An Empirical View of the Political Groups in Mexico: The Camarillas
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Introduction

This paper has several aims. The first is to give an empirical overview of the shape of the camarillas or political groups in the Mexican political system. The second is to explain the role of the individual within them. As is apparent from the bibliography, the bulk of this information comes from interviews with public officials working within the government, political columnists and academics, as well as information gleaned from newspapers.¹ The type of chisme político or political gossip is important for grounding the theoretical ideas presented in my doctoral thesis, as well as for discovering new questions.²

One important point which is not studied in this paper is the role of the camarillas in the succession process. This will be examined in the next paper (chapter) presented.

Part One: An Overview of the Camarilla

Definition of Camarillas

Camarillas are groups of public employees working in the executive bureaucracy, PRI party posts and elected offices. These groups form and work primarily to advance the careers of their members. Camarillas can also be viewed as intra-Party factions, although many times they do not have specific ideological interests or goals. Each faction is led by a jefe (boss) and made up of several members at different levels of the Party and bureaucratic hierarchy. These people are linked together by bonds of loyalty and ability. The fundamental nexus of the exchange relationship between jefe and member is as follows: the jefe delivers government positions, favors and monetary benefits to his people in return for loyalty (or the assurance that the subordinate will not work against the interests of his superior), discipline and information. Therefore, both leader and member benefit from the exchange. In an extremely uncertain political universe, the jefe can build up a reputation of leading an efficacious and loyal group,

¹ For an explanation of how the interviews were done, please see Appendix 1.
² Most of the information from which this paper was written comes from this sexenio (1988-1994). Certain trends have changed over time, but I believe, I have guarded against these problems in two ways: 1. where needed, I have indicated that certain types of action, such as recruitment, have changed over time. Second, in the chapter on the three ruptures within the PRI, I have explained how the political institutions affecting both the political groups and the presidential succession have changed over time. Finally, many of the points discussed in this paper have not changed radically since the late 1950s, when the current formal and informal rules were institutionalized.
which helps both himself and his people achieve better posts in a party and bureaucratic structure that experiences a rapid and thorough turn-over every 3-6 years.\(^3\)

Camarillas vary in size depending on how powerful and/or rich the jefe is. Power in this sense can be understood as how much discretion the jefe has in placing people in positions.\(^4\)

In terms of duration, these internal political groups can last several decades, as was the case General Corona de Rosal who was mayor of Mexico City during Díaz Ordaz’s sexenio. During the sexenio of De la Madrid, when Corona de Rosal was quite old, one could still read of his people, or his group’s members, decrying the activities of the Corriente Democrática during the rupture of 1988.\(^5\) Probably, when the old jefe of a camarilla is no longer able to lead effectively, another strong member comes up to head the group, and takes over as leader. Fidel Velázquez, who is over 90 years old and leader of the Party’s labor central, the CTM, is still able to place his people as governors, and attempt to get jobs for his now ex-governors, by introducing them to certain pre-candidates for the presidential nomination who asks for the labor leaders support during the pre-campaign process.\(^6\)

Fidel Velázquez is in a special position within the Mexican political system as he is the permanent leader of the labor central (the CTM) of the dominant party. In return for keeping organized labor’s voice quiet and delivering votes for the official candidate, he is given his quota of power: party leadership positions, seats in the Cámara and governorships. From these positions, he forms his group.

Not many of the regime’s leaders are able to form these permanent bases of power (like the CTM) and so aren’t able to retain long-term groups. Those tied to ex-presidents have to cast around for new alliances, just as other, less well-connected public figures must.\(^7\)

\(^3\) An ex-functionary of the Ministry of the Interior estimates that approximately 70-80\% of the officials above the level of the union workers left or changed jobs when the Secretary Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios was fired in 1992. (Interview, Nov. 1993 with a mid-level functionary).

\(^4\) Interview, March 10, 1992 with a director general (DG) in the Agricultural Ministry. A rich old-timer like Carlos Hank González has the capability, through his political base in the state of Mexico (the state surrounding the capital, Mexico City), and his position as Minister of Agriculture and several business ventures, to keep probably more than 50 people identified with him. He can pluck a poor but brilliant student out the grime of the countryside with a scholarship, and keep on retainer a distinguished lawyer for over 40 years of service. An Interview, June 23, 1993, with a DG in the Treasury Department. Other, newer, camarillas, headed up by younger men, will have smaller groups whose membership is at least greater than 20 persons.

\(^5\) Acción.

\(^6\) Interview, May 11, 1993 with a CTM member.

\(^7\) Jaime Serra Puche (the current Minister of Commerce in the Salinas sexenio) was able to do this casting with skill. He was originally tied in with Jesús Silva Herzog, the Minister of Finance during De la Madrid’s sexenio. But Serra Puche was able, at the same time he was in Silva Herzog’s group, to form a relation with Salinas when the latter for the PRI’s party nomination. When Salinas beat Silva Herzog (and others) in the 1987 nomination race and became president, Serra Puche was designated Minister of Commerce. Now the head of Commerce is tied to the PRI’s presidential candidate, Luis Donaldo Colosio, and stands a good chance of retaining a Cabinet-level position.
Somewhere between a permanent position such as Fidel Velázquez's and the hopping about of most political figures, lie outstanding regime members, especially those within the financial sector of the bureaucracy, who are able to place their special apprentices with officials within the government, who still owe some sort of allegiance to their former mentors.\footnote{Apparently, a group was formed around Leopoldo Solís in the office of the Presidency in the sexenio of De la Madrid (1982-1988) which included Jaime Zabludowsky and Herminio Blanco, both of whom hold under-secretariat positions in the Ministry of Commerce in the current administration and are poised to become the new generation of political heavyweights (especially if Colosio wins the election).}

Other camarillas enjoy a much shorter life-span, especially if the jefe burns himself badly enough, as was the case of a pre-candidate in the 1988 succession, Alfredo del Mazo (then head of SEMIP). His people are spread out all over the bureaucracy making new alliances because of his mistakes in the destape.

Camarillas have their people distributed throughout the bureaucracy and party. Also, in certain ministries, more than one camarilla can place its members in important positions, usually because the president allows it. This is true for example, in the Treasury Ministry, where the mayor of México City and pre-candidate for the nomination has reportedly been able to place his people, even though a close rival for the nomination, Pedro Aspe, heads up the same agency.\footnote{Interview, June 23, 1993 with a DG in Treasury.} The splitting up of ministries is allowed by the president because this tactic makes it easier for him to control his own strongmen (the cabinet ministers, from whom the next president of México will come), as they have some sort of non-institutional brake on their room for maneuver.

\section*{The Nature of the Relation Between Jefe and Member: What is Exchanged?}

The leader of a group delivers jobs, benefits and general favors in return for the promise of high levels of performance, and the loyalty of his people. In return the jefe provides security in an uncertain career environment. One interviewee\footnote{Interview, June 23, 1993 with a DG in Treasury.} described the rules that govern the relation between leader and subordinate in this way: one must have, nurture and maintain the absolute confidence of one's superior. One must never appear to be smarter than he, and can never go over his head in policy matters ("no se puede saltar al jefe"), and one must share whatever information one has. In short, an equipo and camarilla member must show extreme loyalty. Discipline is the second key attribute: even in the face of abuse, one must never show anger or aggression, one must work as many hours, weekends, vacations as is necessary (many public officials I spoke to come into the office around 10 a.m. and often work until 9 or 10 p.m.). Discipline means that if someone steals a piece of work to look good in front of an under-secretary of state, one has a single recourse, to complain to one's jefe. If he says forget it, it is forgotten. If a boss tells a camarilla subordinate to remain in a terrible job, he stays until further notice.
One of the most important qualities of a member is his willingness to forego immediate gain for long-term benefits which will accrue to himself, the boss and the group. The jefe of the group builds up a reputation for how well he treats his people which is valuable for recruiting others. Similarly, members have reputations for loyalty which can be used to move up within the equipo or group or switch equipos if the case warrants it. Each then, builds a reputation which has value in the system.

The individual’s interests, calculations and strategies are altered by his group membership. His actions are different than they otherwise would be if he were on his own. If the leader places the member in a 'second rate' or extremely difficult job, either because he needs him there, or because he has nothing better for him, the loyal member will remain, with the assurance that he will be repaid for his sacrifice with a better job in the future.

Information is also a valuable resource exchanged between member and leader. Information has a split face in the Mexican political system. In some ways it is easy to discover which person is within which group, and what kinds of policies different groups espouse. Other types of information are far more costly to gather and because of this, one of the primary goods exchanged between leader and member is knowledge. Examples of different kinds of public information would be census data, economic figures, the president’s views of Party reforms, and which Secretary has a chance to become ‘presidenciable’. This knowledge is valuable in making economic policies, political plans, and policy making and can make or break one’s political career.

Some argue that one of the fundamental reasons for the jefe to place his people in different ministries is to acquire information on plans, problems and activities of other departments and groups. This implies spying, but this is (or was) acceptable behavior. A further problem with public knowledge in the Mexican political bureaucracy is that one doesn’t know who produced it, or for what ends. Furthermore, a policy maker often doesn’t know who has the information and therefore the costs of finding it and acquiring it are high. Restricting access to information is a form of competition among groups, because it hinders their ability to make decent policy decisions.

**Flexibility of Groups**

A question that lies at the heart of both an empirical and theoretical study of the camarillas is the level of flexibility of their membership. In general terms, a flexible system of groups is one in which leaving the ranks of the group is relatively costless in terms of punishment, or damage done to one’s reputation for loyalty and discipline. On the contrary, an inflexible system of political groups entails high costs for leaving a still surviving group and its boss. What are (or how high are) the costs of switching groups when the boss survives, and once the boss, especially a pre-candidate, has lost out. A related question is what are the costs (and of course, benefits) of maintaining ties with other groups in order to protect against the political death of the original group.

11 Interview, March 10, 1992 with an ex-functionary.
This is a highly disputed point, or at least a highly confusing one. Some interviewed state that one has to hide one’s group affiliation and any ties one might have to other competing groups, in order to protect one’s working future. This leads to three points: 1. everyone is in a group, 2. most deny it vigorously, 3. most have ties with other groups, whether competing or not, whose affiliation, however casual, is denied as well. Others state that people change groups with relative ease, and without any real damage to their reputation for loyalty towards their boss. The crucial problem in answering this question is to identify 1. the different types of groups that operate, and 2. at what different stages of the sexenio and the presidential succession are they active?

The Difference Between Equipos de Trabajo, Camarillas, and Political Networks

It seems that when people are talking about political groups, they are speaking of several different types or levels: one is the equipo de trabajo (work team), the second is a larger political grouping of people which can be considered a camarilla under one jefe whose members are dispersed throughout the bureaucracy.\(^\text{12}\) The third type of group is some sort of larger, looser coalition of people and groups which work towards placing one person in office, with the hope of being rewarded for their time and energy. I propose this breakdown when referring to ‘political groups within the Mexican political system’: equipo de trabajo; camarilla; and political network.

First, we will begin with the difference between an equipo de trabajo (or work team) and a camarilla. An equipo de trabajo is just that: a group that works together in the same office, (or ministry if the head of the equipo is a high-level bureaucrat), and that works on the same policy problem. Equipos have leaders who recruit the members, direct their work, and with whom they share a professional relationship. The professional relation can later develop into one of trust and loyalty, which then changes the nature of the group membership and its responsibilities.

When the “jefe” of the working team moves to another post, he pulls his equipo (or as many members as he can) with him, and places them in positions within the new area. Usually, people start forming equipos at the level of director general. (Direcciones generales come below the level of under-secretary, and are usually in charge of specific policy areas). Equipos are normally formed by a superior who has jobs to distribute, although many small groups of friends begin to form proto-equipos which can last the career of a public official by doing each other favors and making long-term plans before any one of them has public jobs to give out.

Equipos can be the building blocks of the larger, more politically active camarillas (cliques or factions). One man interviewed\(^\text{13}\) stated that when a director general left and

\(^{12}\) For examples from this sexenio of the difference between an equipo and camarilla, please see Appendix 2.

\(^{13}\) Interview, June 17, 1993 with a mid-level functionary in the Ministry of Tourism.
could not bring all his people in his equipo with him to a new job, those that were left found new jobs with friends or contacts in different "equipos", but those equipos within the same "grupo politico" or camarilla. This leads one to believe that several equipos and their leaders are tied vertically to a single leader through successively more important men, who are closer to the chief of the entire group, who himself is often a cabinet minister.

Camarillas, unlike equipos, have members spread across the bureaucracy rather than having people work directly below them in the same agency. What could be a motivation for spreading one's members across agencies? First, the leader of a political group can influence the outcome of a greater range of policy problems if he can place under-secretaries or director generals around the bureaucracy. Second, come the succession, he can be assured of their loyalty and the resources they bring to bear if he got them their position, and third, people in other ministries should be able to supply him with information on disputes, alliances and problems in other agencies that he could not get otherwise and that could help him in his policy disputes or succession attempt. One interviewee stated, however, that although there are border-crossings among ministries by members of different political groups, these placements are not systematized as it is easy for others within the political class to identify the movements, and make judgements about the possible alliances being made.

Camarillas are larger in number, harder to pinpoint in their membership identification, and more political in their goals than equipos. Loyalty and common interest in moving forward, rather than a strictly professional relation, is what binds the members of a camarilla together. The camarilla, one source explained, can be seen as the inner circle around one leader. The group is closed in the sense that all members recognize the authority of that particular group leader. One can belong to only one camarilla while, at the same time, belonging to a larger, looser political grouping which I term the political network.

Several equipos make up one man's camarilla, and in turn several smaller camarillas together make up a central political group, usually that of a Cabinet minister. Camarillas can endure over several sexenios, as is the case of Carlos Hank González's, or survive only one sexenio, as will probably be the case of Pedro Aspe now that he has lost the race to become the official presidential nominee.

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14 For example, Pedro Aspe, head of the Treasury has a close ally working as an Under-Secretary of Agriculture, and another as Under-Secretary of Fisheries, while Camacho Solís, Mayor of Mexico City, was reportedly able to bounce a director general in a financial sector-ministry (who was admittedly already in a weak position) to place one of his own people months before the destape.
15 After Jesús Silva Herzog left his position as Minister of Finance (SHCP) in 1985 in a policy dispute with Salinas, his chief political rival, Carlos Salinas was able to convince the then President De la Madrid to place Petriccioli in as head of SHCP. This gave Salinas implicit control over both Planning and Finance, the then two most important ministries in the government. Petriccioli, for his support of Salinas, has trend given the post of Ambassador to the US when Salinas became president in 1988.
16 Interview, Nov. 19, 1993 with a mid-level functionary in the Foreign Ministry.
17 I took this term from Ben Schneider's work on Brazil in...
for the PRI.\textsuperscript{18} If a pre-candidate does not become the party’s nominee, than it is unlikely he will be given another top position in the administration, and will thus be unable to deliver the political goods to his followers.

The equipo normally makes or carries out public policies, while the camarillas functions and ends are broader, while still including policy goals. The camarilla acts as a network of friends which advances its members’ careers across agency boundaries and between the bureaucracy and Party. When the PRI had a slimmer majority in the Cámara de Diputados (the legislature) in the first legislature during the Salinas sexenio, Cabinet ministers made it their business to place ‘their people’ in key Congressional posts to make sure their programs got legislative approval with a minimum of fuss.\textsuperscript{19}

During the succession process, members of the camarillas work to promote their candidate while trying to discredit his competitors. Thus, for the individual member, the camarilla is the vehicle which he rides to better jobs, while in the political system, they provide pre-candidates with backup support, information and alliances. Once the new president takes office, his choice of Cabinet ministers reflects both who is in his camarilla as well as the balance of forces among the various factions.

The final political grouping that is active in Mexican politics is the larger political grouping or political network. (To distinguish it from the camarilla, I will use group or network). This network is different from the camarilla only in degrees: the level of loyalty, size, and other characteristics of the camarilla one finds in the larger network, but to a lesser degree. The network is larger in size, less dependent on the mutual loyalty of members, and does not have only one recognized leader. As stated above, a public official can belong to one camarilla and recognize this group’s leader at the same time as he participates in a separate network.

The political network seems to function as an information exchange, allowing members to find particular talent, to become aware of the latest relevant gossip of the political class, or to look for jobs. For example, a new under-secretary moves into the Ministry of Transportation and Communications. He knows very little about the latest in port technology. He needs qualified people to help him, so first he turns to his inner

\textsuperscript{18} Manuel Camacho Solís lost the nomination battle. He immediately quit the office of the Mayor and was named as head of Foreign Relations (SRE) by Salinas as a consolation prize to keep him quiet until the elections in August, 1994. He brought several of his people with him to SRE, who at that point had few other alternatives than the follow the ‘loser’ in the succession to a temporary post. Yet when Camacho Solís was named to the Peace Commission for Chiapas on January 10, 1994, his political fortunes were once again revived and people like Alejandra Moreno Toscano, who had left government after his failure to win the Party’s presidential nomination, once again returned to work with him.

\textsuperscript{19} For example, when Salinas was head of SPP he took two Director Generals and told them to run for their respective congressional seats so that Salinas could protect his economic programs from Congressional interference. One of those two DG’s—Luis Donaldo Colosio—was later chosen to became head of the financial committee in the Congress and is now the PRI’s nominee for president. The other, Sócrates Rizzo, is now Governor of Nuevo León. For more information see, \textit{La sucesión pactada} and the \textit{Diccionario biográfico del gobierno mexicano}. 
circle to fill the more sensitive positions, and then to his political network to fill the rest.  

*Horizontal Relations*

We have discussed the vertical relations among actors and groups within the Mexican political system. Yet horizontal connections —those among members of the same group and alliances between groups— are also important to consider.

One of the least clear issues when speaking of camarillas is competition among members of the same hierarchical camarilla. Some public officials interviewed have mentioned that members of camarillas do in fact compete for the attention of their leaders in order to advance more rapidly within the group’s hierarchical ordering and thereby receive better positions that the leader is responsible for finding and providing. If the entire point of the camarilla is the creation of smaller hierarchical groups which work within the larger political and bureaucratic structures, then it would seem that competition within cooperative groups is a paradox of sorts. Yet even if subordinates are loyal and disciplined in terms of dealing with their boss, it does not logically follow that they must cooperate with each other. It seems, however, that age and length of service probably saves the boss from enforcing cooperation within the group. Internal struggles would be so damaging to the leader as to give him at least the strong incentive to set standards for upward mobility to which all can subscribe, and thereby lower the temptation to compete with one’s own ‘people’.

Horizontal linkages exist both between leaders of different camarillas and among their members. The links between leaders of camarillas can be seen as political alliances, that usually take effect during the presidential succession process to further a pre-candidate’s possibilities. Links among members of different groups are a part of the larger information and connection network. As one academic continues to insist, public officials see themselves as members of the system every bit as much as they see themselves as members of a particular camarilla. This network of friends, information, and contacts offers each individual a safety net in case the primary group —the camarilla— fails.

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20 An interesting example illustrates the difference between a camarilla and a political group or network. Carlos Madrazo was the leader of the PRI in the early part of Díaz Ordaz’s sexenio (1964-1970). Madrazo was serious about his attempts to reform the PRI by allowing the free election within the Party of candidates for elected positions. Such was the negative response from other sectors of the party and elite that Madrazo was soon after relieved of his post. The members of his camarilla were able to incorporate themselves into other political networks and find posts within all sectors of the regime, but they were never able (according to this source) to become members of a camarilla who enjoyed the complete trust (la plena confianza) of their political bosses. Such was the fear of reformers within the political system.
Sectors of the Bureaucracy

Some ministries and sectors of the bureaucracy which they comprise, are more important for both policy outcomes and political strongholds than others. The financial sector of the bureaucracy which includes Finance (SHCP), Commerce (Secofi) and the now defunct Planning ministry (SPP) controls important policy programs and initiatives as well as serving as a base from which long-term political careers can be built. Both presidents De la Madrid and Salinas worked within the financial triangle from the start of their careers and constructed their equipos from those with whom they worked and had attended university. As the Stabilized Development model faltered at the beginning of the 1970s, the financial agencies became more important centers of both policy disputes and launching pads of future presidents.

Up until the early 1970s, the governance sector of the bureaucracy had enjoyed more influence as it controlled labor, ideological and political issues while the technocrats toiled away in relative obscurity in the financial sector. The governance sector is comprised of the ministries of the Interior (Gobernación), Justice, Labor and Agriculture. These ministries have important links with the PRI and its electoral missions. For example, Gobernación controls the national electoral commission and regulates elections, which the dominant party usually wins. The Labor Ministry is connected to the labor sector of the PRI and the CTM, and is responsible for keeping wages and strike levels down.

Equipos formed in the financial sector of the bureaucracy began to gain influence over succession politics as they took over larger policy responsibilities, especially during the 1980s. SHCP’s dealings with foreign governments and banks gave its high ranking members great weight during the PRI’s presidential nomination battles. Planning’s control over the distribution of resources to the different departments of state and the governors allowed its Minister and those working under him to make important alliances and connections with other officials throughout the national and state-level political apparatus. Both Salinas as head of SPP and Colosio as head of Sedesol (which took over many of the distribution responsibilities of SPP when it was dissolved in early 1992), used this money to their political advantage.

Part Two: The Role of the Individual in the Camarillas

Why Join, Why Not?

The first and most obvious reason to join a group is that it is easier to get jobs of ever increasing importance in a bureaucracy that offers little security for those above the level of Director de Area or Sub Director General. Many have stated that unless one joins a group, there is little or no hope of a successful career, and even those who occupy lower ranking positions belong to a group whose boss protects them in that job.21 Secondly, 21 Interview, June 23, 1993 with a DG in the Treasury Ministry.
joining a group and achieving the position brings other benefits besides salaries — legal protection, loans, scholarships, cars, houses can all be provided by one’s boss. An effective group leader should be able to secure goods which are separate from the salary.

Alternatively, some bureaucrats may simply calculate that joining is not their main strategy. One’s skills can be so technical or otherwise specific that it is possible to reach a mid-level position and remain in it, or move laterally without much problem. It is not clear that human or educational asset specificity works well if one wants to move into high posts within the governing elite. One man interviewed insisted that to rise within the bureaucracy, one needed to join a group, yet at the beginning of the interview he explained that most of his early jobs came from his large number of acquaintances and contacts made at the UNAM. One possibility is that there could be time or stage differences in group membership. At an early stage, one casts around for the best group to join and on finding it, the functionary stays with the faction as long as it benefits him, only leaving if the group becomes burnt politically (quemado) or because the individual is powerful enough to do without it. Joining one camarilla rather than another can be risky for several reasons: first, because one can lose out quickly if the jefe is quemado or congelado, thus making it necessary to search for a new group; second, one must deliver loyalty which involves sacrifices, the greatest of which is staying in a job that offers little possibility for advancement in the short term. In Mexican political terminology, this is known as discipline: a bureaucrat stays in a position which he considers second rate because he knows in the future his boss will deliver something better. This problem of delivering something better may well be increasing now that the camarilla bosses have fewer positions to distribute.

Recruitment

From the interviews done, it appears that one gets recruited into an equipo, or rather, one usually attaches oneself to an equipo leader at the level of director general and up, who is in turn hooked up to a camarilla, or has ties to one. Probably in rare cases, a younger functionary can attract the attention of the leader of a camarilla, but even then, this is probably done through an intermediary as well. The new functionary has ties to a camarilla through his equipo leader, and in all likelihood, has not even personally met the camarilla leader. As the bureaucrat works his way up to be on the director general level, he forms his own equipo and begins to have closer ties to the camarilla leader.

Recruitment into the executive branch before the mid-1980s was done primarily through the UNAM undergraduate faculties, especially Law and Economics departments, (as has been pointed out by Camp and Smith). The professors found good students and helped them find jobs in the executive and Party sectors, often part-time while still in school. One of the primary reasons public functionaries taught at the

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22 Interview, June, 1992 with an ex-functionary tied to a losing pre-candidate.
23 Interview, March 10, 1992 with an ex-functionary.
National University was so they could recruit students into their groups early. Professors probably competed among one another for the best students. Companions were also important contacts which often lasted throughout one’s career. One political columnist interviewed claims recruitment used to be strongly political in the sense that leaders of student groups within the UNAM were noticed and brought into the system based on their ideological propensities and leadership ability. This smells strongly of government co-optation of left-leaning students. Students were also given the incentive to be more politicized than otherwise. Both ideological propensity and academic achievement were the primary bases upon which professors recruited students.

Recruitment into an equipo can also take place at a later stage in one’s career. It can also be the case that a subordinate working under one boss can move up (through other connections and greater abilities) to surpass the original jefe. Still there are connections between the two and the former subordinate can now provide his old superior with a position or support.

The Family as a Recruiting Tool

Camp and Smith have pointed out the importance of the family as a recruiting base—a prospective leader has contacts from an early age, and assurance of loyalty built on the father’s experience. Family contacts do not necessarily imply camarilla membership, but they can be used at certain times to help the bureaucrat along, as was shown by Camp in his article on Salinas’s rise. Another political columnist agrees with Camp in that the importance of family background in the government has grown and has thus narrowed the possible channels for entry into the political élite as those who do not have these ties are less likely to gain access to the highest political offices.

The above discussion has covered the general recruitment into the executive branch and Party; the following will cover more specific recruitment into groups themselves. Some speak of recruitment of an individual into a camarilla as a kind of seduction: each has something to offer the other and wants something in return. Each must negotiate the terms of future interaction. The aspirant can offer the group’s leader various favors such as writing articles in the newspapers, speaking in public forums, and reports on important issues, etc.

Jaime Zabludowsky of Commerce was good friends with another student, X, while both were at ITAM. Both went on to US graduate schools and returned to work in the financial sector of the bureaucracy. After their return, Zabludowsky’s career took off, yet as he changed jobs, he continued working among people of his same political group. The other’s career never advanced very far, and while he was languishing at the Central Bank, Zabludowsky offered him a job in Commerce where the latter is a sub-secretary. The friend is now part of Zabludowsky’s equipo, and both remain in the same larger camarilla.


Interview, March 10, 1992 with a political columnist tied to Camacho Solís.

Interview, February 14, 1992 with a political columnist tied to Camacho Solís.
Another type of recruitment is done through a middleman, who will introduce the hopeful to a jefe de grupo who needs someone with the former's qualifications. This type of recruitment seems directed at those already out of university, and who are looking for a new group, since the principals do not know one another, while the middleman does.

How Recruitment has Changed

Several people interviewed have mentioned that recruitment has changed over the past ten years. Most state that the UNAM has been replaced by the ITAM and Monterrey Tech, both private universities, as the primary recruiting institutions for new people for the executive branch.\(^*\) As corollary, many of those who graduated from the UNAM and received graduate degrees abroad no longer return to teach in the National University, preferring to install themselves in ITAM and other institutions such as the Colegio de México.\(^{29}\) Furthermore, professors at the ITAM, like Pedro Aspe, and Francisco Gil Díaz are now important members of the governing elite, and have brought their former students into government to work with them.

One of the greatest problems for those who continue to study at the UNAM is that the reputation of the school has fallen drastically in recent years, so that even those who are capable and well trained have difficulty finding entry ways into higher-level public positions or the equipos that will take them there. One director general in Commerce stated that he believed good students were still coming out the National University in economics, but that since he knew few professors still teaching there, and because the general reputation was so low, he would have to spend a great deal more time and energy testing the ability of a UNAM graduate in economics than he would an ITAM graduate. An ITAM degree now assures contacts and assurance to employers within the government of one's abilities.

Staying, Leaving, and Finding a New Group

Staying

Obviously, one would stay in a group while the jefe continued to provide jobs and other benefits. But the calculation becomes more difficult if the jefe is not able to place an individual in a position at the beginning of the sexenio, not necessarily because the former is quemado or congelado, but simply because he doesn't have enough positions to distribute to his people. Of the two people interviewed who were not offered jobs in

\(^*\) In an interesting side note to this general change, some up and coming functionaries actually cover their bets by studying law at the UNAM and economics at ITAM, thus getting the benefits of contacts at the former, and a serious technical education at the latter. Luis Téllez is probably the best example of this.

\(^{29}\) Interview, June, 1992 with an ex-functionary tied to losing pre-candidate.
the change of sexenio, one took a job in the private sector, while the other turned to
contacts made earlier in his government service. Both however, still considered
themselves members of the original camarilla.³⁰

Exiting an Equipo

Leaving an equipo and leaving a camarilla are two sharply different actions. Leaving
an equipo to go work with another team within the same camarilla is considered quite
normal—there is probably some friendly competition among camarilla colleagues over
the best students coming out of colleges, for example. Although, even here, one has to
be careful when recruiting people that the new member is not already part of another
equipo. This is considered "stealing" a resource and is frowned upon.³¹

On the other hand, changing equipos once the boss is burned or cannot place his
people can be done relatively easily if the head of the team has alliances with members
of other work groups. In other words, the more open the equipo is, the easier it is for
both the boss and his people to maintain relations with other groups. Also, if the member
has maintained such contacts, he stands a better chance of switching with relative ease.
Once he has begun working with another team, over time he begins to develop
confianza (trust) with his boss, although he may have to start at a lower position than
he occupied in his original work team.³²

Exiting a Camarilla

Usually, it is considered acceptable to exit a camarilla when the jefe can no longer
provide jobs (but as we have seen, this is not always done. It depends on one's
expectations of the future possibilities of the group's leader). Depending on the position
of the boss, the individual can find jobs with other contacts. It's not clear whether this
means the person has actually left the first camarilla or not. If the jefe is definitely burnt,
then the individual's choice is more clear—to leave the group and seek out new
opportunities, or to retire to private life. If the jefe is a failed pre-candidate, then by
default his people must find another group. The most dangerous strategy is to leave the
camarilla of one still active político to go with another.³³

³⁰ Interview, September 12, 1991 with a mid-level functionary and May, 1992 with a PRI activist.
³¹ Interview, November 6, 1993 with a mid-level functionary in Agriculture.
³² Interview, Nov. 16, 1993 with a mid-level functionary in Tourism. For example, when Otto Granados
left the Office of the President to become Governor of Aguascalientes, he was not able to bring all his
people of his equipo with him, and of course, there were probably those who simply didn't relish the
idea of living six years in a provincial backwater using their own contacts or those of Otto Granados.
³³ One possible case of this is Javier Beristain, the ex-rector of ITAM, at one point considered an Aspe
person, seemingly switching loyalties to work for Manuel Camacho Solís in the DDF. Most interviewed
believed this was a disloyalty to the to the first group and its leader, and stated that a move like this would
be known and condemned by others within the political class, thus making it difficult for the "disloyal"
individual to continue to be effective in politics.
Leaving the larger political group or camarilla which surrounds (usually) a Cabinet secretary can only be examined in relation to the tiempos políticos (stages of the political term) in which the change takes place. The "reacomodos" (readjustments) and alliance-making begins in earnest after the PRI’s presidential candidate has been named. Individuals and equipos fall in line behind the official candidate in order to find decent posts in the upcoming sexenio. During the first three years of the presidential term, shifts in camarilla loyalty are made as people maneuver for position around the next possible candidate. Equipos maneuver an enormous amount during this period. Finally during the last year before the destape, people and groups move very little because the alliances have been set, and those who don’t want to promise their allegiance to one candidate will not take the chance of making a mistake that late in the game.

In fact, one person took the point farther, stating that at the beginning of the sexenio, all politically active bureaucrats must make a judgement about who will be the next president (and this guess is mostly made on the basis of cabinet postings), at which point he places himself with the most likely candidate. Once he has done this, he cannot change his choice, out of loyalty to the first chosen.34

Finding a New Group

Finding a new group is a function of using the contacts one has or building up new ones. These contacts are built from education and work experience, family ties, or connections within the Party. In one example, a person had good relations from working with one group, while actually being a member of another.35 When the primary boss could no longer provide him with a job, he turned to this second group, whose leader did offer him a place. Many displaced persons move to the private sector until they find new positions, which enables them to rebuild a network. This is often done simply by meeting with several different functionaries at political breakfasts, Party events or conferences, etc.

It was pointed out to me that Beristáin went to Camacho’s group so he could be “the economist” of Camacho, and if the mayor of Mexico City should become the next president of Mexico, then Beristáin would become (hopefully), a high-ranking member of the economic cabinet.34

34 Interview, February 24, with a political columnist tied to Camacho Solís. The example of Carlos Rojas is an interesting one: In 1985, during the sexenio of De la Madrid, he served as Camacho Solís (until 1986, Under-Secretary of Regional Development for the Planning Ministry) Coordinator de Asesores (literally Coordinator of Advisors), usually considered a position of great trust. When Camacho Solís moved to head up Sedue in early 1986, Rojas stayed in Planning, and became Under-Secretary of SPP under Ernesto Zedillo (a Córdoba person) at the beginning of Salinas’ term in 1988. When SPP was dissolved in January, 1992, and the Solidaridad program moved to Sedue/Sedesol, Rojas again served as Under-Secretary of the new ministry. While Rojas was at SPP at the beginning of Salinas’s term, it was not clear whether he was a Camacho person, or a member of Córdoba’s contingent. By the end of the sexenio, it became apparent that the man who had once been Camacho Solís, Coordinator of Advisors was firmly in Colosio’s corner. When he made this decision to switch camps, and how it was seen by the political elite, are important questions still to be answered.

35 Interview, September 12, 1991 with a mid-level functionary.
Forming Equipos/Groups

According to several sources, anyone with positions to offer can form an equipo, which in practice means a Director General or above. Almost all Director Generals belong to an equipo, and are able to form their own. (So their work group would be their equipo, and the larger group they belong to would be a camarilla). Usually in forming an equipo, one brings together people of similar training and background who are able to work well together as a unit, and in whom the leader of the team has confidence. To secure the best people, one must identify them early —college is the norm. Then one finds them a position in the public sector as they finish up their B.A. and helps them in any way one can; for example, by helping obtain scholarships for graduate training. If one does provide this sort of assistance, then the student is obliged to work for the provider when he returns to México, but it still does not lock the new member into the same equipo forever.

Again, capacity and loyalty are the mortar that cements the separate units under one leader. The jefe has the incentive to unite the best people possible, both in technical and political equipos. In technical equipos, a jefe can monopolize scarce specialized talent, and thus be able to sell himself as a more capable job candidate because he is supported by a capable group which enhances his reputation. For equipos that are less technical in nature, controlling scarce technical talents isn’t possible, but the jefe can still enhance his reputation for leading a group that is adept in negotiation, or simply getting policy results. A good group serves the same reputation-enhancing ends.

The equipo assures the jefe of a pool of capable people who will not betray him, who will work hard and produce results, and who usually will not leave the group except in the worst of situations. These qualities enable the jefe to produce positive results in his daily labors. One interviewee stated clearly that “confianza” is so crucial between a boss and his people because of the nature of decision-making in the bureaucracy and party. He explained that the boss has to delegate problems (and their solutions) to his subordinates, and that very often, crucial decisions are made at the mid-level, for which the boss will ultimately be responsible. One can make extra demands on one’s own people that would be difficult to make of any employee: this would include extremely long hours, or ignoring departmental or ministry-wide regulations to instead produce ends desired by the jefe.

Retaining a equipo which has each’s particular interest tied up with the well-being of the group’s leader lowers the costs of monitoring and enforcement. In a equipo where it is impossible to measure individual input, each has the incentive to shirk on his work, hoping that the others will not. Since all have the same incentives to shirk, the output of the entire group will fall, harming the group’s general interest. One way to solve this problem is to hire a monitor whose well-being is directly aligned to the performance of the group. This is precisely the role of the jefe: he has an incentive to monitor the

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individual’s performance, because if the group’s output is off, his career suffers, even in a personalistic system like Mexico’s. One must be capable, because between two friends, one capable, the other not, a leader would choose the better bureaucrat. The jefe de equipo has a clear incentive to monitor his people, and over time judge which is more capable, hard-working and loyal.

The costs of enforcing good performance are relatively low in the Mexican system because the cost of firing a functionary is low; there are few, if any, civil service protections. But in a work group, the costs of enforcement become even lower because information about equipo membership is easily obtainable (although this information becomes more difficult to obtain in the case of camarillas, especially during the presidential succession process). So if one is dropped from a team for poor performance or disloyalty, this information can be circulated throughout the appropriate circles. This makes entry into another team difficult, giving the individuals even less incentive to shirk.

Costs of Forming

Aside from the time and energy involved in finding good people (which can be considerable), the cost of forming a group has to be taken into account. One example of the costs of forming an equipo is that the best may jump ship to another team whose jefe seems to have more possibilities. A director general gave me this example: two graduating seniors from ITAM are given jobs in a division of a financial ministry by a director who wants to recruit them into his equipo. The two students are not given much work because of their status, and their recruiter finds them scholarship money. The director general with whom I spoke was dubious that the boss would be able to actually tie the two students down to his equipo, stating that the two would come back from graduate school, work for this director for a while before using other contacts to find and join a different equipo. This apparently is done enough and it is not considered disloyal behavior.

Another cost of forming equipos is the members’ ability to blackmail the jefe given their considerable information about his behavior, professional and otherwise. One ex-functionary gave the example of underlings blackmailing their bosses successfully for money, and continuing to work for him. I asked another interviewee about this possibility and he flatly stated it would be impossible because of the value placed on loyalty within the system. If one’s disloyalty became public, it would be difficult to continue in the system as no other group leader would want the individual’s services. This sort of protection depends on the blackmail becoming public knowledge. If it were possible to keep the disloyalty hidden, then the defect strategy would be a positive move. Therefore, the cost to the jefe to protect against this behavior is to construct a

37 Interview, June 23, 1993 with a DG in Treasury.
38 Interview, June, 1992 with ex-functionary tied to losing precandidate.
deterrence mechanism which promotes both positive incentives and negative threats, (which may be difficult for those with job possibilities in the private sector). The problem would be more grave for a boss who is still active, but who wants to slough-off members of his group. He must make effective promises that they will be reintegrated into the game. A journalist I spoke to\textsuperscript{39} also mentioned the danger of disaffected bureaucrats feeding him information, most of it designed to damage the career of another, so there is evidence that people work against their bosses' interests.

\textit{Change Over Time: Alternatives}

As has been discussed above, jefes have been losing a certain number of jobs to distribute to followers during the sexenio of Salinas. A distinction has to made between the shrinking of the public sector, which has not been as great as one would expect, given the enormous changes in the role of the state in the economy Mexico has undergone in the last 10 years, and the shrinking of the channels of entry into the political elite —which has been taking place since the beginning of De la Madrid's sexenio. Because the overall public sector still employs hundreds of thousands of people, even those who are not ITAM graduates with advanced degrees can still get public positions, there is simply less chance they will rise to high levels of the bureaucratic hierarchy, even to the level of director general.

It may well be that as the overall number of public jobs falls, the optimal number of people in each camarilla will shrink as well, setting off a competition among members who do not wish to be dropped. This is a point that has been discussed very little: relations among those under a single jefe of a camarilla. These members are competing against each other for the boss' favor in order to rise within the camarilla hierarchy.

For some, especially those with higher education, alternatives exist within the private sector which were far more scarce even 15 years ago. One ex-bureaucrat interviewed stated that it was difficult for even well-trained functionaries to get hired by private industry because of the enormous bias against public employees.\textsuperscript{40} Another ex-government economist seconded this, when he stated that even high-ranking economists in the bureaucracy’s financial sector viewed the private business world as the “enemy”. (Still, this one went on to work for the Mexican stockmarket.\textsuperscript{41})

Possibilities for advancement outside the public sector are growing, so perhaps one’s willingness or need to depend wholly on the boss will decline, thus making the public servant less loyal and less disciplined. At this point it is difficult to know how much the fundamental bond between jefe and member has loosened, but certainly, highly trained young people from private universities are still recruited into the political

\textsuperscript{39} Interview, February 24, 1992 with a political columnist tied to Camacho Solís.

\textsuperscript{40} Interview, March 10, 1992 with ex-functionary.

\textsuperscript{41} Interview, February 17, 1993 with ex-DG on Presidential.
system and are still highly loyal, disciplined and discrete. The fundamental rules remain in place: many of the brightest students go to work for government, and plot their strategies for reaching the top beginning in college. That has not changed. What may be changing is their willingness to wait out bad times in hope of better jobs.

A second type of alternative is switching sides and defecting to the political opposition, which has grown in importance over the past 10 years. This issue will be discussed in the following chapter on the role of the political groups during the presidential succession process, when it becomes a particularly dangerous option for those unhappy with the results of the destape.

Appendix 1

Interviewing Method

Instead of a vertical method of interviewing many people at all levels of one political group, I chose to spread my interviews across the bureaucracy. I spoke with people in the Ministries of Agriculture (SARH), Commerce (Secofi), the Mayor’s Office (DDF), Interior (Gobernación), Treasury (Hacienda), Fisheries (Pesca), Presidential Office (Presidencia), Health (Salud), Social Development (Sedesol), Communications (SCT), Planning (SPP), and the Foreign Office (SRE). I have also spoken with ex-Congressmen, and advisors to the Workers’ Central, the CTM.

I chose this strategy because I needed to find out if there were any major differences between how camarillas and equipos formed and operated across bureaucratic sectors. In fact, what I found is that there are not any fundamental differences in organizing the career-advancing groups in different areas of the public bureaucracy. What is different across sectors is the power some members have to promote their equipos based on their control of public resources. This problem will be considered below.

In my different interviews, I specifically asked about the activity of the different levels of a single camarilla. The relation between the boss and his subordinate is repeated up and down the hierarchical ladder of both the political groups and the public bureaucracy. Other studies, especially Merilee Grindle’s work on Conasupo, has concentrated on how one group behaves, so I believed it was important to concentrate on cross sectorial (of the bureaucracy) interviews.

Added to the interviews with public officials (both active, out of power, and fully retired), I have spoken with political columnists and academics. Obviously, each person

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42 This point is most clearly shown by an attempt to talk to, under informal circumstances, a young Mexican graduate student in Economics at MIT, who had studied at ITAM. When I asked him about the political groups in Mexico, he immediately became highly agitated, turned red, and advised me to Roderic Camp’s books, before turning around and leaving the room. I had been introduced to him by a mutual friend.
I have interviewed has his own agenda, that is at times obvious (and therefore easy to correct for) and sometimes quite hidden. For the juiciest bits of gossip, I try to get confirmation from another source.

In all interviews, I asked two central questions, but in open ended conversations that often began with a lecture on the Mexican Revolution (who says that ideology doesn’t matter?). The first question concerned what are these groups: how many members do they have?; who joins?; how long do they stay?; what are the costs if they choose to leave?, etc. The second central question revolves around the behavior of the groups during the presidential succession period, roughly the last two years of the sexenio. These questions included, what do members do for their boss?; can people switch from one group to another?; does the nature of the groups change from one stage of the process to another, and if so, why? Most questions were covered in most of the interviews.

Appendix Two

Types of Equipos

If one looks at the three leading pre-candidates, one can identify distinct ‘types’ of equipos as well as get an idea of what is involved in these work groups. Two of the three closest Camacho Solís allies were with the pre-candidate when he was a professor at the Colegio de México in the mid-seventies. Alejandra Moreno Toscano and M. L. Ebrard Casaubon both traveled with Camacho Solís as he went from SPP to Sedue to the DDF (office of the Mayor of Mexico City). None of them have had any legislative experience or have spent time in party posts, and none of them appear to have any post-graduate education. Aspe’s closest people all went to ITAM (Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, a private university in México City), and then on to the United States for graduate economics. None of them has held an elected position, all of them have stayed within the financial triangle of the bureaucracy (Treasury, the now defunct Secretaría of Planning and Budget, and the Central Bank), and none of them has held a party office. Only one of those identified, José Ángel Gurría, is a National University graduate with any experience in the party. He worked in the PRI’s think-tank, the IEPES for a time.

L. Donaldo Colosio’s circle is perhaps the oddest, given the present trends toward bureaucracy financial sector dominance in the elite governing circle. His people come from Monterrey Tech (a private university in the North, catering to the business classes from the North), and Iberoamericana, (another private university in Mexico City). Most of Colosio’s people have at least Masters degrees from the United States or Britain. Many of them have legislative experience, and most of them have held positions in the ruling party body, the CEN (National Executive Committee of the PRI), which also reflects Colosio’s experience. A few have held office in the financial sector ministries, such as SPP and Secofi (Commerce Department).
From this overview, we can see some of the possible ‘types’ of equipos—or at least types of contenders for the presidency and the small nuclei of people that have been working with or near their jefes for up to 15 years. Aspe represents the pure technocrat who follows a specific road and so do his allies—he went to a private university, on to a top US graduate school, and has worked within the bureaucracy’s financial sector his entire career. He has probably been working on his contacts with other bases within the party, such as Carlos Hank González, but it’s not clear how much success he’s had. Colosio represents the newest breed of elite bureaucrat: a return to party politics, but with a technocratic educational base. Neither José López Portillo (president from 1976 to 1982), De la Madrid (1982-1988) or Salinas (1988-1994) had held elected positions, or important posts within the party, leading most to predict the PRI was dead, and the financial sector was the new route to the presidency. So the fact that Colosio is now the presidential candidate leads one to believe that the Party as a base which a public official with ambitions must cultivate is not as moribund as was once believed.

Types of Camarillas

Now we turn to a short description of the camarillas (versus equipos) of the three leading pre-candidates for the PRI’s presidential nomination to gain a clearer idea of the differences in the nature of the two types of political groups that interest us and their different types of political activities and connections.

Manuel Camacho Solís, during his quest for the presidential chair was supported by governors such as F. Ruiz Massieu (governor of Guerrero from 1987-1993), with whom he had attended university, and cabinet ministers such as Jorge Carpizo, head of the Justice Department, A. Caso Lombardo, head of Transportation and probably F. Solana Morales, minister of foreign affairs, whose responsibilities had been sharply curtailed by José Córdoba’s maneuvering in the Office of the Presidency. Camacho Solís did not enjoy widespread support among the older members of the PRI, as he was known for his willingness to negotiate with the political opposition. Furthermore, he was viewed with mistrust by large capitalists, especially in Mexico, as a populist whose adherence to Salinas’s economic program would be easily shaken should he need to spend his way out of political problems.

Pedro Aspe was a strong presidential possibility until early 1993, when it became more or less obvious that his skills were too technical, his political sense dulled by economic figures, and his support too weak both within the political class of the regime and the citizenry of the nation to win a presidential election. His best hopes to win the nomination were founded on his excellent connections to large Mexican and international businessmen. He was also seen as one who would continue the economic program of Salinas, but once NAFTA was passed, foreign capital seemed to have all the assurance it needed that the new rules of the game would not change, and they could invest safely. In the first half of the sexenio, when he was seen as the main challenger to Camacho
Solís, it was believed he was making an alliance with Carlos Hank González in order to shore up his support with the rank and file of the political class. That alliance seemed to fall apart once it became more apparent in early 1993 that a more politically able figure would have to follow in Salinas’ footsteps.

Luis Donaldo Colosio, who won the nomination race in November, 1993, had the broadest based support within the elite, partly because he was able to place governors (with the approval of President Salinas) while head of the PRI from late 1989 to late 1991, partly because of his ability to distribute public monies due to his position as head of Sedesol, which controlled millions of pesos through the Solidaridad program, and partly because he was the favored son of both Salinas and Salinas’s right hand man, José Córdoba. Several ministers were seen as being “with Colosio”. Miguel Beltrones, governor of Sonora (Colosio’s home state) was placed by Colosio in the State House. Patricio Chirinos, ex-head of Sedue, is a Córdoba man, and supported Colosio. Jorge Azar, now governor of Campeche, worked with Colosio when the latter was president of the CEN of the PRI. Sócrates Rizzo, governor of Nuevo León, had worked as a director general while Colosio was also a DG at Planning (both, interesting enough, working under Manuel Camacho Solís, who was then Under-Secretary of Regional Development), and is one of Colosio’s strongest supporters in an especially important industrial state.

At the Cabinet level, Colosio had forged important links with other powerful ministers, in many cases with the help of Córdoba, (the power next to the throne). The Minister of Commerce, who was instrumental in the NAFTA agreement, Jaime Serra Puche, is a Colosio supporter (and now a presidential possibility for the next sexenio because of changes in Article 82 of the Mexican Constitution, which dictated that only Mexicans born of parents born in Mexico could become president). The highly technocratic economist, Ernesto Zedillo, who was an early Córdoba pre-candidate while head of the now defunct SPP, is presently Colosio’s campaign manager (Colosio was Salinas’s campaign manager in 1988). Salinas’s original Secretario de Gobernación, who had fought with Córdoba (and Aspe and Camacho Solís) was replaced with a Córdoba supporter, who was seen as a Colosio partisan. The current head of the PRI, Ortiz Arana, was not terribly close to Colosio, but quickly moved into his corner after the destape.
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