Global Religion Research Initiative

- Round 1: Book Leave Fellowship
  - 2017-2018 academic school year
- Led to book publication:
  - University of Michigan Press
  - March 2020
Why Indigenous Activism in Chiapas and Not Yucatan?

- Chiapas
  - Desperately poor
  - Large indigenous population

- High levels of indigenous activism:
  - EZLN (Zapatistas)
  - Vibrant civil society

- Catholic communities play important role
Why Chiapas and Not Yucatan?

- Yucatán
  - Desperately poor
  - Large indigenous population

- Little political activism

- Little activism from Catholic communities

Why Chiapas and Not Yucatan?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chiapas</th>
<th>Yucatán</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,382 protest events</td>
<td>60 protest events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.6% indigenous</td>
<td>37.3% indigenous</td>
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<tr>
<td>57.3% rural poverty</td>
<td>48.4% rural poverty</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Worst in Mexico</td>
<td>• Third worst in Mexico</td>
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Research Question

• Why do religious institutions facilitate secular political activism in some settings but not others?

• I argue where religious institutions are decentralized, they overcome local collective action problems and create an organizational infrastructure enabling political activism.

• Theoretical implications for:
  • Non-state local institutions and collective action
  • Ethnicity and public goods
  • Ideology vs. interests
Presentation Organization

• Previous Literature

• My Argument

• Research Design/Case Selection

• Quantitative Analysis / Results

• Qualitative Analysis / Results

• Implications/ Avenues for Future Research
Religion and Collective Action:

• Political process approach
  • Focus on frames, opportunity, and resource mobilization in creating collective action
  • Previous literature has successfully illustrated role of religious frames (C. Smith 1991; Philpott 2007, 511; Hurd 2008; Philpott 2000; Fox and Sandler 2006; Thomas 2005; Mitchell 2007) and religious opportunity structures (Gill 1998; Trejo 2012)
  • Problem: religions simply assumed to mobilize resources
  • How and when do they build grassroots resources?
Religion and Collective Action:

• Rational choice approach
  • Emphasis on free-rider problem (Olson 1965; Buchanan 1965)
    • Individuals have incentives to free ride off efforts of others
    • If all individuals share such incentives, little collective action is to be expected
  • Strict religious sects weed out free-riders and enable collective action (Iannaccone 1994; Berman 2011)
    • But mainstream religious institutions also can prompt collective action – difficult to explain from this perspective
My Argument

• Political activism creates benefits that are public goods
  • Subsequently subject to the free rider problem

• Decentralized religious institutions lead to political activism
  • Decentralization means local-level governance by the laity:
    • Monitoring, sanctioning, decision-making
    • Mechanism to overcome free riding incentives

• Causal Mechanism:
  Decentralization ➔ Reciprocity ➔ Club Goods ➔ Organization

  ↓

Political Activism
Research Design

• Quantitative analysis
  • Mexican National Survey of Political Culture and Civic Practices Dataset

• Methodological advantage:
  • X is related to Y

• Qualitative Analysis
  • Case comparisons of Chiapas, Yucatán, Morelos
    • Extensive field research and interviews conducted in each state

• Methodological advantage:
  • How/why is X related to Y
Case Selection

• Why Mexico?
  • Common predominant religion in Roman Catholicism
  • Variation in Catholic governance styles across country
  • Variation in levels of activism
Statistical Analysis (Data)

- **Dependent variable data source:**
  - ENCUP dataset
    - 9,000 individuals
    - Protest activity

- **Independent variable data sources:**
  - Catholic Hierarchy Organization
  - Mexican Episcopal Conference
  - Mexican Census
  - Mexican Federal Electoral Institute
  - Jean Meyer’s “La Cristiada: Los Cristeros” Vol. 3
  - United Nations Program for the Development of Mexico
  - National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples
Activism Statistical Model:

• **Dependent variable:**
  • Activism

• **Independent variables:**
  • Religious decentralization
  • Religious competition
  • Political theology
  • Party competition
  • Church/state legacies
  • Deprivation
  • Ethnic heterogeneity

• **Individual Controls:**
  • Economic status; gender; age; religiosity
Activism Statistical Model:

• Primary model ran as fixed effects logistic regression
  • Fixed effects at diocese level
  • Year fixed effects
  • Standard errors clustered by diocese

• Robustness checks for:
  • Random effects
  • OLS
  • Variations on activism measure
  • Variations on decentralization measure
  • .... among others
Activism Statistical Model Results (Primary Model)
Statistical Analysis Primary Findings

• Religious decentralization strongly associated with increased individual-level political activism

• Presence of a political theology and religious competition are also both strongly associated with increased individual-level political activism

• There is a positive interaction effect between religious decentralization and both 1) political theology and 2) religious competition
  • The implication is that decentralization (enabling resource mobilization), political theology (framing), and religious competition (opportunity) mutually reinforce each other’s impact on encouraging collective action
Qualitative Comparison / Data

• Comparison of indigenous political activism across three Mexican states:
  • Chiapas
  • Yucatán
  • Morelos (“shadow” case)

• 70+ interviews conducted in the field from 2011 to 2012
  • Bishops / priests / nuns
  • Laity
  • Political party leaders
  • Civic activists
  • Cooperative members
  • Regular citizens
Location of Interviews

Chiapas

Yucatán

Chiapas

• High levels of indigenous activism
• Vibrant and engaged civic associations
• Rise during the 1970s and 1980s
• 1994 Zapatista uprising
Chiapas: Timeline of Events

- 1960: Bishop Samuel Ruiz Diocese Reorganized
- 1965: Catechists Initial Cooperatives
- 1975

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Chiapas: Timeline of Events

1975
Local Politicized Producer Organizations
   e.g., La’Qu’iptik
Activist movements emerge

1980
Producer groups consolidate:
   e.g., Union of Unions
Large-scale activism

1985
Robust civil society
EZLN growth

1990

1994
Zapatista Uprising
Yucatán

• Low levels of political activism
  • Few indigenous or civic organizations
  • Few organized protest events

• “There are very few civic associations here” (Interview 37)
Yucatán

• Archdiocese of Yucatán highly centralized
  • Doesn’t facilitate local monitoring, sanctioning, or decision making

• Few networks of reciprocal interaction
  • Few regional civic organizations
  • No capacity to organize
Major Results - Qualitative

Chiapas
- Highly Decentralized
  - High Reciprocity
  - Many Club Goods
  - High Organizational Capacity
  - Vibrant Political Activism

Yucatán
- Highly Centralized
  - Little Reciprocity
  - Few Club Goods
  - Low Organizational Capacity
  - Little Political Activism
Summary of Primary Findings

• Religious decentralization positively associated with political activism
  • Statistical results demonstrate individuals in decentralized Catholic dioceses have higher propensities for engaging in activist activities
  • Qualitative case studies:
    • Decentralization overcomes free rider problems and incentivizes engagement
    • As more individuals interact, religious club goods increasingly valuable
    • More individuals interact – develop organizational capacities to manage club goods
    • These organizational capacities can then be marshaled for political activism
  • Presence of political theology and religious competition also positively associated with activism
  • Decentralization, political theology, and religious competition work together to create activism and mutually reinforce one another
General Implications / Avenues for Future Research

• Provides a framework for collective action combining insights from political process and rational choice approaches

• Framework for understanding nonstate institutions’ ability to impact collective action generally

• Greater insights into the relationship between ethnic diversity and public goods
  • Ethnic heterogeneity often thought to be negatively associated with public goods
  • Project suggests multiethnic communities may be better able to produce public goods where decentralized institutions encourage the production of goods and services across ethnic communities