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Original Paper

Whatever Happened to Liberation Theology? Demobilization of a Social Movement

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Abstract

This study uses Liberation Theology as a vehicle for understanding the demobilization of a religious social movement due to democratic consolidation. Building on social movement organizational literature, I analyze the case history of Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones in San José, Costa Rica in order to explain how a social movement remains effective in a competitive field of change organizations by becoming embedded in a representative organization that is able to mobilize its core constituency and maintain social influence. Macro organizational analysis is used to determine its position in the organizational field while organizational theory is used develop five characteristics of movement transformation that enable the organization to resist attrition and develop an enduring niche. Documentary and interview data of first and second generation Liberationists are used to provide an account of the structure and strategies that have enabled Liberation Theology to continue its influence in Latin America. I will argue that Liberation Theology has established a slow, protracted and unobtrusive strategy that has enabled the movement's activists to extend their influence and establish a permanent niche in the socio-religious landscape of Latin America. This study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding social movement demobilization; particularly of a religious movement and contributes an update on the status of Liberation Theology in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Keywords

Liberation Theology, Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones, Demobilization, Social Movements, Lean and Mean Theory, Cox Regression

1. Introduction

Within social movement literature, the majority of research on movement organizations has analyzed the emergence, development, and cyclical growth of organizational forms rather than demobilization and quiescence (Taylor, 1989; Jung, 2010). Gamson (1990) reminds us that over half of the North

American social movements that he studied resulted in partial or complete failure. However, analysis of social movement demobilization is relatively undeveloped both theoretically and methodologically, in spite of its high frequency (Minkoff, 2004; Voss, 1996). Budros (1999, p. 71) reminds us that "movement demobilization may be the most pervasive yet understudied social movement phenomenon yet it has been approached atheoretically and the number of systematic studies on it is paltry." Closely related, how do we understand movements that loose saliency over time? Has the leadership been coopted? Has the organization become institutionalized and ineffective? Is the movement simply experiencing abeyance? We know that social movement organizations (SMOs) are influenced by both exogenous factors (political regime types, macroeconomics, periodization, etc.) and endogenous factors (leadership, constituencies, alliances, etc.). Therefore, this article presents a mixed method research project designed to examine how a religious based social movement organization experiences demobilization and adapts to changes precipitated by, not only the socio-political context, but also by the pressures of the ecological population of competing social change organizations. While social movement transformation may be conditioned by exogenous factors, the critical determinants of social movement attrition or continuation may be found in the capacity of a movement's organization to adapt their internal structure in order to respond to new social realities (Reger & Staggenborg, 2006). Two trajectories are possible for a social movement in demobilization; it can disband or it can adapt its internal structure and continue in a modified organizational form. While a social movement in demobilization may experience a loss of saliency, there is nothing inevitable about its attrition. Traditional social movement theories, such as Political Opportunity Theory and Resource Mobilization Theory, are helpful in explaining why and when movements emerge, expand and contract, yet these theories cannot explain how social movements adapt to unfavorable socio-political conditions nor can they explain which types of organizational characteristics are salient in demobilization.

The first part of this paper introduces a theoretical framework which qualitatively explains the continuity of a once highly influential social movement (Liberation Theology) that is neither extinct nor in abeyance. Although the movement's influence has greatly diminished, Liberation Theology continues to produce numerous publications, modify its strategy, and narrow its constituency under a SMO entitled *Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones* (DEI). The second part of this paper uses macro-organizational analysis to quantitatively observe a competitive field of SMOs in order to identify significant organizational characteristics which contribute to the continuity of DEI and Liberation Theology.

1.1 Why Liberation Theology?

Liberation Theology (LT) is historically significant as the first major non-western theological system pertaining to Christendom and experienced tremendous scholarly attention in the 1970-1990s. Most North American researchers have considered Liberation Theology to be dead…..by this I mean, that Liberation Theology is no longer influencing society. Researchers who have written its obituary can cite several reasons or provide empirical evidence regarding its demise; 1) the loss of key and visionary

leaders either by defection (Rubem Alves and José Miranda), discouragement (Arturo Piedra), or death (Ignacio Ellucuría, Hélder Câmara, Juan Luis Segundo, and thousands of martyrs); 2) others cite the abandonment of the Systematization Project by Sobrino and Ellucuria in the early 1990s (Tombs, 2002, pp. 273-274); 3) a decrease in the volume of book sales (Tombs, 2002; Petrella, 2005); and 4) social scientists who looked closely at CEBs began to question whether or not the numerical strength and democratic equalitarianism of the CEBs had been exaggerated and their biblical insights romanticized (Burdick, 1993; Tombs, 2002; Hewitt, 1995; Burdick & Hewitt, 2000). There is broad consensus among researchers who cite multiple factors for the eclipse of the movement attributable to; 1) tensions precipitated by the Vatican and the institutional church (Lewis, 2005; Levine, 2007; Gomez de Souza, 2007); 2) competition by Protestants (Lewis, 2005; Gooren, 2002; Gill, 1998; Chesnut, 2003; Sigmund, 1999); 3) the defeat of State Socialism (Tombs, 2002; Levine, 2007; Klaiber, 1998), and 4) urbanization and increased poverty (Kater, 2001; Comblin, 1998). In light of a scholarly consensus regarding the demise of Liberation Theology, has Liberation Theology been able to manage demobilization in such a way that has enabled the movement to avoid attrition and remain influential?

1.2 Brief History and Background of the Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones (DEI)

In response to attempts to control the Liberation Theology movement, both by oppressive authoritarian governments in Latin America and the institutional church, prompted the emergence of independent and autonomous organizations that served as mechanisms for communication, networking and collaborative projects that contributed to the development of the movement beyond the reach of the institutional church (Smith, 1991). In the mid-1970s, organizations such as DEI (Costa Rica, 1974), CEHILA (Ecuador, 1973), CEP (Peru, 1970), CESEP (Brazil), CEBI (Brazil), Instituto Bartolomé de las Casas (Peru, 1974), CINEP (Colombia, 1972) were the first wave of important centers that served as a refuge for numerous liberationist committed to the development of LT and its integration with the popular church. *Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones* began by offering its first *Workshop of Formation* in 1974. Pablo Richard (2011) recalls the early days;

> *It was very modest. Assman and I, we had to be professors at the National University to support ourselves. We had a small house and we could not offer scholarships. The participants, who arrived, had to look for accommodations and a place to eat in order to keep costs low. We had two workshops per year of 10-15 people. Over time, we grew. When we acquired a house, we reduced costs, but it was very modest with 6 people sharing a bedroom. The participants had to do all the domestic chores such as cook, clean, do laundry in order to reduce costs.*

One of the most important features of these conferences was to articulate the integration of theology and social science. Although the integration of theology and social science was one of the principle characteristics of Liberation Theology from its origins, the integration engendered much criticism and produced numerous detractors because it was especially dependent on Marxism as a tool for critical social analysis. However, continued dialog and interchanges between working groups associated with LT organizations has been instrumental in refining a multidisciplinary hermeneutic and epistemology (Smith,

1991). Because many of the leaders of these organizations held adjunct positions on University faculties, networks were expanded and strategic alliances were forged with established institutions (Hinkelammert, 1985). Alliances with institutions provided legitimacy and resources to help spread movement ideas to new groups of people outside of the movement. The alliance between small like-minded organizations like DEI provided space for religious dissidents to continue their activism and represented a transition in tactical strategy by shifting from intellectually abstract and politically charged theology to the penetration of the popular church. One of the principle objectives of the LT organizations was to reverse this disconnect. Richards (2008) expresses this change metaphorically;

> *These organizations in Latin America are small and invisible, with few resources. But we have a very appropriate expression; we say that these days, we work like ants and spiders. Before, we used to work like elephants. The elephants were Gutierrez, Sobrino, Boff, no? Now, we are ants and our strength is in that we are many and we are coordinated. If an elephant appears, the entire world will know, but if you are an ant, no one will know. And also, we are spiders. And what is it that a spider does? Weaves networks! Therefore, we work like spiders and ants and the relationships that we have are the key to what we do.*

2. Qualitative Methods

In order to explain how DEI has continued the work of Liberation Theology until today, I utilize a theoretical framework drawn from the business world used to analyze corporate downsizing. *Lean and Mean Theory*, proposed by Budros (2011; 2002; 2000; 1999; 1997), suggests that downsizing organizations should emphasize small size and structural simplicity while rejecting the 'bigger is better' axiom (Budros, 2002). This approach enables leaders to enhance organizational performance by limiting the number of employees, stressing organizational simplicity and avoiding overly bureaucratic processes. A streamlined and focused organizational form can emphasize a few achievable goals and avoid diversification that that can lead to inefficient management of resources (Budros, 2002). The result of strategic structuring is an organization that maintains a comparative advantage by focusing on the quality of a limited number of products. By establishing a market niche, an organization can concentrate its efforts on product design geared to satisfy constituency that not only can result in a consolidation of market shares, but also lead to expansion through organizational reproduction. Burdros (2002) puts forward five analytical benchmarks: 1) *leadership*, 2) *comparative advantage*, 3) *organizational reproduction*, 4) *sodality orientation*, and 5) *market niche*.

2.1 Collective Leadership

According to *Lean and Mean Theory*, the most important element that contributes to organizational continuity is leadership. Leadership provides the basis of stability in the decision making processes that can resist crises precipitated by external pressures which could otherwise undermine a movement organizationally. Leaders ultimately shape organizational culture, provide continuity over time, and are responsible for the socialization of new leaders (Budros, 1999; Reger & Staggenborg, 2006). DEI was

begun in 1974 under the leadership of Hugo Assmann and Franz Hinkelhammert and later joined by Pablo Richard, all of whom had been expelled from Chile in the coup by General Pinochet. Although Assmann remained active in leadership until the late 1980s, the leadership principally fell on Hinkelhammert and Richard. What is striking about the Leadership of DEI from its origins is its collective and team orientation. Unlike their socialization into a Catholic hierarchy, the leadership of DEI fostered a strategic division of labor among themselves that capitalized on functional backgrounds of each leader and generated two principle organizational goals; the formation of new leaders and interdisciplinary scholarly investigations. The task-oriented Hinkelammert became responsible for organizing the research agenda and coordinating seminars consisting of interdisciplinary teams of social scientists and theologians (*intercambios*) on intellectual themes germane to the development of LT that have become the basis for not only his numerous books and articles, but over 300 books generated by DEI's editorial house. A good example is the working group compiled by Hinkelhammert of DEI associates that helped to develop the themes in his influential work *The Ideological Weapons of Death* (1985), which was the first book published by DEI (in 1977) and has provided many of the central theses for DEI research. Although committed to research and writing as well, the self-effacing and relationally oriented Richard gravitated to the pastoral dimension of LT, especially as it affected the base communities. This translated to a dedication to the formation of pastoral agents, be they priests, religious workers, or especially the laity, who give their life to the welfare of the poor (Saranyana, 1999; Mora, 2011). The complementary leadership of Hinkelhammert and Ricard created a collaborative organizational culture contributing to an intensely team oriented approach built on equalitarian relations and a decision-making process that allows the team to participate in the life of the organization. The collective orientation is visible in the organizational structure. According to Richard (2008);

> *DEI is an NGO. We have a junta directiva (Board of Directors) consisting of individuals who are not DEI staff. The Director of the Board is a famous lawyer in San Jose. There is an assembly consisting of noteworthy people. We have Bishops, Rectors of Seminaries, and it serves as an umbrella over the leaders of DEI. Maryse is the Director, I am responsible for the formation of leaders and Franz is the Director of Research.*

The distribution of labor is further divided among an inter-disciplinary team of investigators assigned to areas of responsibility such as publications, Biblical Theology, Black Theology, Social Movements, etc. A team approach is seen in the collaborative literature projects which are usually inspired by informal encounters and dialogues between investigators and lay workers, peasants, neighborhood associations or church groups. Since the origins of the formations seminars, they are facilitated by the entire interdisciplinary DEI team motivated by a pedagogical philosophy of "accompaniment". Richard (2008) explains that "accompaniment" means that once a DEI formation seminar ends and participants return to their respective sphere of influence, DEI leaders visit the community in order to help facilitate theological reflection, develop communal solidarity, and make DEI resources available to all.

Accompaniment not only expands the network of DEI, but provides continuous education and discipleship for those who attended DEI formation seminars.

While Hinkelhammert and Richards have provided stable and continuous leadership over time, it has been inclusive to gender and ethnic diversity. Women were incorporated in to the team of investigators since 1976 (Kater, 2001). DEI has been instrumental to the development of feminist theologians such as Elsa Tamez, Nancy Cardoso Pereira, Carmen Lora, Maria Teresa Ruiz (*Pasos*, 1986) and Elina Vuola (Saranyana, 1999) by publishing their monographs and dissertations, providing them with opportunities to participate in seminars and workshops thus legitimatizing their contributions to LT, and including them in leadership. The director of DEI in 2008 was Sister Maryse Brisson with the Sisters of the Holy Cross who is a triple minority being a foreigner (Haitian), black, and feminine. Presently; in 2022, the director is Silvia Regina de Lima who also is a foreigner (Brazilian), black, and feminine. DEI has purposefully expanded its literary themes to include Feminist Theology, Black Theology, and Indigenous Theology. The result of inclusive leadership has been solidarity through diversity.

Richards and Hinkelammert have functioned as "movement entrepreneurs" by effectively serving as bearers of and coordinators of the transmission of ideas that help participants realize that the demands for social change are necessary and plausible, thus continuing the "cognitive liberation" dimension of the movement (Smith, 1991). They have successfully guided the leadership team of DEI in the contextualization of Liberation Theology to respond to new contextual challenges imposed by neo-liberalism and a truncated democratization as evidenced not only in their own writings, but in the literary products of the DEI team. They have achieved this by maintaining a commitment to informal processes. Like many of their Latin American theological colleagues, most of the teaching and training they do is not in universities, but in informal short courses and workshops sponsored by DEI. In these encounters, participants pose the theological questions that need to be addressed (Brisson, 2008). Richards (2011) insists numerous times, that "DEI is not a think tank", rather DEI differentiates itself by being explicitly interdisciplinary with an aim to integrate theology, biblical sciences and the social sciences in order to arrive at complex analysis overcoming polarizing and simplistic solutions to systemic social problems. It has purposefully resisted the compartmentalization of disciplines in order to achieve a theological reflection rooted in social systems, be they political economies, social theories or historical projects. Simultaneously, DEI has extensive experience in organizing informal education with popular sectors.

The commitment to maintaining DEI as an informal structure along with the collective and inclusive leadership has allowed the organization to avoid many of the ill-effects of institutionalization and bureaucracy. Over its 48 year history, the leadership has remained charismatic and entrepreneurial as evidenced by their capacity to attract new leaders from all over Latin America and still serve as vehicles for the transmission of the values, methodology and vision of LT. In addition, they have been able to maintain the critical and prophetic opposition to economic structures to which Liberationists

have always attributed social inequality and marginalization; in spite of dramatic changes in the socio-political landscape. Liberation Theology was initially critical of the oppressive totalitarian regimes propped up by Security State policies designed to protect the economic interests of the US government and corporations. In light of democratization and the monopoly of unregulated capitalism, the DEI leadership team has adapted their criticism to focus on neo-liberal arrangements that have amounted to a "market Apartheid". Continual oppression has not fatigued the DEI leaders; rather it has energized them to dedicate themselves to the goals of DEI. The current director of DEI explains (Brisson, 2008);

> *What is important is that is that we have a team of investigators who understand very well the pivotal themes of DEI, the investigations that we develop. They are passionate in investigating those research topics. Passionate is the word that they feel. Therefore, we all feel an important responsibility to be faithful to the calling of a DEI investigator.*

As a result, the organization has not grown more conservative, complacent or preoccupied by self-preservation that typically lessens the effectiveness of a movement organization over time. The decision-making processes have remained collective and decentralized thus avoiding hierarchal and bureaucratic tendencies.

2.2 Comparative Advantage

In the face of organizational competition, *Lean and Mean* organizational theory suggests that organizations emphasize small size and structural simplicity in order to facilitate a comparative advantage (Budros, 2002). Comparative advantage refers to the specificity and limitation of goals and products thereby concentrating resources on strategies that produce growth among competitors. This concept is supported by social movement research which recognizes that in times of demobilization, single issue organizations will fare better than multi-issue organization (Hannan & Freeman, 1984; 1989). In social movement emergence and expansion, diversification contributes to a "bigger is better" concept. However, a social movement in demobilization rejects these core assumptions and strives to maximize goal achievement thru organizations consisting of highly dedicated activist who build success by stressing the organization's collective assets that produce stable growth. The paradox of the "small is beautiful" paradigm is; how can a controlled and narrowly focused organization have a broad impact resulting in both transnational influence and mobilization?

One of the principle strategies since the founding of DEI has been the formation of strategic leadership through informal but intensive seminars. DEI provides four intensive seminars annually of varying length and specialization. First, weeklong local workshops are intended to extend the DEI network and provide contact with local communities in the Central American region. Local workshops are designed to introduce local actors (pastors, lay workers, community activists, educators) to the thematic projects of DEI and reinforce participant's productive organizing, education and governance processes. One such group consisted of Guatemalan women who participated in a week seminar at DEI on the topic of facilitating their local base community. Sometime later, they invited Pablo Richards and Tirsa de

Ventura to come and visit their community and spend time in the field in order to consolidate the relationship (Richards, 2008). The second type of seminar is a month in duration and works with experienced leaders (with 5 years of experience) engaged in *Lectura Popular de la Biblia (LPB)*. The seminar is designed to facilitate lay pastoral agents' capacity to reflect, interpret and use Biblical texts in order to engage small groups in a critical contextual analysis and the reformulation of social relationships. With enhanced exegetical and analytical skills, leaders are expected to return to their circle of influence and use their experience at DEI in order to facilitate a popular reading of the Bible in their community context. The third seminar lasts two months and consists of the integration of social sciences and theology designed for leaders of small organizations, neighborhood associations, or pastoral agents; all of which serve the poor. The criteria is a capacity "to reflect critically, theoretically and systematically acquired in social work and theological workshops (https://www.deicr.org/newpage)." While titles or degrees are not required, the selection of individuals for this seminar is contingent upon having mature leadership experience in an established organization which can serve as a vehicle for influence and further mobilization. Lastly, a four month seminar is designed to provide participants the opportunity to conduct a directed research project under the guidance of the DEI associates. The research is facilitated by regular collective discussions between participants and the DEI leadership team that are stimulated by lectures and topical presentations by DEI team members. The method is interdisciplinary allowing for a full integration between theology, humanities and social sciences. In addition, participants use the library and research facilities of DEI and UBL (*Universidad B ɬlica Latinoamericana*) to develop their research of which they are expected to present a paper by the end of the seminar.

Today, DEI holds formation workshops in a rustic conference center that it owns that can hold 40 participants. It has a dormitory, cafeteria, meeting rooms, library and offices for the investigators. Typically, (except for the local variety) workshops consist of 40 participants who come from all over Latin America. Pablo Richard, who was present from the start, says that over 2000 individuals have passed through DEI's formative workshops (2008). The unique feature of these workshops is their pedagogy. DEI is very selective in who they accept in their workshops. For all but the local workshop, candidates must formally apply. Criteria for acceptance differ per workshop; however, expectations are high because the demands are rigorous. For example, all candidates must be organically inserted in a social context where they will have influence, be it political, cultural or ecclesiastical and they must supply referents. For the four month training, candidates are expected to devote their entire time to the rigorous seminar without interruptions form the outside as they must present a polished paper at the end of their time. This means that their application solicits a research question or problem derived from their social context. Candidates must be willing to move beyond sectarian or confessional positions in order to embrace an ecumenical spirit of cooperation.

Secondly, there is no set curriculum or predetermined reading list. DEI is not trying to download information or mass produce indoctrinated students. Rather the pedagogical approach relies on the

participants as the interlocutor; that is their experience and engagement in the struggles of the marginalized and excluded of society is the basis of inquiry.

> *In DEI, the thread that integrates and energizes the DEI team is always the arrival of new workshop participants. Every investigator at DEI is a product of DEI and understands this formation process very well. People that come to DEI are people that come from institutions well known to DEI because we have functioned for over 30 years. Sometimes they come from 14 countries, sometimes 17 countries. Through the dialogue, the interchanges, and the conversations, we listen to the new necessities of those in the struggle. They are leaders of social movements; popular movements. They are responsible for community associations. People that work of NGOs and organizations. They want to make a reflection, in search of an alternative that favors life conditions that favor everyone* (Brisson, 2008).

Here lies the comparative advantage; DEI participants benefit from a unique pedagogical experience that is shaped by a dialectic conversation between disciplines from individuals who themselves have been shaped by the experience. It is a pedagogical experience where the work and daily experience of the learner matters. Learning is adapted to the specific context of the learner. The DEI strategy is not to necessarily work directly with the masses as was believed to be the intent of the base communities, but rather to focus on leadership development among individuals who are embedded in small institutions and hold positions of influence who can reproduce the values, the methodology and objectives of Liberation Theology. The mechanisms of DEI are popular education in the lower level seminars, socialization and reproduction in the formation seminars, and the development of intellectual production in the academic seminars conducted by Franz Hinkelammert. The process that is initialized through DEI seminars is extended thru the journal *Pasos*, which serves as a literary vehicle that not only promotes intellectual property of DEI, but also to keep seminar graduates connected.

2.3 Reproduction

The third mechanism that contributes to a movement's continuity is reproduction. According to Budros (2002), downsizing, de-diversification and decentralization are consistent with a lean and mean concept of demobilization. Organizational research has shown that in competitive markets, firms do better by relinquishing diversified assets and decentralizing by encouraging the autonomous development of divisions that gain greater control in decision making, business development and planning apart from the corporate center. Technological advances have helped facilitate the communication and networking capacity of the parent firm and subsidiaries. In social movements, decentralization is found to empower sub-units which amounts to social reproduction of autonomous but networked movement organizations (Gamson, 1990).

In DEI, Pablo Richard (2008) explains the two types of leaders that DEI hopes to influence, "We have two types of candidates; we form pastoral agents of the *Lectura Popular de la Biblia* (LPB) and committed Christians who are leaders of social movements, leaders of NGOs and social organizations." It is the second type of leader that DEI hopes to develop in order that they reproduce the DEI approach

to social change. In this way, DEI operates according to a centrifugal and centripetal pattern in that participants who reside at DEI are socialized into the DEI strategy of promoting a Liberationist vision and then sent out to their social context with the hope of reproducing the DEI system. One such example is *Dimensiones Educativas* in Bogota, Colombia. *Dimensiones Educativas* (DE) began in 1978 under the leadership of Fernando Torres and Marion Peresson to simply sell LT literature. By early 1990s, Fernando was distraught due to the collapse of the *Frente Sandinistas in Nicaragua.* In Colombia, there was an exponential increase in para-military, private armies responsible for civilian massacres in the 40 year old civil war in Colombia. He went to DEI in order to do a 4 month Seminar for Institutional Leaders. He had been struggling to write his master's thesis on popular pedagogy. At DEI, under the direction Franz and Pablo and their dialectic method of reflection, he was able to put together a plan to systematize popular education. Torres returned to Bogotá and formed teams of collaborators consisting of dedicated bi-vocational workers—meaning that they are self-supporting as teachers, social workers, men and women religious—*Dimensiones Educativas* uses no resources to support personnel. There is no administration, no staff. Projects are self-supported. Torres and Peresson soon initiated the journal *Prácticas*—a small journal to give space to the publication of socio-religious issues. Motivated by the pedagogical philosophy of Pablo Freire and inspired DEI, *Dimensiones Educativas* utilized popular education as a mechanism to engage the popular classes in popular theology. The principle work of DE is on the work shop level. Torres cites an example of being invited, by a group of Pentecostal Women displaced by the civil war, to come to their area to provide a workshop on analyzing their social context and making sense of their context in light of a Biblical Reflection from a popular perspective. *Dimensiones Educativas* represents a de-centralized sub-unit of DEI that is not a clone of DEI; it is autonomous and distinctive. DEI did in fact empower Fernando Torres and he remains networked thru journalistic sources such as *Pasos, Ribla* and the internet (Torres, 2009).

2.4 Sodality

Religious movements have a strategic advantage over other social movements; a tradition and long history of sodalities that emerge at various times in history in order to compensate for what is perceived to be a shortcoming within the Institutional church or the surrounding culture (Budros, 2011). This tradition includes not only Catholic religious orders, confraternities, and brotherhoods, but also Protestant sects, all of which emerge in order to cause or prevent change. While all social movements fall on a spectrum of inclusivity and exclusivity, conventional research suggest that a growing movement is inclusive because it absorbs and mobilizes the masses while a demobilizing movement becomes exclusive as a survival strategy (Taylor, 1989). However, religious movements have a history and tradition of developing sodalities which strike a balance between exclusivity and inclusivity. Although an inclusive sodality is an oxymoron, religious movements tend to operate in such a way that holds this tension together. Protestant groups have followed the church-sect pattern while Catholic groups tend to follow a religious order paradigm; both of which allow dissidents to reform religion,

culture or both. Otherwise known as para-church organizations, religious sodalities have been able to hold and mobilize religious dissidents and religious virtuosos who represent the vanguard of change, while at the same time seek to influence and recruit the masses in ways that it perceives as alternatives to the shortcomings of religious modalities. DEI is a unique para-church organization in that it is intensely ecumenical and consists of both Protestants and Catholics. Therefore, neither the historic specificity of the Church-Sect nor the Religious Orders sodality fits. Rather, DEI has operated as a religious sodality according to a functional and generic pattern. Like most religious sodalities, DEI is a source of religious utopianism and idealism that became a creative force in religious change consisting of dissidents and the disenfranchised who have little power and authority to change the institutional structure. First, the structure and personnel at DEI make ecumenism a unique advantage ….. Pablo Ricard (2008) explains;

> *For us, the Vatican is not an obstacle. We have never received a condemnation. In the first place, we are an ecumenical center. The directors, the associates are of different confessions, including an atheist and a Pentecostal. It is an ecumenical space because if it was purely Catholic space, it would be very dangerous because the Church could cut our funds.*

Second, sodalities stimulate organizational growth by developing innovations for adapting faith to a specific culture or era. This is demonstrated not only in the wide variety of issues represented in DEI literature, but in the methods of formation through DEI seminars.

> *It was the idea of Hugo Assman, that the formation seminars would follow the retreat style of the Jesuits. That is to spend three months in a retreat under conditions in which each participant would have a director in a sense, a close mentor. This is not an academy or a university (Mora, 2011).*
>
> *The formation is very interesting. At DEI, through the dialogues, the interchanges, the conversations, we listen to new necessities. DEI is a space of reflection where the people come to understand what is going on in their locality, and possibly their nation in relation to the world (Brisson, 2008).*
>
> *There is no formalized instruction. There is no DEI ideology. Rather we discuss the social context of each participant in order to contextualize a theological framework that enables them to engage in Praxis. The discussion is Praxis. In our Seminars, not only do we give formation, but we also receive formation in a form of interchange. As Pablo Freide used to say, 'the educator is also educated' (Hinkelammert, 2011).*

Third, new religious sodalities emerge when the Church fails to meet the demands of the people. Each new sodality develops a charisma and mission that addresses an unmet demand or crisis in the Church.

> *…….. but frequently those in the Parish or the Churches who have the social, biblical and theological training, they forget the subjects who are distant such as women, indigenous, the black community, the youth, the peasants or environmental problems. Yet these very same people become associated with Colectivo Ecuménico de Biblistas (CEDEBI) because they are*

> *looking for the opportunity be informed by what the Bible has to say about their condition and social status. They want to join themselves to a community that looks to address their daily circumstances and this is what they have found in Liberation Theology (Arias, 2009).*
>
> *…… so members of these groups unite themselves in order to improve their lives, to defend their lives, and to live in the Kingdom of God. This process includes groups of men and of women, and of different religious communities (denominations) yet we live together as human beings created by God. There is one work; a service to the community in which we are formed in this process of serving the community. We do not receive any help from the Parish and the priests are not in agreement with what we do. While we must work apart from the Parish, we must also contribute to the Parish (Garcia, 2009).*

Thus, DEI has achieved socialization and reproduction of its constituency by strategically emphasizing a contextualized religious vision, an alternative spirituality and innovative organizational practices which provides institutional differentiation.

2.5 Constructing a Niche

From an ecological niche perspective, organizations with little distinctiveness from other traditions or from secular society will have high membership turnover (Stark & Bainbridge, 1985; 1987). Religious sodalities, as with social movement organizations, are effective when they can construct a niche among motivated persons who will resonate with the collective emotions, beliefs and practices of the sodality that in effect, represents an alternative to the status quo (Budros, 2002). A sodality can remain competitive and viable, in both a religious economy and a muti-organizational field, when it can cater to a specific segment of the religious market whose demands are unmet in the conventional religious modality; resulting in a distinctive religious sub-culture. Success depends on a "marketing strategy" that can attract resources and orient production to particular types of consumers and clients. One aspect of niche construction is developing a collective action frame that attracts support among sympathizers. Historically, LT has been preoccupied with an "option of the poor", yet more recently, "the poor and oppressed" have been interpreted as the "excluded". DEI has been instrumental in expanding the themes of LT to include Feminists Theology, Black Theology, and concerns of the Indigenous. The expansion of interests can be verified by the *Pasos* website which states that the journal addresses the following areas with "a Critical, Theoretical and Emancipatory Perspective" (https://www.deicr.org/revistas-pasos); Processes of Globalization, Latin America Theology, History of the Church, Popular Biblicist Networks, Women and Gender, Indigenous Concerns, Racism, New Social Movements, Immigration, Economic Ethics, Economic Theology, Economic and Environmental Concerns (https://www.deicr.org/huellas-del-dei). The investigative areas contained in *Pasos* correspond to group interests regarding how political and resource conditions shape the prospects for recruitment of members who are integrated into DEI. These include individuals concerned about human rights, refugees, the environment, women's rights, peace, economic development, alternatives to neo-liberalism, *campesinos*, and the urban poor. Like most sodalities, DEI appeals to the committed

and passionate. When asked how DEI has avoided institutionalization over time, Arnoldo Mora (first vice-president of the *junta directive*) responded;

> *For us, the most important characteristic is that we bring in people who are committed practitioners…committed to Praxis. How does DEI serve them? By offering a formation that takes into account the social processes that their people are going through. In this way, we here at DEI are always engaged in new ideas and new leaders…..the new blood coming into DEI consisting of people committed to their society, this is why we never suffer from bureaucracy (Mora, 2011).*

Pablo Richard (2011) stresses that committed followers is the binding force that has held DEI together;

> *The Theology of Liberation is a new rationality and is very important to all of us Theologians, but in the end, it is the commitment to our cause. This is very important to the popular subjects who come to DEI. Everything is about the commitment. At DEI, we survive and are energized by commitment. The people who come to DEI, ALL are committed. Each status of the people is different, but ALL are committed.*

Commitment is demonstrated by the application form which candidates who solicit space in a Formation Seminar must complete which inquiries about commitment, sphere of influence, and leadership involvement; 1) *Describe how you are socially involved in; investigations, teaching, human rights, militancy, among popular sectors, or the Church*; 2) *Provide the name of the organization in which you work and the email of two individuals in the organization who know you and are familiar with your work* (*Application for Investigation/Formation Seminar 2011*). To this, Pablo Richard adds (2008);

> *The participants who come (to DEI Seminars) are very committed. This is fundamental to our methodology. Participants can only come if they have been recommended by their community or organization. Frequently, when a new participant arrives who is unknown to us yet recommended by his/her community; they leave and we know them very well. Here at DEI, we have this criteria and demand; that participants are sent from an organization, parish, or community which we know.*

DEI is an organization that operates unobtrusively and quietly under the radar but is highly productive in terms of influencing leaders who extend the DEI network and are committed to fulfilling the goals of LT. While not generating street protests or flash in the pan mobilization, they are training, preparing, inculcating values, the capacity to do social critiques, and to use community to improve people's lives. In doing so, LT has maintained legitimacy as a movement thru its network of organizations like DEI that continue to produce intellectual products, bring in new sympathizers, train activists, and influence both religious institutional life and local communities. Because of DEI's organizational structure, tactics and strategies, the SMO has been able to avoid; 1) institutionalization that tends to reduce organizational effectiveness; 2) cooption of the leadership; 3) repression of the early days by flying under the radar; 4) the temptation to do ALL things or over-extend themselves; and has 5) innovated

enough to provide stability over time; while 6) holding and mobilizing religious dissidents and religious virtuosos who represent the vanguard of change. As a result, DEI continues because it is able to bring in new blood and committed activists, its networks are forever expanding, and they are productively engaged in training associates who are contributing to social and cultural production.

3. Quantitative Methods

Part two of this paper analyzes how a single liberationist organization (DEI) is able to remain vitally active and influential in a changing environment by creating an organizational niche which has allowed it to not only resist attrition, but to contribute to Liberation Theology's on-going struggle to reform the socio-political context of Latin America, in a manner consistent with the original goals of the movement. Macro-organizational analysis allows us to explore how a social movement is positioned in relation to other social movements in the organizational field, and how a social movement organization is structured to survive changing social contexts. In other words, an evaluation of the population ecology of similar organizations provides a useful tool for understanding the development of SMO forms in relationship to their environment and as a configuration within a competitive environment.

3.1 Data and Methods

Data for this research comes from 35 editions (1983-2018) of the *Yearbook of International Organizations* (Union of International Associations), the most comprehensive directory available on international non-governmental and non-profit associations containing information such as founding dates, aims, funding, activities and inter-organizational links among other valuable data points (Note 1). Publishers update information annually relying on UN records, self-reports, referrals, official documents, and local media to maintain organizational profiles, identify the emergence of new organizations and to note organizations that have become defunct or inactive since the previous publication (Note 2). Once organizations are identified by the *Yearbook's* research staff or after they request inclusion themselves, self-reports are issued by which the organization can provide up-dated or revised information and returned to the publishers for each subsequent editions. Such a system provides a means of annual status reports including organizational dissolutions.

3.2 Selection of Cases

Because entries in the *Yearbook of International Organizations* are listed by country, associations included in this study were derived solely from the Costa Rican database. This includes associations based in Costa Rica (identified by a Costa Rican address) or those which are considered "an emanation of a particular organization" based in the region (Central America). These organizations are designated by coding in the *Yearbook* (Section D) which states "non-profit organizations whose membership or preoccupations are restricted to a particular subcontinental region." Therefore, priority was given to organizations with a regional focus (Central America) as opposed to international organizations with a universal membership (Sections E-G). Efforts were made to identify voluntary associations and interest groups which pursue civil (non-governmental), economic and political rights and protections through

educational, cultural and institutional advocacy. Most of the associations work to promote the status of particular demographics (women, indigenous, youth, impoverished, religious) within educational, economic, or religious settings involving the direct participation of constituents (Kriesi, 1996).

Because the *Encyclopedia* contains hundreds of entries within Costa Rica which represent a wide variety of organizational interests, the types of organizations excluded from this study include; foundations, research centers, governmental enterprises, professional associations, political affiliations, academic institutions and business associations in lieu of an emphasis on organizations claiming a nationalistic membership base and engaged in local advocacy and service to vulnerable communities. To facilitate the selection of associations which satisfy these criteria, the *Yearbook* provides qualitative information and "indicative data on regional organizations" in the form of an extended abstract (Volumes I-II) presenting a classification scheme of organizational characteristics which serve as the analytical basis for this study.

3.3 How I Created the Data Set

These criteria yielded a data set consisting of 63 voluntary non-profit organizations which translate into 849 "organizational years"—an observation for each year of organizational activity between 1983 and 2018. The data structure used in this study is unique as each organization, once identified and entered into the study, represents an "observation". One observation is created for each year of the organization remains in the study. The first observation for an organization corresponds to its entry into the sample between editions of the *Yearbook* though it may have existed prior to 1983. The last record for an organization corresponds to either the year the organization dissolves or the last year of the study (2018). Each organization can have as many as 1 or as many as 35 observations (if the organization was founded before 1983 and active after 2018; such as DEI). The total number of observations corresponds to the years of activity. As we will see, only eight organizations were censored: that is they were formed before the study began and still active in 2018. The largest category is "interval censored" meaning that thirty-one organizations emerged during the timeframe of the study but did not survive until the end. Thirteen organizations were "right censored" because they emerged during the study's interval and survived until the end while eleven organizations were "left truncated" in that they existed prior to 1983 but dissolved during the interval of the study.

3.4 Dependent and Independent Variables (Organizational characteristics)

The dependent variable is the dissolution of an organization either reported in the *Yearbook* or the year of the last edition in which the organization appears (Note 3). The dependent variable is represented as a dichotomous measure coded 0 for each year that the organization is active and 1 for the year that the organization is considered to have dissolved. The following year in which an organization is coded 1, it disappears from the analysis. A total of 42 organizations (of 63) dissolved over the interval of the study. If an organization was still active at the end of the study, the status is coded 0 for each organizational year that it appears in the study interval (Note 4). An assumption of organizational survival is, in part, attributable to characteristics that contribute to the organization's success, and thus its legitimacy

resulting in organizational persistence. In essence, voluntary organizations function by convincing certain constituents and sponsors of the legitimacy of what they are doing and why they are doing it and ultimately provide a solution to a perceived social need or grievance. Interest groups are able to achieve a comparative advantage within a social niche that derives a benefit from mutual association. Therefore, this study seeks to examine certain organizational covariates in order to determine which correlates may contribute significantly to provide a comparative advantage and hence organizational persistence.

The *Yearbook of International Organizations* provides an abstract for each organization consisting of data which serves as a basis for determining organizational characteristics. Quantitative data points include founding date, number of paid staff, publications and linkages thru IGOs, NGOs and the number of other Latin American countries hosting members and affiliates (Note 5). Qualitative data consists of types of funding sources (but not amounts), organizational activities, and aims. Aims, otherwise understood as goals and objectives, tended to be presented in broad and generalized terms and hence were reduced to the most appropriate single classification of each organization following Minkoffs strategic forms (1993, p. 894); 1) advocacy—challenging elites thru routine channels such as the press and literature; 2) service—providing direct service or benefits to constituency without advocating change in policy; 3) advocacy-service—providing direct service or benefits to the constituency and advocating change in policy; and 4) cultural production—contributing to the distribution of ideas, knowledge or systems of beliefs thru action in the arts, media, or social science (Note 6). Sources of funding as indicated by the *Yearbook* include 1) Not reported; 2) governmental bodies; 3) external foundations or funding organizations; 4) membership dues, affiliation fees, subscriptions and book sales; 5) private donations and gifts; and 6) two or more sources. Organizational activities have been interpreted as the means of influence exercised by each organization in order to achieve aims. These include; 1) education; 2) religious; 3) religious and educational; 4) policy advocacy 5) investigation and research; 6) networking and coordination among partners; and 7) two or more activities. Persistence of voluntary organizations depends on appealing to a constituency or social niche of followers who embrace the goals and identity of the organization. Direct participation of constituents is a distinguishing feature of social movement organizations (Kriesi, 1996). Unfortunately, the *Yearbook* provides neither detailed quantitative nor qualitative information on the group's constituency. Based on the totality of the abstract, I have coded principle beneficiaries (constituents of a social niche) of the organizations activities to include; 1) victims of human rights abuse such as refugees and immigrants; 2) urban poor / *campesinos*; 3) women / children; 4) indigenous; 5) religious men and women; 6) youth; 7) General Populations; and 8) political parties. Similarly, the qualitative nature of the *Yearbook*'s organizational abstracts allowed each association to be identified according to social movement sectors (Minkoff, 1995). I coded these as; 1) human rights; 2) environment concerns; 3) women's rights; 4) peace and justice; 5) community and cultural development; 6) indigenous/afro-black/ethno-racial concerns; 7) political mobilization. All categorical variables listed

above have been transformed into mutually exclusive dummy variables for the sake of modeling. Reference categories are identified in the models.

Although detailed information on the organizational structure is not available in the *Yearbook*, I use quantitative data reported on related variables. The paid number of staff is reported for most organizations and associations that did not provide data are assigned a value of 0. Because voluntary associations face unique problems of resource acquisition, organizational survival depends on the capacity to procure necessary resources in a competitive organizational field. Organizational coalitions are important for mutual collaboration and for sharing expertise, funds, members, skills and knowledge thus enhancing organizational efficacy. I use the reported number of relations with IGOs and NGOs to measure inter-organizational relations. If an association did not provide inter-organizational information, a value of 0 was assigned for this variable. In addition, abstracts listed other Latin American countries in which organizational members and associates lived representing networks of distal constituents. Last, I use the reported number of titles of major publications corresponding to multiple literary types (dissemination of books, reports, journals, and other media).

3.5 Control Variables

Because organizational failure/persistence may be correlated with factors other than organizational characteristics, the analysis below controls for a number of specific environmental factors which enable the isolation of key explanatory variables net of other possibly correlated factors. I control for resource availability measured by annual per capita Gross National Income (lagged one year) by creating a natural logarithm based on the assumption that economic expansion or contraction may affect organizational survival (Note 7). Conversely, the annual inflation rate (percent) of consumer prices and the total national external debt (in billions, current US dollars; (lagged one year and a natural logarithm) may constrain organizational activity. I control for the political and social environment. As a measure political opportunity, I include a dummy variable indicating whether the regime type in the previous year was the Social Christian Party (historically conservative = 0) or the National Liberation Party (a socialist orientation = 1) and a more reliable ally which would be assumed to create a more favorable environment for social activism. As a measure of human capital, I include an annual measure of primary education completion (percent of cohort) which implies that levels of human capital can moderate or mediate organizational development.

Organizational density refers to the number of organizations active in a movement or in the sector generally and is believed to influence and shape organizational activity (Hannan & Freeman, 1989; Hannan & Carroll, 1995). As an organizational sector becomes established,

a rise in density establishes a favorable environment for group formation by opening up an organizational niche. On the other hand, increases in density may also encourage inter-organizational competition for resources, limiting access to resources and depressing organizational activity (Hannan & Carroll, 1995). Since density can both promote and constrain organizational activity, I include two density measures in this analysis. Density is lagged one year to capture a more proximate effect by

calculating the total number of organizations active at the end of the prior year, plus the number of new entrants, minus the number of groups that exited (either because they failed, became inactive, or did not respond to repeated requests for updated information). In order to avoid collinearity, the density term is centered by subtracting the mean and the new density-centered variable is then squared. Not only does centering avoid collinearity, but it transforms the covariate to a natural zero point. Otherwise the baseline hazard rates, which are the time-only rates when covariates are zero, are estimated for points which do not exist in the data set, resulting in misleading baseline hazard functions (Box-Steffensmeier & Jones, 2004, p. 65). The first variable assumes a linear relationship while the second; a curvilinear relationship between organizational density and dissolution. The natural age of each organization is measured by the reported the founding year and not from the year it entered the study. I account for both a linear effect of natural age and curvilinear age effect by squaring the age term. In order to avoid collinearity, the age variable is centered by subtracting the mean and the new age-centered variable is squared. In addition to age effects, I include a dummy variable indicating whether the organization was founded prior to the beginning of the study (1983) based on the assumption that older groups may be established and escape many of the environmental vagaries that may affect newer startups. A time-varying covariate (also called time-dependent covariate) reflects the phenomenon that a covariate is not necessarily constant through the whole study. My principle explanatory variables (Aims, activity, beneficiary, etc.) are constant throughout the study, but all of my control variables are not constant (GNI, Debt, Inflation, Density, age, etc.).

3.6 Data Analysis

Cox non-proportional hazard models are used to estimate the relationship between organizational characteristics and the hazard of dissolution. Some variables are time-dependent covariates which reflect the phenomenon that some covariates change in value over the course of the observation period (i.e., age, density, GDP per capita). Introduction of time-dependent variables violates the proportional hazard assumption because that covariate has an interaction with time and there are constant covariates as well (aims, funding, activities, etc.). This means relative hazards (ratio of observed estimates to baseline hazard) varies over time. Hazards are still proportional over time, but only within the time blocks formed by changes in the covariates. That is, each time a significant covariate changes in value, there is a "jump" up or down in the hazard, but between jumps hazards are proportional. Non-proportional hazard models assume that the underlying hazard rate rather than survival time is a function of the independent variables and but leaves the baseline hazard rate unspecified (Note 8).

Cox regression is used for additional reasons. Cox regressions correct the coefficients for the right censoring of the data; that is the organizations that survive after the end of the study interval (Blossfeld & Rohwer, 2002). Second, Cox regressions do not require specifying the hazard shape *a priori* (Allison, 2010; Blossfeld & Rohwer, 2002). This is a useful property in studies where the main focus is the association between the covariates and survival because the results can change parametric event history models depending on the hazard shape (Blossfeld & Rohwer, 2002). The non-proportional hazard

models are robust and make no parametric assumptions to estimate hazard rates which are flexible, model-free, and data driven concerning the nature or shape of the underlying survival distribution (Allison, 1995). In other words, no shape assumption is imposed other than the hazard function. Estimates reflect relative rather than absolute risk.

4. Results

To recap, this research emphasizes the role of organizational characteristics in determining a group's ability to persist over time. Table 1 presents the results of the Cox Proportional Hazard models of organizational dissolution in which the dependent variable, technically, indicates the rate of failure over time. Models present regression coefficients (b) because they show the positive/negative orientation of the coefficient and can be easily Exponentiated {exp(b)} to derive the hazard ratio (e^b). A positive coefficient increases the hazard of dissolution and a negative coefficient increases the rate of survival. Model 1 presents the principle organizational characteristics provided by the *Yearbook's* abstract. Aims in general tend toward moderate reform-oriented and traditional voluntary organizations as opposed to protest activism or disruptive collective action. The risk of dissolution among groups that engage in combined advocacy / service by providing direct service or benefits to constituents while advocating change in policy is moderately significant across models and decreases the hazard by a factor of .179 or 82 percent (exp[-1.722]=.179) relative to engaging in advocacy only and net of control variables (Note 9). Organizations engaging in cultural production by contributing to the distribution of ideas, knowledge or systems of beliefs thru various means decrease the hazard of dissolution by a factor of .064 or approximately 94 percent (exp[-2.747] = .064) after adjusting for other variables in the model and relative to advocacy.

As important as resource acquisition is to voluntary organizational survival, funding source outcomes are somewhat confounding. Organizations relying on two or more funding sources are mildly significant across models and approximately 5.2 times more likely to fail (exp[1.650] = 5.209) than organizations that that did not report funding sources. The hazard for organizations which depend on donations and gifts are 11.7 times (exp[2.467] = 11.793) that of organizations that that did not report funding sources. In contrast, groups that are funded by Foundations and Corporate philanthropy reduce the risk of attrition by 77.5 percent (exp[-1.494] = .225) relative to those that do not report funding net of control variables.

Table 1. Dissolution of Social Movement Organizations: Costa Rica 1983-2018

Variable	Model 1 (std. error)	Model 2 (std. error)	Model 3 (std. error)
AIMS / STRATEGIES			
(Advocacy)			
Service	-.340	.264	.052
	(.961)	(.838)	(.895)
Advocacy-Service	-1.863*	-2.024*	-1.722*
	(.1081)	(1.028)	(1.074)
Cultural Production	-2.101*	-2.291**	-2.747***
	(1.032)	(.926)	(.970)
FUNDING SOURCES			
(Not Reported)			
Governmental bodies	-1.066*	-.892	-.947
	(.483)	(.522)	(.597)
Foundations/Corporate philanthropy	-1.099	-.910*	-1.494*
	(.876)	(.574)	(.789)
Membership Dues/Book Sales	-.386	-.887	-.953
	(.682)	(.708)	(.744)
Donations and Gifts	.667	1.216*	2.467***
	(.609)	(.627)	(.758)
Two or More Sources	1.386*	1.530*	1.650*
	(.727)	(.709)	(.816)
ACTIVITIES: MEANS of INFLUENCE			
(Education)			
Religious	-1.070	-.728	-.248
	(.950)	(.886)	(.983)
Religious and Education	3.528***	5.320***	6.086***
	(1.188)	(1.242)	(1.391)
Policy Advocacy / Lobbying	.621	-.240	.010
	(.145)	(.107)	(.361)
Investigation / Research	-2.300	-2.239*	-3.175**
	(.846)	(1.042)	(1.621)
Networking /Coordination	.057	-.942	-1.266
	(.399)	(.313)	(1.273)
Two or More Activities	.525	.684	-.038

	(.912)	(.938)	(..911)
FAMILY: SMO SECTOR			
(Human Rights)			
Environment	-2.392**	-2.788**	-3.812***
	(1.033)	(1.038)	(1.130)
Women's Rights	3.281***	3.352***	3.738***
	(.928)	(.873)	(.895)
Peace/Justice	1.156	1.184	.121
	(.297)	(.313)	(.994)
Community Development/Cultural	-.736	.048	.585
	(1.906)	(.599)	(.541)
Indigenous/Ethnic	1.697*	1.455	1.268*
	(.907)	(.739)	(.751)
Political Mobilization	-4.580***	-4.541***	-3.810***
	(1.351)	(1.305)	(1.420)
BENEFICIARIES / CONSTITUENTS			
(Victims of Humans Rights Abuse)			
Campesinos/Urban Poor	1.180	.713	1.844
	(1.054)	(1.111)	(1.147)
Women/Children	.261	-1.058	-2.837
	(.284)	(.382)	(.545)
Indigenous	.966	2.098	2.945*
	(.742)	(1.682)	(1.685)
Religious Agents	- 5.201***	- 4.921***	- 5.319***
	(1.031)	(1.146)	(1.219)
Youth	2.705**	3.524***	2.462**
	(1.199)	(1.209)	(1.290)
General Populations	2.003	1.197	1.361
	(1.102)	(.133)	(1.185)
Political Parties	-.521	-.730	-1.641*
	(.805)	(.732)	(.761)
ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES			
Number of Major Publications	-.550***	-.543***	-.548***
	(.162)	(,162)	(.172)
Number of Distal Networks	-.009**	-.008**	-.008**
	(.003)	(.004)	(.004)

Number of Paid Staff	.001	.001	.001
	(.001)	(.001)	(.010)
Inter-organizational Relations (NGOs)	.001	.004	.008
	(.006)	(.007)	(.007)
CONTEXTUAL FACTORS			
GNI (log) μμ		.000	.000
		(.000)	(.000)
Annual Rate of Inflation ++		.-003	-.003
		(.007)	(.007)
External Debt (log) ##		-.116*	-.177**
		(.061)	(.070)
Primary Education (% of cohort) ^^		-.160**	-.093
		(.065)	(.071)
Regime Type		-.413	-.718
		(.468)	(.524)
Density Centered			-.028***
			(.011)
Density Centered Squared			.003
			(.002)
Age Centered			-.150***
			(.055)
Age Centered Squared			.003
			(.001)
Established Pre-1983			2.477**
			(1.113)
-2 Log Likelihood	363.308	332.996	310.655
Chi-square	227.728***	240.443***	256.797***
Number of Organizations	63		
Organizational Years	849		
No. of Events	42		

Note. Reference categories are shown in parentheses.

* p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Data Source: *Year Book of International Organizations* (1983 to 2018)

μμ GNI per capita (constant 2010 US$): World Bank National Accounts Data, and OECD National Accounts data.

++ Inflation, consumer prices (annual %): International Monetary Fund, International Financial Statistics and data.

Debt service on external debt, total (TDS, current US$): World Bank, International Debt Statistics.

^^ Education - Persistence to last grade of primary, total (% of cohort): UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

It is counter intuitive that the combination of religion and education significantly increases the hazard risk for dissolution 439 times (exp[6.086] = 439.855) net of controls and relative to organizations whose principle activity is solely education. Counter intuitive because of the eight censored organization, three are religiously based. Of the thirteen right censored organizations, five are religious and of the forty-two organizations that failed during the study interval, only two are religious. Such an output may be a statistical artifact based on an over-extension of the computed relationship (Long & Freese, 2006). Research and investigation as a principle activity is reasonably significant and increases survivability by 96 percent (exp[-3.175] = .042). Regarding organizational sectors, net of controls and relative to human rights, organizations dedicated to women's rights have a significantly increased hazard of disbanding across models (68 times in model 3 {exp[3.738] = 42.014}) while organizations promoting environmental concerns and political mobilization are also strongly significant but increase survival rate 98 percent compared to human rights organizations and after adjustments for all variables in the model. Among constituencies, organizations which target religious agents across all models significantly reduces the hazard ratio by 99 percent compared to targeting victims of human rights abuse net of control effects. Organizations serving youth significantly increases the failure. The four variables listed as "resources" capture the relationship between organizational structure, resource acquisition and organizational survival. Organizations that generate and disseminate literature (books, journals, reports, media) significantly increases survivability (42 percent) while maintaining networks of distal members and associates in other Central and Latin American countries also significantly reduces the hazard ratio by approximately 10 percent net of controls. Interestingly, having paid staff and relations to other IGOs and NGOs (inter-organizational relations) did not contribute to survival prospects.

The final variables control for effects by external factors which might influence organizational life chances. However, only a few of the factors significantly alter the failure rate. While they are not tied directly to organizational success, they do provide insight into the dynamics of organizational persistence or failure. Among items specifying macro-economic and human capital conditions, only external debt is significant and the regression coefficient refers to a decrease in log hazard for an increase of 1 dollar in the value of debt. Compared to the Social Christian Party (historically conservative), eras ruled by the National Liberation Party (socialist orientation) in general decreases the risk of attrition although the presence of a socialist oriented presidential administration is not significant.

Looking at the effect of density representing the organizational ecology is insightful. Density (centered), the linear term, improves the model fit and significantly reduces the hazard ratio in general approximately 21 percent. The curvilinear density term (centered-squared) is not significant suggesting that density is both monotonic and linear. The interplay between organizational age and risk is also mixed. The linear interaction of time and age (age-centered) significantly decreases the risk of attrition by fourteen percent for each unit of change from year to year in the study. Stated simply, the older an organization, the lower the risk for attrition. The curvilinear age term (age-centered squared) is not significant which implies that the relationship is not quadratic. Last, organizations established prior to 1983 significantly increases the risk by 11 percent compared to groups established during the interval of the study. Of the forty-two organizations that failed during the study, eleven were established before 1983 (left truncated). Hence, pre-establishment is not a guarantee of survival.

In general, organizations that have a lower risk for dissolution tend to value cultural production, to be older, are financed by foundations and corporate philanthropy, engage in investigation and research concerning environmental concerns or political mobilization, appealing to religious agents**,** produce multiple types of regular publications and have numerous distal networks of members and associates throughout Latin America. In contrast, organizations engaged solely in advocacy by challenging elites thru religious and educational means by advocating for women's concerns whose constituencies are indigenous or youth are associated with higher rates of dissolution.

5. Discussion

What do mixed methods mean for the continuity of DEI as a sponsoring organization of the on-going development of Liberation Theology? Population Ecology (Hannan & Freeman 1989) suggests that organizations in a competitive field contend for limited resources. In order to survive, an organization must modify its aims, objectives, tactics, strategies, and organizational structure. A *Lean and Mean* theoretical framework (Part I), which explains how organizations successfully downsize, would suggest that the DEI organizational form has adjusted overtime in order to manage Liberation Theology's loss of saliency. Significant organizational characteristics which emerged thru Cox Regression (Part II) may provide an additional explanation for DEI's survival. I will use content from DEI's most recent website (https://www.deicr.org/newpage), a survey conducted by Verena Hammes of *Pastoral Global* on April 16, 2012 (http://en.pastoral-global.org/index.php/Departemento_Ecum%C3%A9nico_de_Investigaciones), and interview data to correlate the significant organizational characteristics from Table 1 to DEI's self-understanding and self-disclosure.

1). Cultural production is defined by Minkoff (1993, p. 894) as "aims, goals and objectives contributing to the distribution of ideas, knowledge or systems of beliefs thru action in the arts, media, or social science." The mission statements from DEI's website states;

> *Our Mission: We are a community dedicated to investigation and formation with an ecumenical vision for Latin America and the Caribbean in dialogue with religious and social movements and organic intellectuals. Our work is to support such actors through critical analysis of reality resulting in transformative outcomes by means of reflective social critique, the theologies of liberation, and popular education* (https://www.deicr.org/newpage)

In response to the survey question (Pastoral Global, 2012); *What does the work of the institute involve exactly? (Framework conditions? Publications? Courses? Lectures? Congress?);* agents of DEI responded;

> *We have three work areas: education, research, publications. DEI is an ecumenical space, every year about 100 people from across Latin America and the Caribbean participate in one or two month events. We highlight pluralism, ecumenism, and commitment to the poor. We place high demands for participation in the DEI. We insist on a program of follow-up activities and implementation/practice for the participants of our workshops and seminars. Our team members, pursuant to their specialization, take part in international congresses, conferences and lectures. We strive towards a good presence in the Latin American region.*

2). Financed by foundations and corporate philanthropy is the most significant source of funding according to Table 1. In response to the survey question (Pastoral Global, 2012); *What are the main difficulties your institute is confronted with in its work?* DEI respondents wrote; "The financial difficulties that force us to work a lot with less people. However, these difficulties have never prevented the implementation of the planned workshops and seminars." While finances are problematic for most SMOs, DEI has had a series of relationships with Foundations which serve as the principal source of financing. Foundational relationships from DEI's initiation was confirmed by Pablo Richard (2008);

> *As an ecumenical space, it is a space of liberty. Secondly, it is a space economically autonomous. If we were dependent on the Church for financial support, it would be dangerous because the Church could kill the Center by cutting the funds. We receive financing from Catholics (CLAR) and Protestants (WCC), but most importantly, from those who are in solidarity with the cause of DEI.*

Arnoldo Mora (2011) cited financial support from the *Rosa Luxemburg Foundation* based in Germany by virtue of a relationship with Franz Hinkelammert who was one of the principal founders and activists of DEI. Pablo Richard (2008) also cites the generosity of Churches in Germany which have shown solidarity with DEI thus allowing the organization to survive. Marysee Brisson (2008) adds "that 'agencies in solidarity' contribute financial support to keep DEI solvent. These are agencies that have an interest in the program of DEI and in their publications." Presently, one such agency in solidarity with DEI that provides financial support is the United Church of Canada (https://www.deicr.org/newpage). While financing the organization has been a challenge thru its 48 years of existence, DEI has been able to manage financially by limiting overhead expenses. The

campus property is paid for, Seminars are paid by participants, the Editorial House is self-sustaining, and many of DEIs functionaries have been members of religious orders and draw financial support for their employment (Richards, 2011). A list of 89 adjunct researchers associated with DEI from 2012 to 2018 from 16 different countries in Latin America and the Caribbean all had full time employment (mostly in University positions) and did not require remuneration from DEI. Hence, by prudent management, DEI has been able to economize limited resources (http://deicr.org/programa-de-formacion-del-dei).

3). Principal means of influence is thru engagement in investigation and research which clearly is one of the principal functions of DEI from its origins. In response to the Pastoral Survey question; *What is your institutions main area of work?* DEI agents responded "The field of education/formation, supported by the research and the publication of our journals and books. Pablo Richard (2008) adds; "DEI has three objectives. 1) Investigate 2) form new leaders; and 3) publish helpful materials to stimulate the liberationist vision and to guide the *Red de la Lectura Popular de la Biblia* (Network of Popular Bible Reading)." DEI's website discloses the following purpose statement and vision statement; (https://www.deicr.org/newpage)

> *Strategic Objective: Program of Investigation at DEI:*
>
> *To generate inspired knowledge of critical social theory, theologies of Liberation, social struggles of the diverse people groups in Latin America and the Caribbean, which emphasize social transformation of popular organizations corresponding to the research themes articulated at DEI.*
>
> *Our Vision:*
>
> *DEI is a Latin-American center for research and formation following critical reflection and theologies of liberation which serve a network of organizations, social centers, and actors interested in constructing an alternative society based on solidarity, equality, inclusivity, and environmental sustainability.*

While research is one of its main functions—hence the name Ecumenical Department of Research (*Investigaciones* in Spanish translates to "research" in English), Franz Hinkelammert (2011) is very clear when he states that "DEI is not a think tank. There is no formalized instruction. There is no DEI ideology. Rather we discuss the social context of each participant in order to contextualize a theological framework as a basis for research projects which enables them to engage in *Praxis.*"

4). Although the SMO Sectors most significant in terms of reducing the hazard of dissolution in Table 1 are political mobilization and environmentalism, DEI has survived by developing broad themes of resistance, social critique, and theological reflection. One thing is for sure; DEI does not engage in political mobilization or collective action which emphasizes protests; protest events include rallies, marches, sit-ins, boycotts, and various forms of civil disobedience. Political mobilization has never been an objective of Liberation Theology. Regarding SMO Family Sectors, it is difficult to pigeon whole DEI because the organization has historically addressed a wide range of research topics to a

diverse audience. An unpublished survey conducted by the author of research articles which appeared in *Pasos* from 1985 to 2016 (N=737 articles from 169 Journals) found that most themes corresponded to one of the nine categories below;

(1). Human Rights/Refugees (4.9 percent)

(2). Environmental Issue (2.4 percent)

(3). Women's Concerns (3.7 percent)

(4). Peace & Justice/Contemporary socio-political commentary (15.9 percent)

(5). Economic development/Alternatives to Neoliberalism (14.1 percent)

(6). Urban poor/Indigenous/Campesinos (4.9 percent)

(7). Sociology of Religion/Theological reflection (24.4 percent)

(8). Social History/Historical analysis i.e.; the Conquista, the missionary movement, history of socialism, Cuban revolution, Nicaraguan revolution, Fall of Berlin Wall, among others (16.0 percent)

(9). Other (Biographic profiles/Reprint of important articles (13.7 percent)

With regard to a SMO Sector, it is difficult to compartmentalize DEI as a single-sector SMO because the organization has historically addressed a wide range of research topics to a diverse audience across multiple nations and cultures.

5). It only makes sense that the principal beneficiaries/constituents of the SMOs in the data set are religious agents given the number of religiously oriented organizations represented. Although the research themes of DEI are diverse, they are seen thru the lens of theological reflection. I would argue that the reason DEI has expanded the human subjects of their theological reflection from the urban and rural poor (*option for the poor*) to include women, *campesinos*, indigenous, victims of human rights abuse, Black Latino-Americans etc., were for ideological reasons as opposed to a market strategy. Rather, it was on moral and ideological grounds in order to be more inclusive to the marginalized and oppressed. Therefore, given the history, development and trajectory of DEI, it only makes sense that one of its principal beneficiaries are religious agents—be they formally ordained or the laity—who are committed to work among these demographic groups in order to affirm their lives and articulate their grievances.

6). The principal organizational resources, according to Table One, include the production of regular publications and maintaining distal networks. DEI has excelled at both. In response to the Pastoral Survey (2012) question; *What magazines, periodicals, books, manuals, work aids, methodological instructions etc. does your institute publish?* DEI agents responded; *Pasos* (journal with four issues per year). *Entre Utopías* (for the subsequent monitoring of Biblista programs). *RIBLAH* (Revista de Interpretación Latino-americana Bíblica = Latin American Bible magazine), co-edition with *RECU* (Quito, press Verbo Divino = SVD). The complete collection of these magazines can be found on our website: www.dei-cr.org. This page provides information on all our Activities, especially the seminars and workshops. Our press "Editorial DEI" publishes an average of six books per year. We publish Materials for direct use for those responsible for community-based organizations (leaflets, manuals,

methods). Regarding distal networks of members and associates throughout Latin America, the Pastoral Survey (2012) asked DEI agents; *Which associations are you affiliated with (personally or as an institute)?* Distal networks include; 1) *Amerindia*: network of theologians, social scientists and bishops. *Amerindia* was present in Puebla (1979), in Santo Domingo (1992) and in Aparecida (2007). Also in the America Synod; 2) Association of Third World Theologians: ASETT (EATWOT); 3) World Council of Churches (based in Geneva); 4) *Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias* (CLAI, Latin American Council of Churches, based in Quito, Ecuador); 5) Various Bible networks: particularly REBILAC (*Red ecuménica bíblica Latinoamérica y Caribeña* = Ecumenical Bible network Latin America and Caribbean); 6) RIBLA (*Revista de Interpretación Bíblica Latino-Americana* = Latin American Bible magazine). Is a magazine but also a platform of Bible professionals who meet sporadically; 7) *Universidad Bíblica Latino Americana* (UBL, Latin American Bible University, San José, Costa Rica); and 8) CETELA—*Red de Institución de Formación Teológica* (Network of theological training institutions).

7). Older organizations had a better chance of surviving of which DEI is one of 7 organizations in the data set which originated before 1983 and survived to the study's last year in 2018 (In spite the fact that the data indicated that organizations established prior to 1983 significantly increases the risk of dissolution compared to groups established during the interval of the study. This variable however is off-set by the age-centered variable.

6. Conclusion

DEI is an organization that operates unobtrusively and quietly under the radar but is highly productive in terms of influencing leaders who extend the DEI network and are committed to fulfilling the goals of Liberation Theology. While not generating street protests or flash in the pan mobilization, DEI is training, preparing, inculcating values, enabling social critiques, and use community to improve people's lives. This work began by humble origins with the first formation seminar in 1974 and continues until today.

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Notes

Note 1. The reason why this research project stopped at 2018 is because the Yearbook's publishers moved to a digital format making the Yearbook less accessible to the type of analysis conducted in this project.

Note 2. Section H states that an organization is classified as Type H if it has been dissolved, has been inactive for several years (that is, there has been no indication of activity for several years), or is dormant for a period of years (Cited in 2018, Volume 4; Appendix 5, page xxvii)

Note 3. Disappearance from the Yearbook may also be due to the failure to respond to the self-report request for updated information or a change of address. Although the final status of these organizations is not known, I count them as dissolved organizations based on the assumption that these organizations have an incentive to maintain their listing in the Yearbook (Minkoff, 1993).

Note 4. I treat survival as a proxy measure for organizational success. Organizational duration is implicitly embedded in the Cox Proportional Hazards model such that duration is not included as an independent variable because the partial likelihood function takes into account the order of failure times (Box-Steffensmeier & Jones, 2004).

Note 5. Rigorous criteria for defining which groups to include were developed and a codebook is available from the author. One important data point not included for each organization in the Yearbook is the total number of members.

Note 6. None of the organizations in this study included social protest or direct confrontation among their list of aims.

Note 7. The co-variate is assumed to be correlated to the event, however, if the covariate value changes at the time of the event, the correlation is lost even though the value of the covariate is incorporated in the hazard ration. Lagging the covariate helps assure that changes in the time-dependent covariate precedes the event (Box-Steffensmeier & Jones, 2004, p. 111; Allison, 2010).

Note 8. In SPSS, the <Cox w/Time-Dep Cov…> automatically inserts a time variable, T_, at the top of the variable list and allows for the transformation time-dependent variables. T_ is multiplied by a time-varying covariate to create an interaction term (T_COV_ = T_ * X). T_COV_ thus increases the covariate X in a multiplicative fashion over time and is capable of providing lagged time-dependent covariates.

Note 9. To calculate percent change, value of hazard ratio (eb) is reduced by 100 — [100 x (eb)].