Pro-Life and Feminist Mobilization in the Struggle over Abortion in Mexico: Church Networks, Elite Alliances, and Partisan Context

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ABSTRACT

This article comparatively analyzes the strategies and political impact of "pro-life" and feminist movements in the struggle over abortion policy in Mexico. Drawing on extensive fieldwork, it argues that anti-abortion movements are more likely to influence policymaking in contexts where they can tap into hegemonic religious institutions' networks and alliances and indirectly provide incumbents with legitimizing moral and financial support in exchange for restrictive reforms. Partisan contexts shape incumbents' need for such support. Feminist activists, by contrast, have neither elite connections nor access to similar mobilization resources. To make this argument, the analysis examines pro-life and feminist movements in two Mexican states: Yucatán, where Congress passed a restrictive reform; and Hidalgo, where an identical initiative failed.

Keywords: Social movements, religious institutions, Catholic advocacy, abortion

Latin America's restrictive abortion policies underwent uneven change over the past three decades. In Chile, Mexico City, and Uruguay, among others, feminist activists mobilized for policy liberalizations that transformed the region's reproductive rights landscape. At the same time, anti-abortion movements, jointly with the Catholic Church, successfully pushed for draconian policy restrictions in, for example, El Salvador and Nicaragua (Heumann 2007; Viterna 2012). Contentious debate also took place in Argentina and Brazil, where movements seeking opposite goals took to the streets in protest (Centenera 2019; López 2018).

Scholarship on abortion politics in Latin America has taught us much about feminist movements and the factors that facilitate liberalizing change (see, e.g., Htun 2003; Blofield 2006; Haas 2010). Less is known about pro-life movements' political impact, and in particular, the influence of conservative Catholic advocacy (Hale 2019). Yet anti-abortion activists have intensified their public presence in

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recent years and have developed new strategies to influence public policy (Vaggione 2018).[1]

This article focuses on anti-abortion and feminist movements' ability to influence policy change. Comparing mobilization in favor of and against right-to-life reforms, it argues that pro-life movements are more likely to impact policy in contexts where they can tap into hegemonic religious institutions' networks and alliances and indirectly provide incumbents with moral and financial support.[2] Feminist activists, by contrast, often lack similar organizational resources and elite ties and cannot offer attractive goods in exchange for reforms. Partisan context shapes incumbents' need for moral and economic support, and thereby the extent of movement impact. To make this argument, this study analyzes pro-life and feminist movements' mobilization strategies and influence in the struggle over abortion policy in the Mexican states of Hidalgo and Yucatán.

In Mexico, where all 32 states have jurisdiction over the penal codes that govern abortion, Yucatán and Hidalgo had similar policies in place before 2009.[3] As a wave of restrictive constitutional amendments swept the country following Mexico City's abortion decriminalization in 2007, pro-life movements in the two states propelled identical right-to-life bills onto legislative agendas.[4] Despite similarities, such as the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in office, weak civil societies (Gutiérrez 1990; Hale 2018), comparable estimated levels of Catholic Church influence, and number of religious associations and ministries of worship (Loza and Méndez 2014; SEGOB 2018), Yucatán's State Congress quickly passed the reform, whereas the attempt to elevate the right to life to constitutional rank failed in Hidalgo. What explains this difference?

Drawing on more than 60 semistructured interviews with activists, legislators, church members, and scholars, as well as extensive archival material, this study finds that Catholic clergy in both states supported the mobilization of anti-abortion movements motivated by perceived threats to religious doctrine.[5] Activists used the church's vast infrastructure to gather signatures in favor of identical restrictive reforms. The Pro-Yucatán Network gained influence through its access to church allies among the economic and political elite, forged via the church's hegemonic status in the state.[6] In exchange for reform, the pro-life network could indirectly offer incumbents moral and financial support. The PRI's need for such support to stay in office led to a quick approval. Feminist and LGBTQ mobilization initially triggered the reform but could not hinder its passage. By contrast, the Yes to Life movement in Hidalgo lacked access to elite circles. The Catholic Church never established ties to economic and political elites in the state, and the pro-life movement could not offer incumbents attractive goods. In a context of PRI dominance, whose interests favored policy status quo and in which feminist activists had some influence, the party had few incentives to pass a reform.

The following sections provide an overview of scholarship on social movement mobilization and influence in processes of abortion policy reform. The study's theoretical framework and research design are presented before turning to the two case studies. The conclusions discuss the main findings and their implications for future research.

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Social Movements and Abortion Politics in Latin America

Abortion politics scholarship has provided important insights into feminist movements' strategies and influence in policymaking. A small but growing literature examines conservative Catholic mobilization (e.g., Felitti 2011; Morán Faundes 2018). Yet existing work provides a limited understanding of its political impact. Church-linked pro-life movements are portrayed as consistently strong, which creates an overly static view of religious opposition that cannot explain variation in its policymaking influence.

Feminist Movement Strategies, Networks, and Allies

Strong, autonomous feminist organizing has been critical for putting abortion reform on legislative agendas in Latin America. Issue networks comprising politically influential actors, such as lawyers, doctors, and journalists, have helped feminist activists raise public awareness, mobilize public opinion, and lobby state actors (Htun 2003, 15). Activists have used individual autonomy, public health, and human rights frames to press governments for liberalizing change and to shift public opinion in their favor. International gender equality norms have figured at the core of claims to expand abortion access (Kane 2008; Sutton and Borland 2013), and transnational advocacy networks have brought new ideas and discourses into domestic policy debates (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 91).

Women's ministries or policy machineries have acted as inside allies to feminist movements. Their ability to affect policy, however, depends on friendly executives that provide ministries with sufficient resources and political influence (Franceschet 2010). As feminist movements' main political allies, left parties have traditionally supported demands for greater gender equality. Efforts to decriminalize abortion have succeeded only where left parties dominate executive or legislative branches (Haas 2010).

Despite its ideological openness, however, the political left has been an unreliable ally in the struggle to liberalize abortion in the region (Friedman 2009; Blofield and Ewig 2017). Left legislators have refrained from promoting change in contexts where the Catholic Church retains political influence, fearing the costs of defying powerful clergy (Heumann 2007). Feminist lobbying has therefore been successful primarily at times of conflicted church-state relations, when incumbents have had little to lose by challenging religious doctrine (Htun 2003).

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Pro-Life Movement Strategies and Networks

Catholic clergy, on the other hand, have for decades supported movements that share their anti-abortion stance. In Argentina, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Peru, clergy began to aid pro-life groups' advocacy to restrict policy in the late 1990s (Morgan and Roberts 2012). Often clandestine, these alliances proved largely successful. The Catholic Church collaborated with nascent anti-abortion movements to pass fetal rights laws in several Argentine provinces, and joint efforts to pressure state officials resulted in complete abortion bans in El Salvador and Nicaragua in 1997 and 2006, respectively (Franceschet and Piscopo 2012; Viterna 2012; Kampwirth 2008).

Beyond clergy members, pro-life activists have developed strategies to include a broader range of actors to defy progressive reproductive rights agendas. Many groups formalized their structures into nongovernmental organizations beginning in the 1980s. Since then, a diverse activist front, encompassing religious academic institutions, lay movements, bioethicists, and parliamentary groups, has converged under the pro-life label and serves as a movement mobilized around the defense of a conservative moral order identical to Catholic doctrine (Vaggione 2018). Similar to feminist organizing, this front operates at global, regional, and local levels (Ramírez and Morgan 2017, 423).

Strategies that downplay religious identity have facilitated broad anti-abortion mobilization. To build networks among the nonreligious, pro-life groups increasingly employ arguments based on biology, psychology, and bioethics. Moving away from religious discourse, they promote a Catholic moral agenda disguised as defending public interests and universal morals—a tactic Vaggione (2014) labels strategic secularism. In Argentina, for example, some activist groups appeal to Catholic or Evangelical audiences, whereas others present themselves as secular (Pecheny et al. 2016). Minimizing religious identity to mobilize across religious divides is also part of the civil ecumenical strategy that brings Catholics and Evangelicals together in pursuit of a joint pro-life agenda by setting religious differences aside (Morán Faundes 2018).

Religious institutions continue to be powerful allies to pro-life movements despite efforts to disguise their affiliation through secular strategies. In Latin America, much research points to the Catholic Church's ability to incite collective action (see, e.g., Yashar 2005; Trejo 2009). The wealthy, highly organized church has facilitated anti-abortion organization and bolstered movements' political influence in relation to feminist activists (Blofield 2006, 2008). Yet as Hale (2018, 33) notes, access to church resources provides only the potential for collective action—it does not guarantee mobilization or political impact. Existing research cannot explain variation in pro-life movements' policy influence or specify the factors that underpin their political leverage. Addressing these issues helps shed light on conservative Catholic advocacy and answers Hale's call for examining movement mobilization and operation (2019, 10).

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Religious Institutions, Historical Allies, and Goods Provision

To explain policy outcomes focusing on movement impact, I argue that influential pro-life movements can tap into hegemonic religious institutions' networks and alliances. Ties to high-ranking clergy, in turn, linked to economic elites, allow movements indirectly to provide incumbents with attractive moral and financial support, which creates incentives to pass restrictive reforms. Feminist activists, by contrast, have little access to similar mobilization resources, and beyond the inconsistent political left, have few allies that provide access to elite circles and give their demands political weight.

As trusted moral authorities, religious institutions often have high credibility among citizens, which translates into substantial political capital. Religious leaders are trustworthy pillars of society who stand above politics, and their moral support can legitimize rulers and their policies, especially among the faithful who confide in religious authorities. To provide moral legitimacy, however, requires the capacity to persuade the masses. Only religious institutions that represent the majority faith and enjoy widespread popular support can sway large segments of the public. Political elites are therefore more willing to bargain with leaders of large ecclesiastical communities who control religious monopolies than those who represent a smaller share of the citizenry (Koesel 2014).

In Latin America, religious notions of hierarchy, authority, and obedience have historically operated to reinforce existing sociopolitical arrangements (Levine 2014, 29). Party leaders have relied on the Catholic Church—a central institution in the region that operates as a pillar of social organization—and its legitimizing support to bolster public trust and popularity (Gill 1998; Loaeza 2013). The clergy's direct political interference is, however, prohibited in countries such as Mexico, and therefore often considered illegitimate (Pew Research Center 2014, 97). Conservative Catholic advocacy movements indirectly influence public policy by operating as intermediaries between incumbents and the church.[7] Anti-abortion groups constitute a subset of these movements, and by approving their moral agenda, which is identical to Catholic doctrine, incumbents gain the clergy's legitimizing support.

Pro-life movements can similarly provide incumbents with support from powerful business elites via the Catholic Church through its relationships with economic elites. The Catholic clergy "slipped into easy, historic alliances with wealthy, conservative elites that could support the church financially" (Hagopian 2008, 154). These alliances shaped perceptions of the church. As Trejo notes, "having sided with local economic elites for centuries" made the church unpopular in some regions and susceptible to religious competition (2009, 324). In present times, the maintenance of clergy–business elite ties over time must be understood in the context of religious education and the social strata that receive private school training.

Education is an important tool for religious institutions to influence elite group formation. Rather than direct political engagement, Catholic bishops in Latin

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America have preferred to "inculcate politicians and future leaders with the proper Christian spirit" (Gill 2002, 105). Through private Catholic preparatory schools and universities, the clergy has reached a small but influential community (Klaiber 2009).[8] Early formation in the "right" moral values is a successful mechanism to ensure longtime loyalty to a specific faith (Gill and Keshavarzian 1999). As a result, elites with instilled Catholic beliefs often favor policies that reflect the church's moral doctrine—especially on key issues, such as abortion. Support from business magnates who control important resources can, in turn, provide incumbents with financial benefits critical for effective rule; for example, by bringing in new investments that contribute to state finances. Approving pro-life movements' proposed policy restrictions can therefore provide political actors with economic support.

Hegemonic religious institutions' links to business magnates and the political class provide elite connections that set them apart from other political actors. In addition to its own organizational infrastructure and faithful adherents, the Catholic Church can mobilize movements that employ secular strategies to rally the nonreligious. It can also obtain financial resources through tithing. But while hegemonic religious institutions, just like labor unions, can mobilize people, raise money, and establish political alliances (see, e.g., Murillo and Schrank 2005), they also forge ties to economic elites. To gain policymaking influence, anti-abortion movements can tap into these networks and alliances.

Feminist movements, by contrast, have little access to such resources. Activists have difficulty mobilizing broad sectors for contentious issues like abortion. International policy agendas and transnational advocacy networks provide information and mobilizing frames, but rarely material resources. Left parties and women's ministries are unreliable allies whose support is conditioned on church power and friendly executives. While feminist organizations have created issue networks to lobby for their cause, they often lack the elite connections that provide political leverage.

Several alternative variables could help explain variation in policy outcome. Public opinion in Latin America generally opposes full abortion decriminalization. Conservative preferences regarding liberal change do not necessarily indicate support for restrictive reforms, however. In Mexico, the harsh punishment for abortion-related crimes that followed right-to-life reforms in many states generated public outrage. Liberal media portrayed the states that passed such bills as backward on women's rights, and legislators tried to fast-track the reforms late at night to avoid controversy (Reuterswärd 2020). Moreover, public opinion's role in shaping abortion politics remains inconclusive. The left-wing Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) decriminalized abortion in Mexico City in 2007, although merely 38.4 percent of polled residents favored the reform (Population Council 2009). This suggests that factors beyond public opinion might have a greater impact.

Ruling party majority also determines the prospects for reform. While the left at times has supported feminist demands for policy liberalization, center-right parties have defended restrictive legislation. Such a propensity suggests that they might promote right-to-life initiatives. Yet in Mexico, empirical observations indicate that this is not always the case. The socially conservative National Action Party (PAN)

supported right-to-life bills, but so did left legislators in several states, and the PRI introduced and passed the majority of restrictive reforms from 2008 to 2013 (Lopreite 2014). Moving beyond ideology, this article suggests that the moral and financial support that pro-life movements can offer incumbents via their links to the Catholic Church is attractive to a wide range of parties.

Research Design, Case Selection, and Methods

This study takes advantage of Mexico's federal structure to examine policy variation among states within the same national polity and society. It uses a subnational method based on controlled case comparisons of state-level political processes. By holding constant variables such as political and religious institutions, as well as general culture and history, a comparative state design helps isolate the variables behind policy variation and reveal the mechanisms at work, which increases the probability of obtaining valid causal inferences (Snyder 2001). This approach is especially useful for examining the Catholic Church's elite connections and political influence. Church-state relations in Mexico are determined largely by governor-bishop interactions; funding for the construction and restoration of churches is also regulated at the subnational level (Camp 1997).

Yucatán and Hidalgo represent the two policy outcomes observed during the wave of right-to-life amendments from 2008 to 2013, restrictive reform and status quo. During this period, in 2009 and 2011, respectively, pro-life movements successfully put restrictive initiatives on legislative agendas. But while the Yucatecan Congress quickly passed a reform, an identical bill failed in Hidalgo. These cases thus represent maximum variance on the dependent variable, *policy outcome*, which increases representativeness and generalizability (Gerring and Seawright 2008, 300).

Despite different policy outcomes, Hidalgo and Yucatán shared many similarities. After decades of semi-authoritarian PRI rule that co-opted interest groups and posed an everpresent threat of violence (Olvera 2010), civil society was weak in both states, as it was in most of Mexico. Civil society remained fragmented in Hidalgo (Gutiérrez 1990), and activism was similarly low in the southeastern state of Yucatán (Hale 2018, 34). The previously hegemonic PRI governed both states. Defined as centrist, corporatist, and clientelist (see, e.g., Lawson 2000; Flores-Macías 2013), the PRI's pragmatic rather than programmatic commitments motivated party politics (Klesner 2005, 135). In contrast to its rivals, the socially conservative PAN and the left-wing PRD, the PRI lacked a clear stance on abortion, providing neither pro-life nor feminist movements with incumbent advantage. The two states are also comparable in terms of religious indicators. Local experts evaluate the Catholic Church's public policy influence to reach 1.71 on a four-point scale in Yucatán, whereas it scores 1 in Hidalgo (Loza and Méndez 2014).[9] Yucatán's 173 religious associations and 583 ministries of worship are further comparable to Hidalgo's 233 and 581, respectively (SEGOB 2018).[10]

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A few differences between the two cases are worth noting although they did not affect the outcome. Whereas a campaign to legalize same-sex marriage triggered pro-life mobilization in Yucatán, the movement in Hidalgo organized to counter a bill seeking abortion liberalization. The joint mobilization against both same-sex marriage and abortion in Yucatán possibly facilitated the right-to-life bill's emergence on the legislative agenda but did not determine the outcome, since the State Congress voted on the two proposals separately. Nor were the types of initiatives—a petition versus a legislative bill—decisive. Instead, both operated to trigger anti-abortion mobilization.

This study uses qualitative process-tracing methods to analyze the events that resulted in a restrictive reform and status quo, respectively. Process tracing is a particularly useful tool to examine variation in policy outcomes because it aims to identify causal mechanisms by carefully tracing each sequence of a political process (George and Bennett 2005). The qualitative approach is also valuable for identifying and examining the impact of social mobilization and the patterns that historically shaped relations between clergy and elites in the states under study. This study draws on more than 60 semistructured interviews with legislators, activists, scholars, and church members conducted in 2015 and 2016.[11] It also analyzes extensive archival material, including hundreds of newspaper articles collected in each state.

In Yucatán: A Pro-Life Movement with Elite Access

In July 2009, Yucatán became the fourteenth Mexican state in rapid succession to pass a constitutional amendment that guaranteed the right to life from the moment of conception. Spearheaded by PRI governor Ivonne Ortega Pacheco, the State Congress fast-tracked the reform, which departed dramatically from Yucatán's history of liberal abortion legislation and feminist, anticlerical politics.[12] Although the PRI majority unanimously supported the bill, it did not originate within the party. Instead, a pro-life movement put the bill on the legislative agenda in a process that began as a reaction against the attempt to liberalize another controversial policy—same-sex marriage—in the state.

The Trigger: Progressive Mobilization Seeking to Advance Same-Sex Rights

Inspired by the region's growing attention to same-sex rights and Mexico City's civil union law in 2006, feminist and LGBTQ organizations in Yucatán began to discuss strategies to legalize gay marriage in 2008.[13] In November, a coalition consisting of sexual diversity and reproductive rights organizations such as Indignación, UNASSE, and Oasis de San Juan de Dios publicly announced the launch of a popular initiative to permit same-sex marriage (Mis Cobal 2008; Indignación 2015). Aware of the ruling PRI's reluctance to debate such a controversial issue, the net-

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work decided to utilize Yucatán's recently approved popular initiative law, which provided an opportunity to advance state policy without engaging in fruitless attempts to lobby legislators.[14]

Despite years of repressive PRI rule, a few vocal organizations sought to advance reproductive health and sexual diversity rights in Yucatán. Their autonomous nature made them an exception in a state where most organizations had a religious or partisan affiliation and even businesses co-opted civil society by cultivating organizations for women, children, and adolescents (UNASSE 2015). The handful of feminist and LGBTQ organizations built on the state's socialist legacy and recent history of gay rights mobilization. Yucatán was one of the states most affected by Mexico's HIV/AIDS epidemic, which disproportionally affected gay men. In response to the outbreak, activist groups emerged in the 1980s and afterward to gather information and resources to combat the disease (Letra S 2016; Derechos Cultura y Diversidad Sexual 2015). By 2009, the early mobilization had given way to multiple organizations that sought to advance the rights of Mérida's increasingly visible LGBTQ population.

Yet despite these early mobilizations, civil society remained weak. Few citizens were actively engaged, and existing groups fragmented, with low capacity to influence public policy. Most organizations had few material or financial resources at their disposal, and divisions based on rivalry over scarce state resources prevented the emergence of a strong, cohesive LGBTQ movement (Indignación 2015; UNASSE 2015; Derechos Cultura y Diversidad Sexual 2015).

Yucatán's thriving sexual diversity community nevertheless made it one of few states in which a popular initiative could succeed.[15] The coalition behind the campaign therefore expected to gather the required signatures quickly. Instead, the initiative failed. Neither feminist nor LGBTQ organizations had the capacity to reach broad social sectors, and the lack of organizational resources impeded strong mobilization.

The attempt to legalize same-sex marriage alarmed conservative religious sectors, which mobilized quickly. Merely two months after the same-sex rights campaign failed, a loosely knit network of pro-life and pro-family organizations formed to protect conservative values. The Pro-Yucatán Network (PYN) replicated the strategy of using the popular initiative law to advance two bills—to ban gay marriage and restrict abortion.

The Pro-Yucatán Network and Its Elite Connections

At a press conference in March 2009, PYN President Ivette Laviada Arce announced the network's intention to advance a bill to protect the family and above all, safeguard children's right to grow up in a family with a mother and a father (González Rivero 2009). Consisting of 46 organizations united in the defense of life and traditional family values, the official signatories in support of the initiative included professional organizations such as Asociación Católica de Abogados and Asociación

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de Médicos Católicos; pro-life groups, such as Ayuda a la Mujer Embarazada (AME) and Vida y Familia (VIFAC); Catholic organizations linked to Opus Dei, including Caballeros de Colón; and civic organizations like the Lions Club.[16]

The PYN was less vocal about its second proposal, to modify Yucatán's vanguard abortion law. Although policy liberalization had not been on the political agenda, PYN leaders considered such a reform to be a credible threat. After Mexico City's abortion decriminalization in 2007, Laviada Arce and her members believed that it was only a matter of time before the national capital's reform spread to Yucatán (Laviada Arce 2015). The PYN therefore used the popular initiative to mobilize not only for a same-sex marriage ban but also to preemptively restrict the state's abortion policy. Fearing the unpopularity of such a proposal, however, they kept the second initiative under wraps.

Yet despite Yucatán's conservative reputation, citizens of the state did not necessarily support restrictive change.[17] Often described as *mochos*—that is, having double standards—many identified as Catholic but few actively practiced their faith. While economic and political elites tend to be very conservative in the state, most people are not (Interview 22, 2015; Sauri 2015). Well aware of this context and the general unpopularity of right-to-life reforms, PYN-affiliated organizations were careful to emphasize their opposition to punishing women for abortions (AME 2015).

As part of its mobilization strategy, the PYN avoided outright religious arguments and denied any affiliation with the Catholic Church. To project a secular image, members used a discourse of human dignity and respect for life that drew on bioethical arguments. Organizations in the network maintained that their opposition to abortion was not founded "in religious but in human beliefs." Yet leaders used language akin to Catholic doctrine to claim that life begins at conception and that reproductive rights cannot exist since abortion is a crime (AME 2015).

The PYN's objectives were indeed identical to the Catholic Church's agenda—it aimed to preserve traditional gender roles and protect the "natural order," including the right to life and heterosexual family norms. In the words of the PYN's president, "We believe that a child needs a mother and a father. We are aware that there are gay families, but it is one thing what exists and another what is desirable" (Laviada Arce 2015).

The PYN quickly gathered support for its cause, although it never collected any signatures in public. In late March 2009, its lawyer, Jorge Carlos Estrada Avilés, submitted the two initiatives to Congress accompanied by 9,703 signatures (González Rivero 2009). But while leaders denied any religious affiliation, multiple ties to Catholic clergy suggest that access to the church's mobilizing structure helped the PYN gather signatures.

The leaders of the PYN, Ivette Laviada Arce, Margarita Rubio de Ponce, and Alicia García Gamboa, belonged to the state's deeply Catholic business elite, with close intrapersonal and professional links to clergy. The García Gamboa family supported archbishop Emilio Berlié when he arrived in Yucatán in 1995 (Franco 2013).[18] For years, Alicia García Gamboa's sister, Ana María, hosted a television

show, *Dialogando en familia*, with Berlié; and Berlié, up to 2015, wrote a weekly column for the influential newspaper *Milenio*, owned by Laviada Arce's family (Franco 2009, 33). Moreover, the PYN's Estrada Avilés coordinated the archdiocese's team of lawyers under Berlié. Its leaders were closely linked to the state's apostolic movements, which multiplied during his tenure (Franco 2009; Delgado 2016). Margarita Rubio de Ponce, in particular, was, for decades, involved as a movement leader (*Diario de Yucatán* 2009a; Gómez Chi 2012).

In the context of a weak civil society, the Catholic Church's infrastructure was key to the PYN's success. Access to the church's mobilizing structure helped the network reach vast sectors of Yucatecan Catholics, which undoubtedly facilitated the rapid gathering of almost three times the required amount of signatures (Peniche Quintal 2009; Oasis de San Juan de Dios 2015). As a PAN official explained, only with church support could a civil society organization carry out such a big operation secretly in Yucatán. Indeed, the PYN was the only network in state history to initiate a citizen proposal and successfully fulfill the requirements of the process (Interview 24, 2015).

Although the church did not openly acknowledge its involvement, clergy members publicly supported the PYN's agenda. In a letter directed to its faithful following the bill's approval, the archdiocese of Yucatán declared the right-to-life reform a historical advance. It gratefully acknowledged the individuals, organizations, and authorities involved in the process, especially "the deed of a group of faithful laymen committed to uniting Yucatán with the other 13 federal entities that already changed their constitutions to establish the fundamental principle of right to life." Echoing PYN leaders' discourse, the letter stated that without the right to life, no other right can exist (*Diario de Yucatán* 2009b). In addition to the church's infrastructure, its links to business elites—including PYN leaders—and politicians contributed to the bill's success. To understand the role of these ties, let us turn to the Catholic Church's history in Yucatán.

The Catholic Church: Business Connections and Incumbent Relations

A conservative oligarchy formed in Yucatán during the nineteenth century. Through its control over the agave fiber production that ushered in the state's "golden era," elite groups dominated the state and, with Catholic clergy support, imposed conservative values on society (Ortega and Fajardo 1997). The church had exercised significant political and economic control in Yucatán since colonial times, and it grew in the shadow of the oligarchs, closely imbricating their interests (Montalvo 1996).[19] As the golden era ended, business elites remained close to church hierarchies as leaders of apostolic movements or administrators of church property. A Catholic identity remained intact in Yucatán's middle and upper classes over time, which allowed the conservative legacy to continue to dominate the region (Ortega and Fajardo 1997).

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The church's close relationship with business elites provided the clergy with indirect political influence. All incumbents depend on oligarchs to govern effectively, and relations between prominent business families and the political class went back decades. The PRI's main supporters during the 1980s and afterward were Andrés García Lavin, the founder of Grupo SIPSE, which runs newspapers in several states, as well as radio and television in the Yucatán peninsula; and Fernando Ponce García, who created Yucatán's most influential business enterprise, which includes a brewery for Coca-Cola products (*Mérida de Yucatán* 2010). Governor Víctor Cervera Pacheco (1984–88, 1995–2001) integrated Ponce García and other business leaders into his cabinet to further Yucatán's economic development via foreign investment, which strengthened already codependent governor-business ties (Sabido Méndez 1995; Quezada 2001). Oligarchy support has been so critical that both the PAN and the PRI have catered to elite interests; for example, by not carrying out major redistributive projects in the state (Montalvo 1996; Ortega and Fajardo 1997). But while business elites' political allegiances have shifted over time, closeness to the Catholic clergy has persisted.

As mentioned above, the PYN leaders formed part of Yucatán's business elite via familial ties. Margarita Rubio de Ponce was the widow of the aforementioned Fernando Ponce García; Alicia García Gamboa's family owned Grupo SIPSE; Ivette Laviada Arce's family owned *Milenio*. These business links were amplified through other organizations in the network. VIFAC, for example, received support from well-known businesses, such as Mi Viejo Molino, Mega-media, Ford, and Sensei, which sponsored its annual fundraising breakfast in 2015 (Ceballos Alvarado 2015).[20] As part of the state's Catholic business elite, the PYN's leaders were also well connected to the political class. García Gamboa was elected president of the board of the State Administration of Public Welfare and received an honorary medal from Congress recognizing her work in "defense of life and servant of the unprotected" in 2009 (*Yucatán Ahora* 2010). For the incumbent PRI, the PYN provided a link to the clergy, whose support the party needed to boost legitimacy.

Partisan Context: The PAN, the PRI, and Salient Catholic Morals

The quest for the church's moral support had been a constant struggle between the PRI and the PAN since the late 1960s, when competition began over the control of Mérida. A revival of the elite culture that upheld the state's Catholic conservatism coincided with the struggle for electoral democracy in the 1980s and afterward. Clergy spearheaded an opposition movement supporting the PAN's efforts to oust the PRI from power. The successful campaign put Catholic morals at the center of state politics and established the importance of the clergy's legitimizing support (Franco 2009).

As competition hardened throughout the 1990s, PAN candidates increasingly used discourse embedded in moral values to distinguish themselves from the PRI (Ortega and Fajardo 1997). PRI officials, in turn, adopted similar discourse and

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intensified efforts to gain church support by hosting apostolic congresses and demonstrating their Catholic beliefs before the electorate (Montalvo 1996). Abortion became salient in this context, and a scandal implying that Governor Cervera Pacheco supported an illegal abortion clinic contributed to the PRI's loss in the 2001 gubernatorial elections—the first in 50 years (Reuterswärd 2019).

By 2009, the PRI had regained control over Yucatán. Governor Ivonne Ortega Pacheco narrowly won the 2007 gubernatorial election and, well aware of the importance of maintaining good relations with Catholic hierarchies, publicly declared herself Catholic. Throughout her time in office, Ortega Pacheco participated in numerous religious acts and openly praised archbishop Berlié's work (Franco 2009; Sauri 2015). Lacking the PAN's Catholic foundation, the PRI had to convince the clergy and business elites of its equally high moral standards. The right-to-life bill constituted an opportunity to show commitment to church doctrine and gain clergy support (Payán 2015). As a scholar explained, "The governor's group were losing the little legitimacy they had and believed they could be seen as a little better, a little more Catholic, by supporting the right-to-life reform" (Interview 22, 2015).

The Passage of the Right-to-Life Reform

Three months after the PYN submitted its initiatives to Congress, the two bills were up for vote in a session announced at the last minute. On July 14, without any preceding debate, the PRI fast-tracked the reforms supported by the PAN. Only the sole PRD legislator opposed the bill (Congreso del Estado de Yucatán 2009). Activists alerted to the imminent vote rushed to Congress but could not hinder the process, as Ortega Pacheco refused to postpone the session. Feminist and LGBTQ activists protested outside while PYN members and their leaders filled the legislative chamber's front rows (Vargas 2009a).

Although the PRI majority unanimously supported the reforms, party leaders could not explain the decision to fast-track the bills. Responding to criticism, the PRI's coordinator, Jorge Carlos Berlin Montero, downplayed the party's agency and emphasized the obligation to analyze citizen initiatives in the same legislative period as they were received (Vargas 2009a). Yet concerns about following protocol were not the only motivation. The rushed process was a calculated move to avoid negative media attention, and not even the PAN knew about the voting session in advance. While its legislators supported the reform that coincided with party ideology, many criticized the quick process that minimized time for analysis and hindered public debate (Vargas 2009b; Interview 24, 2015).

By passing the right-to-life bill, the PRI received the clergy's legitimizing moral support that had become an important electoral good in competing for office with the PAN. It also helped the party gain traction with the state's conservative business elite, whose financial support incumbents in the state had been dependent on for decades.

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In Hidalgo: A Pro-Life Movement Without Elite Links

In October 2011, two years after Yucatán's restrictive reform, PAN legislator Yolanda Tellería introduced a bill to protect life from the moment of conception in Hidalgo. The initiative responded to PRD deputy Sandra Ordaz Oliver's proposal to decriminalize abortion in the state six months earlier. Just as in Yucatán, the right-to-life bill did not emerge within the proposing party. Instead, a pro-life movement initiated the reform in the attempt to defend Catholic doctrine and counter the PRD's bill.

The Emergence of the Yes to Life Movement and Its PAN Ally

The pro-life movement in Hidalgo emerged just days after Ordaz Oliver presented to Congress the initiative to decriminalize abortion. A member of the left-wing PRD, Ordaz Oliver believed that advancing reproductive rights in Hidalgo was necessary to strengthen women's rights. In early April 2011, she presented a bill to Congress based on Mexico City's 2007 policy, which, in effect, legalized first trimester abortions (Ordaz Oliver 2016). Mere days afterward, the slogan "Yes to Life in Hidalgo" (*En Hidalgo, Sí a la Vida*) began to appear on house walls, church buildings, and bumper stickers across the state (Sánchez 2016). Hidalgo's nascent pro-life movement was behind the sudden public displays in favor of life. With a vision to defend life, it mobilized quickly after news spread of the PRD's initiative to decriminalize abortion.

The pro-life movement used secular and civil ecumenist strategies to mobilize broadly against the initiative. To counter the PRD's bill, it sought to introduce a right-to-life reform identical to those that many states had already passed, and embarked on a campaign to gather signatures. The shared value that cut across religious lines and could persuade those without faith to support the reform revolved around defending life and the most vulnerable—the unborn. As one pro-life activist explained, "Most signatories were Catholic, but members of Protestant churches and people without religious affiliation also joined. We said, 'are you from Hidalgo? Are you in favor of life? Join us! If you have a job, a company, if you have a religion, join us!'" (Interview 24, 2016).

Despite its appearance, the pro-life movement did not mobilize autonomously. Catholic clergy initiated the campaign. As a congregation member in Pachuca recalled, "In church, priests told us, 'let's show that we do not agree on legalizing abortion.' At that point an organization called Yes to Life spoke to us and said they were going to promote a right-to-life initiative" (Interview 28, 2016). Others also bore witness to clergy involvement: "Certainly the church helped. There are people directly linked to the church who dedicate their time to protecting life. The move-

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ment coincides with church activities" (Interview 79, 2016). The movement's confinement to Catholic congregations helps explain why it lacked specific leaders. In sharp contrast to the PYN, whose leaders held press conferences and were active online, those behind the initiative in Hidalgo remained anonymous. The movement was also less organized. In 2011, it had no web presence or concrete structure of affiliated groups. The document that would later accompany the signatures to Congress was signed by "civil society in general."

Hidalgo's weak civil society made the Catholic Church's network the best available structure to mobilize in favor of a right-to-life initiative. Similar to the PYN, the movement succeeded in rapidly collecting thousands of signatures in favor of the reform via the church's vast infrastructure. Yet the pro-life movement in Hidalgo did not have a large network of associated organizations at its disposal. Beyond the task of gathering signatures, conservative religious mobilization in the state was weak. The church had few actively engaged members and mostly dormant associated groups. Pro-life activists found it difficult to recruit even those Catholics who regularly attended church: "Civil society did not want to commit to the church and participate. It was difficult to reach residents" (Interview 28, 2016). Beyond the "Yes to Life" signs that appeared across the state, the movement made little noise, and activists did not voice their opinions in local media (Meza Escorza 2016; SEIINAC 2016). Similar to the PYN, it was nonconfrontational and rarely took to the streets to manifest its pro-life stance.

Yet despite having few active members, the movement quickly gathered signatures in favor of a right-to-life reform. In contrast to Yucatán, however, Hidalgo had no popular initiative law. The movement therefore needed a legislative ally to propose the bill and submit the signatures as evidence of its broad-based support. For the job, it approached the PAN's Yolanda Tellería. A well-known politician and a suitable choice, given her party's socially conservative stance, Tellería agreed to introduce the bill to Congress, accompanied by 108,318 signatures (*El Sol del Hidalgo* 2011). But although the pro-life movement in Hidalgo amassed a vast amount of signatures in a short time and managed to put a reform on the legislative agenda, it did not enjoy the elite links via the church that provided the PYN and its initiative with political weight.

Religious Diversity and Distant Church-State Relations

Historically, the Catholic Church in Hidalgo did not prosper as in other regions. The early migration in and out of the state led to a proliferation of religious beliefs beyond Catholicism that divided rather than united religious forces. The state's mining industry and its geographic location as a passage to neighboring Mexico City generated an influx of foreigners and a cosmopolitan environment. The English mine workers who settled in the area in the 1800s were practicing Methodists and Anglicans. In contrast to Catholics, Methodists were inspired by modern principles of individual liberty, and these intellectual currents in Hidalgo became an important

antecedent for Mexican liberalism.[21] Still today, the Methodist Church remains more deeply rooted in Hidalgo than elsewhere in Mexico (Loaeza 2010).

The presence of other organized religions made it difficult for the Catholic Church to become hegemonic. In 1863, Rome established the Diocese of Tulancingo in an effort to "church the state." The quick turnover of bishops, however, undermined its growth, and by the Mexican Revolution, Tulancingo was politically and economically irrelevant. In the postrevolution phase, the anticlerical federal inspectors who oversaw the socialist education project did not consider the institutional church a major threat (Fallaw 2013). In contrast to Yucatán, the church "never experienced a dramatic Porfirian renaissance in Hidalgo" (Fallaw 2013, 63).

Hidalgo's diverse and fragmented religious sphere and liberal climate shaped church-state relations. In sharp contrast to Yucatán, bishops and governors never became strategic allies. Instead, relations remained distant, visible in their symbolic geographical separation. While the State Congress is located in Pachuca, the cathedral is found in Tulancingo, approximately 30 miles away.[22] Pachuca is the only Mexican state capital without a resident bishop and lacks the typical New Spain city plan, in which the cathedral is located in front of the government palace. Thus, while the Catholic Church has exerted a certain influence in Hidalgo as in all of Mexico, it has been confined to the faithful sphere, and the clergy's political impact has remained limited (Interview 14, 2016).

The liberal current that took hold in the state consolidated the idea that politics should be above religion, and the church-state separation has continued to be respected in Hidalgo. Aware that closeness to Catholic clergy is generally perceived as illegitimate, politicians have maintained their distance; for example, by not attending mass publicly (Interview 14, 2016). Still today, governors maintain a critical and indifferent approach to the clergy. PRI governor Osorio Chong (2005–11) and his successor, Francisco Olvera (2011–17), both followed their predecessors' strategy of avoiding any association with the clergy (Meza Escorza 2016). Pope Francis's meeting with Chong during his 2016 visit to Mexico illustrates a careful adherence to the church-state separation. Chong, still closely linked to the PRI in Hidalgo but at the time interior minister in Enrique Peña Nieto's cabinet, met with the Pope far from the public eye and did not release any statement afterward—unusual behavior in a context in which politicians often openly display their relationship to high-ranking religious officials (Interview 14, 2016).

The church's lack of elite connections was further visible in relation to the economic sphere in Hidalgo. The intrapersonal and professional ties between clergy and oligarchs that characterized Yucatán were absent. A small group of business magnates made up the state's economic class, but it was less prominent, and an agrarian elite never formed (Gutiérrez 1990, 57). The mining industry instead dominated Hidalgo's business sector, and the English entrepreneurs who owned the mines were practicing Methodists or belonged to other Protestant churches with few connections to Catholic clergy (Bastian 1983, 42). Gutiérrez (1990, 57) notes that business owners in Tulancingo contributed to the city's conservative climate but does not

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mention ties to Catholic clergy. In present-day Hidalgo, pro-life organizations with Catholic foundations and links to both clergy and business sectors, such as VIFAC, have yet to establish themselves in the state.

The clergy's lack of ties to the political class, as well as Hidalgo's small business elite, meant that the pro-life movement could not offer incumbents indirect moral or economic support in exchange for a restrictive reform. By contrast, a handful of feminist activists had, over decades of civil society engagement, built connections among political actors. Previously successful in influencing abortion policy, the group acted swiftly.

Fragmented Feminist Organizing with Some Elite Access

The pro-life mobilization in response to the PRD's bill was not unwarranted. Although a full abortion decriminalization was unlikely to pass, Congress had approved a policy liberalization three years earlier. In June 2001, Carmen Rincón of Grupo de Mujeres Cihuatl—a well-known activist who participated in the Cairo Conference of 1994 as an invited expert on reproductive rights in Mexico—presented a bill to permit abortion in cases of extreme poverty. The initiative lingered in committees for seven years until the PRD's Tatiana Ángeles, inspired by the party's reform in Mexico City, reintroduced it in 2007. The following year, it passed unanimously without any controversy or public opposition (*El Sol del Hidalgo* 2008). While far from a decriminalization, the reform indicated an openness to liberalization enough to alarm conservative religious sectors.

Similar to that in Yucatán, the feminist movement in Hidalgo was fragmented. In addition to the obstacles activists faced across the country, Mexico City's concentration of activism left less mobilization in nearby Hidalgo. Disputes over resources and ideological differences further impeded the emergence of a coherent feminist movement. Nevertheless, a handful of activists, including Carmen Rincón, Otilia Sánchez, and Elsa Ángeles, were well respected for their decades-long engagement and had, over time, established relationships with legislators and other state actors (Rincón 2016). As is common in Mexico, Governor Olvera's spouse, Guadalupe Romero, directed the state Institute for Family Development (*Desarrollo Integral de la Familia*) in 2011. Romero's team coordinator, Rosa María García Pardo, was also actively involved in civil society. Feminists joined forces with García Pardo to develop relations with institutions such as the Organization of American States and lobbied for making Pachuca the headquarters of the Belém do Pará Convention, a regional agreement to prevent violence against women (Ángeles 2016; OAS 1994).

Although Hidalgo's loose network of feminist activists benefited from individuals with institutional access, such as Pardo, they were ultimately a small group seeking to resist a restrictive reform. While the state-run Women's Institute (*Instituto Hidalguense de las Mujeres*) was reluctant to take a stand on a controversial issue like abortion, activists used their connections to influence policymaking. Ángeles described the impact of feminist activism accordingly.

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> We don't take to the streets because we are few and we have been unable to pass the torch to younger feminists. What we have been able to do, perhaps because we are veterans, is to negotiate. If we go to Congress, the deputies sit down with us to talk. We open forums, we have offices. We might not have much to play with, but we know how to negotiate. (Ángeles 2016)

Partisan Context and the Failure of the Right-to-Life Bill

The handful of feminist activists with access to the political elite partially contributed to the right-to-life bill's failure. Prompted by the initiative, the group went to Congress to address the PRI-dominated legislature. Elected members listened as Rincón, Sánchez, and Ángeles declared that approving a restrictive reform identical to Catholic doctrine might imply electoral costs, given Hidalgo's liberal climate and observed church-state separation. The group also offered a workshop on reproductive rights, in which they distributed information about legal abortion (Ángeles 2016). Shortly thereafter, the PRI quietly sent the right-to-life bill to linger in legislative committees, where it remained without reaching a vote. The PRI's pragmatic approach to moral issues and tendency to ignore civil society, however, suggests that feminist activism alone did not prevent the right-to-life reform's passage. Other party interests shaped the outcome.

The PRI in Hidalgo faced a context vastly different from that in Yucatán. The party had never lost a gubernatorial election and, for more than 80 years, had retained a legislative majority (Vargas 2003). The PAN played only a minor role, and its weak position, combined with the Catholic Church's lack of elite links, never generated competition over the clergy's legitimizing moral support. The PRI's continued dominance gave it almost full legislative control, and in 2011, the party sought to avoid controversial debate. The PRI feared that a right-to-life reform would place Hidalgo among those states considered "backward" on women's rights and destroy its progressive reputation. At the same time, approving the PRD's bill would generate intense debate. Status quo was the best option. The PRI therefore also sent Ordaz Oliver's initiative to linger in committees and asked Tellería to withdraw her bill from the list of proposals awaiting analysis (Tellería 2016).

The PRI's reluctance to pass the right-to-life bill was symptomatic of the clergy's lack of elite connections in Hidalgo. The presence of other organized religions and a liberal climate hindered the Catholic Church from establishing hegemony in the state. While clergy could mobilize to gather signatures in support of a restrictive reform, they were not part of the elite nexus. In contrast to the PYN, the Yes to Life movement could not indirectly offer incumbents moral or financial support in exchange for a reform. Moreover, in a partisan context of PRI dominance, the party had no need for the clergy's legitimizing support. Instead, to avoid costly debate, the PRI sent the right-to-life bill to linger in legislative committees.

Conclusions

This article has examined variation in abortion policy outcome, focusing on the impact of pro-life and feminist movements in subnational Mexico. In response to perceived threats to Catholic doctrine, anti-abortion movements emerged in both Yucatán and Hidalgo and successfully put right-to-life bills on legislative agendas. Yet despite the two states' many similarities, only Yucatán passed a reform. The PYN gained political leverage by tapping into the hegemonic Catholic Church's elite alliances in the state, which allowed it to indirectly offer incumbents economic and moral support in exchange for reform. Competition over the clergy's legitimizing support created further incentives for its passage. The Yes to Life movement in Hidalgo, by contrast, lacked such ties. The Catholic Church never established hegemony in the state and had little access to elite circles. While clergy mobilized both Catholics and non-Catholics to gather signatures, the pro-life movement could not provide incumbents with attractive goods in exchange for reform. In a context of PRI dominance in which party interests took precedence and feminist activists had some influence, incumbents had few incentives to pass the reform.

These findings confirm previous research that suggests that pro-life actors have greater political impact than feminist groups, given their access to Catholic Church resources (Blofield 2006). By specifying the sources of anti-abortion groups' influence, the results shed light on conservative Catholic advocacy movements and have several implications for future research.

Catholic clergy were highly implicated in the processes that unfolded in Yucatán and Hidalgo. While the Yes to Life movement emerged from within the church, the PYN appears to have organized autonomously and was channeled through elite networks. This contrast suggests differences in social bases (see Hale 2019). In both states, access to church infrastructure facilitated gathering signatures in support of right-to-life bills. The precise extent of clergy involvement is, however, difficult to establish. Both pro-life activists and church officials deny cooperation, which poses challenges to researchers. More studies are required to fully understand the clergy's involvement in mobilization and pro-life activism's degree of autonomy—in some cases, these movements may act as church fronts—and whether these findings apply to countries elsewhere in the region.

Results from the study also suggest that anti-abortion movements emerge in response to initiatives that threaten religious doctrine. Feminist demands for policy liberalization often constitute the triggers that activate church networks and associated movements that overtly or covertly defend Catholic doctrine. Future research should study the dynamics of movement interaction, rather than each actor separately.

Social movements' policymaking influence ultimately depends on incumbent interests—especially those of governors or other executives. The case studies examined in this article suggest that policy outcomes largely depend on incumbents' need for the attractive goods that passing restrictive reforms could provide—specifically, the clergy's legitimizing moral support and the endorsement from business elites. Future research should continue to examine the motivation behind incumbents'

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policy choices and how factors such as partisan context interact with social mobilization to shape abortion politics.

Notes

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1. This article uses *pro-life* and *anti-abortion* interchangeably.

2. *Incumbent* refers to the party that holds the governorship and a legislative majority.

3. Yucatán and Hidalgo both allowed abortion in cases of extreme poverty, risk to the mother's life, and fetal malformation. Besides the rape exemption valid in all states, abortion is permitted when the life of a woman is at risk in 27 states, in cases of fetal malformation in 13, and when the woman's health is at risk in 12 states.

4. Eighteen of Mexico's total 32 states enacted constitutional right-to-life amendments to preempt future policy liberalizations (Beer 2017).

5. This study focuses on the Catholic Church's mobilization of pro-life groups. It follows Vaggione, who acknowledges the growing importance of conservative Evangelical activism but contends that "the Catholic Church leads and shapes the opposition to the movement for sexual and reproductive rights in most of Latin America" (2018, 24).

6. Hegemonic religious institutions are those that not only dominate popular faith but historically have forged, and over time have maintained, ties to political and economic elites over other organized ecclesiastical communities.

7. Not all pro-life movements are necessarily linked to the Catholic Church. However, their shared objectives render close affiliations highly likely.

8. Cuba, Mexico, and Uruguay prohibit religious education in public schools, whereas it is allowed in some provinces in Argentina and Brazil (Asiaín Pereira 2016).

9. Specifically, experts answer the question of how much power the Catholic Church has in determining public policy: 0 = none, 1 = a little, 2 = some, 3 = quite a lot, 4 = a lot (Loza and Méndez 2014).

10. This includes all religious associations and ministries of worship in a given state. To my knowledge, no data exist that separate these into different religious denominations.

11. The clergy's elite connections are contentious in some states. This article therefore anonymizes those scholars who have not published or publicly expressed their opinion on this topic.

12. Mérida emerged as the center of Mexico's growing feminist movement in the early 1900s, and under the brief socialist rule of Salvador Alvarado (1915–17) and Felipe Carrillo Puerto (1922–24), Yucatán enacted Mexico's most liberal abortion policies.

13. Yucatán's civil code did not define marriage as between a man and a woman.

14. The 2006 law sought to enhance political participation by providing an opportunity for citizens to submit legislative proposals to Congress. The procedure requires gathering at least 2,600 signatures in support of an initiative to be delivered to the Instituto de Procedimientos Electorales y Participación Ciudadana, which, in turn, submits the initiative to Congress, which is obliged to analyze its content (Vargas Aguilar 2008).

15. While no census exists, a high number of LGBTQ people are believed to live in Yucatán (Interview 28, 2015).

16. See http://www.redproYucatán.org/adhesiones-a-la-iniciativa-por-la-familia/

17. To my knowledge, no state-level public opinion data on abortion exist in Mexico.

18. Emilio Berlié was archbishop of Yucatán, 1995–2015.

19. For example, an alliance between Governor Olegario Molina (1902–7) and Catholic clergy reinforced the church's dominant position by strengthening the state's religious infrastructure, multiplying the number of Catholic churches and schools.

20. Marilú Mariscal de Vilchis founded VIFAC in 1985 to honor maternity. Its mission is to protect life by providing for pregnant vulnerable women (Carrasco Azcuaga 2015).

21. A group of citizens, spearheaded by Mayor Gabriel Mayorga, wrote the "Jacala Act" in 1856. It expressed ideas concerning a church-state separation that preceded Benito Juárez's reformation laws (Vergara Hernández 2011).

22. Benito Juárez created the State of Hidalgo in 1869 as a sign of gratitude to the "liberal loyalists who fought against Conservatives and the French in western Huasteca" (Fallaw 2013, 63).

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