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DIFFERENCES IN LEVELS OF VOTER TURNOUT AMONG THE MEXICAN STATES

David R. Hansen, Errol L. King, and Samuel H. Peterson

Abstract

In the 2000 elections, voter turnout varied widely among Mexican states, from as high as 72 to as low as 52 percent. This article will answer the question: Why did voter turnout vary among the states during Mexico’s 2000 presidential elections? We will show how levels of wealth, education, and other resources, as well as indigenous culture, are influential in explaining variations in voter turnout. We will determine the influence of these variables on voter turnout through regression analysis of the thirty-two states of Mexico and case studies of the Federal District, Guerrero, Chiapas, and Yucatan.

Presentation of Research Question and Puzzle

It is important to understand voter turnout because it can indicate the health of democracy in a country or other political unit. As Mark Franklin writes, “Participation is the lifeblood of democracy” (Franklin 1996, 216). Arend Lijphart reinforces this by asserting that political participation through voting is one of several “basic democratic ideals” (Lijphart 1997, 1). Political participation can indicate a strong political culture and high levels of citizen involvement in government. In addition, it enables all groups of society to influence policy outcomes.

Because of its importance, many political scientists have examined variation in voter turnout among countries. In spite of the many efforts to
explain voter turnout using national level variables such as compulsory voting laws, party structure, salience of elections, proportionality of the electoral system, and weekend voting (Franklin 1996, 217; Jackman 1987, 407-09), few have attempted to explain variation in voter turnout within countries outside of the United States. There is much variation among subnational divisions in terms of voter turnout that cannot be explained by an analysis of international variation.

We are particularly interested in the intranational variation of voter turnout in Mexico. In the most recent presidential elections, voter turnout varied by as much as 20 percent between Mexican states, as in Chiapas, which had the lowest turnout levels in the country at 52.2 percent, and neighboring Yucatan, which had the highest turnout at 72.0 percent (IFES [2]). Other examples of neighboring states with high levels of variation in voter turnout included Baja California and Baja California Sur, whose levels of voter turnout differed by 10 percent. The levels of voter turnout of two northern states, Durango and Jalisco, also differed by approximately 10 percent. If geography were the only factor in explaining voter turnout, we would expect voter turnout to be more homogenous within regions, if not nationwide. It is difficult to say that these differences are the result of random variation because, as we will show, significant patterns are visible in the state-by-state data. In this article we will address the puzzle: Why does this variation of voter turnout occur within a country that has the same electoral laws in all of its states?

Theoretical Background

We believe that a combination of resource, instrumental motivation, and cultural theories explains discrepancies in the levels of state voter turnout in Mexico. These theories, as we found in our data analysis, can be mutually reinforcing, and different theories may have varying levels of applicability in different states. In certain areas a history of extreme internal conflict may also affect attitudes toward voting, such as in the case of Chiapas. We will explain the effects of conflict using instrumental motivation theory.

To explain cross-state variations in voter turnout, we intend to use resource theory and instrumental motivation theory, which are described by Mark Franklin in his chapter “Electoral Participation” in the book *Comparing Democracies: Elections and Voting in Global Perspectives*. Simply
stated, resource theory is the idea that “people participate who have the time and money to do so” (Franklin 1996, 220). In this view, the rich, the educated, and those who have time to spare will be more likely to vote than the poor, the uneducated, and those who have little time. Steven J. Rosenstone argues that this is because voting, like all types of political participation, imposes an opportunity cost on scarce resources that the poor or unemployed could otherwise use to improve their economic situation (Rosenstone 1982, 41). According to Lijphart, “the inequality of representation and influence [is] . . . systematically biased in favor of more privileged citizens—those with higher incomes, greater wealth, and better education—and against less advantaged citizens” (Lijphart 1997, 1). Lijphart supports this by referring to a study by Harold F. Gosnell: “Gosnell . . . found that turnout increased with economic status and that ‘the more schooling the individual has the more likely he is to register and vote in presidential elections’” (Lijphart 1997, 2). Thus, if resource theory is correct, we should see higher voter turnout in states with high average levels of education, wealth, and other resources. States with chronic poverty and low levels of education would be expected to exhibit lower voter turnout.

Instrumental motivation theory suggests that voters will be more likely to vote if they feel that their vote will positively influence the electoral outcome. This theory implies that an individual voter makes a cost–benefit analysis, consciously or not, involving the likelihood that her vote will affect public policy, the degree to which such an effect would benefit her, and the costs of voting. One important factor in this cost–benefit analysis is the level of contestation between parties or candidates in the election. A citizen will be more likely to vote in a close election, because she will perceive that her vote is more likely to swing the outcome toward her favored candidate. Thus, we expect that if instrumental motivation theory is accurate, we should see higher voter turnout in states where an election is close, more is at stake, or the costs of voting are lower (Franklin 1996, 221).

One particular aspect of the cost–benefit analysis found in instrumental motivation theory is the effect of the threat of violence on voter turnout. Disruption caused by factors such as armed conflict and extreme social tension can have a negative impact on the willingness and ability of people to vote. This will occur in cases of extreme violence and societal
unrest because of increased danger of violence to those who use their vote to oppose armed groups. Conflict, intimidation, political coercion, and other disruptions may also indicate reduced perceptions of democratic legitimacy, which would increase citizens' reluctance to vote. We have found that this application of instrumental motivation theory is particularly useful in explaining the low levels of voter turnout in the southern state of Chiapas, which has experienced a great deal of armed conflict in the past decade.

In our analysis of voter turnout, we will also employ an indigenous culture theory. We believe that high levels of indigenous culture in certain Mexican states will tend to lower voter turnout. Much of this effect stems from indigenous Mexicans' perceptions of themselves as alienated from the mainstream of their society and from the benefits of representative government. They may not feel that national representative institutions address their particular needs, or they may be uninformed about the larger issues in an election because of limited language skills and insufficient access to media information on elections. Indigenous people may even feel that the national government is hostile toward them and their interests. As Wendy K. Tam Cho writes:

If minorities have informational and social networks that provide unique political information and a different source of political socialization, they may not derive the same sort of satisfaction from affirming allegiance to the political system or have the same sense of responsibility for preserving the democratic process. (Cho 1999, 1144)

In particular, we will examine the effects of large monolingual indigenous language populations on voter turnout. We believe that large monolingual indigenous populations in a state will lead to lower voter turnout. As Cho claims in her study of immigrant political socialization, proficiency in the dominant language of one's country greatly improves the possibilities for political participation. Her analysis implies that at least a minimum proficiency is important in overcoming bureaucratic processes in registering to vote and obtaining information about political issues.

Cho also argues that "minority populations have a tendency . . . to establish ethnic communities or neighborhood clusters" (Cho 1999, 1144). An indigenous village with many citizens that do not speak Spanish will be less likely to feel itself a part of Mexican society than a village where
bilingual or monolingual Spanish speakers predominate. Monolingual speakers of an indigenous language will likely be less informed about election issues and may hold a more parochial perspective than Spanish speakers who have access to a national media perspective. María Paris, writing for the Instituto Federal Electoral, shows that Mexican speakers of indigenous languages are likely to be less tolerant of other races, religions, and political backgrounds than non-indigenous Mexicans (n.d.). This easily leads to alienation from the non-indigenous majority and the mestizo-dominated political system.

Furthermore, the cultural divide in Mexico appears to be widening, as the populations of speakers of almost all of Mexico's indigenous languages continue to grow, passing on their language and culture to future generations. For example, from 1970 to 2000, the population of people speaking an indigenous language nearly doubled and now comprises over 6 percent of the national population of Mexico (INEGI [4]). In all eleven states where 10 percent or more of the speakers of indigenous languages were monolingual, voter turnout was below the national average. The monolingual population is a reflection of the level of integration of the indigenous population of a state. If indigenous culture is a fundamental determinant of voter turnout, we expect to see lower levels of voter turnout in states with deeply entrenched indigenous communities, as measured by a large proportion of indigenous people in a state, a low percentage of Spanish speakers, and large groups of monolingual speakers of an indigenous language.

In addition to instrumental motivation theory and resource theory, Franklin also uses mobilization theory to explain voter turnout. This theory holds that "citizens . . . are more likely to participate if encouraged to do so" (Franklin 1996, 220). Mobilization theory also stresses the importance of the "activities of groups and organizations (especially political parties)" in increasing voter turnout (Franklin 1996, 220). This theory, although applicable, was not used in our analysis due to a lack of sufficiently detailed information about the mobilization efforts of political and other civic organizations in each Mexican state. To collect the necessary data to examine mobilization theory, we would most likely need to conduct field studies and other more in-depth research into efforts at mobilizing the various groups of Mexican society.

We must keep in mind the reinforcing effect of these theories on one another in predicting voter turnout. One theory may be more generally
applicable and thus capable of establishing a rough baseline prediction for voter turnout, which is then modified by more state-specific variables. Resource theory, for example, is applicable to all states because of its focus on variables that are seen in all states of a country, such as levels of wealth and education. As Franklin points out, instrumental motivation theory and resource theory are often highly interrelated, as citizens whose opportunity cost of voting, in time and effort expended, is higher are probably less likely to vote. Our indigenous culture theory, in contrast, may have high predictive and explanatory power in particular cases, such as that of Chiapas and other states with large indigenous groups, while being unable to explain anything about voter turnout in an area where indigenous culture has no significant presence.

We must also note that causative variables from different theories may be correlated with one another. For example, indigenous culture may affect the amount of education that a person may receive, while an advanced education may cause an individual to reject many aspects of her indigenous heritage. The presence of high correlations between some of our independent variables indicated the possibility of multicollinearity, which can produce unreliable regression results. For example, there was a large correlation (R=0.77) between average years of school and per capita GDP. To overcome the problem of multicollinearity, since the variables used to examine a particular theory will most likely be closely related, such as different variables measuring education or wealth, we eliminated some of these redundant variables from the regression.

Regression Analysis

To support our thesis, we ran several regressions on the variables we thought would be most useful in supporting or undermining the theories we used to explain voter turnout. Though we discovered some possible problems with our data, we were able to mitigate them by using statistical techniques. Among the group of variables we examined, we found that indigenous culture had the most significant influence on voter turnout.

To examine the contestation element of instrumental motivation theory, we used the difference in vote share between the top two vote-getting parties in each state in the 2000 legislative elections to indicate the level of competition in state elections. To assess the theory that states with high percentages of indigenous population have lower voter turnout, we
Table 1: Influences on Voter Turnout

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Coefficients (t-ratios)</th>
<th>Coefficients (t-ratios)</th>
<th>Coefficients (t-ratios)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage monolingual indigenous</td>
<td>-0.245* (-3.141)</td>
<td>-0.181 (-1.702)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Catholic</td>
<td>0.113 (1.315)</td>
<td>0.0957 (1.087)</td>
<td>0.111 (1.220)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference between vote share of top two parties</td>
<td>0.0985 (1.085)</td>
<td>0.0945 (1.036)</td>
<td>0.0752 (0.803)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per capita GDP</td>
<td>0.0359 (1.196)</td>
<td>0.0368 (1.221)</td>
<td>0.0551** (1.888)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiapas and Oaxaca Dummy</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-3.547 (-0.884)</td>
<td>-0.430* (-2.677)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>52.697* (6.392)</td>
<td>53.843* (6.427)</td>
<td>50.582* (5.995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.391</td>
<td>0.386</td>
<td>0.343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-ratio</td>
<td>5.984*</td>
<td>4.905*</td>
<td>5.052*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent variable: Percentage voter turnout
* indicates p ≤ 0.05  ** indicates p ≤ 0.10

measured the level of indigenous cultural influence as the percentage of a state's indigenous population that speaks only an indigenous language. We found this to be a more accurate depiction of the depth of indigenous culture in an area than the percentage of the population that spoke an indigenous language without regard for other languages spoken because it takes into account the level of indigenous integration into or alienation from mainstream Mexican society. We collected data on gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in each state (INEGI [7]) in order to test resource theory's implication that people with more wealth tend to vote more. We also found data on the percentage of people who identified themselves as Catholic in a given state, which enabled us to control for religious affiliation, which varies widely among the states (INEGI [10]).

Regression 1 in Table 1 analyzes the relationship between the dependent variable of voter turnout (IFE [3]) and four independent variables:
difference in vote share (IFE [3]), the percent of indigenous people who are monolingual (INEGI [9]), per capita GDP (INEGI [7]), and percentage of Catholics (INEGI [10]). We chose the first three independent variables to test the relative importance on a national level of each of our principal theories (instrumental motivation, indigenous culture, and resource theories, respectively). We also included the level of Catholicism (INEGI 10) in a state to check for possible religious effects on voter turnout. Because our analysis did not find levels of Catholicism to have a significant influence on voter turnout, we did not include it in our case studies.

The most statistically significant correlation was with the indigenous monolingual variable, which showed a p-value of 0.004. Its regression coefficient value of -0.245 showed that, for a 1 percent increase in the percentage of monolingual speakers of indigenous languages, voter turnout decreased by 0.245 percent. In contrast, on a state-by-state level, the level of Catholicism, the average number of years in school, and the difference between the top two vote shares proved ineffective at predicting voter turnout. The correlations of these variables with voter turnout were not statistically significant (p>0.2), and their associated regression coefficients were too small for the variables to have much substantive effect on voter turnout.

Taken together, the regression using these four variables had an R² value of 0.391, meaning that the regression equation using these four variables can explain 39.1 percent of the variation in voter turnout across states. The regression's F-ratio of 5.984 indicates that the variables in the regression, taken together, have a statistically significant effect on voter turnout with a p-value of less than 0.01.

Our model's R² value of approximately 0.4 shows less predictive significance than several studies of cross-national variation in voter turnout. For example, G. Bingham Powell, Jr., claims several R² values of 0.9 or greater in his study of the effects of various electoral laws and sets of political institutions on voter turnout (Powell 1986, 25). Robert W. Jackman obtains R² values as high as 0.97 in his comparison of voter turnout among industrial democracies (Jackman 1987, 412-16). Though we cannot claim such high values of statistical significance, the relative difficulty of obtaining such predictive power is exacerbated by the small sample size and limited scope of our study to one election year. Idiosyncratic factors not easily captured in such a limited study, such as regional weather
conditions and the details of local electoral races, may play a role in explaining voter turnout. Theories that we were unable to examine, such as Franklin's mobilization theory, might also explain some of this variation.

**Statistical Concerns**

It appears that Chiapas and Oaxaca may be outliers for some of our independent variables, especially Catholicism and monolingual indigenous percentages. To determine how significant the effect of these outliers was (regression 2 in Table 1), we created a dummy variable for Chiapas and Oaxaca (1=Chiapas or Oaxaca; 0=all other states) and tested it with the variables that we used in our previous regression. When we performed the regression with the dummy variable, the $R^2$ value decreased slightly to 0.386, but the overall regression retained a high level of statistical significance ($p=0.003$), with the F statistic decreasing to 4.905. The monolingual indigenous percentage variable, however, became only marginally statistically significant and lost some of its predictive power, with its p-value increasing to 0.101 and its regression coefficient declining to -0.181. Including the dummy variable in the regression had little effect on any of the other variables.

To determine whether the level of monolingual indigenous population has an influence on voter turnout apart from the influence of outliers, we performed the regression again without the monolingual indigenous variable, but including the dummy variable (regression 3 in Table 1). We found the presence of the monolingual indigenous variable in regression 2 greatly reduced the statistical significance of the dummy variable and increased the $R^2$ value, indicating that the dummy variable is not as effective as the monolingual indigenous variable in explaining voter turnout.

Since Chiapas may be an outlier, we will study its situation more in depth in this article to determine some of the factors that affect its low voter turnout and that will help us to determine whether it is an exceptional case or merely an extreme example of the effects of these state-level variables. This analysis also prompts us to study more carefully the role of indigenous culture in affecting voter turnout.

In addition, our quantitative analysis is limited by the fact that we are using state-level variables to attempt to explain variation in voter turnout, a variable that is inherently based on individual decisions and characteristics. For example, while measures of indigenous culture are positively correlated
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with voter turnout on a state-by-state basis with a significant degree of predictive ability, we will take care to strengthen this correlation and show causation by providing data to show the same influences in the behavior of individual voters. For this reason, we will perform several case studies to show the workings of our theories on an individual level.

Case Study of Mexico D.F.

Though technically not a state, the election laws in the Federal District of Mexico (Mexico D.F.) are very similar to those of other Mexican states with regard to federal elections. Since the Federal District has its own electoral districts and follows the same electoral law, we will include it in our study, treating it like a state. In the 2000 elections, Mexico D.F. recorded the second highest voter turnout in the country behind Yucatan with a voter turnout of 70.59 percent (IFE [3]).

Resource theory best describes voter turnout in Mexico D.F. According to resource theory, an individual's proximity to a polling site could encourage or deter her from voting. On a national level, seven out of eleven states that have more than 0.10 polling sites per square kilometer have above-average voter turnout, while only four out of the twenty-one states with less than 0.10 polling sites per square kilometer have above-average voter turnout (CNIRT; IFE [3]). In the 2000 elections, Mexico D.F. had 11,130 polling places, which means that there were almost seven and a half polling sites per square kilometer. Most citizens of Mexico D.F. could walk to their polling site within a few minutes. The citizens in rural areas of the rest of the states, however, would normally have to drive or ride longer distances to reach their polling sites. A typical state such as Chihuahua, for example, had only 0.02 polling places per square kilometer. The level of voter turnout in Chihuahua, at 58.2 percent, is significantly lower than Mexico D.F.'s 70.6 percent (IFE [3]). Even if the citizens of Mexico D.F. were not better off economically, they would still have more time to vote than residents of rural areas since most polling sites in the capital are just a stone's throw away.

The high per capita GDP and levels of education of the Federal District of Mexico also support resource theory's contention that the rich and educated are more likely to vote. Mexico D.F.'s per capita GDP of 131,790 pesos is considerably higher than the average national per capita GDP of 52,090 pesos and is almost double Chihuahua's 74,820 pesos.
(INEGI [7]). In addition, one study showed the average person older than fifteen years of age in the Federal District has completed 9.4 grades compared to the national average of 7.3. In contrast, states like Chiapas, Guerrero, and Oaxaca all average six or less grades of schooling completed (INEGI [8]). Mexico D.F. also has the highest literacy rate: 97 percent compared to the national average of 90.5 percent (INEGI [3]). Thus, the combination of proximity, income, and education in Mexico D.F. all help to explain its unusually high voter turnout.

Cultural theory also helps explain Mexico D.F.‘s high voter turnout. The indigenous population is almost nonexistent in the Federal District, accounting for only 1.8 percent of the total population. To make this even less significant, only one person in every 10,000 is a monolingual indigenous-language speaker. Since there is little deeply rooted indigenous culture in Mexico D.F., this factor does not lower voter turnout.

The level of contestation in Mexico, D.F.‘s 2000 elections was probably not a significant factor in Mexico D.F.‘s high level of voter turnout. The vote shares of the top two parties were separated by 7 percentage points compared with a slightly higher national average of 10 percentage points.

**Case Study of Guerrero**

In order to further understand the effects of these variables on voter turnout we will look at the state of Guerrero. This state is nearly an exact opposite of Mexico D.F. While the Federal District has the second highest voter turnout, Guerrero had the second lowest voter turnout in Mexico. Resource and cultural theory both play a role in explaining Guerrero’s low turnout.

Guerrero is one of seventeen states with less than 0.10 polling sites per square kilometer with below-average voter turnout. With 0.06 polling sites per square kilometer, the average citizen of Guerrero has to travel a considerable distance to reach the nearest polling site (CNIRT; IFE [3]). In addition to Guerrero’s largely rural population, the state’s per capita GDP is among the lowest in all of Mexico. At 27,800 pesos, the per capita GDP in Guerrero is about half of the national average and only one-fifth of that of Mexico D.F.’s (INEGI [7]). With such a low income in a rural state, a trip to the polls could be out of the question for many voters. Guerrero’s economic adversity helps describe its low voter turnout.
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Education in Guerrero is also anemic compared to national levels. The average person over the age of fifteen in Guerrero has only completed six years of school and only three out of four people in the state are literate compared to Mexico D.F.'s 97 percent literacy (IFE [8]; IFE [3]). It is difficult for populations with low levels of education and low literacy rates to become educated on political issues. Since Guerrero has such low education and literacy levels, its citizens have few incentives to get out and vote.

In addition, the percentage of monolingual speakers of indigenous languages in Guerrero is the second highest in the country. Since Guerrero has the second highest level of monolingual speakers of indigenous languages, the state may be failing to integrate its population into the national political culture and society as a whole (IFE [4]). This is yet another factor that discourages citizens of Guerrero from voting.

Instrumental motivation theory, in contrast with these explanations, would predict a somewhat higher level of voter turnout in Guerrero, since the vote shares of the top two parties in Guerrero were separated by only seven and a half percentage points. This is comparable to the Federal District's level of contestation but not far off the national average, so its impact on voter turnout would be minimal at best.

Case Study of Chiapas

In the 2000 presidential elections, Chiapas had the lowest level of voter turnout in Mexico. The state's level of turnout, 52.19 percent, is remarkably low compared to the national average of 63.97 percent (IFE [2]). Chiapas is far behind the rest of Mexico in its level of voter turnout for two reasons. First, the state is the poorest and least educated in Mexico. According to resource theory, this poverty of resources causes people to focus more on mere survival than issues such as politics and voting. Second, violent conflict has existed in Chiapas for years. Instrumental motivation theory affirms that this violence increases the perceived costs of voting, thus decreasing voter turnout.

According to resource theory, poverty has an effect on voter turnout. As one author writes, "when a person experiences economic adversity, his scarce resources are spent on holding body and soul together—surviving—not on remote concerns like politics" (Rosenstone 1982, 26). This is apparently the case in Chiapas.
Due to Chiapas’s undesirable status as the poorest and least developed state of Mexico, the people of Chiapas are the least likely to have the time and money to vote. According to INEGI, the average citizen of Chiapas makes 10.7 Mexican pesos per hour (slightly more than a U.S. Dollar). This average wage is the lowest in the country and is a little more than half of the national hourly average wage of 18.7 pesos (about 2 USD) (INEGI [2]). Another indicator of Chiapas’s poverty is the state’s GDP, which is also the worst in the country. The state GDP of 20,700 Mexican pesos is less than half of the average state GDP of 51,090 pesos (INEGI [6]).

Another factor affecting the low rate of voter turnout in Chiapas is the level of social instability and political violence. Social instability, violence, and their consequences have been particularly apparent in Chiapas, where a state of upheaval has existed since 1994. Conflict in this state has substantially decreased its level of voter turnout. Firsthand accounts and other reports confirm the idea that instability and violence have created an environment that is hostile to certain segments of the population due to their political affiliations (Humanitarian Law Project).

To understand the instability and violence that exist in Chiapas and their effect on voter participation, one must first understand something about the source of such violence. On January 1, 1994, a guerrilla group known as the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) started an armed uprising. Although the revolt quickly lapsed into an unofficial ceasefire, the region is said to be in a continuing state of low-intensity war. Violent extralegal groups, such as the EZLN and their paramilitary opposition, known as “Peace and Justice,” continue to operate in the region. These groups, as well as the police and the Mexican army, have been accused of human rights violations “involving everything from harassment to murder” (Dent 2002, 303–04).

The effects of this “low intensity war” are particularly visible in the voter turnout of the 1997 election. In this election the state had a turnout of only 35.81 percent, strikingly low compared to the 1991 turnout of 65.82 percent (IFÉ [5]). Although one IFE document attributes this to the “low reliability of electoral data,” other sources provide ample evidence that suggests that low voter turnout is attributable to disruption from the regional conflict (IFE [4]).

One report from the International Service for Peace (SIPAZ) cited several electoral irregularities that occurred as a result of the conflict in the
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region. For example, “polling booths were being set up adjacent to military camps, or in zones controlled by the PRI or by the paramilitary group, ‘Peace and Justice’; Zapatista-controlled towns acted to prohibit polling booths in their communities; and military patrols stepped up activities in Zapatista strongholds” (SIPAZ). The report also states that on the day of the election,

voters were reportedly drafted or coerced into participating; there were attacks and ambushes on voters by armed groups; some voting booths did not allow for privacy; voting instructions and voter lists were incorrect or incomplete; political propaganda was distributed by partisans at polling places; election officials were absent at some polling places, etc. Abuses includ[ed] reports of stolen and burned ballots, highway blockades, and other actions that otherwise impeded or made voting difficult. (SIPAZ)

Under these conditions many could not “go to the polls because of the insecurity and violence that reigns in that region” (SIPAZ).

Another source of evidence of the poor electoral conditions arising from violence in the region is a report by the Humanitarian Law Project (HLP). This report, titled “Chiapas: Burned Ballots and Absent Voters,” details the experiences of a team of five sent to observe the election process. This group cited various instances of intimidation. One example occurred in the town of Tumbala, Chiapas, where “six heavily armed policemen stood just to the right of the voting region. Given recent arrests in this town which are being contested as politically motivated, their very presence contributed to the air of intimidation.” Another example was cited from an unidentified town of Chiapas. According to the observers, as one man was explaining to them the recent state of threats and violence, the approach of another man caused the first to change his criticism to praise of the progress of the elections. The group of observers concluded “the conditions in this region were not conducive to fair elections,” and “the people in this region did not feel conditions were either safe enough or fair enough to warrant participation” (HLP).

Despite IFE’s affirmation that “preparations to carry out fair elections were in place,” other organizations cited a “lack of guarantees” (IFE [4]). Organizations like “citizen’s councils, the PRD, the Diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas, Civic Alliance, and indigenous and peasant organizations” protested the lack of better conditions (SIPAZ).
Although not as severe, the violence and social tension that affected voter turnout in 1997 was still present during the 2000 elections. According to one report, men associated with security forces loitered around polling places and "occasionally snapped pictures of the people lined up to receive their ballots." The report also mentioned the existence of fear of attacks by "paramilitary groups along the road out of sight of the election observers stationed at the polling booths" (Nelson). This continuing intimidation was almost certainly one cause of Chiapas's low levels of voter turnout in the 2000 elections.

**Case Study of Yucatan**

Yucatan is another particularly interesting case, especially when contrasted with Chiapas. This state, in spite of its poverty and underdevelopment, has had very high levels of voter turnout. Yucatan's voter turnout for the 2000 presidential elections, 71.96 percent, is the highest state level in the country (IFE [3]). This elevated voter turnout is surprising, given the state's poverty. High levels of contestation in the state might lead us to expect instrumental motivation theory to explain this phenomenon.

Yucatan's high voter turnout is not explained by resource theory. Like Chiapas, Yucatan is one of Mexico's poorer states. The average wage in Yucatan is only 13.7 pesos per hour. This is about three pesos more than the average wage in Chiapas but still significantly less than the national average of 18.6 pesos (INEGI [2]). The state economy as a whole, indicated by the state GDP of 41,660 pesos, is higher than that of Chiapas but still not up to par with the national average of 51,090 pesos (INEGI [6]).

Although resource theory fails to describe the high voter turnout in this economically poor state, instrumental motivation theory succeeds. In Yucatan there has been a high level of contestation between two parties, specifically between the Partido Acción National (PAN) and the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). This contestation is manifested in the results of the 2000 presidential elections when PAN received 47.10 percent of the vote and PRI received 46.08 percent of the vote. The next closest party received only 3.90 percent of the vote (IFE [3]). A high level of contestation existed because neither party dominated the election. This contestation indicates that instrumental motivation theory may be helpful in explaining the high level of turnout that exists in Yucatan.
Conclusion

In summary, education, wealth, and other elements of resource theory predict much of the variation in voter turnout. In addition to this, indigenous cultural theory enables us to understand how alienation and marginalization of indigenous populations can lead to lower levels of voter turnout in states with large indigenous components. We discussed in our article how monolingual speakers of indigenous languages, in particular, can feel separated from the center of Mexican society. Though it has less effect in most cases, instrumental motivation theory explains the case of Yucatan, where the other theories' predictions fail. Chiapas's social breakdown and violence exemplify the devastation that violence and its aftermath can wreak on democratic participation. Thus, the most accurate predictions of voter turnout in individual cases include the interaction of several variables.

The complexities of this analysis show the importance of understanding the interactions between different causative variables explaining voter turnout. We have been limited by the small sample of states available to us, which has forced us to examine only a few of the variables that can have the most influence on voter turnout. An interesting topic for future study might involve taking a larger group of countries, controlling for national-level variables, and examining the factors that influence intranational variation in voter turnout in this larger sample. We were not able to fully analyze such influences as the level of urbanization in an area, the effect of religion, and differences in civic culture across regions. We would also like to explore Franklin's theory of mobilization by examining organizations and methods that might differ across states in their ability to mobilize citizens to vote.
Works Cited


VOTER TURNOUT AMONG MEXICAN STATES


SIGMA


