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**Mexican Corporatism is Alive and Well: Union Affiliation and Political Identities**



Importante

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## Abstract

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While the voting behavior literature establishes that party identification is a strong determinant for electoral preferences, the corporatist literature suggests that union affiliation tends to drive voter choices. Using innovative data and survey methods, we address the relationship between union affiliation and party identification among workers in Mexico. We analyze how corporatist structures contribute to party identification among both traditional corporatist actors and independent unionists. In doing so, we assess the utility of corporatist legacies in explaining voting behavior in Mexico, and provide a first assessment of party affinities among independent unionists. Our evidence draws from original survey data collected during seven different protest events in Mexico City between 2011 and 2013. We find that like in other countries, party identification tends to strongly drive the vote in Mexico. However, union membership, and sectoral divisions in particular, also appear to influence voting patterns. In the case of those voting for the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), affiliation to corporatist unions also helps to predict party identity, given the traditional ties between the PRI party and the union sector in Mexico. However, in the case of the leftist party, Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), the effect of union membership is even stronger and more formative. While the PRD does not appeal to traditional corporatist actors, being affiliated to any union seem to predict workers' voting identity, in favor of the PRD. These results seem to suggest that the corporatist vote, traditionally associated with the PRI, has become more volatile, and individual unionists are shifting their votes toward the PRD.

**Keywords:** party identification, union affiliation, corporatism, independent unions, Mexico

## Resumen

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Aunque la literatura sobre comportamiento electoral establece que la identificación partidaria es un determinante robusto para las preferencias electorales, la literatura sobre corporativismo sugiere que la afiliación hacia un sindicato tiende a afectar la decisión de voto. Mediante métodos estadísticos y datos novedosos, analizamos la relación entre afiliación a un sindicato e identificación partidaria entre trabajadores en México. Estudiamos cómo las estructuras corporativistas contribuyen a la identificación partidaria tanto de los sindicalizados en corporaciones oficialistas como en independientes. De este modo, evaluamos la utilidad de los legados corporativistas para explicar el comportamiento electoral en México y proporcionamos una primera evaluación de las afinidades partidistas entre los sindicalizados independientes. Nuestra evidencia se basa en datos innovadores obtenidos en encuestas en siete diferentes protestas en la Ciudad de México entre el 2011 y el 2013. Encontramos que como en otros países, la identificación partidaria tiende a conducir fuertemente el voto en México. Sin embargo, la afiliación sindical y las divisiones sectoriales en particular, tienden a influir en los patrones de votación. En el caso de aquellos que votan por el Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), las afiliaciones a los sindicatos corporativistas también tienden a predecir la identidad partidaria dados los lazos tradicionales entre el PRI y el sector

*sindical en México. Sin embargo, en el caso del partido de la izquierda, el Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), el efecto de la afiliación sindical es aún más fuerte y formativo. Como el PRD no tiene lazos con actores tradicionales corporativistas, estar afiliado a cualquier sindicato parece predecir que el trabajador va a votar a favor del PRD. Estos resultados parecen sugerir que el voto corporativista, tradicionalmente asociado con el PRI, se está volviendo más volátil y los sindicalistas independientes están cambiando sus votos hacia el PRD.*

**Palabras clave: identificación partidista, afiliación sindical, corporatismo, sindicatos independientes, México**



## Introduction

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Various scholars have posited that in the context of the breakdown of hegemonic party rule post-2000, the old patterns of interest representation that characterized Mexican politics for most of the 20th century have also eroded. Scholars have generally focused on three areas of interest representation to demonstrate that as the PRI has lost political power in Mexico: in the voting rolls, in representation the chambers of in the Mexican Congress, and in informal channels of political power that were historically used as the power to mold public policy. Scholars further assumed that as these channels of power eroded, so too did the Mexican corporatist system, as a weakened PRI party lost the ability to represent constituencies to other emerging forms of interest representation with greater weight, including a multiparty electoral system (Samstad, 2002). However, even close observers do not know for certain how much of the machine politics aspect of the Mexican corporatist system has survived in the aftermath of the erosion of the PRI's electoral fortunes and ability to pay off support nationwide.

By *corporatism*, we mean a system of interest representation, classically described by Philippe Schmitter (1974) as an organization where the constituent units are hierarchical functional categories created or recognized by the state to hold monopoly representation, in exchange for controls over the selection of their leaders and the articulation of their demands (pp 93). To give support to the post-corporatism thesis, we must first assess Mexican corporatism's core feature, the voting mechanism that exchanged electoral support for the PRI – despite individual level voter preferences or party identification – for material benefits, political representation, and input on policy among corporatist actors.

In this paper, we examine the voting behavior of union members, because labor unions have historically served as the core constituency of the Mexican corporatist system. Even as union membership has declined in Mexico in recent decades, as it has across Europe and Latin America, unions still play important roles for interest representation, especially in the absence of other national level organizations.

This analysis seeks to resolve two important puzzles: First, we seek to unravel the relationship between corporatist affiliation and party identity among union respondents to understand whether and how corporatism alters political identities. Although the literature on voting behavior has a long research tradition, and it is largely accepted that party identification serves as the strongest factor in determining voter choice (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Franklin & Jackson, 1983a), the corporatist literature challenges this assumption by suggesting that union affiliation plays an important role in influencing the vote among union members, especially in political systems that are marked by corporatist interest representation, like Mexico's. As such, we argue that corporatism presents an intervening variable that conditions

voter party identity, and therefore, voting behavior. Our study thus analyzes the effects of corporatist interest representation on the formation of party identity to understand how affiliation with a corporatist or independent union influences party affinities.

Because we focus on party identity among union respondents, we also weigh in on a second puzzle. There is still very little information available on the voting preferences of the dissident union sector in Mexico. While the Unión Nacional de Trabajadores (UNT) officially states that all union affiliates are free to adopt a party affiliation, and that the UNT itself has no formal ties to any political party (UNT, 2007), in practice there is no systematic data available until now to examine political behavior among dissident unionists.<sup>1</sup> Because we are also able to describe how union membership, and more specifically, membership in officially corporatist or independent union confederations influences party identity, this paper provides a first estimation of the varied party affiliation of unionists associated with the independent union movement in Mexico.

We begin by illustrating the Mexican corporatist system and unions' role in it historically, to contextualize the two puzzles that we seek to address. We then discuss the voting behavior literature from American politics that describes the relationship between party identity and voter choice, and discuss how corporatism in Mexico influences party identity at the individual level. We then present a series of hypotheses on political behavior among Mexican unionists that unpack the legacies of Mexican corporatism. Our methods section discusses the survey we use to construct the data, our sampling methods, and the research design. We discuss the results of multinomial logistical regression analysis to show that union membership and different union sector affiliation do influence workers' party identification. Our results suggest that although independent unions do not have a formal alliance with any political party, individual level preferences show support for the leftist parties. We end with suggestions on what our findings contribute to the literature on corporatism, and union-party affiliation in Mexico.

### ***Unions in Mexico's Corporatist Bargain***

Of the corporatist entities represented in the sample we chose to predict the party identity of unionists because even given the decline of union representation in Mexico over the last 15 years (Herrera and Melgoza 2003; García Aguilar 2010), unions still remain the most important expression of Mexican corporatism. The roots of Mexican corporatism run deep: in the unstable years following the Mexican Revolution, the popular sectors were organized into mass associations and linked to the post-revolutionary Mexican state through alliances that provided political support and revolutionary legitimacy for the new government (Collier and Collier 1991). As the

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<sup>1</sup> The public opinion data on Mexican elections that is currently available, Alejandro Moreno's surveys and the Comparative National Election Project data, ask questions that would allow us to identify respondents as union members. Yet, neither is fine grained enough to determine which union a respondent belongs to, which is key to disaggregating unions into traditionally corporatist and dissident sectors, as we do here.



best-organized social actor, labor's support was crucial for regime consolidation in Mexico even then, through the Confederación Regional Obrero Mexicana (CROM) (Collier and Collier 1991; Middlebrook 1995).

However, it was during the late 1930s, during the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) that the roots of contemporary Mexican corporatism emerged, and unions were cemented as major actors within the political system (Anguiano, 1975; Córdova, 1974; Gershenson, 1973). In order to reassert the power of the president, rather than serve under the guidance of General Calles during the *Maximato* period, Cárdenas needed to establish a power base separate from Calles' own mass party, the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR).<sup>2</sup> He began by reconstituting the party within with a new organizational structure, assigning each of the core popular sectors a formal channel of interest representation: the military, the rural and agrarian sector, the middle classes (made of teachers and bureaucrats), and organized labor. By throwing its support to Cárdenas in the consolidation of power, the Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM) replaced the CROM as the most important labor central in Mexico, and thus dominated the labor sector in the new party.<sup>3</sup> This new party, the Partido Revolucionario Mexicano (PRM), was launched in 1937. The PRM would go through additional organizational changes in the 1940s, and would eventually evolve into today's Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) by 1946.<sup>4</sup> While some individual unions and confederations already included the party alliance in their statutes, the linkage between the CTM and the PRI was solidified in 1966 with the advent of the Congreso de Trabajo (CT), the umbrella organization of industrial and service unions, which by statute created a formal alliance between union federation and confederation affiliates and the PRI (Rojas 1986).<sup>5</sup>

Labor played a crucial role in coordinating the base of power for Cárdenas because of its massive organizational capacity. As such, union activity in support of the party began on the shop floor and moved up to regional levels through labor federations to confederations. In exchange, unions received a number material benefits to pass on to members, enjoyed political favors, and played a key role in national politics. First, state support for union organization was sustained through labor clauses incorporated into the 1931 Federal Labor Law, and applied liberally during the Cárdenas administration. An exclusion clause (*cláusula de exclusión*) mandated that employers could only hire unionized workers, effectively creating a closed shop (Middlebrook, 1995), and allowed union control over hiring decisions. Only one union

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<sup>2</sup> Much like he had as Governor of Michoacán, combining the support of peasants, workers and intellectuals into a single corporatist entity, the Confederación Revolucionaria Michoacana del Trabajo (CRMT) (Edmonds-Poli & Shirk, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Earlier in the decade, factionalism among unions led dissident members of the CROM to defect from the union after its shift away from radicalism, and form separate unions in Mexico City. Cárdenas supported the consolidation of these five unions into the CTM in 1936, under the leadership of Vicente Lombardo Toledano, who of the dissident union leaders was the most ideologically wedded to the *cardenista* anti-imperialist agenda (Carr, 1991; Collier & Collier, 1991; Edmonds-Poli & Shirk, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> The agrarian sector was separated out of the labor sector into the Confederación Nacional Campesina (CNC) in 1935 to counterbalance the growing power of urban workers. Popular Sectors were incorporated into the party in 1942 through the Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares (CNOP), and the military was removed from the party structure altogether in the reformulation of 1946, when the party was relaunched as the PRI.

<sup>5</sup> The most important unions in the CT, by membership, are the CTM, the Federación de Sindicatos de Trabajadores al Servicio del Estado (FSTSE), the Confederación Revolucionaria Obrero y Campesina (CROC), and the CROM.

was recognized in each workplace in practice, and that union held exclusive rights to bargain the collective contract.<sup>6</sup>

The collective economic and social benefits that were amassed by unions allied with the PRI through the CTM or later, the CT, were numerous and impressive. State-sponsored benefits accrued to individuals through a number of programs, including healthcare programs for workers and their extended families, various programs for housing credits, household and consumer credit, and generous state-subsidized pension plans. In exchange, workers were expected to show up in support of the party at campaign functions and rallies, and the mass base of workers could be pointed to as a source of legitimacy for the party. Since one's job depended in part on one's status in the union given the closed shop provisions, attendance at rallies and other party functions could be enforced.

In terms of the political arrangements, the corporatist bargain rewarded union electoral support for the party with formal political representation in the halls of Congress, and informal political influence throughout government ministries. CTM leaders held assigned seats in the Mexican congress for the PRI, which in the 1970s and 1980s totaled 90 seats, nearly 20% of the Chamber of Deputies (Bensusán, 2004).<sup>7</sup> Union leaders from the CTM and other unions held positions through the vast state bureaucracy, especially in the Secretaría de Trabajo y Previsión Social (STPS), Mexico's labor ministry, and the labor boards run by that entity. Union leaders were consulted on most aspects of public policies that affected the working class, or had important influence over policies that affected membership, including salary, wage scales, and federal benefits. Unions guided social policy, giving input on costs and levels on state subsidies for food, energy, housing, and utility prices. Unions had important weight as well over the terms and content of any labor reform questions (Zapata, 2006). It is said that the CTM was such a powerful force in Mexican politics, that before the PRI formally nominated its candidate for president, its choice was first introduced to Fidel Velázquez, the leader of the CTM until his death in 1997 (Castañeda, 2000).

However, the price of exchange for these individual and collective benefits was not just the expectation of mass mobilization for the party at crucial moments, and support for the state when necessary, but the Mexican state dominated labor in other aspects of the state-labor relationship, especially labor regulation. Government sets and applies the rules and procedures for nearly every aspect of union organization and the exercise of collective rights through the STPS and labor arbitration system. These areas start with the legal recognition of workers' organizations as labor unions, through the procedures for holding a strike, union elections, or bargaining collectively, remain under control by the state through its labor agents and the labor justice system. In effect, Mexico's unions traded political influence and material benefits for wide state control over industrial relations, which is one of the sources of

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<sup>6</sup> There was also a separation clause (*cláusula de separación*) by which unions could revoke the membership of individuals, and in that way maintain the union-employment link, but the revocation process is so costly and unwieldy in bureaucratic terms that it was almost never invoked in practice. The closed shop clauses were only recently struck down by Mexican Supreme Court decisions. Interview, Supreme Court Labor Magistrate Hector Mercado López, Mexico City, July 14, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> But this number drops to 20 PRI Deputies by 2009 (Bensusán & Middlebrook, 2012) .

dissatisfaction with the corporatist bargain, and one of the reasons why the dissident sector has emerged time and again in Mexico since the 1930s.

Given the collective benefits that accrued to unions through their relation to the state, all mediated by the corporatist channel of interest representation through the PRI, it is not difficult to imagine that individual unionists understood that the fortunes of their union depended in turn on the fortunes of the party. To the extent that the state could provide benefits to individuals on the basis of union membership, the idea that when the party does well, the union does well was reinforced. In turn, individual level responsibility to the party was maintained at the workplace, where presence in party mobilization events on behalf of the union was commonplace, and noted. As such, there were clear incentives for unionists affiliated with the CT to vote for the PRI for political and economic reasons in order to capture those collective and individual benefits, even later on in the 1990s in the face of individual preferences for other parties.

Aside from these material incentives to vote for the PRI, most scholars note that one of the peculiar features of the PRI corporatist machine was and is its ability to incorporate a broad spectrum of interests of Mexican society into the party within the party's factions. Survey data on the hegemonic period explains voter choice for the PRI even in times of political and economic crisis, when voters would be most likely to vote for other parties, as due to partially responding to feelings of Mexican nationalism and patriotism (Domínguez and McCann 1996). During the hegemonic period then, unionists, like many Mexicans, may have felt clear affinity for the PRI for ideological reasons, separate from a corporatist affiliation. For many reasons then, union members may have formed party identities that led them to vote for the PRI, responding to material and normative, collective and individual reasons to do so.

### ***Three Challenges to Mexican Corporatism***

The set of material incentives that maintained the corporatist bargain began to break down in response to three trends in the late 1980s that provided new competition for the PRI for representation. One was the emergence of viable opposition parties. While the center-right Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN) had won some subnational elected offices beginning the 1940's (Shirk, 2005), and electoral reform in the 1970s opened up political space for opposition parties (Nacif, 2005), it was not until 1989 that these parties began to win important national level offices. Around the same time, a section of the progressive wing of the PRI, the *Corriente Democrática*, or "Democratic Current," defected with party leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. The Mexican socialist parties eventually backed Cárdenas as their presidential candidate on a coalition ticket in the 1988 race, and the next year, these smaller parties came together under the new Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Bruhn, 1997). After 1988 then, Mexico became a viable multiparty system, with a full ideological spectrum, including a left wing to compete for worker's votes. The electoral losses suffered by the PRI in the

aftermath implied that labor too began to play a less important role in mobilizing the vote (Samstad, 2002), partially because of their dwindling numbers.

While these important changes to the party system were shaping up, economic crises during the 1980s took their toll on the working class. Mexico triggered a severe balance of payments crisis for the entire region when it defaulted on its international loan obligations in 1982 (Lustig, 1998; Stallings, 1992; Teichman, 1988). The crisis period that resulted, and the restructuring of those loans through changes in macroeconomic policy from 1985 to 1987 that necessarily generated a number of negative economic consequences (Flores Quiroga, 1998), led to high unemployment especially in the public sector (Teichman, 1988), dislocated organized labor, and eroded this base of support for the PRI (Alvarez Bejar, 1991; Samstad, 2002).

Also, with less access to resources during the crisis period due to reduced tax income and across the board budget reductions, the state and the PRI also had fewer resources available to buy off political support, or otherwise engage in patronage (Álvarez Béjar, 1991). Yet, through these adjustments, corporatism remained intact at the core (Zapata, 1998), even as the access to material resources was reduced. Instead of defecting, union leaders were able to rein in the rank and file to support the state during the 1980s. Murillo (2001) discusses how the economic crisis led unions to accept wage freezes for a number of years and agree to refrain from engaging in strikes under the Pacto de Solidaridad in 1987 in exchange for retaining their political presence in the Congress. With fewer members to draw on, unions began to lose their political clout nationally, and scrambled to maintain any influence politically even as they lost importance as economic actors.

Finally, the CT-PRI alliance also faced competition for interest representation from other union centrals by the mid-1980s. There have been dissident tendencies within the CTM since its inception in the 1930's, and defections from the CT as well by democratic and insurgent unions since the 1960's.<sup>8</sup> For some dissidents, maintaining linkages within the union federation and formal union structure and attempting to promote democratization from inside was one form of dissident organization (Carr, 1991).<sup>9</sup> However, other unions have chosen to defect from the CT, or never joined it.

Mass consolidation of the dissident factions into confederations to rival the CT has taken three forms over time. The third and most recent expression is embodied by the UNT, which reemerged in the late 1990s and was reformed in 1997 as a confederation of independent unions (UNT, 2007),<sup>10</sup> comprising 22 industrial and service unions, though it is important to note that not all dissident unions are

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<sup>8</sup> The CT suffered mass defections in the 1970s from key unions, including the Sindicato Único de Trabajadores Electricistas de la República Mexicana (SUTERM), the key player in the "Democratic Tendency" labor movement for greater union democracy in the 1970s. Other unions left after 1978 due to the CT's collaboration with the state to reign in wage rates (Carr, 1991).

<sup>9</sup> This is the form that the dissident CNTE teacher's union has taken as organized sections within the larger Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Educación (SNTE). See Cook (1996).

<sup>10</sup> The UNT was first formed in 1972 by the STRM, the MSF, the Frente Auténtico del Trabajo (FAT) - a large independent industrial union representing workers in various industries), but was eclipsed by the UOI. The UNT of 1997 has no real linkage to the 1972 group other than a recognition that some of the same founding groups of 1972 are also present in 1997, including the union of workers at the social security ministry SNTSS, the STUNAM union, and the FAT (UNT 2007). We thank Maria Cook for bringing this point to our attention.

members of the UNT.<sup>11</sup> The confederation generally follows a policy to promote democratic unionism in Mexico, meaning it is actively engaging in pressuring for labor reform to end policies and practices that limit freedom of association and the right to strike in Mexico. Yet, the UNT has no relationship to any political party in Mexico to push this agenda within the party structure, and leftist political parties, including the PRD, have no labor base or labor platform.<sup>12</sup>

The lack of a party-labor linkage on the left end of the political spectrum is one legacy of the party-labor alliance (Carr, 1991), and it remains a barrier to progressive unions forming alliances with leftist parties today.<sup>13</sup> Because union leadership actively reproduced state control over the rank-and-file in order to receive state benefits and channel demands from unions to the state, the lack of internal democracy and within unions also became a source of discontent and union dissidence. This legacy marks distrust on both sides, and leaves dissident unions especially wary of making alliances with political parties. The empirical implication here is that the independent union sector then would not vote as a block per se, but show wider variation in voter identity across parties than its corporatist counterparts.

### ***Party Identity, Voting Behavior, and Corporatist Identity***

Early public opinion studies uncovered that during the PRI hegemonic period, voters approached elections in a two-stage decision-making logic that did not respond to the dominant voter identification and voter choice model (Domínguez and McCann 1996). Voters first determined if they should vote against the hegemonic system, which for all its faults and democratic deficits, still delivered public goods, and only then considered which party might replace it. Moreno (2009) writes that by the watershed 2000 elections, the electorate was more sophisticated, and his data shows that the two stage considerations were replaced in favor of a clear pro- and anti- system vote in favor of the PAN candidate, Vicente Fox. However, by the 2006 elections, Mexico began to look like other multiparty systems, where ideological preferences emerged in a straight left (PRD/Convergencia) versus right (PAN) contest (Moreno, 2009). In the most recent 2012 elections then, we assume that Mexico has lost most of the distortions in the electoral caused by dominant party rule and looks more like an ideal type multiparty system. Also, Mexican voters are like most others in that today, party identification drives voting behavior.<sup>14</sup>

Our argument on the intervening effect of corporatist interest representation on voting behavior enriches the conventional understanding of the relationship between party identity and voting behavior. The Michigan school in particular is the

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<sup>11</sup> While this most recent wave of union democracy has had more staying power than previous iterations, it remains on the defensive vis-a-vis the federal government. See Bensusán and Middlebrook (2013) on the persecution of the two most important dissident unions, los Mineros and the SME.

<sup>12</sup> Interview, labor lawyer Oscar Alzaga Sánchez, Mexico City, July 27, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Interview, labor lawyer Arturo Alcalde Justiniani, Mexico City, May 26, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> We tested for this relationship, and found party identification to be a robust and significant predictor of voter choice, as did Moreno, using the 2006 presidential election data (2009).

most influential of the strands of the voting behavior literature to establish that party identification is the principle determinant of voter choice (Campbell et al., 1960; Franklin & Jackson, 1983b; Franklin, 1992; Meier, 1975; Moreno, 2009). Additional studies deepen this finding to discuss the socialization process by which individual voters develop ideological affinities for one party or another, commonly understood as party identification. Campbell et al. provided groundbreaking work on the US electorate that suggested that party identification was developed by not just a number of personal psychological attributes at the individual level, but also social, political and economic influences over time that formed a sense of political ideology (1960). Once voters chose a party identification was formed, it remained rather stable, but even so, nearly half of voters were not able to distinguish between American political parties across ideologies.

Our contribution is that we suggest that part of the socialization process for party identity includes the individual-level interests that are instilled in voters out of membership in a corporatist body. We explained above how the relationships at the individual and collective level that were to be formed between workers and their union because of labor registration requirements of a unionized workplace, as well as the access to material goods at the individual level awarded through union membership. We also described the corporatist relationship between unions and the PRI that made it clear that union support for the party through electoral activities was key to maintaining these benefits. We believe that both mechanisms influence party identification socialization processes, to the extent that even where individuals may have other social influences through which they form party identities, it is the corporatist identities that drive party identification choices.

## **Hypotheses**

Our study supposes that first, drawing on the American politics literature, that there should be a positive relationship for all respondents on the measures of party identification and voting behavior. That is, we assumed that all else being equal, respondents should vote for the party that they self-report and which represents their individual party identity. In accounting for the intervening effect of corporatism, we argue that for union respondents, individual party identification measures will correlate with union membership. In Mexico, this tendency will be particularly strong for workers in unions affiliated with the CT. Therefore, *we hypothesize that union membership and party identity are significantly correlated, as we expect union members to participate in corporatist practices than non-unionized individuals. Second, we expect that workers that are members of CT unions are more likely to report a party identity that correlates positively with the PRI than for other parties.*

Third, given that the UNT has not formed alliances with political parties, we do not have expectations about the party identity among unionists in independent labor centrals, other than that these will be varied. However, given that these unionists are

part of the dissident faction of Mexican labor, we believe that they are more likely to distance themselves from the corporatist tendencies, and thus, less likely to vote for the PRI. Therefore, we expect that independent unionists are more likely to report a party identity that correlates positively with the left (PRD, MORENA).

## **Methods**

### *Types of protests*

The survey data comes from six different protest demonstrations that took place between 2011 and 2013 in Mexico City, collected by the Protest Survey Project ([www.protestsurvey.eu](http://www.protestsurvey.eu)). Only protest events expected to congregate around 5,000 people were covered, using the same standardized sampling technique developed by the Protest Survey team (Klandermans, van Stekelenburg, van Troost, van Leeuwen, Walgrave, Verhulst, van Laer, Wouters 2010). Protest events included the 43rd anniversary of the students' massacre of 1968 in 2011, the 2012 May Day rally of corporatist as well as independent unions, a pre-elections protest against then-candidate for the PRI, Enrique Peña Nieto, a post-electoral rally called by the losing candidate for the party of the PRD, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, a march against the energy reform organized by the Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional (MORENA), and a teachers' camp organized by the dissident teachers' union, the Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (CNTE). Hence, our database consists of both commemorative and spontaneous events, as well as events organized by unions, political parties, and civil society organizations without any party or union affiliation. The diversity of events surveyed allows us to decrease potential selection bias in our data and to increase the reliability and generalization of our results. In addition, although the majority of protest participants came from Mexico City, respondents surveyed during the May Day rally, the march against the energy reform, and the teachers' camp came from different states in the country (see Table 1). Hence, we are confident that our sample is not only representative of protest participants from Mexico City, but also from other parts of the country.

### **Standardized sampling technique**

As part of the Protest Survey Project, fieldwork for this study uses the standardized survey sampling technique developed by Bert Klandermans, Jacquelin van Stekelenburg, Dunya van Troost, Anouk van Leeuwen, Stefaan Walgrave, Joris Verhulst, Jeroen van Laer, and Ruud Wouters (2010) for the research project titled "Caught in the Act of Protest: Contextualizing Contestation" (CCC). This survey method has a number of advantages over conventional research designs of political participation. Sampling and surveying protest participants during protest events

reduces memory errors and false attribution usually present in protest participation or national surveys, which are conducted after the protest event has passed (Opp, Gern, and Voss 1995).

**TABLE I. NATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS**

STATE	NUMBER OF PROTEST PARTICIPANTS
Aguascalientes	10
Baja California	1
Baja California Sur	0
Campeche	3
Chiapas	58
Chihuahua	0
Coahuila	5
Colima	3
Distrito Federal	620
Durango	2
Estado de México	303
Guanajuato	11
Guerrero	7
Hidalgo	6
Jalisco	9
Michoacán	27
Morelos	22
Nayarit	5
Nuevo León	3
Oaxaca	87
Puebla	12
Querétaro	8
San Luis Potosí	7
Sinaloa	1
Sonora	2
Tabasco	8
Tamaulipas	3
Tlaxcala	4
Veracruz	25
Yucatán	0
Zacatecas	1
Foreigners	6
No response	67

National surveys lack information as to the type of protest in which respondents participated in the last year. Our survey allows us to report the type and the precise timing of the protest event. This allows for comparisons across different types of protests and mobilizing contexts (Walgrave and Rucht 2010). Surveying protest participants during demonstration events also increases the validity and reliability of their responses regarding their motivations to participate, their mobilization dynamics, and their opinions regarding the political context in which the event is taking place. Moreover, the respondent's presence in the event guarantees that the subject actually participated in the protest. Because our surveyors record



respondents' answers, potential errors of misunderstanding common in mail-in surveys are also diminished.

Potential selection bias was resolved by employing a team of "pointers" in charge of randomly sampling protest participants for surveyors to interview (Klandermans et al 2010).<sup>15</sup> According to Klandermans et al (2010), counting with pointers is essential to increase the chances that they select protesters to be surveyed independently of their own inclination to approach them, as earlier tests showed that interviewers would be much more inclined to select their own respondents based on how approachable they seem to them (Walgrave and Verhulst 2011). By pointing surveyors to randomly selected subjects of study, pointers also helped us to increase the likelihood that our sample was randomly selected from one of the sections of the moving or standing demonstrations, and it is therefore representative of those protest participants (van Stekelenburg, Walgrave, Klandermans, and Verhulst 2012).

Previous fieldwork experience has shown that face-to-face interaction with the respondent has a high response rate (Walgrave and Verhulst, 2011). Because all surveyed events lasted for over 5 hours, we were able to reach an over 80% response rate as survey teams had time to randomly sample and survey other protest participants.<sup>16</sup> Surveyors kept track of the number of rejections, and for every rejection, they went back to their pointer to get assigned to another protest participant.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> In a moving demonstration (march), three pointers, each accompanied by a team of interviewers, are distributed to cover the front, the middle and the back of protesting group. To ensure a fair dispersion of questionnaires over the marching column, pointers count the rows of participants in the moving cortege, selecting every  $n^{\text{th}}$  row, to ensure that the same number of rows is skipped throughout the demonstration, so that the whole procession is covered (Klandermans et al 2010). During standing demonstrations (rallies) three pointers distribute interviewers around the square where the protest event is taking place. Hence, the crowd and space of a standing demonstration was always divided into three sampling areas. Pointers instructed their interviewers to survey from the outer circle in the direction of the centre of the square. As pointers walked toward the center of the square they needed to count their steps and assign another surveyor every  $n$ -steps, increasing the number of steps as they approached the center. Pointers sent out interviewers to the left and the right of the 'line' he or she was following, and interviewers were spread more to the left and right at the edge of the crowd than in the centre. Pointers could also decide to start 'back-to-back' at the center of a square and spread themselves from the center to the periphery of the crowd of the crowd, diminishing the number of steps towards the periphery of the group. Finally, when the crowd was in a rectangular square or broad avenue, pointers counted lines of protestors to assign surveyors similar to the method they followed during moving demonstrations (marches). The area was divided into three survey areas and each pointer went through the crowd counting lines of protestors, and sent out interviewers to the left and the right of this middle line. They could start covering the crowd from the front to the back and from left to right, or from the back of the front and from right to left.

<sup>16</sup> Rejection rates ranged from 2.6 to 53% with an average of 19.3%.

<sup>17</sup> Protest non-participants were also surveyed following the same sampling technique. Non-participants were bystanders and passer-byes along streets surrounding each demonstration event. Non-participants were considered to run robustness tests on our models. Running an additional model considering non-participants allows us to check for potential response bias among protest participants.

## Data

**TABLE 2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

VARIABLES	OBSERVATIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
PRI-ID	668	42	6.29	0	1
PRD-ID	668	248	37.13	0	1
MORENA-ID	668	187	27.99	0	1
Other-ID	668	28	4.19	0	1
No party-ID	668	163	24.40	0	1
Union membership	668	294	44.01	0	1
CT unions	668	31	5.07	0	1
UNT unions	668	61	9.97	0	1
Other unions	668	86	14.05	0	1
No union	668	434	70.92	0	1
	OBSERVATIONS	MEAN	ST. DEV.	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
Education	668	3.40	1.14	0	6
Socioeconomic status	668	3.65	0.96	1	6
Age	668	40.64	15.37	16	82
Gender	668	0.66	0.47	0	1

## Dependent variable

**Party Identification:** the Protest Survey questionnaire asks respondents to mention the political party they currently identify with. In the interest of this study we coded five possible political party identification options: (0) for those who do not identify with any political party, (1) for those who identify with the PRI, the political party that has traditionally carried the corporatist vote, (2) for those who identify with the PRD, the political party the most preferred in Mexico City since 1997, (3) for those who identify with MORENA, the newly-created leftist political party formed by Andrés Manuel López Obrador, and (4) for those who preferred other parties.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> PAN was not included as one of the main political identification options, given that only a minority of respondents chose it as their preferred political party.

## **Independent variables**

**Union membership:** to observe whether union membership has any role in the political socialization of survey respondents, we include the question in the survey which asks respondents to indicate if they are a member of a trade union. A dichotomous variable helps us identify with a '1' a member of a union, and '0' otherwise.

**Union type:** next, we coded whether survey respondents belong to a traditional corporatist or independent union in order to identify whether corporatist affiliation influences political party identification. In order to do this, we use the survey question which asks respondents to list the name of the organization of which they are members. This allowed us to then code the listed union or federation into a categorical type of union (corporatist or independent) using data from Mexico's union registration lists. This significantly improves the quality of our data over national public opinion surveys currently available, which only provide simple information as to whether or not respondents belong to a union, thus precluding the crucial division into competing union sectors that we use in this study.

We classify union membership using three different dichotomous variables: (1) those belonging to the traditional corporatist Labor Congress (Congreso del Trabajo, CT), (2) those affiliated to the National Union of Workers (Union Nacional de Trabajadores, UNT), (3) those associated with other union sectors. This category includes unions that do not identify with a corporatist or independent union federation or confederation, as well as teachers affiliated with the official or independent teachers' unions. We use 'Other' as our base category.

**Education:** we control for the effect that formal education might have on individuals' political socialization process leading to forming an identification with any given political party by including the Protest Survey question which requires respondents to indicate the highest education level achieved. The indicator is a seven point scale where "0" indicates none, or did not finish elementary school, "1" indicates that the respondent completed elementary school, while "2" codes as completed middle or technical school, "3" codes as finished high school, "4" codes as holds a bachelor's degree, "5" holds a master's degree, and "6" holds a doctoral degree.

**Socioeconomic status:** as individuals' socioeconomic status also plays a role in determining their identification with any given political party, we consider respondents' self-identification with a given socioeconomic status. A six-point scale gave them the option to locate themselves in none=0, lower=1, medium-lower=2, medium=3, medium high=4, and high=5 socioeconomic status.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> We acknowledge that this may not be an actual measure of the respondents' socioeconomic status, as their own perception might bias their responses. However, a measure based on the surveyors' judgment of the respondent's socioeconomic status based on his/her appearance without information on their income would also be biased. Having the respondent listing his/her salary without a solid way to justify the response would also present bias problems. Given the surveyor's need to create rapport and trust with respondents, relying on their self-identification is the only way to measure an approximation to respondents' socioeconomic status.

**Age:** to analyze the extent to which older citizens tend to show a stronger party identification as part of their richer political knowledge and experience, we computed respondents' age from the survey question which asks them for the year in which they were born.

**Gender:** finally, to observe whether gender a political party attracts more females or males, we include the respondents' gender. A dichotomous variable was used to indicate with a '1' if the survey respondent was male, and '0' if she was female.

## **Models**

Because our goal is to model individuals' nominal identification with any given political party, we use a multinomial logistic regression. A multinomial regression model allows us to address the likelihood that respondents would identify with any of the four possible party identification options given the respondents' responses for all the different independent variables we include in the model. Given that most of our survey respondents declared no political party identification, we decided to use the 'no political party identification category' as the base to which all other party identification preferences are compared. This has two purposes: first, using the largest nominal category as the base allows us to correct for potential response biases in the data, and second, it also allows us to correct for the contextual bias that Mexico City as a PRD electoral bastion may pose to this type of study.

We included clustered robust standard errors to correct for potential error correlation across protest events and post-estimation predicted probabilities. Results of our multinomial models and predicted probabilities are presented in Tables 3 and 4 respectively. We discuss them in the next section.

## **Results**

In order to disentangle the relationship between union affiliation and party identification, we first constructed a simple model to test for the existence of a statistically significant correlation between these two variables controlling for other socialization factors, such as education socioeconomic status, age, and gender. Results for Model 1 suggest that indeed such relationship exists.<sup>20</sup> However, these results also seem to suggest that this correlation is only positive for the development of a PRI identity. In all other cases, a statistically significant negative correlation between union affiliation and party identification could suggest that a corporatist political identity exists only for unionized workers who identify themselves with the PRI. However,

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<sup>20</sup> We ran an additional model considering protest non-participants to check for whether protest participants would be more likely to mention they are members of trade unions than non-participants. There were no significant union membership differences among protest participants and non-participants. The results of this additional model confirm our results for Model 1 presented in Table 3.

when we disaggregate union membership between corporatist and independent union confederations, we are able to observe that this is not necessarily the case.

**TABLE 3 RESULTS**  
**MULTINOMIAL MODELS FOR UNION MEMBERSHIP AS POLITICAL PARTY IDENTIFICATION**  
**PREDICTOR (WITH CLUSTERED ROBUST STANDARD ERRORS)**

MODEL 1				
PREDICTING FACTORS	PRI-ID	PRD-ID	MORENA-ID	OTHER-IDs
UNION MEMBERSHIP	0.57 ** (0.30)	-1.24 * (0.02)	-1.34 *** (0.46)	-0.82 ** (0.39)
EDUCATION	-0.62 *** (0.16)	-0.15 (0.22)	-0.22 (0.14)	-0.27 * (0.16)
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	-0.32 *** (0.12)	-0.19 *** (0.05)	-0.32 *** (0.08)	-0.59 *** (0.10)
AGE	0.03 *** (0.008)	0.05 *** (0.0077)	0.06 *** (0.006)	0.02 ** (0.01)
GENDER	0.31 (0.33)	0.27 (0.37)	0.41 (0.30)	1.27 *** (0.40)

\*\*\* Statistically significant at .01%, \*\* Statistically significant at .05%, \* Statistically significant at .10%

MODEL 2				
PREDICTING FACTORS	PRI-ID	PRD-ID	MORENA ID	OTHER-IDs
CT union	3.74*** (0.89)	-0.75 (0.71)	+	0.73 (0.54)
UNT union	1.13 (0.71)	1.07* (0.67)	0.18 (1.04)	-0.61 (1.51)
Education	-0.56*** (0.11)	-0.18 (0.24)	-0.25 (0.16)	-0.28 (0.18)
Socioeconomic status	-0.37*** (0.14)	-0.2*** (0.07)	-0.34*** (0.09)	-0.60 *** (0.08)
Age	0.03 *** (0.008)	0.04*** (0.009)	0.05*** (0.007)	0.02 (0.01)
Gender	-0.15 (0.28)	0.13 (0.42)	0.32 (0.26)	1.20 *** (0.42)

\*\*\* Statistically significant at .01%, \*\* Statistically significant at .05%, \* Statistically significant at .10%

+ No CT unionized workers expressed feeling identified with MORENA.

Our disaggregated model (Model 2) shows that unionized workers in the corporatist sector maintain the tendency to identify with the PRI. More interesting here is to observe how both corporatist and independent unionists identify with the two main leftist political organizations in the country. While no worker in the corporatist sector identified with MORENA, independent unionized workers appear to show a significant identification with the PRD. As expected, there is no significant correlation between other political parties and different union federations. The initial significant negative relationship between other political parties and union membership shown in Model 1 can be explained by the very low number of unionized workers expressing a different political identity with those parties.

**TABLE 4 PREDICTED PROBABILITIES\***

UNION MEMBERSHIP	NO PARTY-ID	PRI-ID	PRD-ID	MORENA-ID
NO UNION MEMBERSHIP	27% **	3%	35% ***	30% ***
CT MEMBERSHIP	13% ***	71% ***	10% ***	0 ***
UNT MEMBERSHIP	11% ***	0.05 **	59% ***	23% **

\*\*\* Statistically significant at .01%, \*\* Statistically significant at .05%.

The predicted probabilities shown in Table 4 allow us to assess more precisely the effects that union affiliation in different sectors has on determining a worker’s political affiliation. Holding all other variables unaltered and controlling only for different types of union affiliation, we can observe that although the majority of surveyed respondents indicated having no union affiliation and no party identification, the different types of union membership are strong predictors for developing different political party identities.

The data shows first that CT affiliated unionists appear to be more likely to develop a PRI identity 71% of the time, while being a member of an independent union makes workers more likely to identify with the PRD 59% of the time. In comparison, an independent unionist is only 5% more likely to identify with the traditional corporatist party, the PRI, and a corporatist affiliation may increase the likelihood of a worker choosing the PRD by only 10%.

Second, even more interesting is the comparison between those choosing between the two major leftist political forces in the city. The data show that those respondents showing no union affiliation have an almost equal preference for the two major leftist political parties. The literature, as well as common wisdom, has traditionally assumed that unionized workers tend to sympathize and support left-

\* All other variables are held unaltered.

leaning political parties (Carr 1991). Mexico City has not only been an electoral bastion for the PRD since 1997, but it is also assumed that Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the ex-head of the local government, still enjoys a strong sympathy among Mexico City residents. Hence, it is not surprising that our surveyed respondents expressed feeling identified with MORENA. However, while the PRD and MORENA enjoy similar chances for attracting preference of not-unionized individuals, it is clear from the results in Table 4 that independent unionized workers prefer the PRD to MORENA.

They could already be pointing at relevant trends in the capture by political parties among Mexican workers. These results seem to indicate that although the PRI still enjoys the sympathy of the corporate labor sector, independent workers are showing clear individual political preferences that, if organized into a corporate sector, could benefit other forces in the country. More importantly, this study offers the first individual level analysis of party identification and union affiliation between traditional corporatist and independent unionists. As such, it begins to decipher the extent to which corporatism still prevails among the labor sector in Mexico. In addition, it also offers a first glimpse at the political behavior of independent workers and the possibilities for the development of a corporatist identity.

## Conclusion

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Our results show that union affiliation is a strong predictor for party identification even when controlling for other socialization variables. As such, even in the current catch-all parties' era, labor relations are still relevant in determining political identities among voters. Our results also show that in the case of Mexico, union affiliation and political identities have become more diverse as electoral politics became more democratic and traditional corporatism broke down among independent, dissident, and traditional unions. Most of the support for the PRI comes from traditional corporatist union members, while most independent unionists seem to prefer the PRD.

The corporatism literature tells us that unions tend to align with left-leaning political parties (Collier and Collier, 1991). Our results seem to confirm this claim. However, these results are still interesting to analyze for the Mexican context, as neither independent or dissident unions have declared an official affiliation with any political party. While our results are consistent with the common wisdom that suggests that unions affiliated with the CT continue to identify and vote for the PRI, they also show that the PRD is now the political party attracting workers' preference, especially among workers affiliated with independent and/or the dissident corporatist union sector.

These findings offer important contributions to the corporatist and voting behavior literatures. First, the literatures on unions and democratic transition have long assumed that the electoral democratization of Mexico together with economic liberalization lead to the weakening of the political power of the PRI and corporatist unions. Scholars have argued that with more competitive and transparent elections, the corporatist grip over unionized voters was destined to fade away. Thus, citizens could begin to vote according to their political identities, independently from their corporatist union affiliation. With the emergence of independent unions without any corporatist linkage to political parties, independent unionized voters could also decide their political preferences more freely. In addition, as the PRI lost its political hegemony and its ability to channel economic resources to mobilize voters through its corporatist political machine, it was expected that corporatism would weaken, if not disappear from the Mexican political system.

This paper counters these claims. First, we show that Mexican corporatism is still alive and well. Its importance lies deeper than influencing the vote for the PRI, but in determining political identities among workers. Second, as expected, independent workers seem to prefer other parties than the PRI, in particular the leftist PRD, with a second strong preference for the newly formed political party, MORENA. This evidence seems to suggest that leftist parties could benefit from building formal alliances with independent unions, as they already enjoy support among independent workers. As such, this study underlines the fragmentation of both the Mexican left and independent dissident unions. While the Mexican left devolves into factions and



infighting, it has left aside its historical linkages to the union sector once reflected in workers parties, as well as its radical anarcho-syndicalist heritage.<sup>21</sup> Not a single workers' party exists in Mexico today.<sup>22</sup> As the successor of the old workers parties, the PRD should capture the independent workers' vote, and our data shows that this is becoming the tendency. However, MORENA is emerging as a strong competitor to the PRD.

Finally, our research gives insights into the mechanisms of interest representation in Mexico that can be carried beyond the union sector. On the one hand, if those actors who are most likely to vote as a collectivity no longer do so, we can speculate on the health of the Mexican electoral system, and Mexican democracy, across other sectors. On the other, if leftist parties build formal alliances with independent and dissident unions we may be able to witness a more diverse, and hopefully more democratic, corporatist labor sector in Mexico.

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<sup>21</sup> For its part, Mexican unions that have historically exhibited combative and radical tendencies (the SME, the telephone workers of the STRM, the unions of the mining sectors, the teachers' unions), now find themselves on the defensive in the face of economic and policy reform, in and general, Mexico's union movement has been all but purged of its earliest Marxist and communist elements, which have been pushed to the fringe.

<sup>22</sup> Factionalism split apart the Partido Mexicano de los Trabajadores (PMT), and it was absorbed in 1988 by the Partido Socialista Unificado de México (PSUM), itself a product of merges and splits of a number of other leftist parties. The PSUM joined forces with the Partido Mexicano Socialista (PMS), other smaller socialist factions, and the Frente Democrático Nacional (FDN) to form the PRD in 1989 (Bruhn 1997). This included the Partido Comunista Mexicano (PCM) and the Movimiento de Acción y Unidad Socialista (MAUS) which itself was a split from the PCM, the Movimiento de Acción Popular (MAP), and the Partido del Pueblo Mexicano (PPM), itself split from the PPS.

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