2015

Let Our Voices Be Heard: A Comparative Analysis of Indigenous Political Representation in Latin America

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Introduction

Imagine you were completely stripped of your voice; without that voice, who would stand up for you and fight for your rights? Most Americans will never experience this extreme level of voicelessness. We, as citizens in the global north, are privileged with political and social opportunity. Furthermore, we have a hard time identifying forms of structural violence—violence that goes beyond causing direct physical harm. Voicelessness is a form of structural violence, one that is a reality for thousands of indigenous people worldwide. Voicelessness of any human being, indigenous or non-indigenous, contradicts the morals of the international community, and is in direct violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This strategic silencing and lack of representation must end. Indigenous people can have voices by gaining political representation in their homelands.

The first step in addressing this issue of representation, or lack thereof, among indigenous people is to study the factors that improve or hinder political representation of ethnic groups. To do so, scholars explore how notions of race and ethnicity have been reflected in social and political institutions. Specifically, scholars have found that race and ethnic differences create classifications of inferiority and superiority. Although ethnic segregation is discouraged in our modern world, the social and political institutions continue to maintain the disenfranchisement of specific groups in areas like Latin America, where thousands of indigenous peoples live as secondary citizens.

The poor political representation of indigenous people has contributed to their disenfranchisement. If there are few to no indigenous people in politics, their interests are likely not being protected or advanced. If their interests are not being fulfilled, then they may not experience the same basic benefits as their mixed race counterparts who live in a democratic

state. Further, as a result of underrepresentation, indigenous people are less likely to advance economically and are more likely to remain in a persistent state of poverty.

Using Bolivia, Mexico, and Peru as three examples of countries with significant indigenous populations, this study will examine the causes of indigenous political underrepresentation. While there are likely many contributory factors, this analysis will focus on three: (1) Neoliberal economic reform, (2) Civil Society, and (3) Reserved seats and quotas.

Literature Review

A significant amount of comparative political science literature focuses on Western definitions of democracy and political involvement. When comparing levels of democracy and its effectiveness, Western countries, such as the U.S. and England, are used as models to demonstrate what effective political representation looks like. In recent years, scholars have begun to step away from this skewed way of measuring political representation. Most of the literature on indigenous political representation in Latin America is less than twenty-five years old. Experts in various fields, primarily anthropology and political science, continue to develop theories about what factors affect indigenous political representation. These factors range from colonization to views of diversity. This field of study continues to grow.

Neoliberalism and Poverty

Most literature on neoliberalism and indigenous representation suggests at least one of two theories: 1) neoliberalism created persistent poverty for indigenous people, and/or 2) neoliberalism led to environmental degradation. Neoliberalism was expected to be the economic savior across Latin America. Despite the intense implementation of neoliberal economic reforms,

such as privatization and moderate tax policies, most Latin American peoples experienced no significant gain. Specifically, from 1990 to 2000, when most of the neoliberal policies were in effect, reduction in poverty flat-lined as 200 million people were under the poverty line and economic inequality deepened (Birdsall 2011, 17). Indigenous people, compared to white and mixed race groups, were more likely to suffer as a result of the unfulfilled economic promises of neoliberalism. A country like Bolivia, with a substantial number of different ethnic groups, was more likely to be poor, and the frequency of poverty for indigenous people was fifteen percent higher than that of non-indigenous people (Gigler 2009). The neoliberal economic reforms created worsening conditions for indigenous groups, causing them to mobilize and voice dissent and dissatisfaction. Scholars highlight that the more dissatisfied indigenous people were with the failures of neoliberal policy, the more likely they were to mobilize and vote for a candidate who was willing to address their concerns and grievances (Yashar 1998, 36). If these scholars are correct, then we can expect greater indigenous political representation in countries that suffered the most from neoliberal economic reform.

Neoliberalism and Environmental Destruction

The environment was another area where neoliberal policies negatively affected indigenous people. Neoliberal economic practices often required the use of natural resources, many of which are found in areas where indigenous people lived. Specifically, under neoliberal policies, resourceful indigenous land became privatized and deregulated in an attempt to encourage competition. This negatively affected the amount of environmental protection from the government (Birdsall 2011). The privatization and expropriation of indigenous land, along with the growing number of missing indigenous people from their land, sparked anger and caused

indigenous people to mobilize in order to combat this issue (Culver 2011). Indigenous people were also more likely to elect a political candidate from their community, one who understood the severity of the issues. If these experts are correct, then we should see more indigenous political representation in countries that have experienced the worst environmental destruction as a result of neoliberal economic policies.

Civil Society and Intangible Skills

Literature on civil society's role in indigenous representation can also be broken into two categories: 1) civil society giving indigenous leaders intangible skills, and 2) civil society acting as an arena for indigenous and non-indigenous people to work together. Civil society includes the various groups and organizations people use to network and address issues that are important to them. Civil society in its basic function provides a form of education that cannot be obtained in a classroom. Scholars argue that civil society leads to stronger indigenous political mobility and representation (Chartock 2013). Civil society mobilizes like-minded people, and it provides resources that indigenous people can use to facilitate change within their communities. Strong leadership is essential to mobilization of the masses (Brysk 2000), and civil society organizations allow potential indigenous leaders to develop intangible skills to communicate and network. These skills are then transferable, and can be used to rally people to resist certain issues specific to indigenous populations. If this camp of scholars is correct, then we should expect indigenous political representation to be high in societies with civil society organizations run by leaderships with strong intangible skills.

Civil Society and Alliances

According to Edward Fischer (2013), indigenous presence in civil society leads to indigenous political representation as a result of its inclusion of and collaboration with white and mixed race members, who are recognized as more legitimate by the state. The inclusion of other ethnic groups and populations creates an alliance that leads to more support for indigenous issues. These allies are sympathetic to indigenous goals; more vote sharing for the indigenous candidate results because of this alliance, thus increasing the chances of an indigenous political candidate being elected into office. With this white and mixed race alliance, the state is more likely to listen to indigenous needs. If Fischer is correct, then we should observe that indigenous groups without support from racial allies would be less likely to obtain political representation.

However, relying on the support of white and mixed raced allies reduces indigenous people's ability to impact their communities through their own efforts. Indigenous groups, some scholars argue, use civil society as a mechanism to differentiate themselves from other ethnic groups who see indigenous people as inferior, and therefore reject collaboration with them (Culver 2011). The ability to differentiate civil society participation from support of racial allies is beyond this comparative analysis, since it would require months of extensive research. Only the strong alliance hypothesis will be critiqued in this essay.

Reserved Seats and Quotas

Reserved seats and quotas involve setting aside a specific portion of government, such as a seat in parliament or congress, for the political representation of a specific demographic group. Reserved seats allow ethnic-based political parties to pursue their goals by guaranteeing a share of power independently. According to Htun, this fulfills their desire of self-rule, while

simultaneously creating electoral incentives like limited competition (Htun 2004; Htun and Ossa 2013; Rice and Van Cott 2006). If Htun and others are correct, we should expect more indigenous political representation in states that have reserved seats. Table 1 (below) summarizes the expectations stated in the literature about the representation of indigenous peoples in democratic political institutions.

Table 1: Expectations of Indigenous Representation according to Existing Literature

Variable	Mechanism for Positive Impact on Indigenous Representation
Neoliberal economic reforms	worsening socio-economic and environmental conditions for indigenous communities → greater political mobilization of those communities → voting for candidates from indigenous communities
Civil Society	access to civil society→ development of intangible skills→ indigenous leaders use skills to politically mobilize on important political issues access to civil society→ opportunities to network with white and mixed allies→ allies with legitimacy for the state serve as advocates for indigenous political issues
Reserved Seats/quotas	indigenous political candidate elected to serve in reserved seat→ candidate able to act in pursuant of indigenous political interests

Key
→ = causes

Methods

John Stuart Mill's method of difference is most suitable for my study. Its method identifies a single factor unique to a specific case, but is not present in the other cases used. The method of difference can be employed to explore the reason for disparity in outcomes in otherwise quite similar cases. Bolivia, Mexico, and Peru are three Latin American states that share similar

characteristics, namely a large indigenous population, a past relationship with the neoliberal economic program and the Washington Consensus model, and developed avenues of civil society. These assumed factors contribute to political representation of any group, specifically in this study, indigenous groups. Although Bolivia, Mexico, and Peru share common characteristics, they are significantly different in indigenous political representation. These features make these case studies strong candidates for a comparative analysis. My study will test the various hypotheses explored by scholars to confirm or reject expected causes of high and low indigenous political representation.

Indigenous Political Representation

Conceptualization:

The dependent variable for this study is indigenous political representation, an important concept in the field of political science, more specifically the study of democracy. In this comparative analysis, the definition of representation goes beyond its traditional definition of one person acting on behalf of a group of people (McLean 1996). Although this definition might allow some flexibility in determining the quantity of representation for indigenous groups, it is too broad, and more specific details should be accounted for. In my analysis, representation will be defined as a political official, indigenous or not, who is elected by indigenous people to act on behalf of indigenous communities in the legislature.[1]

The time parameters for this study are strategically set. Indigenous political representation, or lack thereof, has a long history in all three case studies. We are able to narrow

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[1] This comparative analysis recognizes the complexity and diversity of many indigenous peoples and communities in Mexico, Peru, and Bolivia. For the purpose of this paper, however, the representation, or the lack thereof, will be seen as a collective whole in juxtaposition to non-indigenous populations.

our focus point based on previous discoveries. This study respects the findings of existing literature that conveys neoliberalism, civil society, and reserved seats from 1990s to early 2000s, as correlating with the effectiveness of indigenous political representation today. Therefore, indigenous representation before 2012 will be not considered.

Operationalization:

Indigenous representation is the election of a representative by indigenous people for indigenous people. This concept can be operationalized in two ways: indigenous candidates and non-indigenous candidates. Including non-indigenous candidates in this operationalization assumes that the non-indigenous officials elected by indigenous people will represent indigenous interests. One way of attempting to pursue indigenous interests is the use of indigenous language in political campaigns. Non-indigenous Ecuadorian politician Gilmar Gutierrez, for example, incorporated an indigenous language, namely Quichua, into his campaign to attract indigenous voters (Madrid 2012: 105). The incorporation of indigenous languages in campaign material would increase the ability for indigenous citizens to know which candidates focused on the issues they cared about.

Another factor that we can use to operationalize indigenous representation is indigenous elected officials. Electing indigenous candidates into political offices increases the likelihood of indigenous representation in government. This claim rests on the assumption that the presence of an indigenous representative in office brings representation of indigenous peoples' interests. This assumption is problematic, but necessary, given the time and data constraints of my analysis. For this study, indigenous representation will be ranked using qualitative coding measures of high, medium, or low.

Neoliberalism and Poverty

Conceptualization:

Poverty as a result of neoliberal economic policies is our first independent variable. Defining this variable requires a clear conception of neoliberal economic policies and a clear measurement of poverty. Neoliberal economic policies, in broad terms, are laissez-faire policies that promote economic autonomy and defend private property (McLean 1996). There are a variety of economic policies that embrace neoliberal values. However, this study focuses specifically on the Washington Consensus model, a broad economic set of ideas that embraces the free market and is favored by global organizations such the IMF and the EU (Pettinger 2013). For this study, we will further define the Washington Consensus as the adaptation of ten specific economic policies, including deregulation of natural resources and privatization, to spark economic development in the Latin American region (Birdsall 2011; Pettinger).

For this study, it is necessary to illustrate clearly when the neoliberal economic policies were being most implemented in Latin America. States in Latin America emphasized neoliberal economic policies and the Washington consensus model heavily during the 1990s and early 2000s (Birdsall 2011). In order to study the potential correlation between the Washington consensus model, neoliberal policy, and poverty, I will only analyze poverty in my case studies from the 1990s to early 2000s.

Ten Principles of the Washington Consensus Model (Pettinger 2013).

1. Low government borrowing
2. Redirection of public spending
3. Tax reform
4. Market determined interest rates
5. Competitive exchange rates
6. Liberalization and deregulation of imports

7. Liberalization of foreign direct investment
8. Privatizations of state enterprises
9. Deregulation of market entry and competition
10. Legal security for property rights

Operationalization:

Bolivia, Peru, and Mexico all adopted the Washington Consensus model in the late 1990s. Specifically, liberalization in trade and privatization of public banks and enterprises were the two principles of the Washington Consensus model embraced the most across the three case studies (Birdsall 2011, 12). Several indigenous groups did not favor the adoption of these principles because it further contributed to their voicelessness (Yashar 1998). Poverty, for example, was enhanced by neoliberal economic reforms. For this study, poverty from neoliberal economic reform will be an independent variable, and identified in terms of wealth inequality. Therefore, poverty will be measured by two factors: headcount ratio at the rural poverty line at the national level, and the GINI coefficient.[2] Since the majority of indigenous people in our case studies are concentrated in rural areas, using poverty indicators specifically in rural areas is the best way to capture indigenous persistence of poverty. The GINI coefficient measures wealth inequality of a state. The farther from zero a GINI coefficient is, the more wealth inequality there is.

Neoliberalism and Environmental Destruction

Conceptualization:

The next independent variable for my study is environmental destruction. For this variable, the same analytical principles we used in the previous variable, which also involved neoliberalism economic policies in the Washington Consensus model will be used. Following Birdsall's

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[2] World Bank World Development Indicators do not specify how the poverty line is being defined. The findings and analysis for neo-liberalism and poverty should be taken with caution.

timeframe, my study will only regard data on environment destruction from when the Washington consensus model was applied the most in Latin American states. Time parameters shape the conceptualization of environmental destruction, defined here as environmental damage, such as oil extractions and water contamination, which occurred from the 1990s to the early 2000s, as a result of neoliberal economic policies that relied on natural resources to fuel economic development projects. Environmental data outside of the time frame for this study will not be included. Specifically, environmental damage will be studied as a factor relating to indigenous political representation.

Operationalization:

Increase in CO_2 emissions is an indicator of environmental damage. Neoliberal economic reforms favor the use of oil as a source of energy. Oil and other energy sources are burned to produce energy needed to fuel various infrastructures. CO_2 emissions measure the frequency and intensity of this type of activity. They calculate the greenhouse gases released by human activity and are measured in million metric tons. We can learn about environmental damage as it relates to the three case studies from using CO_2 emissions as a variable. The burning of natural resources, especially when the Washington Consensus model is applied, is an example of human activity that increases CO_2 emissions. In the three case studies, during the 1990s and 2000s, CO_2 emissions increased as Latin American countries adopted Western economic reforms. CO_2 emissions as a variable will capture the effects neoliberalism had on the environment within the three case studies. In addition, CO_2 emissions are associated with economic development. More developed societies have cars and other advanced means of transportation that rely on the use of gas to operate. Latin American states, like the three case studies, began to import more cars from

outside sources. As a result, the CO2 emissions of these countries correlate with their economic development and increase usage of cars.

This measure of environmental degradation has its limitations. CO2 emissions might not be the best option for indicating environmental damage, because the massive use of natural gas is not the only way to cause destruction of the environment. CO2 emission does not measure the degree of water contamination, is an issue that affects indigenous peoples' sources of water, which has been indicated by an anonymous artist in Peru (see Figure 1). However, the data on CO2 emissions is plentiful and accessible. My study specifically looks at CO2 emissions from the year 2000, during the ten year period when the Washington Consensus model was implemented the most in Latin America.

To complement the CO2 emissions variable, we will look at low forest area, another indicator of environmental damage. Neoliberalism as an economic ideology relies on the use of natural resources, most of which are found in forests and amazons. These forests and amazons are often destroyed by big companies for economic gain. Furthermore, neoliberal economic reforms thrive in industrial societies, ones focusing on centralization and urbanization while devaluing forest areas. Low forest area conveys that the state is more urbanized, echoing cities in the global north. Shelter for wildlife is being exchanged for shopping centers and tall buildings. From using the forest area variable, we can learn which of the three case studies embraced neoliberal economic reforms the most by extracting resources from their forest areas in exchange for more urbanized societies. Similar to the data on CO2 emissions, data on forest area is also accessible from the World Bank. For this study, forest area will be measured by its percentage as it pertains to total land area. 2000 will be the point of analysis for this variable because of the neoliberal influence during that time period.

Civil Society & Strong Alliances

Conceptualization:

The strong alliances facilitated through civil society are the associations between indigenous members and white or mixed race members. These allies can hail from local or international communities. These alliances require white and or mixed race people to be sympathetic to indigenous needs. These allies are the first to open their ears to indigenous issues. They take the role of advocates and help indigenous populations address needs and demands unique to their communities.

Operationalization:

Strong alliances are difficult to observe and measure. Unfortunately, no database on alliances between indigenous and white or mixed race people exists. Thus, my analysis will rely on literature that implies collaboration between the different ethnic groups in the case studies. Since there are no specific numbers on this variable, case studies will be labeled either yes or no for strong alliances.

Reserved Seats and Quotas

Conceptualization:

Reserved seats is the final independent variable for my comparative analysis. Reserved seats set aside a specific percentage of seats for members of a particular group to create incentive for group-specific parties and direct representation of that group (Htun 2004). The reserved seat system addresses the necessary variable argument. Reserved seats do not ensure quality indigenous representation, although reserved seats would have to be necessary for quality

indigenous representation to be more likely. In other words, without reserved seats it would be almost certain that indigenous groups would not be represented in legislature.

There is a difference between reserved seats and quotas. Quotas, unlike reserved seats, allow for group representation by incorporating that group in existing parties (Htun 2004). Joining existing parties could be beneficial to indigenous representatives. They could have the opportunity to add their issues to an already established political platform. However, quotas may not fulfill the demand for consolidation that indigenous groups deserve if they are silenced by other members of a political party. Nevertheless, case studies with quotas will be considered in my analysis.

Operationalization:

Measuring the degree of reservation for indigenous groups is difficult. The data on indigenous parties, more specifically indigenous political officials, is very scarce. Therefore, case studies with reserved seats will be identified using existing literature. Cases will be labeled yes or no for having reserved seats.

Figure 1 (Photo taken, by author in Lima, Peru July 17, 2014).

Analysis and Results

Table 2: Indigenous Representation and Independent Variables

Case Studies	Dependent Variable	GINI Index and Poverty Rates	CO2 Emissions (Million Metric Tons) and Forest Area (% of land area)	Strong Alliances	Reserved Seats/quotas
Bolivia	H	GINI: 56.3 Poverty: 73.6	CO2 Emissions: 9.256 Conservation: 55.5%	YES	YES
Peru	L	GINI: 49.0 Poverty: 68.8	CO2 Emissions: 26.918 Conservation: 54.1%	YES	YES
Mexico	L	GINI: 48.3 Poverty: 60.3	CO2 Emissions: 382.897 Conservation: 34.3%	YES	NO

Key:
H=High quality of indigenous political representation
L=Low quality of indigenous political representation
I=Neoliberal policies have been implemented

Neoliberalism and Poverty

The findings counter the hypothesis, which states countries suffering the most from neoliberal policies will have higher indigenous political representation. Bolivia, Peru, and Mexico all have high GINI coefficients and poverty ratios, above fifty percent in rural areas. Bolivia, with high indigenous representation, has a GINI coefficient of 56.3, and Mexico, with low indigenous political representation, has a GINI coefficient of 48.3 (Table 2). It is important to note that the GINI coefficient is an economic variable that applies to the entire state, not to specific racial/ethnic groups. Similar to the GINI coefficient, the poverty headcount ratio for rural areas is high, ranking over 60 percent across all three case studies. In the case of Bolivia, poverty in rural areas exceeded 70 percent in 2008 (Table 2). This data indicates that the GINI coefficient and poverty headcount are more significant in Bolivia. That observation supports the hypothesis that Latin American states with high poverty as a result of neoliberal economic policies have lower

indigenous political representation. The economic data collected from the World Bank indicates that in all case studies, poverty persists in indigenous communities. We can then infer that since the persistence of poverty is a shared variable across all three case studies, it cannot be used as a factor to help explain indigenous political representation. There is not a significant gap in poverty indicators to explain why the case studies have different degrees of indigenous representation. Bolivia has both high GINI coefficients and a high headcount of poor indigenous people in rural areas, similar to Mexico. The difference, however, is that Mexico has low indigenous representation. There is little variation of poverty indicators between Peru and Mexico, yet both states have low indigenous political representation. These findings counter the previous hypothesis, which argues that indigenous political representation will be high in areas that were harmed the most by neoliberal policies.

Neoliberalism and Environmental Destruction:

Scholars predict that the more environmental destruction from neoliberalism there is, the more indigenous political representation will be observed. There is a significant variation in CO_2 emissions across my three case studies. In 2000, when the Washington Consensus model was being applied to Bolivia, their CO_2 emissions were less than ten million metric tons (Table 2). In Mexico during that same year, CO_2 emissions were an alarming 382 million metric tons (Table 2). Peru's CO_2 emissions lay between the unique cases of Bolivia and Mexico, ranking around 26 million metric tons (Table 2).

The hypothesis applied anticipated more indigenous representation in areas with the highest CO_2 emissions (Culver 2011). Not only does this data represent an unexpected correlation between poverty and environmental destruction, but it also provides insight on the desired

phenomenon of this study. The data suggests that the more CO2 emissions a country has, the less indigenous political representation there is. The gap between the CO2 emissions for Bolivia and Mexico is significant. The gap in CO2 emissions between Peru and Mexico is rather large, yet they both have low levels of indigenous representation. More research should be done to explore the environmental aspect of this analysis. The difference in CO2 emissions for Bolivia and Mexico is even more significant. These findings are innovative, and no other literature used in my analysis support them. If economic development and population play a factor in CO2 emissions, then Bolivia, with a GDP per capita of $980, would have significantly less CO2 than Mexico (Gigler 2009). The substantial gaps in CO2 emissions between the three case studies are strengthened by disparities in forest areas.

Bolivia, the state with the highest level of indigenous representation, also had the highest forest area percentage of total land area in 2000, at 55.5. Coming in at second is Peru, with a forest area of 54.1, 1.4 less than Bolivia's. Although the gap between Bolivia's and Peru's forest area percentage is small, it is still noteworthy for this study. This almost two percent gap could be a factor in explaining the disparities in representation between the three case studies. Mexico, a state with a low-level of indigenous representation, had forest area that occupied only 34.3 percent of its total land. The data presented in this study conveys that there is a correlation between forest area coverage affected by neoliberalism and indigenous political representation. Bolivia, with high indigenous representation, has substantially more forest area compared to Mexico, a state with relatively low representation.

Civil Society and Strong Alliances:

The strong alliances hypothesis emphasizes that indigenous civil society groups without strong alliances with white and mixed race people are less likely to be politically represented. All three

of my case studies have civil society organizations with strong alliances between white and mixed race members. Indigenous groups in Bolivia have been collaborating with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to broadcast their issues to the international arena (Orais 2011). Similarly, Peru, data implies that indigenous civil society has formed alliances with international actors to address issues within their environment (Peru Support Group 2013). Mexican civil society echoes the same pattern. In 2014, Azalia Hernandez, an indigenous advocate in Mexico, gave a presentation at The College of Wooster on human rights activism in Mexico. She used the international arena to create alliances and promote her cause. Ms. Hernandez worked with her white and mixed raced counterparts in Fray Bartolomé by traveling through the U.S. spreading awareness.

Strong alliances are not an explanatory factor for indigenous political representation. The data indicates that strong alliances are found in civil society organizations in all my case studies. Since it is a common factor, it cannot explain why Bolivia has high indigenous representation, and Mexico, along with Peru, have low indigenous representation. These findings counter the existing hypotheses of Madrid and Fischer.

Reserved seats and quotas:

Scholars believe that states with reserved seats lead to high indigenous representation. Bolivia has a political system with reserved seats, and Peru uses quotas for the indigenous candidates (Htun 2004); (Htun & Ossa 2013). No sources were found to indicate that Mexico uses quotas or reserved seats for indigenous representation its in legislature. Peru has set quotas for indigenous groups in its current legislature; however, there is no indication of indigenous elected officials utilizing the quota system. Even if there are indigenous officials in Peru's legislature, indigenous political representation is ranked low. The ethnic quotas system forces indigenous politicians to

join an existing party, one that might be majority white or mixed race, and this does not address the specific issues of the indigenous community.

Bolivia supports the previous hypothesis. As hypothesized before, states like Bolivia with reserved seats have high indigenous political representation. Peru has a quota system, yet it has low indigenous political representation. This finding counters existing literature. Mexico, a state with no reserved seat system in their legislature, has low indigenous political representation. The reserved seat system in Bolivia ensures that indigenous parties are represented.

Conclusions

It is hard for people in the global north to set aside their privilege and put themselves in the shoes of the thousands of voiceless indigenous people. Direct violence, imposing physical harm, seems to grab the most media coverage in the international arena. If people are not dying, we turn a blind eye. This is unfortunate. Structural violence, such as silencing an entire group of people based on ethnic identity, is such an important issue that the international community has failed to address. This may be because it is hard for people to relate to issues outside of their own countries. Still, the world needs to stop contradicting itself and address the voicelssness of indigenous people and their lack of representation. If we are to promoting the notion of human rights, then we must address human rights violations.

Voicelessness has serious consequences. Indigenous people have been forced to suffer and to live as second-class citizenship all throughout Latin America. This suffering will persist as long as the international community fails to act. Being informed is the first step, and scholars have begun to raise awareness. Literature suggests that neoliberal economic reform, civil society, and reserved seats all play a role in affecting indigenous political representation. This analysis

challenges existing literature. In the case of Bolivia, Mexico, and Peru, civil society does not affect indigenous representation as expected. Strong alliances between indigenous leaders and white or mixed raced people is not significant to political representation, as understood in these three case studies.

My study counters literature that suggests the failures of neoliberal economic policies led to high indigenous political representation. Contrary to what scholars hypothesized, environmental destruction leads to less indigenous political representation. The more CO_2 emissions, the less likely indigenous people are to be represented in legislature, although there may be other social and economic factors that contribute to this finding. Also, in 2000 when the Washington Consensus model was being implemented the most, Bolivia, with a high level of representation, had the most forest area percent of total land area compared to Mexico and Peru.

Further research needs to be done on the effects of neoliberalism and environmental degradation in Latin America. Did Mexico embrace the neoliberal economic policies to a greater degree than Peru and Bolivia? Is this because of Mexico's geographic proximity to the United States, one of the most of influential states in the global north? Further research needs to be conducted in order to attempt to answer these questions.

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