

PARTY AFFILIATION AND INDIVIDUAL INCENTIVES: COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES IN CHILE, 1990-2018*

Militancia partidista e incentivos individuales: la membresía en comisiones permanentes en la Cámara de Diputados de Chile, 1990-2018

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ABSTRACT

In presidential democracies with strong party systems, the congress shares legislative powers with the executive, and parties strongly influence the behavior of legislators. The law-making process should reflect that balance of power, as the reactive legislative powers of Congress should make committee membership less valuable than in systems where the legislature enjoys proactive powers. The strong party system and electoral rules should also be reflected in committee assignment dynamics. We test 4 hypotheses on the impact of individual (distributional and informational theories) and party level incentives (cartel party and issue ownership theories) on annual committee membership in the Chamber of Deputies in Chile (1990-2018). District and legislator specific characteristics—like the economic activity in the district and the legislator’s professional expertise, respectively—explain committee membership. In some policy dimensions, parties that exercise issue ownership also have more presence in the respective committees.

Keywords: Legislative committee assignments; distributional theory; informational theory; cartel party theory; issue ownership theory; Chile.

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RESUMEN

En democracias presidenciales con sistemas de partidos fuertes, el congreso comparte poderes legislativos con el ejecutivo y los partidos influyen en el comportamiento de los legisladores. El proceso legislativo debiera reflejar ese balance en tanto los poderes legislativos reactivos del Congreso debieran hacer menos valiosa la membresía en comisiones permanentes que en sistemas en que la legislatura tiene más poderes proactivos. A su vez, el sistema de partidos fuerte y las reglas electorales debiesen verse también reflejado en las dinámicas de membresía en comisiones. Testeamos 4 hipótesis sobre el impacto de incentivos individuales (teorías distributivas y de información) y a nivel de partidos (teoría del partido cartel y de dominancia temática) en la membresía anual de comisiones permanentes en la Cámara de Diputados de Chile (1990-2018). Características específicas de los distritos y de los legisladores—como el tipo de actividad económica en el distrito y la experiencia profesional de los legisladores, respectivamente—explican membresía en las comisiones. En algunas dimensiones de política pública, los partidos que ejercen dominancia tienen más presencia en los comités respectivos.

Palabras clave: *membresía en comisiones legislativas; teoría distributiva; teoría informativa; teoría del partido cartel; teoría de dominancia temática; Chile.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Studies on the behavior of legislators normally rely on two series of determinants, personal incentives (Weingast and Marshall 1988), and party affiliation incentives (Cox and McCubbins 1993)—both are constrained by the transaction costs. Self-interested legislators seek to maximize their re-election or otherwise advance their political careers. Given certain rules, militants respond to the interests of political parties which are sometimes in tension with those of their constituencies or their personal goals. While explanations based on individual-level incentives are grouped in the distributional and informational theories, explanations based on party-level incentives—like the cartel-party or the issue ownership theories—focus on the institutional design that give parties power over the behavior of legislators in the law-making process.

In parliamentary systems with closed-list proportional representation rules, parties have more powers and tools to influence the behavior of legislators (Riera and Cantú 2018), while in presidential systems that promote a personal vote—like the single-member districts with competitive primaries—legislators are less constrained by the stick-and-carrot powers of political parties (Gschwend and Zittel 2018; Mickler 2018). In Latin American presidential democracies, where proportional representation is more common, the legislature has fewer proactive law-making powers (Cox and Morgenstern 2001). That gives the president additional advantages in the law-making process (Pereira and Mueller 2000), although in some countries, closed-list proportional representation arrangements and/or the informal powers of provincial governors help level the playing field for parties (Alemán and Calvo 2008).

Between 1990 and 2018, Chile had a strong presidential system, where the executive enjoys proactive legislative powers, and an institutionalized party sys-

tem with an open-list proportional representation electoral rules for legislative elections that promoted the cultivation of a personal vote. Thus, the power of political parties over the behavior of legislators and the incentives to cultivate a personal vote produced competing incentives. We assess the impact of those incentives on the membership in permanent legislative committees with 4 hypotheses derived from the distributional and informational theories, and from the cartel-party and issue ownership theories, respectively.

We use data for annual committee assignments for the 120 members of the Chamber of Deputies in the 28 legislative years comprised between 1990 and 2018—3404 observations. After presenting the theory and our hypotheses, we introduce the case and the data. Then, we move to the inferential analysis. We finish by discussing the implications of this case for the larger understanding of legislative committee assignments in presidential systems where the executive enjoys strong legislative powers.

II. THEORY OF COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS

A legislative committee system “is a division-of-labor arrangement that distributes members to structural decision-making subunits of the organization” (Shepsle 1979: 32). In the U.S. Congress, bill introduction, gatekeeping and amendment powers give committees a central role in the legislative process, as committees have agenda control power, monopolize information, and accumulate experience on their respective jurisdictions (Shepsle and Weingast 1987). Committee membership is explained by individual and party level incentives. As legislators optimize their competitive advantages, they seek membership in committees associated to their professional trajectories (Krehbiel 1992; Baron 2000). Party leaders assign committee membership at the beginning of the term based on the legislators’ preferences (Shepsle 1975), which in turn often reflect the characteristics of their districts (Shepsle 1979). As some committees are more coveted, there is strong competition for committee assignments (Weingast and Marshall 1988).

Legislative committees can be classified in three types: high policy, public goods, and distributive committees (Shugart et al. 2021). High policy committees cover economic, foreign affairs, defense, legal system, and constitutional issues. Public goods committees cover education, health, environment, telecommunications, and other similar issues. Distributive committees cover issues relevant to specific districts, like agriculture, mining, or fishing—and are often associated to legislators seeking benefits for their districts. It is expected that parties will appoint members to the high policy and public goods committees according to their experience and training, while distributive committee appointments will respond to the interests of the districts (Shugart et al. 2021).

The theories that account for the functioning of congress—distributional, informational and cartel party—can be grouped into those that focus on individual

incentives and those that focus on the influence of the parties on the behavior of legislators (Martin 2014). The distributional theory starts from the assumptions that legislators are assigned to committees based on their individual preferences, that they have some degree of independence from their party leadership (Martin 2014), and that as re-election seekers, the behavior of legislators reflects the priorities of their districts more than those of their parties (Mayhew 1974). In the distributional theory, legislatures are highly decentralized institutions designed to advance the legislators' goals, including re-election (Weingast and Marshall 1988; Martin 2014; Martin and Mickler, 2019).

Evidence consistent with the distributional theory (Adler and Lapinski 1997), including the effect of seniority, has been reported for the Turkish legislature (Ciftci et al. 2008), the European Parliament (Yordanova 2009) and the Argentine congress (Crisp et al. 2009). In Mexico, assignments to the agricultural committee can be explained by the presence of agricultural workers in the districts represented by the legislators (Raymond and Holt 2019) and, in general, parties assign committee membership to promote constituency service (Raymond and Bárcena Juárez 2019). Committees promote policies that favor special interests in the members' districts that can contribute to the legislator's reelection efforts. A first hypothesis, then, links the characteristics of a legislator's district to the committee where legislators have membership:

H1: (Distributional theory): Legislators are more likely to be appointed to distributional committees that oversee economic activities relevant to their district.

In turn, the informational theory sees committees as a solution to the legislature's collective action problem and to the need of the legislature to compete against well-trained public bureaucracies (Martin 2014). Committee members have specialized information on the content of the bills they review. As legislators specialize on the area of the committee jurisdiction, they gain a competitive advantage to strengthen their re-election prospects, especially in areas important to their constituencies (Weingast 1979). The committee system promotes the specialization of legislators, which in turn gives them informational advantages (Krehbiel 1992; Martin and Mickler 2019). Optimal committee assignments and resource allocation achieve maximum feasible informational efficiencies (Gilligan and Krehbiel 1990: 556). In legislatures with high levels of specialization, legislators seek membership in committees that cover issues where they have more prior knowledge (McElroy 2006). Legislators follow the principles of specialization and reciprocity—meaning that they respect decisions of other committees in exchange for the rest of legislators doing the same (Weingast 1979). Woon (2009) reports that the committee system induces legislators to specialize in specific issues and, thus, rely on other legislators' specialization on other issues. Specialization incentives allow legislators to implement successful policies that, in turn, make them influential (Woon 2009).

Supporting evidence for the informational theory has been widely reported for the U.S. Congress (Krehbiel 1992; Baron 2000; Battaglini et. al, 2019) and for U.S.

state legislatures (Hamm et al. 2011). In the European Parliament, the absence of distributional incentives and the high levels of specialization required by the nature of that legislature make the informational theory a more appropriate approach to explain committee assignments (McElroy 2006). A second hypothesis builds on the claim that legislators develop committee specialization on policy areas that match their areas of specialization. Formally, we state that:

H2 (Informational theory): Legislators are more likely to be appointed to high policy and public goods committees that match their areas of specialization.

Party-level incentives also impact committee assignments. Parties function as cartels that seek majority control of congress (Cox and McCubbins 1993). The cartel party uses committee structure rules to advance its own agenda and to influence, control, punish, and reward the behavior of legislators (Cox and McCubbins 1993; Canon and Stewart 2002). Party leaders use committee assignment nominations to negotiate with internal factions and reward loyal legislators (Canon and Stewart 2002), but their influence varies depending on the committees (Young and Heitshusen 2003) and on the incentives, limitations, and resources available to them (Whitaker 2001; Young and Heitshusen 2003). Parties consider the legislator's experience, age, education, and prior committee service when making appointments (Giannetti et al. 2019), rewarding more loyal legislators with membership in their preferred committees.

The parties' ability to influence the behavior of legislators depends on the level of institutionalization of the party system and on electoral rules that give parties gate-keeping powers on the nomination of candidates. Normally, committee membership is proportional to the relative weight of each party (Strøm 1998). Depending on the electoral system, parties will use committee assignments to maximize the number of seats they can get or to impact policies (Shugart et al 2021). When electoral rules mandate closed-list voting, parties have control over ballot position and thus exert more power over the behavior of legislators. The cartel-party theory is, thus, more applicable to European parliamentary democracies than to the U.S. presidential system (Gschwend and Zittel 2018; Mickler 2018) or Latin American presidential democracies that use open-list proportional representation systems. Since parties control the composition of the chamber leadership, larger parties should obtain slots in the most coveted committees and distribute them to their most loyal or influential members. Thus, our third hypothesis postulates that:

H3 (Cartel-party theory): Legislators from parties with higher vote shares are more likely to be appointed to the more coveted high policy committees.

We also include a fourth hypothesis associated to the incentives of political parties. We build on the issue ownership theory to account for why parties seek membership in certain committees. As parties exercise issue ownership over some policy areas, party leaders will want to get appointments to committees where they can affect policy accordingly. Introduced as an explanation to ac-

count for vote choice in institutionalized party systems, the issue ownership theory claims that some parties exert dominance over some issues and that they command more popular credibility when advocating for policies on those issues (Budge and Farlie 1993; Petrocik 1996). Issue ownership produces a positive association among the public between certain issues and specific political parties (Egan 2013). Issue ownership impacts vote choice and the priorities that different parties advocate for when in government (Egan 2013). In the U.S., the Democratic Party has historically been seen as dominant on issues of health, education, and civil rights, while the Republican Party is more dominant on issues of taxes, crime, and defense (Egan 2013; Shugart et al 2021). Thus, following the Shugart et al. (2021) classification, center-right parties will give more relevance to high policy committees while center-left parties will privilege public goods committees.

H4: Legislators are more likely to be appointed to committees where their parties exercise issue ownership.

The dominant theories that inform our 4 hypotheses are not mutually exclusive. The informational theory does not assume the absence of distributional conflicts (Krehbiel 2004). In turn, the cartel party theory does not deny the existence of individual preferences, but legislators are not independent of their parties. Since there is competition for coveted committees, legislators have incentives to remain loyal to their parties (Cox and McCubbins 1993: 170). In democracies with incentives to cultivate a personal vote and where there is an institutionalized party system with strong parties, parties will help candidates build direct electoral connections with a subgroup of party voters. Parties also use legislators' traits, like their professional specialization, or their districts' composition to inform committee assignments and to allow for legislators to specialize (Shugart et al. 2021). Thus, committee assignments can concurrently reflect individual-level and party-level incentives.

Strong legislative committees and strong parties can coexist, like in Germany, where committee assignments are largely determined by seniority rules and district-specific characteristics (Mickler 2018). The incentives generated by Germany's mixed electoral system promote the cultivation of a personal vote at the district level which in turn favors the number of seats the party gets at the national level. Similarly, in European legislatures, parties control permanent committees, but they earmark distributive policies to specific regions to win votes at the district level (Gschwend and Zittel 2018). Legislators who are ideologically loyal to the party leadership are rewarded with committee assignments that benefit their districts and allow them to cultivate a personal vote (Gianetti et al. 2019).

As Latin American presidential democracies can be placed between the U.S. and European systems in terms of the balance of powers between the executive and legislature (Alemán and Tsebelis 2016: 5-7), law-making rules should present evidence of individual level and party level incentives in committee as-

signments. The power parties exercise over committee assignments, low reelection rates in the legislature and high turnover in committee membership make it difficult for committees to be autonomous entities (Alemán 2006). Previous studies have reported wide variance in committee independence of party leadership in the region, with Bolivia and Mexico reflecting strong party control over committees, and the Dominican Republic exemplifying strong committee independence (Béjar 2007). According to Béjar's classification (2007), Chile's institutional design promotes the specialization and professionalization of the committee system which in turn gives parties a moderate control over committees. Thus, given that design, the institutionalization of the party system and an open-list proportional representation system, we expect that committee assignments in Chile reflect individual-level and party-level incentives.

III. PERMANENT COMMITTEES IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS IN CHILE

As other Latin American democracies, Chile has a president with proactive legislative powers and a legislature with reactive powers. Since the 1990s, Chile has been classified as having strong presidents (Siavelis 2000; Cox and Morgenstern, 2001; Carey 1999). Though the president can issue urgency motions to force the legislature to vote on a bill, institutional incentives foster cooperation between the executive and the legislature (Aninat et al. 2008; Alemán and Navia 2009). Congress can obstruct presidential legislative initiatives (Berríos and Gamboa 2006) and legislators have high re-election rates and long careers (Bunker and Navia 2015). In fact, anecdotal evidence shows that permanent committees have derailed or significantly modified presidential bills (Alemán 2006).

Bills can be introduced by the president or by legislators (in their own chamber). A bill is reviewed by the chamber where it is introduced and, if approved, it goes to the other chamber. Bills are assigned to a committee by the president of the chamber, according to their scope. The committee reports on a bill and makes a recommendation to the floor on whether to proceed with debate. Though formally committees do not have gate keeping powers, the chamber rarely overrules the committee recommendation as committees normally avoid alienating the chamber by recommending bills that have sufficient support in the chamber (Soto 2015: 53-64).

If the chamber votes in favor of opening debate, the bill goes back to the committee where amendments can be introduced by the executive or legislators (Toro and Hurtado 2016). Thus, committee members have an advantage in pushing their own amendments (Soto 2015: 53-64; Toro and Hurtado, 2016: 206). Once the committee returns the amended bill, the floor votes either on the entire bill or article by article—without adding new amendments. If the bill passes, it goes on to the other chamber for a similar process. If both chambers

pass different versions of a bill or one chamber rejects a bill passed by the other chamber, a conference committee works out discrepancies. The compromise bill needs to be voted favorably by both chambers before it can be sent to the president, who can in turn sign the bill or veto it.

Permanent committees date back to the origins of the republic (Obando 2011). In the 19th century, committee assignments were the prerogative of the president of each chamber who, supported by legislative majorities, used persuasion more than coercion to advance the legislative work (Obando 2011). The current rules for committee assignment are similar than those in the 19th century, which shows a strong institutional tradition. Today, according to articles 216-218 of the Chamber of Deputies Internal Rules, the leadership of the chamber makes a take-or-leave proposal with committee assignments for each party according to the party's overall seat share in the Chamber (Soto 2015: 59). Normally, the leadership recommendations are agreed upon unanimously, since the president and vice-president of each chamber are elected by a majority of members, which given the multi-party nature of the political system, induces the formation of ad hoc majority coalitions. Thus, the committee membership proposal made by the chamber's leadership reflects the will of the majority. Each political party gets committee seats proportional to its seat share (Soto 2015: 59). Given Chile's multiparty system, there might be more parties that seats available in each committee. As a result, not all parties get seats in every committee. Larger parties often get more than one seat in several committees. Parties discretionally assign their slots among their legislators (Soto 2015: 60).

Members of the majority party or coalition have an advantage over which committees they can be appointed to. However, it is not uncommon for the opposition to have a majority in some committees, and consequently, controls their presidency (Soto 2015: 53-64). Occasionally, negotiations between coalitions produce seemingly odd committee compositions. For example, in 1990, negotiations with an opposition party allowed the center left Concertación government coalition to control the presidency of the Senate and several committees, despite not having a majority in the Senate.

Though committees and their presidents are not required to follow party orders (Alemán and Navia 2016), committee members generally behave consistently with their party positions—at least in the Senate (Londregan 2000). Parties care a lot about committee composition (Tolozza and Toro 2017). A study for the 2006-2010 period reports that the ruling center-left Concertación exercised strong control of the committee composition but, lacking a majority in the Chamber of Deputies in 2010-2014, the ruling center-right Alianza coalition did not exercise such a tight control (Tolozza and Toro 2017). For the 1998-2002 period, Carey (1999) reported that less than 30% of committee members were in their first term in highly valued committees like Finance, Constitution, Health, Defense, and Education—though those numbers are similar than the overall presence of first termers in the Chamber that period (Bunker and Navia 2015). Other committees, like Public Work, Housing and Science and Technology had

higher presence of first termers. Carey (1999) associates the high tenure rates in coveted committees with experience and the re-election seeking goals of legislators, but there has not been a systematic study of the determinants of committee assignments in Chile for that period.

The committee president sets the pace of the legislative process in each committee (Soto 2015: 60-63). The committee president controls the agenda—except when the executive power has assigned urgency motions to one or more bills—, can delay debate on some bills, leads the legislative debate and chooses to put some amendments to a vote. According to article 18 of the Internal Rules, the committee president can permanently shelve a bill if it has not been acted upon for a year (Soto 2015: 60-63). So, indirectly, the committee president can obstruct a bill and eventually kill it. In 2013, 82.5% of the legislative work in the Chamber of Deputies took place in committees (Soto 2015: 54). Thus, though the executive controls the agenda through presidential urgencies, the work of committees is essential and so is the role of the committee president. For instance, if the executive has issued similar urgency motions on more than one bill, the committee president chooses which of those bills will be prioritized.

Even though permanent committees in Chile's Chamber of Deputies might comparatively have fewer powers and attributions than in other legislatures, anecdotal evidence suggests that legislators seek membership in coveted committees and committee presidencies (Alemán and Navia 2016). José Miguel Ortiz, a member of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC)—a member of the Concertación coalition that ruled for 24 of the 28 years in the 1990-2018 period, was first elected to the Chamber for the 1990-1994 term. Seven 4-year terms later, Ortiz had served for 22 of his 28 years in the Finance Committee. The other 7-termers in the Chamber have had an even a longer tenure in other coveted committees. René Manuel García, from the rightwing Renovación Nacional, has served for 28 years in the Public Works Committee. As there is enough anecdotal evidence that legislators develop long careers in some committees, we conduct the first comprehensive study on committee assignments in the Chilean legislature over a 28-year period that sheds lights on some of the individual and party-level dynamics that account for what determines membership in high policy, public goods, and distributive committees in the Chamber of Deputies. After discussing our methodology, we move on to discuss the results of our study.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Previous studies on committee assignments normally use a dichotomous indicator as the dependent variable (Yoshinaka 2003; Frisch and Kelly 2004). As independent variables, some use census, and other socio-economic data at the district level to assess the composition of committees (Adler and Lapinski 1997) and W-Nominate scores to estimate ideal points between members of differ-

ent committees (Young and Heitshusen 2003). Others use survey data (Ciftci et al. 2008; Strøm 1998) or interviews (Whitaker 2001) to assess the determinants of committee membership. Here, we also use a dichotomous indicator of membership in selected committees as our dependent variable, but following Raymond and Holt (2018), we rely on independent variables associated to the distributional, informational and cartel party theories.

The indicator for our dependent variable is individual committee membership in each legislative year. We collected information on committee membership from the daily logs (*diarios de sesiones*) of the Chamber of Deputies between March 1990 and March 2018 for its 120 members in each of the 28 legislative years. Since some legislators were replaced, we have more than 120 legislators for some years. We have 3404 observations. Each committee is comprised of 13 members. In the seven 4-year terms, the number of permanent committees increased from 16 in 1990 to 26 in 2018, as some legislators pushed for the creation of committees that, without having much work in the actual lawmaking process, could signal their commitment to specific issues. For that reason, there is wide variance in the number of bills reviewed by each committee, as shown in Table 1. While the 10 more active committees account for 84.1% of all the bills reviewed, the 25 least active committees only account for 4.8%. We exclude conference, investigative, and constitutional accusation ad-hoc committees. Although membership occasionally varies within a year, for the most part, legislators appointed to a committee—when the legislative session begins on March 11th—remain in that committee until the end of the legislative year on the subsequent March 10th. As the number of permanent committees increased over time, the 120 deputies have also received a larger number of committee assignments. Since legislators with leadership roles in the Chamber and, in some cases, political parties, receive fewer committee assignments, the number of committee slots varies from year to year—but has trended upwards over time. The individual legislator average committee assignments have almost doubled from 1.7 in 1990-1994 to 3.6 in 2014-2018.

Previous studies have reported some committees to be more important, like Finance and Constitution (Soto 2015: 63-64). Others add Defense and Health (Carey 1999: 385-388), or Labor, Education, and Foreign Affairs (Londregan 2000: 119). We use an evidence-based approach by selecting the 10 committees with the highest number of referred bills. In addition, we selected 5 other committees for their importance as, following Shugart et al. (2021), public goods and distributive committees. Those committees are Human Rights, Defense, Agriculture, Fishing, and Mining. Table 1 shows the committees with the highest number of referred bills in the period, highlighting the committees that we use in our study.

Table 1. Average committee assignments, Chamber of Deputies in Chile, 1990-2018

Committee name	Years in operation	# Bills reviewed	% All bills reviewed	Committee type*
Constitution*	28	2991	29.0	High policy
Government*	28	1153	11.2	High policy
Labor*	28	721	7.0	Public goods
Economics*	28	709	6.9	High policy
Education*	28	632	6.1	Public goods
Public Works*	28	613	6.0	Distributive
Health*	28	543	5.3	Public goods
Finance*	28	489	4.7	High policy
Housing*	28	293	2.8	Distributive
Natural resources*	28	290	2.8	Public goods
Family	24	246	2.4	Public goods
Human Rights*	28	187	1.8	Public goods
Defense*	28	176	1.7	High policy
Agriculture*	28	170	1.7	Distributive
Culture	10	159	1.5	Public goods
Fishing*	17	156	1.5	Distributive
Mining*	28	143	1.4	Distributive
Foreign Affairs	28	82	0.8	High policy
Science and Tech	24	51	0.5	Public goods
Internal affairs	20	7	0.1	---
Others (15 committees)	--	490	4.8	---
Total	28	10301	100	---

*We follow Shugart et al. (2021) to assign committee types.

Source: Authors with data from *Diarios de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados*.

For hypothesis 1, on the distributional theory, the indicator for the independent variable is the economic activity in the district. Given Chile's unusual pencil-shaped geography, different regions have drastically different kinds of economic activity, from mining in the northern desert to forestry and fishing in the far south—with agricultural and manufacturing activities in the central regions. As the distributional theory sees committee assignments made based on the interests of legislators, we expect that the economic activity in each district will affect the type of committee their legislators are assigned to. For example, a legislator from a rural agricultural district would likely want to serve in the agriculture committee. We obtained information from the National Statistics Institute (INE, in the Spanish acronym) on employment in different sectors in each district and coded the share of workers in each district in agriculture and cattle raising, mining, fishing, manufacturing, construction, and commerce.

For hypothesis 2, on the informational theory, we use an indicator of the legislator's academic training as a proxy for the area of expertise. Using data from the Library of Congress, we coded six dummy variables for professions based

on the legislator's academic degree: lawyer, engineer/business major (including commercial engineering), physicians, teachers, economists, and agriculture sciences.

For hypothesis 3, on the cartel party theory, we coded the legislator's party seat share in the Chamber of Deputies in each term. Parties with larger seat shares are expected to get more appointments to the more coveted high policy committees.

For hypothesis 4, on issue ownership, we use the legislator's political party affiliation. In the period, the Chamber of Deputies had an open-list proportional representation system with 60 two-seat districts. In most districts, the two dominant coalitions, the *Concertación* and *Alianza*, had one seat each. However, since both coalitions were comprised by several parties, there was within coalition variance in the party composition in each district more than between-coalition variance.

As control variables, we use the number of previous terms for each legislator, the legislator's gender, and his/her vote share. We expect that legislators with longer terms will be more likely to seat in coveted committees—like Finance or Defense. In turn, we expect that women would be more likely to be assigned to committees that cover issues traditionally associated with social policies and the family, like education, housing, and health—and less likely to be assigned to committees associated to finance and economic activities. The vote share for each legislator is a good indicator of how safe their seats are of their electoral support. We also use log of the district's population, the district's rural population share, and an indicator for districts in the Metropolitan Region (40% of the population). Particularly for distributive committees, the demographic traits of the district should be correlated with the committee type legislators are appointed to. Table A in de the Appendix shows the descriptive statistics for the dependent and independent variables.

V. INFERENCE ANALYSIS

We estimated logit regression models on annual membership assignments to high policy, public goods, and distributive committees. Tables 3, 4 and 5 show the results of the models for each type of committee, respectively.

Hypothesis 1 associates committee assignments to the economic activities in the district. The results shown in Table 2 are consistent with that expectation. Legislators from districts with a strong presence of fishing, agriculture, and mining activities are more likely to serve in the Fishing, Agriculture, and Mining committees, respectively. Legislators from districts with significant manufacturing activities are more likely to be appointed to the Agriculture and Mining committees—a finding that makes sense as those two activities are associated with manufacturing as well. Since districts with strong presence of

construction and commerce—the other two most important activities in the national economy—are not directly associated with any specific committees, legislators from those districts are not more likely to serve in any committees with distributive implications.

Hypothesis 2 suggests that legislators are more likely to be appointed to committees that match their professional expertise. The results of the models are consistent with the expectations. Table 3 (high policy committees) shows that lawyers are more likely to be appointed to the Constitution committee while engineers and economists are more likely to be appointed to the Finance and Economics committees. In turn, Table 4 (public good committees) shows that physicians, teachers, and lawyers are more likely to serve in the Health, Education, and Human Rights committees, respectively.

Hypothesis 3 suggests that legislators from parties with higher vote shares are more likely to be appointed to high policy committees. But in all but one of the models in the three tables, the effect of party seat share is not significant in explaining appointments in any of the committees—including high policy committees. This finding might be explained by the fact that committees have 13 seats that are distributed to parties according to their vote share and, thus, all sufficiently large parties have chances of securing at least one seat in the most coveted high policy committees—while only a few parties can secure more than one seat in the most coveted committees. The majority coalition in the chamber normally has a majority of seats in each committee, but the distribution of seats to parties might not reflect the vote share of each coalition party in the chamber, as the majority coalition can follow other criteria to assign seats to coveted committees among its members.

Hypothesis 4 suggests that legislators are more likely to be appointed to committees where their parties exercise issue ownership. The expectation is that rightwing parties will have more presence in high policy committees (Table 3), while leftwing parties will have more presence in public goods committees (Table 4). The results of the models are not systematically consistent with the expectations. The models in Table 3 show that legislators from rightwing parties RN and UDI are not more likely to get appointments to high policy committees. In turn, legislators from leftwing parties PS and PPD are more likely to get appointments to the Constitution and Government committees, and less likely to be appointed to Defense. The models in Table 4 (public goods committees) show that PS and PPD legislators are more likely to get seats in the Labor and Education committees (PS legislators are also more likely to go to the Health committee), but the PS is less likely to get seats in the Natural Resources committee. However, legislators from the rightwing RN and UDI parties are also more likely to get seats in the Labor and Education committees (and RN legislators are also more likely to get seats in Health). Thus, there is no clear distinction between parties in terms of the type of committee appointments. As the 13 seats of committees are distributed proportionally to the different parties, the larger parties get seats in most high policy and public goods

committees and assign them, according to the results of the models, following an informational approach—with legislators getting appointments to committees that best match their professional expertise. In addition, as the rightwing coalition is comprised of fewer parties than the leftwing coalition, rightwing UDI and RN end up getting seats in most committees—while the parties that comprise the leftwing coalition do not have that advantage.

The control variables also show interesting results. For 4 distributive committees—Public Works, Agriculture, Fishing and Mining—legislators from outside the Metropolitan Region and those from lesser populated districts are more likely to be appointed—which points to a constituency service relationship. The tenure length variable is only positive and significant for membership in the high policy Finance and Defense committees. Membership in the Constitution, Mining, Education and Health committee go to legislators from districts with a high urban population. Women tend to get fewer appointments to the high policy Economics, Finance and Defense committees and more appointments to Labor and Education, two public goods committees.

The models in the 3 tables consistently show that individual level incentives are stronger and more systematic predictors of committee membership than party level incentives. The fact that the electoral system fosters the cultivation of a personal vote might be the reason why committee assignments in Chile are better explained by the distributional and informational theory than by theories associated to party-level incentives.

Table 2. Logit models on membership on distributive committees, Chile, 1990-2018

VARIABLES	Public Works (1)	Housing (2)	Agriculture (3)	Fishing (4)	Mining (5)
H1: Agriculture & cattle raising	-2.332*** (0.834)	-3.185*** (0.892)	5.027*** (1.154)	-8.715*** (1.368)	8.308*** (1.062)
H1: Fishing	2.105 (1.580)	-9.903*** (2.799)	-10.24** (4.040)	4.129** (1.718)	-31.30*** (7.421)
H1: Mining	-24.13*** (5.220)	1.133 (3.580)	-18.35*** (5.377)	-13.46*** (4.187)	30.26*** (2.849)
H1: Manufacturing	0.712 (1.242)	-2.540** (1.110)	11.84*** (1.925)	-1.463 (1.769)	11.37*** (1.624)
H1: Construction	-1.937 (1.503)	-1.310 (1.387)	7.294*** (2.210)	-2.170 (1.692)	1.974 (1.618)
H1: Commerce	-7.458*** (1.619)	4.545*** (1.536)	-2.470 (2.152)	-8.897*** (2.043)	2.558 (2.130)
H2: Lawyer	-1.416*** (0.174)	-0.901*** (0.152)	-1.131*** (0.184)	-0.382 (0.238)	-0.183 (0.175)
H2: Engineer/business major	-0.414**	-1.049***	-1.022***	0.132	0.571**

VARIABLES	Public Works (1)	Housing (2)	Agriculture (3)	Fishing (4)	Mining (5)
	(0.181)	(0.214)	(0.259)	(0.259)	(0.227)
H2: Physicians	-0.476**	-0.991***	0.350*	0.535**	-0.655**
	(0.205)	(0.228)	(0.190)	(0.266)	(0.255)
H2: Teachers	-0.510**	-0.990***	-1.245***	0.0656	0.728***
	(0.218)	(0.263)	(0.276)	(0.270)	(0.219)
H2: Economists	-0.380**	0.0687	-0.811***	0.0835	-0.814***
	(0.190)	(0.194)	(0.282)	(0.252)	(0.265)
H2: Agriculture sciences	-	-1.684***	2.834***	2.025***	-1.181**
		(0.533)	(0.341)	(0.383)	(0.577)
H3: Party vote share	-0.0136	1.164	-0.0683	-3.306**	-1.633
	(1.139)	(1.188)	(1.260)	(1.525)	(1.324)
H4: Dummy UDI	-0.0455	-0.774**	-0.209	0.813*	0.0705
	(0.331)	(0.335)	(0.355)	(0.436)	(0.369)
H4: Dummy RN	-0.208	-0.841***	-0.0825	0.183	-0.0654
	(0.308)	(0.298)	(0.330)	(0.408)	(0.338)
H4: Dummy PDC	-0.0698	-0.618*	-0.0374	0.351	-0.403
	(0.344)	(0.350)	(0.373)	(0.446)	(0.390)
H4: Dummy PPD	-0.200	-0.904***	0.149	0.622*	-0.336
	(0.277)	(0.270)	(0.300)	(0.373)	(0.328)
H4: Dummy PS	-0.622**	-0.470*	0.191	0.377	-0.604**
	(0.304)	(0.271)	(0.318)	(0.362)	(0.296)
Tenure length	-0.0112	0.0448	-0.0973*	0.297***	-0.0518
	(0.0486)	(0.0485)	(0.0543)	(0.0536)	(0.0602)
Woman	-0.509**	0.318*	0.399	0.232	-0.123
	(0.220)	(0.168)	(0.243)	(0.259)	(0.229)
% vote share in past election	2.472***	0.0798	-1.615*	-1.885*	1.161
	(0.750)	(0.751)	(0.829)	(1.129)	(0.904)
Log district population	-2.198***	1.623***	-1.669**	-4.679***	-3.296***
	(0.665)	(0.578)	(0.780)	(0.856)	(0.676)
% rural pop in district	0.0228***	0.0478***	0.0368***	0.0131	-0.110***
	(0.00653)	(0.00732)	(0.00768)	(0.00967)	(0.0100)
Dummy RM	0.538**	0.570***	-1.709***	-0.988***	-1.781***
	(0.251)	(0.211)	(0.386)	(0.369)	(0.307)
Constant	10.97***	-10.51***	3.997	25.23***	13.45***
	(3.542)	(3.137)	(4.154)	(4.619)	(3.649)
Pseudo-R2	0.114	0.083	0.312	0.204	0.303
Observations	3,271	3,359	3,359	3,359	3,359

Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Authors with data from *Diarios de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados*, from the Library of Congress biographies on legislators and from Servicio Electoral de Chile election results.

Table 3. Logit models on membership on high policy committees, Chile, 1990-2018

	Constitution	Government	Economics	Finance	Defense
VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
H1 Agriculture & cattle raising	-0.528 (0.936)	-1.358 (0.924)	0.336 (0.775)	-4.754*** (1.019)	0.257 (0.795)
H1 Fishing	6.366*** (2.446)	-1.783 (1.709)	2.394 (1.716)	-4.050* (2.226)	-2.177 (2.095)
H1 Mining	2.990 (3.323)	-22.45*** (3.971)	-1.326 (3.216)	8.722*** (3.161)	1.694 (2.898)
H1 Manufacturing	-4.912*** (1.121)	1.926* (1.148)	-3.603*** (1.183)	-4.786*** (1.221)	-1.163 (1.133)
H1 Construction	-6.334*** (1.345)	7.489*** (1.310)	-3.333** (1.369)	2.983** (1.347)	-1.915 (1.243)
H1 Commerce	-0.773 (2.135)	0.190 (1.617)	5.120*** (1.494)	-4.915*** (1.656)	-1.334 (1.638)
H2 Lawyer	4.518*** (0.405)	-0.566*** (0.150)	-0.207 (0.151)	0.128 (0.193)	0.0347 (0.137)
H2 Engineer/business major	-1.225 (1.046)	-0.310* (0.188)	0.451*** (0.170)	1.075*** (0.176)	-1.186*** (0.259)
H2 Physicians	0.464 (0.647)	-1.416*** (0.294)	-0.641*** (0.235)	0.878*** (0.245)	-2.143*** (0.376)
H2 Teachers	-1.297* (0.666)	-0.293 (0.208)	-0.814*** (0.296)	0.639** (0.249)	-0.555** (0.230)
H2 Economists	-	-0.0768 (0.196)	0.331* (0.176)	1.817*** (0.178)	-0.848*** (0.263)
H2 Agriculture sciences	-	-0.677 (0.484)	-0.923* (0.533)	0.480 (0.408)	-2.713*** (1.017)
H3 Party vote share	0.959 (1.242)	-0.755 (1.107)	-0.453 (1.125)	1.684 (1.252)	-0.878 (1.111)
H4 Dummy UDI	0.423 (0.494)	0.696* (0.367)	-0.605* (0.316)	-0.0694 (0.380)	-0.306 (0.322)
H4 Dummy RN	0.540 (0.479)	0.485 (0.350)	-0.545* (0.292)	-0.227 (0.337)	-0.349 (0.297)
H4 Dummy PDC	0.163 (0.505)	0.745* (0.385)	-0.280 (0.336)	0.210 (0.390)	-0.570* (0.336)
H4 Dummy PPD	1.188** (0.467)	0.902*** (0.327)	-0.344 (0.266)	0.0361 (0.319)	-0.650** (0.282)
H4 Dummy PS	1.351*** (0.478)	0.647** (0.322)	-0.157 (0.264)	-0.263 (0.323)	-0.924*** (0.296)
Tenure length	0.0838 (0.0664)	-0.0520 (0.0477)	-0.187*** (0.0547)	0.179*** (0.0479)	0.256*** (0.0440)
Woman	-0.0723 (0.258)	-0.0233 (0.193)	-0.882*** (0.247)	-0.984*** (0.289)	-0.972*** (0.261)
Vote share past election	4.237*** (1.003)	-5.094*** (0.863)	-1.187 (0.766)	1.319 (0.833)	2.422*** (0.755)
Log district population	3.142***	-1.378**	0.880	1.467**	0.751

	(0.705)	(0.601)	(0.563)	(0.631)	(0.574)
Rural pop in district	-0.0226**	0.00358	0.00417	0.0578***	-0.0192***
	(0.00880)	(0.00725)	(0.00625)	(0.00796)	(0.00693)
Dummy RM	-0.136	-0.546**	-0.303	0.901***	-0.745***
	(0.198)	(0.212)	(0.213)	(0.224)	(0.200)
Constant	-22.19***	5.871*	-5.465*	-11.40***	-5.237*
	(3.947)	(3.325)	(3.045)	(3.403)	(3.118)
Pseudo-R2	0.106	0.378	0.092	0.071	0.186
Observations	2,835	3,359	3,359	3,359	3,359

Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Authors with data from *Diarios de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados*, from the Library of Congress biographies on legislators and from Servicio Electoral de Chile election results.

Table 4. Logit models on membership on public goods committees, Chile, 1990-2018

VARIABLES	Labor	Education	Health	Natural Resources	Human Rights
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
H1 Agriculture & cattle raising	2.598** (1.023)	0.597 (0.823)	7.251*** (1.023)	0.392 (0.817)	1.865** (0.901)
H1 Fishing	5.559*** (1.707)	-8.151*** (2.241)	4.525 (3.058)	9.577*** (1.514)	0.0789 (2.053)
H1 Mining	5.983** (3.022)	-9.612*** (3.461)	-11.23*** (3.873)	-15.43*** (3.790)	-4.528 (3.438)
H1 Manufacturing	9.855*** (1.216)	-2.841** (1.113)	4.599*** (1.301)	-0.501 (1.159)	3.654*** (1.110)
H1 Construction	8.402*** (1.609)	-4.537*** (1.289)	3.679** (1.772)	-1.515 (1.450)	4.741*** (1.451)
H1 Commerce	-3.835** (1.693)	-3.225** (1.626)	10.59*** (1.833)	1.671 (1.505)	6.706*** (1.606)
H2 Lawyer	-0.00402 (0.156)	-0.669*** (0.167)	0.180 (0.190)	-0.519*** (0.166)	1.090*** (0.163)
H2 Engineer/business	0.125 (0.186)	-0.106 (0.210)	-0.319 (0.278)	-0.204 (0.212)	0.870*** (0.193)
H2 Physicians	-0.310 (0.245)	-0.567** (0.246)	3.015*** (0.192)	0.836*** (0.177)	0.148 (0.252)
H2 Teacher	-0.516** (0.243)	2.018*** (0.175)	-1.384*** (0.524)	0.930*** (0.192)	-0.259 (0.301)
H2 Economists	0.346* (0.194)	-0.487** (0.226)	0.0112 (0.286)	-0.857*** (0.247)	0.526*** (0.200)
H2 Agriculture science	0.311 (0.343)	-	1.328*** (0.317)	-0.414 (0.446)	0.726** (0.356)
H3 Party vote share	0.104 (1.131)	-1.652 (1.154)	0.280 (1.222)	-0.274 (1.128)	0.165 (1.114)

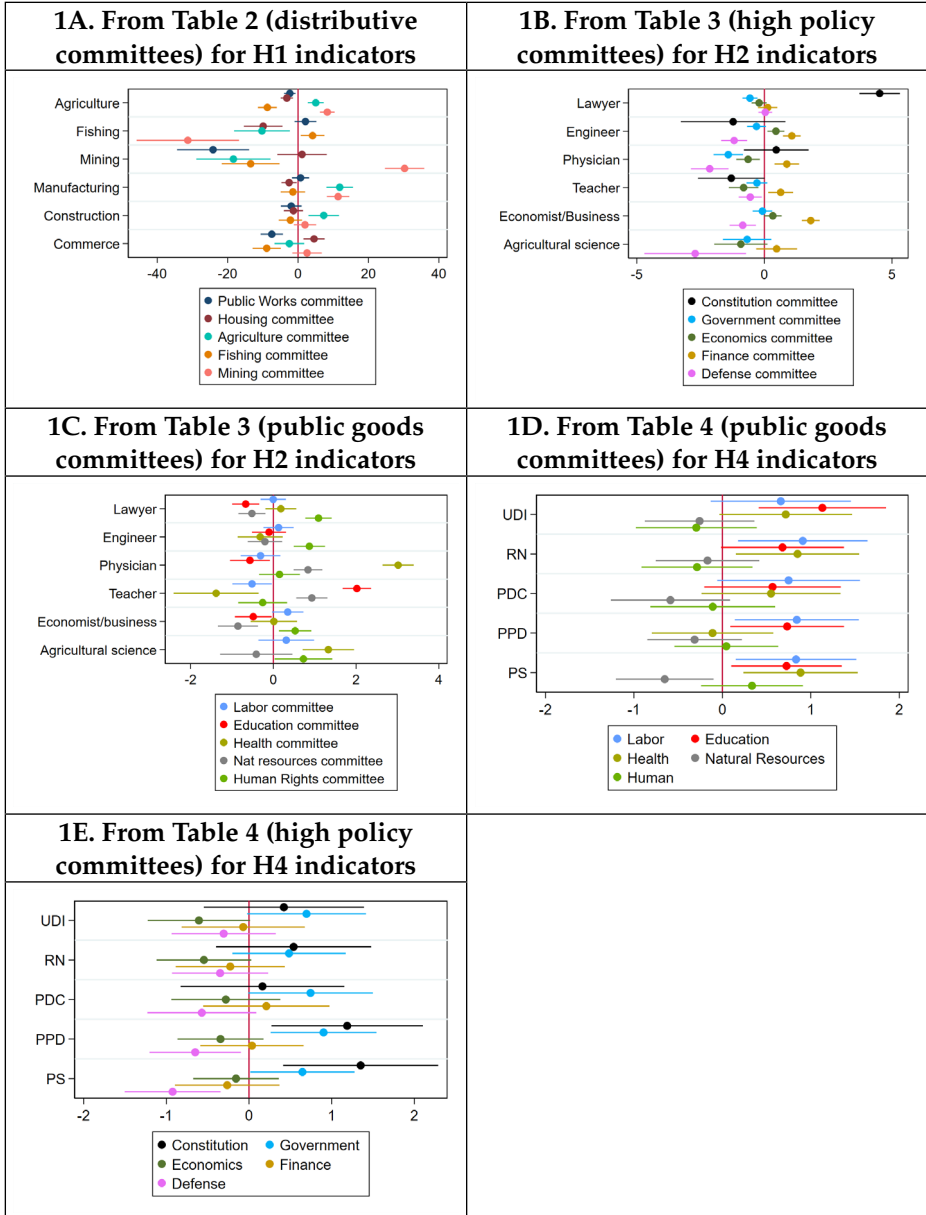
VARIABLES	Labor	Education	Health	Natural Resources	Human Rights
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
H4 Dummy UDI	0.661 (0.404)	1.131*** (0.367)	0.717* (0.383)	-0.257 (0.316)	-0.295 (0.349)
H4 Dummy RN	0.910** (0.373)	0.680* (0.355)	0.850** (0.356)	-0.168 (0.299)	-0.287 (0.320)
H4 Dummy PDC	0.749* (0.412)	0.567 (0.394)	0.550 (0.401)	-0.587* (0.344)	-0.109 (0.360)
H4 Dummy PPD	0.842** (0.358)	0.733** (0.328)	-0.111 (0.351)	-0.314 (0.273)	0.0450 (0.299)
H4 Dummy PS	0.833** (0.348)	0.725** (0.319)	0.884*** (0.330)	-0.652** (0.282)	0.335 (0.294)
Tenure length	0.0455 (0.0481)	-0.245*** (0.0548)	-0.169*** (0.0609)	-0.355*** (0.0595)	-0.0262 (0.0506)
Woman	0.768*** (0.171)	0.429** (0.169)	0.118 (0.218)	-1.036*** (0.234)	-0.0289 (0.212)
Vote share past election	-0.559 (0.773)	1.492* (0.807)	-0.00563 (0.826)	0.632 (0.763)	-2.374*** (0.795)
Log district population	-2.165*** (0.663)	-0.440 (0.603)	-2.504*** (0.690)	-0.797 (0.598)	-0.318 (0.603)
Rural pop in district	0.00532 (0.00758)	-0.0508*** (0.00834)	-0.0363*** (0.00885)	-0.0108 (0.00672)	0.0157** (0.00681)
Dummy RM	0.788*** (0.235)	-0.0597 (0.202)	1.112*** (0.269)	0.131 (0.228)	0.258 (0.216)
Constant	5.522 (3.662)	2.245 (3.228)	6.331* (3.761)	3.242 (3.213)	-3.199 (3.335)
Pseudo-R2	0.078	0.144	0.265	0.104	0.061
Observations	3,359	3,271	3,359	3,359	3,359

Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Authors with data from *Diarios de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados*, from the Library of Congress biographies on legislators and from Servicio Electoral de Chile election results.

To summarize the effects of the independent variables of interest on appointments to the three different committee types, Figure 1 presents five coefficient plots. Figure 1A shows the impact of the economic activity in the district on membership on distributive committees. Legislators from districts where fishing or mining are strong are more likely to serve in the respective committees. Likewise, legislators from districts where agriculture is important are more likely to serve in Agriculture. Figure 1B shows that lawyers are more likely to serve in the Constitution committee, but not more likely to serve in Finance. In turn, economists and engineers are more likely to serve in Finance. Figure 1C shows that the professional experience of legislators is a good predictor of the type of public good committee membership. Figure 1D shows that party affiliation is associated with issue ownership on affiliation to public good committees, but it also shows that membership in those committees might be associated with seeking to establish issue ownership or with parties that have the opposite positions on certain issues, like education.

Figure 1. Coefficient margins for the impact of the relevant independent variables on committee appointments in Chile, 1990-2028



Source: Authors with data from Diarios de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados, from the Library of Congress biographies on legislators and from Servicio Electoral de Chile election results.

VI. CONCLUSION

In democracies where presidents have strong agenda setting and bill initiation powers and where committees have restricted gate-keeping powers, committee assignment dynamics should be different than in systems where committees have stronger law-making attributions. However, when committees retain sufficient powers to influence the outcome of a bill, individual-level and party level incentives can still explain committee membership. Using data from 28 years of legislative committee appointments in the Chamber of Deputies in Chile, we find more evidence of individual level incentives than party level incentives—though some parties consistently get more assignments in some public goods committees. In general, committee assignments dynamics in Chile resemble those reported for the U.S. presidential system more than those of European parliamentary systems, even though Chilean political parties are seen as having more influence over the behavior of their legislators than U.S. parties.

The incentives to cultivate a personal vote might explain the presence of distributional and informational incentives in committee assignments in Chile. Legislators are more likely to serve in committees that offer distributional opportunities for constituency service and specialize on committees that match their professional expertise. As the composition of committees reflects the seat share distribution of coalitions, the larger parties manage to get seats in most committees, but parties seem to prefer membership in committees where they hold issue ownership. In high policy committees, all large parties have membership. Committee assignments in Chile strongly point to distributional and informational theory dynamics more than to party-level incentives. That reflects the need to cultivate a personal vote given the open-list and small district magnitude of the electoral system.

Our findings lead us to warn about changes in the electoral rules and, thus, on the incentives that affect the legislators' behavior. As Chile adopted, since the 2017 election, a more permissive open-list proportional representation system, the dynamics of committee assignment might have changed for the 2018-2022 period, but as the de facto powers of the legislature seem to have increased as those of the president have weakened—especially after the 2019 popular uprising—the dynamics of committee assignment might also reflect that change.

Our findings also have implications for other presidential democracies in Latin America. Though there are some comparative studies on the rules that determine committee assignments in Latin American legislatures (Béjar 2007) and a handful of country-specific studies, the predominance of the executive in the lawmaking process has led scholars to overlook committee assignments as a mechanism for individual career-advancement for legislators and for parties to increase their influence. We contribute by showing that in Chile, a country with a strong executive power, there is also evidence that the distributive and informational dynamics account for assignments in permanent committees in

ways that resemble what has been reported for the comparatively stronger U.S. legislature.

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