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*Negative Campaigns and Voting in the 2000 Mexican
Presidential Election*

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Abstract

In this paper I analyze the effects of negative campaigns on Mexican voters' behavior and opinions during the 2000 presidential election process. Based on the four-wave Mexico 2000 panel study, I developed multivariate dynamic models of candidate image, candidate preferences, and turnout. The findings indicate that negativity did influence opinions about the candidates and the vote choice, and it had both mobilization and demobilization effects on voters. Negativity measures are statistically significant even when controlling for relevant variables in behavioral models. The paper also shows evidence about the patterns of negative advertising on television based on daily monitoring of media.¹

Introduction

When President Ernesto Zedillo appeared on national television the night of July 2nd, 2000, Mexicans witnessed what no one had seen in their country for 71 years. The President, a member of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, better known as PRI, conceded defeat of his own party in the presidential elections. Mr. Zedillo acknowledged the victory of Vicente Fox—the candidate from Alliance for Change, a coalition formed by the National Action Party (PAN) and the Green Ecologists (PVEM)—and praised Mexican democracy. Regardless of whom they have voted for,

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Mexicans were astonished, both by the unprecedented performance of an opposition candidate at the polls and by the surprising calmness with which the oldest ruling party in the world took the unfavorable election results.

The once impossible task of defeating the PRI in a presidential race was accompanied by a very intensive negative campaign. The degree of visible negativity was probably the highest of any Mexican presidential election. The purpose of the article is to assess the effects of negative campaigns on Mexican voters. In order to do this, I analyze panel data that were gathered during the campaigns and after the presidential election.

There are many types of negative campaigns, and Mexicans witnessed a lot of them in 2000. Some of the most common types are candidate-centered negative campaigns, which focus the attacks on the candidate's opponents, and party or policy-centered negative campaigns, which criticize policy proposals, political stands, and the government's or the candidate's record (Aldrich 1992, Jamieson et. al. 2000). In addition, Mexican election campaigns, and especially negative campaigns, have been heavily regime-centered. Attacks and criticisms have aimed at the very fundamentals of the PRI regime. Many of Vicente Fox's messages, for example, did focus on his opponents, and several ads used candidate-centered messages and images that emphasized the other candidates' character. Such ads were responsive tactics to specific moments in the campaign.

However, the Fox campaign's general strategy was twofold: on the one hand, the PRI regime had to be exposed as corrupt and inefficient, and voters had to be convinced that it was time for a change. On the other hand, Fox had to present himself to the electorate not as the best, but as the only alternative for change. Accomplishing both tasks would coordinate voters against the PRI and dissuade many of them from voting for Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, a three-time presidential candidate nominated by Alliance for Mexico, a group led by the leftist Party of Democratic Revolution (PRD).

In retrospect, it seems that going negative worked for Vicente Fox. Voting intentions changed significantly from the time Francisco Labastida won the PRI nomination in November, 1999, to the day he lost the presidential race in July, 2000.

The PRI candidate was leading in most polls by as much as 20 percentage points over Fox only two months before the presidential campaigns formally began. Unlike other presidential elections in Mexico when the government record had been relatively bad and still the PRI won the election, in 2000 the government and the economy were doing relatively well, according to most political and financial analysts. Media polls indicated that President Zedillo's enjoyed an approval rating of 67 percent just a few weeks before the election. Something other than current conditions must have convinced voters that it was really time for a change.

In this paper, I demonstrate that negative campaigning had significant effects on the Mexican electorate. By looking at the effects of negativity on candidate image, candidate preferences, and turnout, I argue that negative campaigning should be taken seriously when examining the 2000 elections. Negativity hindered Labastida's chances to preserve the presidency for the PRI.

In this research, I use different types of empirical evidence to assess the nature and the effects of negativity in Mexico. First of all, I illustrate the patterns of information and the degree of negativity based on data from a daily monitoring of electronic media conducted by newspaper *Reforma*. Secondly, based on *Reforma's* national pre-election polls and exit poll, I show that Vicente Fox was perceived as the candidate who attacked and criticized his opponents the most. Finally, I use panel data to develop dynamic models of candidate image, candidate preferences, and turnout. Because they are dynamic models, I focus on change during the campaign, rather than attitudes and preferences at one point in time. In some cases I also conduct static models on the dependent variable, but using independent variables from different panel waves. All these data offer a comprehensive kit of tools to understand the dynamics of negative campaigns and test its effects on the Mexican electorate. Moreover, they offer evidence to take the negativity argument seriously when explaining why the PRI lost the presidency to Vicente Fox in 2000.

Negative Campaigns: A Theoretical Review

Going negative is an old practice of campaigning. Take the following phrase by Reverend Timothy Dwight, a Yale President, as an example: “If Jefferson is elected, the Bible will be burned, the French ‘Marseillaise’ will be sung in Christian churches, [and] we will see our wives and daughters the victims of legal prostitution; soberly dishonored; [and] speciously polluted” (cited in Jamieson, et. al 2000).

Candidates are common targets of accusations in political campaigns. In the Tilden-Hayes presidential race of 1876 negativity apparently was a common feature of campaigning. “Despite their personal standing, the election was exceptionally dirty. Tilden was called a syphilitic swindler and Hayes was accused of murdering his mother in a fit of insanity—an impressive double calumny” (*The Economist*, Nov 25th 2000).

In spite of the broad use of negative messages in campaigns, scholarly efforts to theorize on negativity have been rather scarce. Most of the literature on negative campaigns reports the findings from specific races at different levels of public office, but it lacks of a relatively consistent body of theory.

Fortunately, the last five years have brought a significant number of books, articles and papers that focus on the effects of negative campaigns on the electorate (Thurber, Nelson, and Dulio 2000; Ansolabehere, Iyengar, and Simon 1999; Lau and Sigelman 2000; Kahn and Kenney 1999; Lau, et. al. 1999; Wattenberg and Brians 1999; Farnsworth and Lichter 1999; Swint 1998; Campbell 1999; Stephen 1997; Bryant 1995; Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995). Many of them utilize experiments, some use cross-section surveys, and almost none of them employs panel designs. Also, some of this research reaches conclusions based on meta-analysis. What have we learned from them?

The following are some findings from that literature. Let us take a look at the effects of television negative advertisements. (1) Negative campaigns work. Both rational choice perspectives and social psychological approaches acknowledge the fact

that negativity has some effects on the electorate. (2) Negative ads are processed and remembered more easily than positive or advocacy ads. (3) Negative ads are more persuasive than non-negative ads. (4) Negative ads increase the level of information among the public because people learn more about candidates and issues through negative ads than through positive ones. (5) Voters do not like negative ads, but such ads provide them with some details about the potential costs of their decisions.

Scholarly work has also reported several effects of negative advertising on voting intentions and candidate images. (1) Negative ads affect candidate images, generally improving that of their sponsor and worsening his opponent's. (2) Negative ads increase slightly the intentions of voting for their sponsor in general elections, but decrease it slightly in primary elections. (3) Negative ads decrease significantly the probabilities of voting for the attacked candidate. (4) Going negative increases the chances of challengers to win, but decreases the incumbents'. (5) Negative ads that are perceived as true are favorable for their sponsor and unfavorable for the target.

Finally, much of the literature focuses on the effects of negativity on turnout, although findings have been rather inconsistent. (1) Negative ads reduce turnout. (2) Negative ads increase turnout. (3) Negative ads have no effect on turnout. (4) Negative ads reduce turnout in districts with a high proportion of independent voters, but increase it in highly partisan ones.

In addition to all these findings, negative ads seem to matter as long as they are credible and relevant (Bryant 1995). In any type of messages, whether negative or not, credibility of the source increases the acceptability of the message.

Perhaps the most serious attempt to build a theoretical argument on negativity is William Riker's (1996) research on the campaign to ratify the American Constitution. Riker understands campaigning in terms of rhetoric, as an attempt to persuade voters to see what is at stake in an election in a way the candidate wants them to see it. This attempt is not just an exercise of framing, however. Riker thinks of campaign rhetoric as *heresthetic*, that is, the art of presenting a structure of choices in which even those who wouldn't support you would end doing so. In this sense, going negative is to

expose the dangers of your opponents in a world where voters are risk averse. If effective, negative campaigning would lead voters to behave according to what Riker calls a minimax regret strategy: minimizing the maximum regret of your vote. According to this, a negative message attempts to tell voters which candidate is the option for potential maximum regret.

This article evaluates the role of negative campaigns in the 2000 Mexican presidential election. What seemed to matter in this case was not just that negative messages hurt the PRI candidate's image, as opposed to Fox's; what mattered was the credibility and visibility of an opposition message centered on the PRI regime and the need for change. Voters may have been effectively coordinated around that single idea. As in the 1992 "it's the economy, stupid!" motto summarized the American election's underlying meaning, many Mexicans who supported Fox seemed to be driven by a similar reasoning: "it's the PRI, stupid!" I do not have enough evidence to test hypotheses of regime-centered negativity, but what the existing surveys offer makes an important case for negativity in Mexico.

Research on Mexican voting has suggested that, at least since 1988, elections have been referenda on the PRI and voting behavior has reflected a process of decision-making in which voters ask themselves first whether to vote for the PRI or not (Domínguez and McCann 1996). A few days after the PRI lost the presidency, a close aid to Mr. Fox wrote that the PAN candidate "transformed the election from a beauty contest into a referendum on change, challenging Mexicans to vote for or against perpetuating the PRI's hold on power" (Castañeda 2000). This was not new, however. Regime-centered negative messages were not an invention of the Fox campaign. What is puzzling is how voters reacted to them this time.

Before going further, let me clarify some of the terms that I will use throughout this article. Negative campaigns can be understood as processes of political communication in which the sponsor criticizes and attacks a target, whether a candidate, his character, his issue stands, his policies, a political party, the government, or any other aspect being discussed in an election period. In the case of Mexico, the political

regime represented by the PRI was a very important target of negativity. So were the main presidential candidates, Francisco Labastida, Vicente Fox, and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas.

Negativity can also be perceived as an environment without specifically identifying the sponsors and targets. In fact, with all the information that campaigns generate, it is likely that most voters do not keep track of whom is criticizing whom and with what arguments. In order to assess the effects of negativity on candidate image, candidate preferences, and turnout, we may differentiate the sponsor from the target and observe the isolated effects. However, an exchange of negative messages and attacks during the campaign can be simply summarized as a perceived environment that varies from high to low negativity, without a specific reference to sponsors and targets. For example, the PRI candidates for the Senate, not the Labastida campaign, sponsored most of the PRI ads attacking Fox in the last month of the campaign. Their logo appeared in the many ads that depicted Fox as a liar and a mad man. What matters is the degree of negativity that voters perceive in the campaign.

Negativity, however, is not limited to advertisements. The candidates may go negative in debates for example, attacking each other directly. “*Me ha llamado chaparrito, mariquita, La Vestida, mandilón...*” (He has called me shorty, gay, a dressed female...) Labastida said in the first presidential debate held in April, referring to the demeaning way in which Fox had been naming him publicly. “*Señor Labastida,*” Fox replied immediately, “*a mí tal vez se me quite lo majadero, pero a ustedes lo mañoso y lo corrupto no se les va a quitar nunca*” (Mr. Labastida, I may stop using dirty words, but you [and you party] will never stop being trickery and corrupt).

News coverage may also show the candidates and their parties as attack dogs, and the media can also conduct attack journalism (Sabato 1992). In fact, candidates go negative in campaign events that the networks and the press usually cover. This may increase the voters’ stimuli exponentially when assessing the effects of negativity. By focusing on an environment of perceived negativity we may be able to determine the effects of negative campaigns not as a direct relationship between the sponsor’s message and the voters’ attitudes and opinions, but as a perceived nature of the

campaign. We may look at the relationship between negativity as an information shortcut defined by a general environment (no matter who the sponsors and the targets are) and the voters' decisions.

In sum, negative messages communicated either through advertising or directly through televised political events or through news coverage, create an environment that may affect voters' opinions and behavior. Negativity can be an information shortcut. Voters may say that they do not like criticisms and attacks, but negativity provides them with enough information to make up their minds. In Riker's terminology, minimizing the maximum regret through negativity may have affected the Labastida vote, at least among some segments of the Mexican electorate. If this argument holds, some of the Fox support was not really for Fox, but for the idea that having another *priista* in Los Pinos—the home of the Mexican President—was potentially too costly.

I propose that going negative mattered—and, therefore, campaigns mattered—in helping bring the PRI down in 2000, and thereby allowing alternation in Mexico at the presidential level. I focus on the public opinion side of this event, but it may also have some implications for the study of democratic transitions and transfers of power in young democracies. The “No” in Chile's 1988 plebiscite was clearly a regime-centered negative campaign. (Is there anything more clearly negative than saying “No”?). The presidential elections in Argentina that took Fernando de la Rúa to the Casa Rosada were preceded by a very negative campaign centered on the “corrupt Menem government”. In fact, many of the Fox campaign spots were borrowed from De la Rúa's campaign, like the one “fools” ads described in the following section.

Negative Campaigns in the Mexican Presidential Election

Political campaigns in Mexico have been loaded with negativity. Opposition parties have usually blamed the PRI regime for corruption and continuous economic crises. The PRI has usually appealed to voter's fears arguing that things could be worse if the inexperienced opposition came to power. However, it was not until the 1997 congressional elections when the opposition's negative messages became more visible

to public opinion. The campaigns' financial resources were more balanced than ever before, and opposition parties were able to advertise intensively on television. News coverage was also more balanced. In fact, there is some evidence that the amount of information that voters received in that election was strongly and negatively related with preferences for the PRI (Moreno 1999).

In 2000, the balance in quantitative and qualitative coverage of the main presidential candidates even shifted in comparison to previous electoral contests. According to the Federal Elections Institute's (IFE) conclusions about its monitoring of media during the campaign, media coverage did not have clear biases, in terms of time, towards any of the major candidates. Although the IFE monitoring covered a national and local range of broadcasting companies measuring air-time of news coverage, its measurement lacked of television and radio shows that were not news programs. Moreover, the monitoring was very limited in its measurement of qualitative biases. The IFE monitoring concluded that most of the information provided by the news broadcasts was "neutral" towards the candidates.

An alternative though more modest monitoring of electronic media conducted by newspaper *Reforma* illustrates some central features of the campaign's information flow. Table 1 shows the total air-time for each of the three main presidential candidates on radio and television's major networks based on Mexico City but with a national reach. The monitoring was conducted for twelve hours every day in three different times: early morning, early afternoon and the evening, including prime time. Every type of program broadcast in the corresponding time and channels was monitored: news programs, sports, soap operas, entertainment shows, and so on. One of the media innovations in this campaign was the introduction of the presidential candidates in talk shows, for example. As the monitoring recorded time and qualitative features of all information, it offers useful data about candidate coverage on radio and television.

TABLE 1. Time on radio and television dedicated to main presidential candidates: Number of seconds from January 1st through June 28, 2000. (Paid advertising not included)

	<i>Cárdenas</i>	<i>Fox</i>	<i>Labastida</i>	<i>Total</i>
Total	483,962 (25.9)	758,914 (40.6)	628,016 (33.6)	1,870,892 (100.0)
Radio	409,693 (25.5)	660,563 (41.1)	536,378 (33.4)	1,606,634 (100.0)
Favorable	140891 (34.4)	314,306 (47.6)	225,471 (42.0)	680,668
Neutral	197939 (48.3)	208,289 (31.5)	199,349 (37.2)	605,577
Unfavorable	70863 (17.3)	137,968 (20.9)	111,558 (20.8)	320,389
Television	74,269 (28.1)	98,351 (37.2)	91,638 (34.7)	264,258 (100.0)
Favorable	27,019 (36.4)	33,159 (33.7)	41,325 (45.1)	101,503
Neutral	39,458 (53.1)	43,682 (44.4)	42,084 (45.9)	125,224
Unfavorable	7,792 (10.5)	21,510 (21.9)	8,229 (9.0)	37,531

Source: *REFORMA*, Daily Monitoring. Entries are the total number of seconds registered for each candidate. Percentages are shown in parentheses and should be read horizontally for the totals and vertically for the favorable, neutral and unfavorable categories.

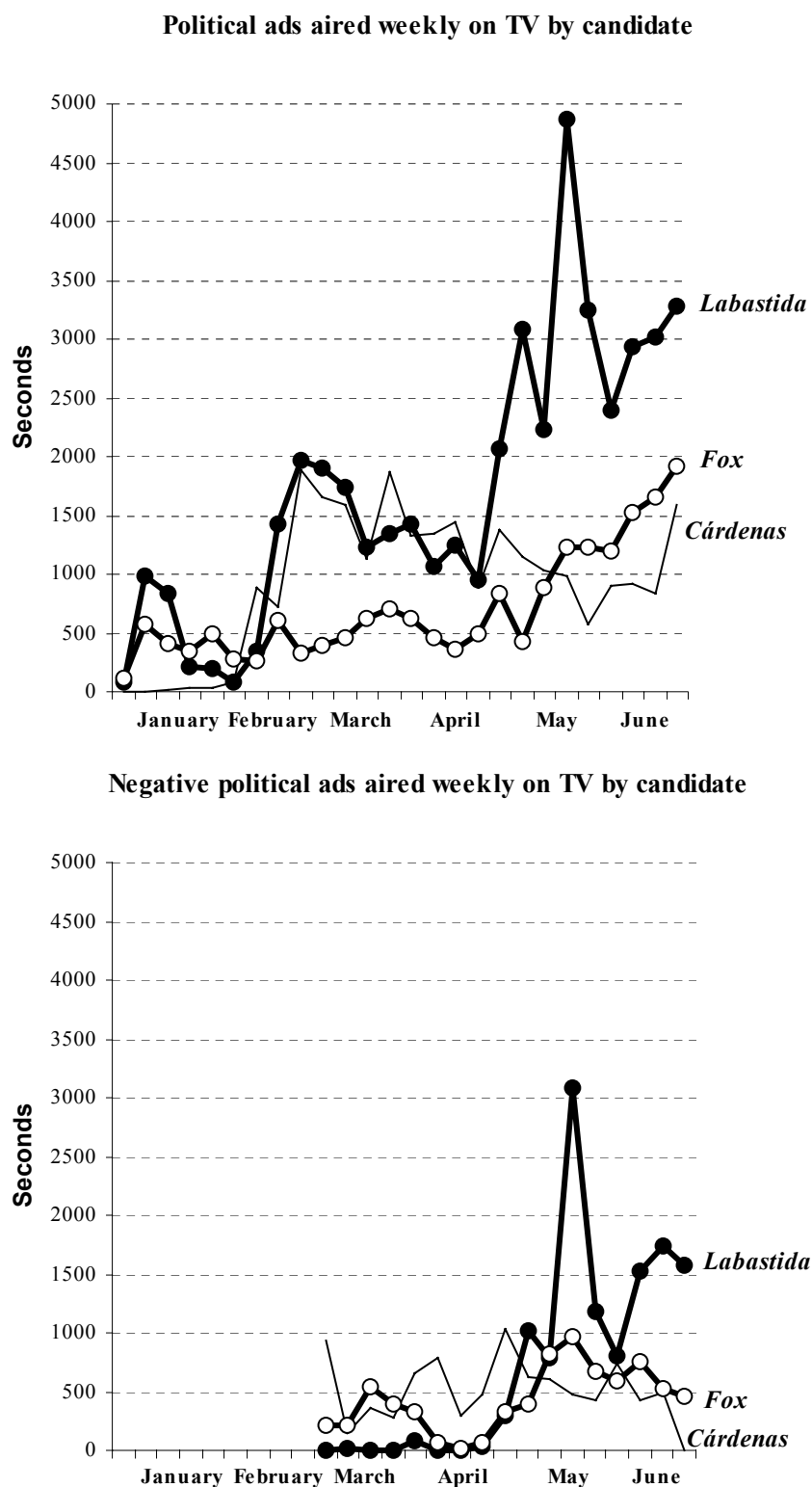
According to the data shown in Table 1, Vicente Fox had more air-time, both on television and radio (without considering paid advertisements), than any other candidate did. Forty one percent of the 1.8 million seconds dedicated to the three main

presidential candidates from January 1st to June 28th, when the campaigns ended, corresponds to Fox. Thirty four percent focused on Labastida and 26 percent on Cárdenas. The fact that a presidential candidate from the opposition had more air-time than a PRI candidate was unprecedented. Fox's highest amount of coverage was mainly on radio, but television also assigned slightly more time to him than to the rest: 37 percent of the 264 thousand seconds monitored, as opposed to 35 percent for Labastida and 28 percent for Cárdenas.

Reforma's monitoring also classified the coverage as "favorable", "neutral", and "unfavorable" depending on the source's position toward the candidates at the time of transmission. Forty eight percent of the time dedicated to Fox on radio was coded as favorable, 31 percent as neutral and 21 percent as unfavorable. The Labastida time was 42 percent favorable, 37 percent neutral, and 21 percent unfavorable. In other words, *Reforma's* monitoring shows that Fox had a 27 percentage-point difference between favorable and unfavorable time on radio, while Labastida had a 21-point difference and Cárdenas 17 points.

Television time was less favorable but equally unfavorable to Fox in comparison to his air-time on radio. In contrast, Labastida his air-time was much more favorable and much less unfavorable on TV. The balance (favorable minus unfavorable time) was 36 points for Labastida, 12 points for Fox, and 26 points for Cárdenas. These figures clearly suggest that, although the amount of air-time dedicated to the two major candidates, Fox and Labastida, was similar, television was biased in favor of the PRI candidate in terms of quality. Let us keep in mind that attacks and criticisms directed at the candidates on television is another component of a perceived negative environment during campaigns.

FIGURE 1. Total time of political advertising and time of negative advertising on television by presidential candidate, January-June.



Source: *REFORMA*, Daily Monitoring.

What about political advertising? According to *Reforma*'s monitoring, displayed in Figure 1, the Labastida campaign clearly had more paid air-time than Fox's and Cárdenas's. At some moments of the campaign, Labastida even had more air-time than both of them together—the monitoring also showed that the time of advertisements sponsored by the Presidency was greater than that of all three candidates together. Figure 1 shows the weekly patterns of air-time advertising from January to June, revealing the different strategies of the main campaigns.

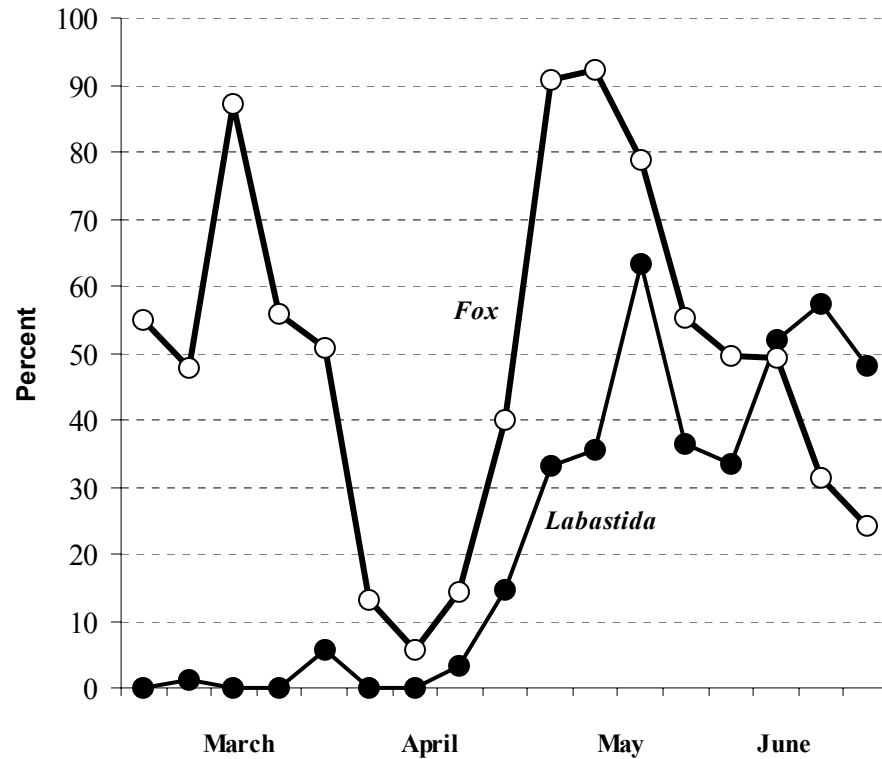
Labastida's started with an early lead in mid-January, then it reduced its ads for about four weeks and raised them again until mid-February. The Labastida campaign did not go negative until late April and early May, partly as a response to the presidential debates that, according to media polls, Fox won. The lower part of Figure 1 shows the weekly air-time for advertisements coded as negative, or attack ads, as opposed to advocacy ads. By mid-May, it is evident that the Labastida campaign not only did increase significantly its television ads, but also that many of them were attacks on Fox. At the same time, the Fox campaign increased its number of ads, but reduced the negative ones, as shown by the two accompanying figures.

If we attempt to draw any conclusions from Figure 1, we would argue that Labastida had more paid advertising and that he was more negative than Fox. However, this is only partly true. In fact, Labastida did have more ads on television than Fox, but the relative load of negativity was substantially higher in the Fox ads than in Labastida's, at least during the first five months of the campaign. Let us take a look at Figure 2, which shows the percent of time coded as "negative" ads as a proportion of the total advertisement time. Fox went negative at least since March, when *Reforma*'s monitoring started to code such categories. That month, almost 90 percent of his advertising time was negative. At the same time, the Labastida field barely ran any attack ads. That was the time when most of the PRI candidate messages centered on his proposals of teaching Mexican children English and computing.

Fox reduced the attack ads significantly in late March, a month before the first presidential debate, which took place April 25th, and then went negative again in early May, before the second debate, which took place May 26th. By then, 90 percent of his advertising time was negative: nine out of every ten seconds of advertising were attacks on the PRI and its candidate. An absence of negativity in his April ads does not mean that he stopped attacking the PRI and its candidate, just that negative ads were reduced. Given the patterns shown in Figure 2, which reveal what going negative looks like over time, it seems that the advertising strategy was planned in advance. However, a close aid to Mr. Fox told this author at the time that the candidate and his team had reacted to a *Reforma* national poll published on March 27th. The headline read “Voters disapprove of negative campaigns”. Eight out of ten respondents said they disliked the way candidates were criticizing each other. Nonetheless, Fox went negative again, and for a longer period of time, later in the campaign.

FIGURE 2. Negative advertising as a percent of total time of political advertising

on television by presidential candidate, March-June.



Source: *REFORMA*, Daily Monitoring.

The Labastida campaign engaged in attacks by late April and early May, increasing the time of negative ads up to 60 percent of all their TV advertising. In June, a few weeks before the election, the Labastida campaign continued airing negative ads, which represented around half of their total televised advertising. They were attacks on Fox's character and personality, as well as his policy proposals: the "gardeners" ad, where Fox was accused of "exporting" Mexican gardeners to the United States is perhaps the best example. In contrast, the Fox campaign gradually reduced the negative

ads as the election drew nearer. In its tactics, the Fox campaign started to picture him as Mr. Nice Guy right before the elections, when Fox had actually been an “attack dog” during the whole campaign. The reaction by the Labastida team to counter-attack came too late. According to political analysts, the mean-spirited PRI ads started to sound like what Mexicans call *patadas de ahogado* (drowning kicks). Fox had been going negative for months and had placed his flag on both the truth and relevance of negativity. This probably made it easier to spin the Labastida attacks in the last month, like the “Black Tuesday” image to which I will return later.

Which type of ads did I consider as negative? The following are some examples. The original Spanish wording is accompanied by my own translation into English.

There are some examples of what I call regime-centered negative ads. In early November, 1999, the PAN tried to run an ad before the campaigns formally began. The ad showed different PRI presidents that Mexico had had since the 1970s in black and white images and questioning their work and promises: “*¿Acaso creen que no tenemos memoria?*” asked the narrator, (Do they really think that we have no memory?). “*¿Acaso creen que vamos a tragarnos un sexenio más la misma sopa que tanto daño nos ha hecho?*” continued the ad (Do they really think that we will swallow again another six years with the same soup that has hurt us so much?). The ad was not run on air-time, supposedly because the Interior Ministry (Secretaría de Gobernación) had asked the PAN not to run it. The PAN accused *Gobernación* of censorship.

Although this ad was not shown, there were many more to come. The Fox campaign ran the following ad on TV:

“No se olvida que los responsables del 68, de la devaluación del 76 y del 82, de la caída del sistema en el 88 y del error de diciembre, son los mismos cínicos que hoy nos piden que volvamos a confiar en ellos. Ellos no han cambiado ni van a cambiar. Los que ya cambiamos somos la mayoría de los mexicanos. Nos vemos el 2 de julio. Ya ganamos. Vota Alianza por el Cambio. Presidente Fox.

(We can’t forget that those who are responsible for [the student massacre in] 1968, for the peso devaluation in 1976 and 1982, for the “fall of the system” [election fraud] in 1988, and for the “December error” [in 1994], are the same cynical people who are asking us to trust them again. They have not changed, nor will they change.

We, the majority of Mexicans, are the ones who have changed. We'll see you on July 2nd. We already won. Vote Alliance for Change. President Fox.

This ad blames the PRI for dark episodes of Mexican recent history. Nonetheless, the Fox campaign had more easy-to-remember negative messages. At the beginning of the campaign, the Fox team ran several ads addressing different issues and asking voters to imagine a country without the PRI running it: *"Imagínate un México donde los funcionarios estén para servir al público y no para servirse de él. Imagínate un México sin el PRI. Imagínatelo y ya esta hecho. Fox ya."* (Imagine a country [Mexico] where public officials serve the public instead serving themselves from it. Imagine Mexico without the PRI. Imagine it and it's done. Fox, now). The "ya" expression became a continuously aired message meaning that Mexicans had enough with the PRI. *"Ya, ya, ya, ya, ya, ya, ya, ya ... Ya basta del PRI, vota por el cambio. Fox Presidente"* (Now, now, now, now, now... it's enough with the PRI, vote for change. Fox for President). The "ya" also became a symbol of Fox support represented by the Churchill-like V of victory made with the fingers.

Another ad was taken directly from De la Rúa's campaign with a young couple talking, hiding their faces and showing their backs to the camera:

"Hola, soy Juan y salgo así porque, bueno, debo tener cara de tonto. Si no, cómo te explicas que después de 70 años de estar gobernando nos dicen que ellos son el cambio. Ella es María, mi mujer, otra tonta. Y ahora ellos van a terminar con la corrupción, la inseguridad y la pobreza que ellos mismos generaron. Nos quieren ver la cara de tontos, pero no lo somos. El 2 de julio vamos a volver a mirar hacia adelante en México. Porque ya somos la mayoría y sabemos toda la verdad. Cada vez somos más." (Fox logo shown)

(Hello, my name is Juan, and I am shown like this because, well, I must be a fool. She is my wife, María, another fool. And now, they are going to finish with the corruption, the crime, and the poverty that they created themselves. They think we are fools, but we are not. On July 2, we are going to look ahead in Mexico. We are the majority and we know the truth. We are more and more every time).

Many of Fox's messages referred to the evil 71 years of PRI rule, corruption, massacres, drug trafficking, election fraud, the Salinas family, and so on. However, some of them were also charged with direct attacks to the PRI candidate, Francisco

Labastida. Look at the following example of a personal attack implying that Labastida was a homosexual: A male narrator says “*Labastida y el PRI tienen nuevas mañas para obtener votos*” (Labastida and the PRI have new tricks to get votes). A song is played and black-and-white images of corpulent semi-nude men who participated in a PRI rally with Mr. Labastida are shown: “*Unos lo tienen largo, otros lo tienen corto, unos lo tienen más largo y otros lo tienen más corto...*” (Some have it long, some have it short... Some have it longer than others do).

As the song continues Labastida is shown hugging and carrying State of Mexico Governor Arturo Montiel. The male voice concludes: “*Esto comprueba lo que pensábamos la mayoría de los mexicanos: Labastida es muy mañoso. Necesitamos como presidente un hombre... honesto y derecho; no a un mañoso*”. (This proves what most of us, Mexicans, thought: Labastida has weird habits. We need a president who is a man... who is honest and right, not a tricky one).

On the other side, the Labastida campaign ran several ads trying to expose Fox as an incoherent and obscene person, as well as a liar. The following ad taps some of these features:

“Muchos mexicanos que van a Estados Unidos buscando empleo están muriendo. Sufren de abusos de autoridades y de gente racista que les dispara como si fueran presas de cacería. El 8 de mayo, Fox fue a los Estados Unidos para reunirse con el Congreso de California y adelantó que criticaría fuertemente al gobierno de ese país por los abusos que sufren nuestros compatriotas. Sin embargo, Fox prefirió quedar bien con los políticos estadounidenses y decidió no decir lo que tenía preparado. Evitó hablar de los mexicanos que mueren injustamente porque le dio miedo quedar mal con Estados Unidos (a newspaper headline is shown on screen: “He chickened out”). Fox es muy hablador, cuando le conviene.”

(Many Mexicans who go to the United States looking for a job are dying. They suffer abuses from authorities and racist people who shoot at them as if they were hunting preys. On May 8th, Fox went to the United States to meet the California Congress. He said in advance that he would harshly criticize that country's government for the abuses that our countrymen suffer. However, Fox preferred to look good before American politicians and he decided not to say what he had prepared. He avoided speaking about Mexicans who die unfairly. He was afraid to make himself look bad with the Americans. [He chickened out]. Fox talks too much... when it's convenient to him).

Perhaps the ultimate example of attacks against Fox centered on the so-called “Black Tuesday”, a live TV negotiation between the candidates to determine a new date for the second presidential debate. All three major candidates gathered at Cárdenas’s campaign headquarters to arrange a new schedule for the debate, but Fox opposed the proposal and insisted in following the original plan, that is, to hold the debate that same day. Labastida, Cárdenas, and Joaquín Vargas, President of the National Chamber of Radio and Television Industry, tried to convince Fox that there were not appropriate conditions to hold the debate that day. However, Fox replied stubbornly “*hoy, hoy, hoy, el debate es hoy*” (Today, today, today, the debate is today). Most analysts thought Fox had virtually lost the election that afternoon.

After that event, remembered as Black Tuesday, both the Labastida and the Cárdenas campaigns ran ads criticizing Fox’s intolerance and exposing him as a lying and stubborn individual. “*Estoy esperando un fax*” (I am waiting for a fax), he argued referring to an apparent letter from the Televisa network confirming that the debate could have been aired on TV that same day. However, the calculus of the negative ads based on the Black Tuesday experience did not take into account the spin by the Fox campaign. They showed him as a man of “today”, someone with firm positions—something that many believed Fox lack of, given his common swings of discourse—someone who would bring change to Mexico “today”. Public opinion reacted favorably to that image. The impact of the word “today” was important and Fox referred to it several times from then on, even in his inauguration speech as President on December 1st, almost seven months after he unintentionally coined the idea.

Black Tuesday was remembered by a significant amount of survey respondents after the election. For example, 61 percent of respondents in the fourth round of the Mexico 2000 Panel Study correctly attributed the phrase “the debate is today” to Vicente Fox, while 34 percent did not know who said it. The other 5 percent mentioned some other candidate. Also, 50 percent of the same respondents attributed the statement “I am waiting for a fax” to the *panista*, while 46 percent did not know who said it.

Before concluding this section and moving on to a more rigorous statistical analysis about the effects of negative campaigns, let me show some figures on the perceived negativity of the campaign. From the numbers in Figure 2, we should expect that Fox was more widely perceived as a negative candidate than Labastida or Cárdenas were. Survey data do confirm this.

TABLE 2. Public perceptions about the presidential candidates' negativity.

	<i>March</i>	<i>May 14</i>	<i>May 28</i>	<i>June</i>
	%	%	%	%
In your opinion, what has [CANDIDATE] been mostly doing in his campaign, communicating government proposals or criticizing other candidates?				
Cárdenas				
Communicating proposals	27	30	31	32
Criticizing other candidates	41	43	46	47
Fox				
Communicating proposals	23	26	22	22
Criticizing other candidates	51	51	59	62
Labastida				
Communicating proposals	42	38	45	36
Criticizing other candidates	35	41	38	47
Which candidate is the one that has [ACTIVITY]... the most?				
Criticized other candidates' character				
Cárdenas	--	--	--	11
Fox	--	--	--	48
Labastida	--	--	--	21
Criticized other candidates' proposals				
Cárdenas	--	--	--	17
Fox	--	--	--	39
Labastida	--	--	--	21
Criticized other candidates' record in office				
Cárdenas	--	--	--	14
Fox	--	--	--	41
Labastida	--	--	--	18
Criticized other candidates' parties				
Cárdenas	--	--	--	15
Fox	--	--	--	42
Labastida	--	--	--	17

Sample size	1,533	1,547	1,543	1,545
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Source: *REFORMA*, National Pre-Election Polls.

Table 2 shows two measurements of public perceptions about the candidates' negativity. The first question simply asked whether each of the three major candidates had been mainly communicating his government plans or mainly criticizing his opponents during the campaign. From this question, it is clear that Fox was perceived as the one who criticized others the most. This perception became more common from March to June, as the election drew nearer.

The second question is a set of items asking which of the candidates sponsored more attacks towards several targets: their opponents' character, proposals, parties, and record as public officials—the three main candidates had been Governors in their natal states, Labastida was also Secretary of State in several ministries, and Cárdenas was Chief of Government in the Federal District—the other parties and their. In every single item Fox was perceived as the main “attack dog” by a two to one ratio, and even more in some items.

These figures show that Fox was the most negative candidate according to respondents' perceptions. Exit poll data confirmed these numbers, showing that Fox was indeed perceived by actual voters as the most negative candidate. *Reforma's* national exit poll of 3,380 respondents showed that 51 percent of the interviewed voters thought Fox was the candidate who criticized his opponents the most. In contrast, 25 percent thought Labastida was the main attacker and 11 percent said Cárdenas was.

This did not seem to hurt Fox, however, as much as it hurt his opponents. According to the exit poll, only one fifth of those who thought Labastida or Cárdenas were the main attackers voted for them respectively. One third did so for Fox. That is, voters did not seem to mind much about Fox's negativity. On the contrary, it may have been such negativity what drove some voters away from Labastida. In the next section I test this assertion with panel data. The findings demonstrate that there were significant effects of negativity on candidate image, candidate preferences, and turnout. The

dynamic models developed in this research indicate that negativity had significant effects on the electorate.

The Effects of Negativity

In order to assess the effects of negativity in the 2000 Mexican presidential election, I developed multivariate models that predict the following dependent variables: (1) changes in candidate image during the campaign, (2) candidate preferences, and (3) turnout.

Changes in candidate image. Negative campaigns played an important role in changing voters' opinions about the candidates during the campaigns. To demonstrate this, I developed a dynamic model of candidate image based on waves 1 and 3 of the Mexico 2000 Panel Study, which represent the beginning and the end of the campaign. The model was estimated with multinomial logit regression where the dependent variable is a non-ordered, discrete variable. The values of the dependent variable were taken from opinion-thermometer differentials and represent negative changes, positive changes, and no changes in candidate image from February to June. The category of no change is used as the base group. In this article I show the models for Labastida and Fox. However, I omit the model for Cárdenas because it was the only one that did not result statistically significant with the same model specification.

Candidate preferences. Negative campaigns also played a role in shaping vote choices. To demonstrate this, I developed a model of candidate preferences, which, unlike the previously described model, is not dynamic on the dependent variable. The model predicts voting intentions for Fox, Cárdenas and Labastida, with the latter as reference category, in wave 3 (June) of the panel study. However, although the dependent variable is static, I did include independent variables from waves 1 and 3.

Turnout. Negative campaigns seemed to have had an effect on turnout as well. To illustrate this, I developed two models. The first is a dynamic model based on a multinomial equation using waves 1 and 3 of the panel study, in which the categories are taken from an 11-point participation scale differential which was transformed into three discrete categories. “Demobilization” represents respondents who decreased their probabilities of voting according to their scores on the scale from February to June. “Mobilization” represents respondents who increased their probabilities of voting on the scale in that same period. “No change” represents those respondents who did not change their probabilities of voting. The theoretical bases for this model follow the debate on whether negative campaigns have either mobilizing or demobilizing effects on turnout (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995; Wattenberg and Briens 1999). The findings suggest that both effects took place, suggesting that they affect different segments of the electorate differently. The second model uses information from wave 4 to assess whether respondents actually voted or not, according to self-reported vote. I use the same independent variables from the mobilization-demobilization model to predict “abstention”: the dependent variable represents respondents who said in July, after the election, that they did not vote. I will provide more details about all these models in their specific sections.

Changes in candidate image

Table 3 shows multinomial logit equations that estimate changes in candidate image from mid February—one month before campaigns formally began—to early June, three weeks before the election. The equations predict negative and positive changes of opinion about Francisco Labastida and Vicente Fox as opposed to no change based on opinion thermometer differentials.

TABLE 3. A dynamic model of candidate image: multinomial logit estimates.

	<i>Labastida</i>		<i>Fox</i>	
	Positive change / No change	Negative change / No change	Positive change / No change	Negative change / No change
	b	b	b	b
Constant	1.756 **	-0.631 *	0.651	-0.658
Cárdenas negative campaign	-0.009	0.058	0.108	0.274
Cárdenas negative news coverage	-0.016	0.224	0.204	-0.162
Cárdenas television ads w1	0.053	-0.155	0.065	0.090
Cárdenas television ads w3	-0.060	0.124	0.115	0.487
Fox negative campaign	0.050	0.195	0.205 *	-0.335 **
Fox negative news coverage	-0.302	-0.425 *	-0.043	0.297
Fox television ads w1	0.020	0.399	-0.069	0.079
Fox television ads w3	0.216	0.095	-0.190	-0.831 *
Labastida negative campaign	0.099	-0.308 **	-0.138	0.157
Labastida negative news coverage	-0.081	0.241	-0.083	-0.475
Labastida television ads w1	-0.448 *	-0.484 *	0.021	-0.112
Labastida television ads w3	-0.055	-0.209	0.034	0.013
R likes own candidate to criticize others	0.351	-0.170	-0.296	-0.115
R likes others to criticize own candidate	0.012	0.141	0.533	0.000
R likes own cand. to criticize government	-0.427 *	0.041	-0.121	-0.014
Attention to campaign news coverage	-0.146	-0.002	-0.194	0.109
Political interest	-0.058	0.139	-0.055	-0.123
Presidential approval	0.030	0.156	-0.012	0.151 *
Personal economic situation	-0.139	0.043	0.075	0.019
Prior preference for Fox w1	-0.214	-0.709 *	-0.082	-0.155
Prior preference for Labastida w1	-0.951 **	-0.327	-0.024	0.337
Prior preference for Cárdenas w1	-0.695	-0.231	0.209	0.587
Weak PRI partisan	0.068	0.421	0.443	0.372
Independent PRI leaner	0.635	1.111 **	0.961	1.060
Weak PAN partisan	0.073	0.515	0.172	0.617 *
Independent PAN leaner	0.474	0.744 *	-0.113	0.160
Weak PRD partisan	0.142	0.819 *	-0.418	-0.112
Independent PRD leaner	-0.426	0.075	-0.238	0.114
Education	0.104	0.123	0.140	0.193 *
Number of cases analyzed	828		814	
Chi-square	103.84 ***		110.78 ***	
-2 Log likelihood	1679.05		1607.05	

Source: Mexico 2000 Panel Study, waves 1 and 3. Author's calculations.

Significance levels:

*** $p < .01$

** $p < .05$

* $p < .1$

Independent variables include several measures of perceived negativity, as well as control variables. Here is the list of independent variables.

Perceived negativity (candidate's negative campaign) for each of the three main presidential candidates, based on a question of what they were mostly doing during the campaign, either communicating policy and government proposals or criticizing their opponents. These are dummy variables that represent criticism as the main candidates' activity.

Attitudes towards criticism, based on whether respondents like or dislike that (a) their candidate criticizes other candidates, (b) that other candidates criticize their candidate, and (c) that their candidate criticizes the government. These are also dummy variables that indicate respondents like these aspects.

Perceived negative news coverage, based on whether respondents think television news coverage was unfavorable towards the candidates, as opposed to favorable, neutral or "don't know". These are also dummy variables.

Attention to television advertisements, based on whether respondents said they had watched ads on TV for each of the three main candidates, both in February and June. It's important to keep in mind the timing, since Labastida's negative ads did not start until late April.

Control variables include presidential approval, retrospective economic evaluations, political interest, the extent to which respondents follow campaign news on television, prior candidate preferences (reported in February), party identification, and education. Other demographic variables were not statistically significant.

Negativity influenced the candidates' image in different ways. Let us take Labastida's case first. What explains the deterioration of the PRI candidate's image during the campaign? Whose opinions about Labastida worsen the most? The model indicates that those who said in February that they approved of the way Ernesto Zedillo was handling his job as President were more likely to lower their opinion scores about

the incumbent party's candidate. This paradoxical finding is complemented with the fact that PRI leaners also reduced their favorable ratings about Labastida. So did PAN leaners and weak PRD partisans. If candidate opinion thermometers represent voters' expected utilities, then Labastida's decreased among Zedillo supporters and PRI leaners.

However, Labastida's own negativity seemed to have played a role in preventing a decrease in favorable ratings, especially among strong partisans, who tend to like their candidate's criticisms. The negative coefficient of Labastida's perceived attacks on other candidates reduced the probabilities of an unfavorable change in his opinion ratings. Those who said, in February, that they had watched Labastida ads on TV were less likely to worsen their opinions about the *priísta*.

The model also indicates that those who perceived negative news coverage for Vicente Fox were less likely to decrease their expected utilities from Labastida. That is, perceived unfavorable coverage for Fox hindered a decrease of Labastida scores. However, those who said in February that they would vote for Fox were less likely to worsen their opinions about the PRI candidate, perhaps because they were already low.

In the column of positive change in Labastida's opinion thermometer, all significant coefficients have a negative sign, meaning that their respective variables reduced the probabilities of having higher expected utilities from him. Preferences for Labastida in February played against an improving image in June, meaning that several respondents who said they would vote for him did not improve their opinions about him during the campaign. Also, a taste for government-centered criticism stopped any improvement in Labastida's image, which suggests that those who like the government to be criticized were opposition partisans. In any case, government-centered negativity prevented an increase of Labastida's expected utilities.

Let us now turn to the Fox case. The only statistically significant variable that predicts positive changes in Fox's opinion thermometer is his own negativity. This means that perceptions about his criticisms to other candidates were more effective in improving Fox's image during the campaign than perceptions of his policy proposals. Negativity worked for him.

Fox's negativity also had a significant influence in hindering unfavorable changes in Fox's opinion scale: respondents who perceived him as an attack candidate rather than as an advocacy candidate were less likely to decrease their expected utilities. Also, having watched Fox's TV ads towards the end of the campaign hampered a deterioration of his image. However, perceptions about Cárdenas's negativity damaged Fox's image significantly. Again, negativity worked. It worked favorably for Fox when his campaign was perceived as a matter of criticism rather than advocacy. It worked unfavorably for Fox when Cárdenas's campaign was more critical than advocating. Labastida's negativity was not significant in damaging Fox's image, however, in spite of the many efforts and resources employed to doing so. This is an important finding, given the fact that Fox was the main target of PRI-sponsored attacks.

Presidential approval and weak identification with PAN were strongly associated with a reduction of expected probabilities on Fox. This means that Fox suffered a loss during the campaign among weak *panistas*, which, at the end, did not have a significant impact on the vote, as I will illustrate below. Many Fox voters may have not liked his candidate, but still they voted for him.

In summary, the effects of negativity on candidate image seemed to have worked in several ways: perceptions of Fox conducting a criticism campaign rather than an advocacy one improved his scores on an opinion thermometer and hindered any decrease on it. In contrast, Fox's image was damaged by Cárdenas's criticisms, but not by Labastida's and the PRI's. Labastida's own image did not benefit from anything in particular. However, it suffered from Fox's negativity—although not significantly—and, more importantly, from Presidential approval and weak PRI partisanship.

Candidate preferences

Table 4 shows a multivariate model of vote choice using candidate preferences in June—wave 3 of the panel study—as dependent variable. The equation is a multinomial logit with preferences for Fox, Cárdenas, and Labastida, this latter being the reference category. The model includes many of the negativity variables shown in

Table 3 and described in the previous section, as well as variables that are common in voting models, such as retrospective evaluations, issue positions, candidate image, party identification, subjective probabilities of winning for each candidate, and socio-demographic measures.

TABLE 4. A model of candidate preferences: multinomial logit estimates.

	<i>Fox/ Labastida</i>	<i>Cárdenas/ Labastida</i>
	b	b
Constant	-0.780	4.420 **
Cárdenas negative campaign	0.323	0.913 **
Cárdenas negative news coverage	0.773	0.503
Cárdenas television ads w1	0.321	0.813
Cárdenas television ads w3	1.142 *	0.687
Fox negative campaign	0.537 **	0.008
Fox negative news coverage	-0.287	0.049
Fox television ads w1	0.937	1.000
Fox television ads w3	1.239	-0.863
Labastida negative campaign	-0.734 **	-0.630 **
Labastida negative news coverage	-0.859	-0.691
Labastida television ads w1	-0.499	-1.228
Labastida television ads w3	-1.477 *	-0.055
R likes own candidate to criticize others	-0.457	-0.968
R likes others to criticize own candidate	0.172	0.754
R likes own candidate to criticize government	-0.350	-0.306
Presidential approval	-0.450 **	-0.643 **
Retrospective national economic evaluations	0.111	0.070
Retrospective personal economic evaluations	0.097	-0.069
Retrospective crime evaluations	-0.188	0.209
Retrospective corruption evaluations	0.117	-0.061
Prior preference for Fox w1	1.932 **	-0.820
Prior preference for Labastida w1	-0.450	-1.900 ***
Prior preference for Cárdenas w1	-1.593	0.166
Weak PRI partisan	0.291	1.014 *
Independent PRI leaner	-1.375	0.934
Weak PAN partisan	0.207	0.734
Independent PAN leaner	1.201	0.958
Weak PRD partisan	1.967 **	0.904
Independent PRD leaner	0.963	0.637
Subjective probabilities of Cárdenas winning	-0.136	0.501 ***
Subjective probabilities of Fox winning	0.392 ***	-0.052
Subjective probabilities of Labastida winning	-0.585 ***	-0.496 ***
Cárdenas opinion thermometer	0.058	0.311 **
Fox opinion thermometer	0.623 ***	0.039
Labastida opinion thermometer	-0.498 ***	-0.689 ***
Age	-0.034 **	0.013
Education	-0.056	0.411 *
Number of cases analyzed	675	

Chi-square	1013.84 ***
-2 Log likelihood	387.98

Source: Mexico 2000 Panel Study, waves 1 and 3. Author's calculations. Significance levels: see Table 3.

The model provides evidence that perceived negativity influenced the vote choice, even when controlling by generally strong variables such as partisanship and economic retrospective evaluations. Let us concentrate in the column of Fox versus Labastida. The most significant variables predicting Fox's support, as opposed to Labastida's, were Fox's perceived negative campaign, Cardenas's television ads—not Fox's—measured in June, weak PRD partisanship, high subjective probabilities of winning, Fox's favorable image, and age. Fox's negativity mattered, and that probably helped convince weak *perredistas* to vote for him—the so-called “voto útil” may have been but a response to a critical image, something that weak PRD identifiers may have been attracted to. Also, the probability of preferring Fox to Labastida increased as age decreased. The younger the respondent, the more likely that she preferred Fox to Labastida. Finally, prior preferences—in February—were strong predictors of later preferences—in June; that is, prior Fox voters did not seem to abandon him significantly during the campaign.

Preferences for Labastida increased significantly with presidential approval, candidate image, Labastida's negativity, PRI ads, and subjective probabilities of winning. Unlike Fox's prior vote, Labastida support in February is not a strong predictor of Labastida support in June, reflecting what media “horse race” polls showed throughout the campaign: a constant debilitation of Labastida support.

Issues did not matter. At least not the ones included in the model. Economic retrospective evaluations, both pocketbook and sociotropic, did not matter either. The quality of news coverage as perceived by panel respondents had no influence whatsoever. The significance of weak partisans and independent leaners was minimal in comparison to strong partisans, who clearly supported their respective candidates. Interestingly, weak PRD identifiers supported Fox significantly, crossing their party lines from PRD to PAN.

Cárdenas's negativity also played a significant role in promoting his own support. Taking Labastida as reference, the PRD presidential candidate also benefited from weak *priistas*, from subjective probabilities of winning, from his favorable ratings in the opinion thermometer, and from education. The more educated the respondent,

the more likely that she supported the leftist Cárdenas. Labastida's support, on the other hand, was stronger among those who approved of the President, from his negativity, from his opinion thermometer scores, and from subjective probabilities of his victory. The more respondents thought he was likely to win the more they voted for him. Unlike the Fox/Labastida comparison, where early support for the *priista* did not predict later preferences for him, in this case they do. Labastida support in February predicts significantly his support in June. This means that Labastida deserters were more likely to go to Fox than to Cárdenas, even when weak *priistas* preferred the latter to Labastida.

In summary, perceived candidate negativity is strongly associated with preference for that candidate, as shown by the multinomial logit equation: perceptions about the candidates conducting a campaign of criticism rather than advocacy increased significantly the probabilities of voting for them when compared in pairs. However, perceptions about a third candidate's negativity did not matter; that is, perceptions about Cárdenas negativity were not important when we focus on preferences for Fox as opposed to Labastida. Third-candidate negativity does not matter in a two-candidate comparison.

Negative news coverage was, however, insignificant in the vote choice. So were economic retrospective evaluations and issues in the model presented here. Nonetheless, partisanship is an important component of the vote choice and the equations shown in Table 4 indicate that there were significant partisan lines crossed in the 200 Mexican election: weak PRD identifiers voted for Fox, the PAN candidate, and weak PRI identifiers voted for Cárdenas, the PRD candidate. The model does not provide evidence of weak PAN identifiers voting for a candidate other than Fox.

Turnout

In this section I evaluate the role of negative campaigns in electoral participation. Some interpretations about the 2000 Mexican elections sustain that the gap between Fox and Labastida was partly because many traditional PRI voters did not go to the polls.

This is a question that will not be fully answered here, given the need of aggregate data to do so. However, I provide evidence that perceptions of negativity influenced scores on the participation scale of the panel study, meaning that negative campaigns had both mobilizing and demobilizing effects before the election. In other words, there seem to be two-way effects of negativity on turnout: demobilization of some voters and mobilization of others. Although the coefficients shown later indicate that demobilization effects could have been stronger, a relevant question centers on who were demobilized and who were mobilized by negativity.

TABLE 5. A model of mobilization, demobilization, and abstention: multinomial logit and logit estimates.

	Demobilization/No change	Mobilization/ No change	Abstention
	b	b	b
Constant	-1.125	-0.531	-0.192
Negative campaigns index	0.184 **	0.143 *	0.062
Labastida negative news coverage	-0.052	-0.418	-0.307
Fox negative news coverage	0.773 ***	0.308	-0.012
Cárdenas negative news coverage	-0.500 *	-0.492 **	0.504 *
Perceptions of fair elections	0.040	0.096 *	0.041
Television ads index w1	0.051	-0.014	-0.147
Television ads index w3	-0.159 **	-0.017	0.037
Attention to campaign news coverage	-0.289 **	-0.24 **	-0.302 **
Political interest	-0.164	-0.42 ***	0.019
Prior preference for Labastida w1	0.202	-0.549 **	-0.698 **
Prior preference for Fox w1	-0.092	-0.157	-0.796 **
Prior preference for Cárdenas w1	0.575	-0.484	-0.897 **
Intensity of party identification	-0.215 **	0.000	-0.358 **
Decided vote choice in last month	0.709 **	0.682	-0.068
Decided vote choice in last three months	0.366	0.282	-1.268 **
Undecided at the time of the survey	0.537 **	0.172	0.174
Age	-0.009	-0.016 **	-0.019 **
Education	0.003	0.002	-0.289 **
Number of cases analyzed	928		705
Chi-square	114.38 ***		67.81 ***
-2 Log likelihood	1531.86		542.74

Source: Mexico 2000 Panel Study, waves 1 and 3 for the multinomial logit equation (mobilization and demobilization), and waves 1, 3 and 4 for the logistic equation (abstention). Author's calculations.

Significance levels:

*** p<.01

** p<.05

* p<.1

Table 5 shows two models of electoral participation. Both of them have the problem of having a dependent variable that measures self-reported participation before and after the election, not actual turnout. However, they provide an important piece of evidence about the effects of negativity in such behavioral reports. The first model is a dynamic equation based on multinomial logit estimates of mobilization and demobilization. Mobilization refers to increased scores on the participation scale before the election, from February to June—waves 1 and 3 of the panel study. Demobilization refers to reduced scores on the same scale. The category of “no changes” in the scale is taken as a base for comparison.

The second model uses self-reported vote from the post-election wave 4—in July—to predict abstention. The dependent variable is a dummy variable that takes the value 1 for respondents who said that they did not vote and 0 for those who said that they did vote. Actual turnout was 65 per cent; 82 percent of the total panel respondents in wave 4 reported that they had voted (which increases to 85 percent if we only take registered voters). The problem here is the inability to determine whether this 20-point overrepresentation comes from simple overreporting or from a more highly participant panel of survivors. Respondents from the fresh cross-section survey, conducted simultaneously to wave 4 of the panel study, who said that they had voted represented 81 percent of the sample. (This is a work in progress that will not be shown here by now). All models in this section only analyzed registered voters.

Let us concentrate on the dynamic model of mobilization and demobilization first. The two columns on the left of Table 5 show this equation. Demobilization, understood as the reduced scores on the participation scale, is significantly explained by different measures of negativity, even when controlling by common measures in models of turnout. The effects of negative campaigns are observed by the influence of perceptions of negative news coverage for Fox and by a composite index of perceived negativity, included in the model instead of the single candidate measures of negativity. The index represents a perceived environment of negative campaigns, as it is an additive index based on the three separate candidate negativity variables used in

previous models. The variable is coded from 0 to 3, where 0 is low negativity and 3 is high negativity.

Perceptions about negative news coverage for Fox increased the probabilities of demobilization. So did negative campaigns. In other words, it is very likely that negative campaigns dissuaded some voters from going to the polls on Election Day. According to the model, voters who made up their minds about whom to support in the last month before the survey, as well as those who had not made up their minds by that time, were more likely to be demobilized. In other words, demobilization was more likely among late deciders and among the undecided. Table 5 also shows that people who made up their minds in the three months prior to the survey did not have a significant effect on demobilization. Those who decided their vote way before the survey or always vote for the same party are the base category for these dummy variables.

Demobilization was less likely among respondents who followed campaign news frequently, among those who perceived negative news coverage for Cárdenas, and those who said they had been watching campaign ads. In other words, attention to the campaign hindered demobilization. The intensity of party identification also played an important role: the stronger the respondents' partisanship, the less likely her demobilization during the campaign. This means that demobilization was more common among independent voters, which supports the finding that the undecideds were also more likely to be demobilized. Independents are more likely to remain undecided during the campaign.

Let us now turn our attention to the mobilization column. Negative campaigns and age are the only positive and significant predictors of mobilization: the higher the perceived negativity in campaigns, the higher the likelihood of mobilization (remember that this variable was also positive and significant in predicting demobilization). The younger the respondent, the more likely the mobilization. In other words, younger voters increased their probabilities of voting during the campaign, which played in favor of Fox, as we observed in the model of candidate preferences. Negative campaigns may

have played a role in engaging the youth on the election. If so, negativity worked for Fox.

What reduced the chances for mobilization? The model indicates that prior political interest, prior preferences for Labastida, attention to campaign news on TV, negative news coverage for Cárdenas, and prior beliefs that the election was not going to be fair reduced the probabilities of mobilization. In other words, respondents who expressed political interest and preferences for Labastida at the beginning of the campaign did not increase their score on the participation scale. However, following campaign news on TV had demobilization effects as well as an influence on mobilization. Finally, if the election was thought to be fair, the probabilities of mobilization increased significantly. Again, Vicente Fox may have benefited from this because confidence in the process would make turnout more meaningful among opposition voters. As media polls showed a very contested race, Fox supporters may have increased their subjective probabilities of a Fox victory. Nonetheless subjective probabilities of winning for any of the three candidates did not have a significant effect on either mobilization or demobilization. Those variables were omitted from this model.

Let us now move onto the abstention model. Again, this model uses self-reported abstention in the post-election wave 4 of the panel study as dependent variable, but exactly the same independent variables used in the mobilization/demobilization model. Unlike the latter, which is based on a multinomial equation, the abstention model estimates the coefficients with logisitic regression, where the dependent variable takes the value 1 if the respondent said that she did not vote, and 0 if she said that she did vote. Results are shown on the right-side column of Table 5.

The likelihood of not voting increased significantly among those who perceived negative news coverage for Cárdenas and among the younger segments of the electorate. The youth did in fact participated less than older voters, according to these results, in spite of the positive mobilization shown earlier in the article. This means that older voters are more likely to vote than younger ones, and that is why the mobilization effects are stronger among the latter.

The model confirms some common findings. For example, education decreases the likelihood of abstention: the higher the education level, the higher the likelihood of voting. Attention to the campaign decreases the probabilities of abstention: engaged and attentive voters are more likely to vote. The intensity of party identification also decreases the chances of abstention: the stronger a voter's partisanship, the higher the likelihood of voting. Independent and leaning voters are less likely to vote than weak and strong partisans are.

Although there is no significant evidence that voters who were undecided in June abstained from voting (at least with these self-reported measures), it is clear that the likelihood of not voting decreased among those who had made up their minds long before the survey. Prior vote decisions had significant effects on reducing the probabilities of abstaining. For example, those who had already picked their candidate by February, supporting either Fox or Labastida or Cárdenas, were more likely to vote than those who had not chosen a candidate by that time.

The coefficient for the negative campaign variable has a positive sign—suggesting an positive influence in abstention—but it is statistically insignificant. This does not mean that negativity did not play a role in turnout. It means that the negative measures used here do not predict self-reported vote in wave 4 significantly.

Conclusions

The 2000 Mexican presidential election offered a good opportunity to understand, among many other things, the nature and the effects of negative campaigning. A negativity environment is that in which voters perceive the candidates' and their parties' attacks and criticisms, as well as unfavorable information and campaign coverage. In 2000, a winning challenger was perceived as the most negative candidate of all. As the analyses shown here indicate, negativity influenced Mexicans' opinions about the candidates throughout the campaign, candidate preferences, and possibly turnout. These influences are significant even when controlling for generally strong explanatory variables of behavior.

The obvious implications from all this is that negativity mattered and, therefore, campaigns mattered. They mattered in changing candidate images, in shaping voting preferences, and in mobilizing some segments of the Mexican electorate and demobilizing others. They seemed to be less important in explaining self-reported participation and abstention in post-election measures. These findings are, nonetheless, preliminary. More questions are undoubtedly raised from them. How did negativity influence actual voters? Which specific segments of the electorate are more easily affected by negativity? How much of the variance in Labastida's loss of support and Fox's gain is attributed to negativity? How do these measures work in other electoral races, both from the past and from other contexts? What is the campaign strategists' rationale when they go negative? How do they assess the potential impact during campaigns? And, most importantly, what are the theoretical aspects that underlie arguments of negative campaigns? Can there be a theory of negativity or only bits of findings that vary from race to race and from context to context?

Answers to some of these questions can be developed with the use of other methodological tools at hand, such as exit poll data, aggregate data, and interviews with campaign managers and staff, who tend to make decisions based on both polls and qualitative analyses and focus groups. Many of the findings on the effects of negative advertisements are based on experimental research, still a non-open door among scholars who study Mexican voting behavior. Many questions, then, will remain unanswered until further work is done. Negative campaigns are usually seen as something dirty and little serious. That is perhaps why scholarly work on voting behavior incorporated them in the academic agenda just recently. One of my purposes in this article is to demonstrate that negativity is in fact a variable that not only helps understand what happened in the Mexican presidential election, but that it represents, as of today, a kernel for a promising research agenda.

Beyond the Mexican case, negativity offers a chance to work on revisionism of other campaigns and elections in newly democratic societies. To what extent did foundational elections and plebiscites on authoritarian political regimes, for example, were accompanied by negative messages and how did they work? Moreover, if

negativity is an important influence on individual behavior, what is its importance on a society's institutional foundations? Some scholars have already addressed this question, and have also reached contradicting conclusions. We may as well ask whether negativity has long-term effects, as it seems to have short-term ones.

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