind will support my hypothesis that distrust and dissatisfaction with the previous three parties was, at least partially, responsible for the sudden and dramatic growth of popularity for the MORENA party and AMLO's victory in 2018.

In addition to running binary logistic regression tests, I am including frequency tables for the dichotomous variable responding to "¿Simpatiza con algún partido político?", or for the 2008 data set, "¿En este momento, simpatiza con algún partido político?" both of which are asking if the respondent identifies with any political party. The response to this survey question is either yes or no. These frequency charts are employed to show the decrease in partisanship between 2008 and 2018. These frequency tables are included also because my two presented hypotheses both rely on party identification being low and decreasing across this time period, which is demonstrated in these frequency tables. Dissatisfaction with the preexisting majority parties is manifested through party abandonment and low partisanship, both of these are displayed in these

frequency tables. The decline in partisanship showed in these frequency tables supplements the

results from the logistic regression tests and track the digression of partisanship.

4.1.2 El Voto Nulo and Non-Voters

El voto nulo, or the void vote, is a tool commonly used in Mexico and Latin America by

citizens wanting to protest the electoral or political institution. Valid votes in Mexican elections

are defined by article 436 of the General Law of Electoral Institutions and Proceedings as a mark

on the ballot only in a square where the emblem of a political party, or two if they support the

same candidate, or the name of an independent candidate is (García, 2018). Votos nulos, on the

other hand, are any ballots that do not follow this established format. Citizens annul their votes

either to reject the presented options or by accident (García, 2018). In Mexico, el voto nulo does

not have any legal ramifications on the elections, such as invalidating the entire election, but

instead just voids that one elector's vote. 1.6 million ballots in 2018 were cast as a voto nulo

(Hernández, 2019), which was a 2.8% increase since the 2012 election. This increase though is

purely based on the amount of votos nulos and does not account for an increase of population

and voters.

Another form of protest against the electoral and political institutions that Mexicans

implemented in the 2018 elections was just to not vote at all. Non-voters are common in every

democratic election that lacks compulsory voting laws, either as a result of not caring, not having

the time, or having the desire to make a statement in protest against the institution. About 62% of

registered voters voted in 2018, including the 1.6 million invalid votes (Election Guide). Non-

voters often exhibit particularly low political efficacy, lacking the belief that they have the ability

to make real change. These non-voters are not exempt from the LAPOP surveys and will thus

fall into the category of those that did not vote for AMLO, coded as 0 for my dependent variable

in each of the regression tests. This is important to note because their inclusion signifies that not every person who is coded under 0 voted for another candidate, they could have not voted at all or cast a voto nulo.

4.2 Binary Logistic Regression

To begin running the binary logistic regression tests, I started with the 2018 dataset, so the dependent variable was coded for the MORENA. My independent variables are confidence in political parties, confidence in elections, L/R ideology, identification with a political party, approval of the executive government and a few regarding demographics, such as age and years of education. The survey question asking about approval of the work of the executive branch is coded on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being "Muy bueno" and 5 being "Muy malo". The survey question about identifying with a political party is coded by political party, for example 101 is the PAN, 109 is MORENA, 102 is the PRI and 103 is the PRD. This variable includes smaller minority parties as well, but those parties typically back one of the major parties during presidential elections. The two survey questions asking about levels of confidence in both elections and political parties are coded on scales of 1 to 7, 1 being "Nada" and 7 being "Mucho". Finally, the survey question asking about the respondent's ideology is coded on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being 'izquierda' and 10 being 'derecha'. These then are all used in regression tests with my dependent variable indicating whether or not the respondent voted for AMLO in his three bids for the presidency.

4.2.1 2019 Data Set

Independent Variable	B.	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
years of education	0.057	0.065	0.774	1	0.379	1.059
Age	0	0.016	0.001	1	0.982	1

Sex	0.21	0.538	0.152	1	0.697	1.233
Identification with a Political Party	0.259	0.075	12.069	1	0.001	1.296
Confidence in Political Parties	-0.421	0.159	6.982	1	0.008	0.657
Confidence in Elections	0.055	0.143	0.145	1	0.704	1.056
Ideology (Left/Right)	-0.014	0.09	0.023	1	0.878	0.986
Approval of the Executive Office	-1.731	0.428	16.381	1	.000	0.177
Constant	-21.778	8.427	6.679	1	0.01	0

Table 4.1 Impact on Respondent's Vote for AMLO 2019

		percent	valid percent	cumulative percent
valid	sí	19.7	19.8	19.8
	no	79.9	80.2	100
	total	99.6	100	
missing	system	0.4		
Total		100		

Table 4.2 Partisanship 2019

Table 4.1 indicates that the most statistically significant variables in the 2018 dataset are

approval of the executive branch, identification with a political party, and confidence in political

parties, so I ran the same logistic regression tests with the 2008 and 2014 datasets to see if they

would produce the same results. The data in Table 4.1 indicates that these two variables had the

greatest impact in determining whether or not the voters decided to vote for AMLO in 2018. The

variable regarding approval of the executive indicates that over 68% of respondents think that

AMLO's administration is doing either good or very good, with very few responding that they

think he is doing a very bad job. As expected, those that did vote for AMLO were also the group

that reported the highest approval, although even those that did not were still more likely to

approve of his work so far than not. One variable that is not indicated as statistically significant

in Table 4.1 is left/right ideology. This is particularly noteworthy because this means that there is

not a strong relationship between how people identify themselves politically and if they voted for

AMLO. One's ideology was more or less irrelevant in this election because AMLO and the

MORENA were able to draw support and votes from all ends of the political spectrum.

Voters' confidence in political parties was also significant, indicating that their general

attitudes towards the political parties related to whether or not they voted for AMLO.

Specifically, "Mexicans holding the most negative views of political parties were also major

supporters of AMLO in 2018" (Mattiace, 2019). Given that the number of those that specifically

identify with a certain political party was the lowest it had ever been during an election year as

seen in Table 4.2, those with a negative view towards these political parties was likely also the

highest it had ever been during a national election. As demonstrated below, the variable voter

confidence level is not significant following the prior two elections. Interest in politics and voter

turnouts had increased over the past three elections, so in 2006 and 2012 those that had the most

negative views of the political parties may not have bothered to vote whereas in 2018

independent voters made up 43% of the voter turnout (Mattiace, 2019).

4.2.2 2014 Data Set

Independent Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp (B)
Confidence in Elections	-0.156	0.128	1.484	1	0.223	0.855
Confidence in Political Parties	0.076	0.131	0.33	1	0.566	0.927
Approval of the President	0.31	0.198	2.467	1	0.116	1.364
Ideology (Left/Right)	-0.305	0.068	20.106	1	.000	0.737
Identification with a Political Party	0.533	0.13	16.784	1	.000	1.705
Sex	0.027	0.377	0.005	1	0.944	1.027
Years of Education	-0.026	0.046	0.322	1	0.57	0.974
Age	0.003	0.013	0.053	1	0.818	1.003
Constant	-54.952	13.446	16.701	1	.000	0

Table 4.3 Impact on Respondent's Vote for AMLO 2014

		percent	valid percent	cumulative percent
valid	sí	27.6	27.7	27.7
	no	71.8	72.3	100
	total	99.3	100	
missing	system	0.7		
total		100		

Table 4.4 Partisanship 2014

Table 4.3 shows that the 2014 dataset indicates slightly different statistically significant variables than those of the 2018 data. According to the 2014 data, the Mexican people's ideology and identification with a political party affected whether they voted for the AMLO as he was running with the PRD. This was not the case in 2018, where approval of the executive's work and confidence in political parties were instead significant. This supports my hypothesis that AMLO's success with the MORENA instead of his prior two attempts with the PRD is largely due to their dissatisfaction with the current three major parties since with the MORENA he was able to reach voters from each party, whereas here in the 2014 dataset ideology does have a strong relationship with who they voted for. In 2012, party loyalty, particularly to the victorious PRI, was still a deciding factor during the national presidential elections. Following Felipe Calderón's administration, a PAN candidate, the Mexican people were willing to give the PRI one more chance because of their disappointment with Calderón's failure to curb organized crime. Going into the 2012 election, Peña Nieto's greatest advantage was the PRI party's traditional support. Party affiliation and support mattered significantly less in the 2018 election, with the MORENA dramatically gaining popularity, and AMLO gaining votes from independents and even other parties. Though already low in 2014 with 27% survey respondents indicating specific partisanship as seen in Table 4.4, in 2019 respondents demonstrated that only

19.8% consider themselves to be affiliated with a political party. This made the 2018 election much more open to competition and minority parties such as MORENA.

4.2.3 2008 Data Set

Independent Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
To what point do you trust elections?	-0.291	0.095	9.37	1	0.002	0.748
To what point do you trust Political Parties?	0.012	0.099	0.015	1	0.904	1.012
Talking about the government in general, would you say Felipe Calderon is doing…	0.527	0.208	6.438	1	0.01	1.694
Which political party do you sympathize with?	0.736	0.183	16.126	1	.000	2.087
Ideology (Left/Right)	-0.171	0.069	6.174	1	0.013	0.843
Sex	-0.131	0.333	0.154	1	0.695	0.877
Years of School	-0.044	0.041	1.186	1	0.276	0.957
Age	0.018	0.012	2.345	1	0.126	1.018
Constant	-76.267	18.705	16.625	1	.000	0

Table 4.5 Variables' Impact on Respondent's Vote for AMLO 2008

		percent	valid percent	cumulative
valid	sí	31.7	32.2	32.2
	no	66.8	67.8	100
	total	98.5	100	

Table 4.6 Partisanship 2008

The case of the 2006 election varied even greater from the 2018 election according to the data indicated in Table 4.5. Unlike the 2018 election, left/right ideology was significant, as it was in the 2014 data set. Even though the PRD was still the third most popular party at this point, AMLO's popularity allowed him to rise to be a close second candidate. Calderón in this election had the support of the PAN and therefore the incumbent government. According to table 4.5, the respondents' approval of the job the president was doing was also a significant factor in whether or not they voted for AMLO, which relates to the incumbent support that Calderón had and

AMLO did not. In 2008, following the 2006 election, 32.2% of survey respondents still said that

they identified with political parties, so Calderón's partisanship support from the PAN members

was stronger than that of the PRD's. Across the three frequency tables, partisanship consistently

decreased, indicating increased levels of dissatisfaction with the existing majority parties in

addition to the individual variables relevant to my dependent variable changing. That being said,

low partisan association in 2018 would include the MORENA, but that also meant that the

number of independent voters was at an all-time high, making the competition between the

parties for independent votes more important. AMLO's success in this category during the

election was essential to his success as a presidential candidate.

4.4 Data Summary

The most significant variables regarding political behavior indicated in Table 4.1 are

confidence in political parties, executive approval, and whether they identify with a political

party. With Table 4.2 demonstrating the frequency of respondents that associate with a particular

political party showing the lowest percentage in the democratic period during an election year of

19.8%, I am interpreting the significance of confidence in political parties to mean that low

confidence, indicated by Table 4.1, means that the respondents were likely to vote for the

MORENA. The majority of AMLO's votes came from either independents or those abandoning

their own parties, as demonstrated by the data in Tables 4.1 and 4.2. I hypothesized that

dissatisfaction with the current political parties would draw both partisan and independent voters

to the MORENA and low confidence, as well as low identification, with political parties both

demonstrate this hypothesized dissatisfaction. Additionally, this was not a particularly significant

variable in the tests run for the 2014 and 2008, both Tables 4.3 and 4.5 producing values of

p>.05. This difference setting 2018 apart from the 2014 and 2008 data further strengthens the

support for my hypothesis and lends itself to why the MORENA's victory is so different from

those of the PAN and the PRI that precede it.

The second significant independent variable from my binary logistic regression of the

2019 dataset indicates whether the respondent identifies with a political party. Party

identification is coded based on which party the respondent considers to be their identification,

so each political party has its own code. The last variable that was statistically significant in the

2018 election data was executive approval, which was also true from the 2006 election. When

considering the context of these two elections, specifically the popularity of the prior two

presidents, this is easier to understand. Approval of the presidents affects how voters decide who

to vote for in the next elections, whether it be positively or negatively. With Vicente Fox's

administration leaving office without a dramatic drop in approval, along with the PAN party still

being a signifier of change from the PRI, Felipe Calderón was well positioned going into the

2006 election. Peña Nieto's poor approval ratings, on the other hand, were extremely low by the

end of his presidency which would then in turn send voters away from the PRI in 2018.

Alternatively, the 2012 election was not affected by the approval ratings in the same way

because the era of newness of democracy and the PAN's victory had ended and Calderón's

approval ratings had tapered off.

One variable that was statistically significant in the data sets from 2008 and 2014 but not

in 2019 was the independent variable of left/right ideology. This variable is responded to on a

scale of 1 through 10 with the respondents placing themselves on this scale to identify their

political ideology. Closely tied with partisanship, ideology aids voters in choosing which

candidates meet their qualifications and which party typically aligns with their concerns. In the

2006 and 2012 elections this variable was statistically significant with p<.05, whereas the p value

in 2018 for ideology was p=.878. Prior to the 2018 election, ideology was particularly important to voters when choosing who they voted for in the national elections, meaning that their party loyalty was stronger and a consideration when casting their votes. When deciding on a candidate in the 2006 and 2012 elections, the voters cared where each candidate fell on the political spectrum and chose accordingly the ones that were closest to their own position. In 2018 however, this simply did not matter to those that were voting for AMLO. This demonstrates that voters from all parties and ideologies abandoned their previous loyalties to vote for the MORENA and AMLO, buying into his claim that he is a man of the Mexican people and represents the country as a whole.

Given that AMLO won by such a vast majority and that his voters extended far beyond the official partisan support of MORENA, ideology as an insignificant variable makes sense. However, this challenges my second hypothesis that the MORENA's strong ideologization contributed considerably to their victory. With this hypothesis I was predicting that ideology would be more significant in 2018 than in the other two election years, which is the opposite of what is demonstrated with the data. One explanation for this could be that my hypothesis is about the MORENA's ideologization within the context of the other three major parties, whereas the question on the survey regarding ideology asks respondents to identify themselves in general. This contextualization is important when considering this second hypothesis is important in clarifying that it is only meant to be considered when also looking at the other parties' ideological weakness, especially during the 2018 election.

When running my binary regression tests, I was hoping that the statistically significant variables would be different in 2018 than in the 2008 and 2014 datasets, therefore indicating that voters were influenced by different independent variables when deciding to vote for, or against,

AMLO. In addition to simply looking for general differences in what was statistically significant,

I was also hoping to find differences in variables that would particularly pertain to my two

hypotheses regarding dissatisfaction in the institutions and ideology. To this extent, I was hoping

that the variables asking about confidence in either political parties or elections and left/right

ideology would be significant in 2019 but not 2014 and 2008. This, in turn was not the case.

Instead, ideology was the one common statistically significant variable between 2008 and 2014

that was not significant in 2018. Although this complicates my secondary hypothesis regarding

ideology, it speaks volumes to the extent of AMLO's popular support. Ideology's lack of

statistical significance in 2018 indicates that voters' decision to vote for AMLO in 2018 largely

disregarded their own ideological identification. Though the data in this instance does not

directly support my hypothesis that the MORENA's ideological strength was a large contribution

to AMLO's victory, it cannot yet be discounted when contextualized with AMLO's prior

presidential attempts. In 2006 and 2012 AMLO was a member of the PRD, who lacked

ideological strength, especially after his departure when they united with the PAN for the first

time since the democratic era.

    Fortunately, one of the variables I had anticipated contributing to my first hypothesis of

dissatisfaction with the overall political institution, confidence in political parties, was in fact

only statistically significant in 2019. With the value of p<.01 for the independent variable of

confidence in political parties, the 2019 data set is the only one with results supporting that

voters' confidence in existing parties affected whether or not they voted for AMLO. Given the

results in the frequency charts, it follows that this would correlate with decreasing partisanship

and increasing distrust in political parties. As an essential aspect of the political institution in

Mexico, distrust in political parties is one indicator of distrust in the institution as a whole. This

is not to be mistaken as attributing the mistrust of one part (political parties) to the whole (political institution), but instead to merely lend support to the notion that voters are dissatisfied with the current political sphere. If the independent variable of confidence in elections was also only statistically significant in 2019, then this hypothesis would have even stronger quantitative support. However, it is not significant in 2019 at all, let alone unique to being significant in 2019, so, while supported with this data, my first hypothesis relies on further support contextual in addition to what is presented here. However, the data does in fact lend itself to my first hypothesis through these regression tests.

One variable that was consistently significant across the three data sets that I had not anticipated was party identification. The independent variable regarding party identification, coded by which, if any, political party the respondent identifies with, assumes that partisan ties are still strong. Given that party identification is statistically significant in all three data sets asking about the 2006, 2012 and 2018 election years, voters' decision to vote for AMLO is consistently dependent on their party ties, should they uphold any. We know that AMLO was particularly successful in winning the independent voters (Mattiace, 2019), which were representing the greatest majority of voters in Mexican history in the 2018 election, as demonstrated in Table 4.2. Although party members are far fewer than independents, the party identification statistical significance in 2019, as well as across the board, shows that party members are loyal. This party loyalty contributes to why AMLO may have lost in 2006 when partisanship was higher and when the PAN was still celebrating a honeymoon period following their defeat of the PRI in 2000. The Mexican voter is loyal to their partisan ties, including to MORENA, but with partisanship falling between each presidential election, their loyalty matters less.

Although partisan ties are consistently significant according to Table 4.1, 4.3 and 4.5, this also includes the lack thereof. According to the frequency tables indicating partisanship levels, it can be inferred that the majority of the population falls into this category of lacking partisan ties. So, even though the ties to other parties are significant and indicative of people voting for candidates other than AMLO, these numbers are significantly lower than those that have ties to either AMLO or are independents that voted for AMLO. This is also not to say that every independent voted for AMLO, even though he performed better in the independent voter category than the other candidates.

Chapter 5: Who is Andrés Manuel López Obrador?

Although the first presidential election for his new party, AMLO was far from new to the political scene in Mexico, or even to the race for the presidency. Beginning his political career in 1977 (AMLO, 2020) he climbed the ranks to eventually be governor of The Federal District and then president of the PRD. As a former prominent member of the PRD, AMLO unsuccessfully ran for president in 2006 and 2012 and then decided to found MORENA just in time for the next national election year. AMLO's road to the presidency has been far from conventional, as a third time candidate whose presence in prior elections earned him two consecutive second-place rankings. AMLO also breaks with the traditional education of Mexican presidents as someone educated in the pre-technocratic age at UNAM from 1973-1976, though not officially completing his degree until 1987 (Camp & Mattiace, 2020, p. 141). As one of many factors that distinguish AMLO from his political counterparts, advanced education is highly valued in Mexican politics which is one reason many candidates and politicians attend schools internationally. AMLO's election helped prevent these international degrees at institutions such as the Kennedy School at Harvard (Camp & Mattiace, 2020, p. 142) from becoming an informal credential of the presidency.

Though the landslide victor of the most popular Mexican election in modern history (Election Guide), AMLO by no means escapes controversy both as a candidate and now as a president. His first loss to Calderón in 2006 was the result of an extremely close election that was riddled with alleged fraud and left many Mexicans doubting the integrity of democratic elections (Camp & Mattiace, 2020, p. 4). These results were also "vociferously disputed by López Obrador" (Camp & Mattiace, 2020, p. 166) following the election and by almost the exact same percentage of voters that voted for AMLO. His popularity throughout the campaigning period,

as early as 2004, demonstrates that AMLO's good rapport with the Mexican people was nothing

new in 2018, even though success on the national level was. The aftermath of the 2006 election

would prove to hurt AMLO in the future. During the 2012 election, AMLO was seen as out of

touch with the electorate and many were "strongly disaffected with his unwillingness to accept

the electoral outcome" (Camp & Mattiace, 2020, p. 262), yet still managed a reasonably close

second place. His climb to the top included winning over independent voters, minimizing the

gender differential and making serious headway in typical PRI partisan groups, such as those in

rural regions with lower education (Camp & Mattiace, 2020). Thankfully for AMLO though,

Peña Nieto's dismal approval ratings by the time he was leaving office did some of that work for

him.

5.1 Presidential Approval Ratings
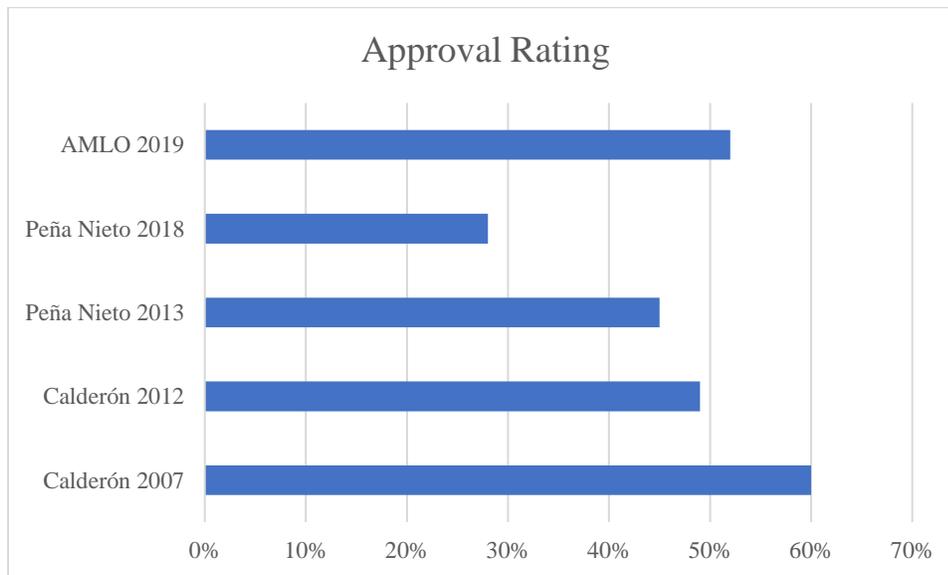
Figure 5.1 Executive Approval Ratings

    One noteworthy aspect of my case study is the digression of executive approval ratings.

Approval ratings are one measure of satisfaction of the administration and party in charge, and

are included as an independent variable in chapter four, but are also worth mentioning individually. What stands out the most in Table 5.1 is the dramatic decrease in presidential approval ratings from Felipe Calderón's first year through the end of Peña Nieto's term, approval ratings dropping an aggregate 32%. This dramatic decrease in executive approval demonstrates the increasing frustration and disapproval in the institution embedded in the Mexican people since 2006. Organized crime began to dominate the political and public spheres in the early to mid-2000's, which is why Calderón started his presidency so popular after officially militarizing the war on drugs two days after beginning his term. Quickly enough though, Calderón's approval ratings dropped as the Mexican people only saw the crime and violence increase while the government's handle on the situation deteriorated. This then inspired the vote for Peña Nieto, as a desperate attempt to return the country's state to as it was before the PRI ever lost power in relation to these criminal organizations.

Interestingly enough though, approval ratings do not reset at a higher number after Peña Nieto's election as they do with AMLO. By design, a return to the once reliable and trusted PRI in practice was also a return to a general distaste for the government. By the end of Peña Nieto's presidency, about three fourths of the population disapproved of him and his administration, largely due to his failure to properly address the corruption and violence resulting from organized crime and drug trafficking. Throughout his presidency, Peña Nieto was marked by skepticism of his involvement in various levels of corruption that further diminished his approval ratings and increased frustration in the Mexican people. Though never particularly high, Peña Nieto's approval ratings dropped the most dramatically throughout his presidency, thus creating a political environment concerned with change more than anything. The 12 years between

Calderón's election and the 2018 were extremely formative in Mexican politics and public

opinion, which, as Figure 5.1 demonstrates, included largely negative changes.

Partisanship has altered greatly throughout Mexico's history and has helped to shape the

electoral sphere, especially during the democratic period beginning in 2000. Though now a much

truer version of democracy, Mexico still battles corruption and challenges with low executive

approval ratings, regardless of the party of the incumbent. With Peña Nieto wielding the worst

approval ratings of contemporary Mexico (Executive Approval Project) leading up to the 2018

elections, the Mexican people had clearly reached a breaking point that meant turning to a new

political party entirely. Although Peña Nieto's approval rating were the worst within the

democratic period by far, the steady decrease and lack of an initial spike after his initial election

demonstrate dissatisfaction and gradual loss of faith in the executive institutions. Also made

apparent through decline in partisanship displayed in chapter four, increase in dissatisfaction

with the institutions is represented in the poor presidential approval ratings. Peña Nieto's time in

office was one of being a figurehead of the PRI and, by association, the history of the political

institution in Mexico.

AMLO's approval ratings began notably higher than Peña Nieto's, implying that at the

beginning of his term, he already instilled more confidence in the Mexican people than Peña

Nieto did throughout his entire presidency. This does not make AMLO immune to doubt or

frustration of the public. For example, AMLO faced heavy criticism both internationally and

domestically following the arrest and then release of El Chapo's son, Ovidio Guzmán, in October

of 2019 (Wall Street Journal, 2019). Anything pertaining to the war on drugs in Mexico, and the

notorious leaders of organized crime groups, typically makes any Mexican leader particularly

susceptible to criticism and falling approval ratings with this instance early in AMLO's

presidency generally seen as a failure. More recently, AMLO is criticized for how he is handling

the outbreak of covid-19. Despite closing the border with the United States aside from essential

business crossing before the United States began taking strict measures regarding the outbreak,

AMLO is thought to be responding to the pandemic feebly, and was, as late as March 17 still

shaking hands with crowds of constituents on the weekend (Díaz, 2020). While the global

pandemic is unprecedented, the general effect on executive net approval ratings has been

positive, while AMLO's have been stagnant at best (Approval Rises for World Leaders Amid

Pandemic, 2020). However, over four years remain of AMLO's presidency so the final outcome

of his approval ratings, and their effect on the next election, is difficult to predict at this time,

though considering his popularity during the campaign season and high approval ratings early on

it is unlikely they would fall as low as those of Peña Nieto.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In conclusion, my findings from the Mexican case study and regression data from 2008, 2014, and 2019 survey responses support the notion that the 2018 presidential elections in Mexico broke with the norm in Mexican politics beyond the simple extent of global populism. MORENA's success in lower levels of government as well as it's sudden rise from nonexistence to the most powerful and popular party in the country set it apart from other cases of populism.

Limitations:

The most effective way to be able to answer my research question would have been to interview a large variety of Mexican voters after each of these presidential elections. I would have been able to ask more specific questions that apply to my topic better than those of the LAPOP survey regarding AMLO. Ideally, I would have been able to find voters that had changed their mind going into the 2018 election that had voted in at least 2006 and 2012 to be able to ask them what factors made them change their minds. However, the data from the LAPOP surveys are an incredible resource and are more than sufficient for responding to my research question. Conducting interviews on my own would have required, above all, time. The data I am researching spans over 12 years, so although the survey questions do not specifically regard ALMO or decision heuristics that influenced vote changes, using the LAPOP data is the best way to conduct my research. Survey data typically comes with their own limitations as well, regardless of the source. Since these responses are self-reported and often regard personal opinions, they are very subjective and respondents can feel the desire to answer one way or the other depending on their personal comfort levels discussing the topics at hand.

Hypothesis One

I initially hypothesized that one contributing factor to AMLO's success was that the Mexican people had lost faith in the current political parties because that lends logic to AMLO winning as a member of MORENA instead of the PRD. My binary logistic regression tests generally support this hypothesis, with confidence in political parties only holding statistical significance in the 2019 data set. Additionally, the decrease in partisanship demonstrates overt frustration with the existing political parties. If AMLO's success truly lies with his party ties to MORENA, I would expect to see partisanship begin to rise in forthcoming years. The key for any candidate to win in 2018 was to win over independent voters, many of which had at some point abandoned party ties to the PRI, PAN or PRD. Given this abandonment, a candidate from a new party was the most likely to find success in this category, even though AMLO had made previous attempts as a PRD party member.

Hypothesis Two

The data was less indicative that MORENA's ideological strength as the most radical party was another relevant factor in the 2018 election. I had hoped that left/right ideology would also only be statistically significant in 2018, but even though this was not the case, literature regarding ideologization in elections indicates that it generally is an advantage. This is an instance in which designing my own survey would have been able to attain more conclusive data to see if this was something at the forefront of voters' minds as they cast their ballots. MORENA's ideology is better examined under the comparative lense, noting that AMLO's previous party, the PRD, did not even have their own candidate to support, indicating a struggle with party identity. While Ideology was not a significant variable in my regression tests, comparing AMLO's presidential bids between his with the PRD and with MORENA, it can be

inferred based on general trends in democracy that the new party's ideological strength was helpful in making his campaign stronger in 2018 than in 2006 and 2012.

The Mexican Voter

Whether Mexican politics have been permanently reshaped by MORENA and AMLO's historic victory in 2018 remains undiscernible. MORENA performances in future elections will be more indicative of the possible alterations to the political scene. AMLO's success and approval ratings as he leaves office in 2024, along with the strength of the candidate pool, will largely determine the future of MORENA. The picture that Moreno (2003) gives us from the post-democratic transition era based on research from 2000-2002 no longer creates an accurate mold for Mexican voter behavior. In 2018, voters took to the polls desperate for change and willing to take a chance on someone they had rejected twice before. The Mexican voter in 2018 that abandoned their partisan ties overwhelmingly supported AMLO in hopes of breaking the status quo of corruption deepened and perpetuated by Peña Nieto and the PRI. Those that stayed with their parties were loyal and voted accordingly, as predicted by partisanship theory. Regardless of what may happen with MORENA in the future, the decisions made by voters nationally in 2018 will serve as an example of the power of the proper execution of democracy as this election upended the recently ruptured party system.

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