**CONFESSIONAL INTENSITY: A SPANISH EXAMPLE WITH APPLICATION TO THE LITERACY PROCESS**

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**ABSTRACT**

The Kulturkampf set off by article 26 of the Constitution of the Second Spanish Republic is used to construct a proxy variable for the intensity of confessional allegiance in Spain. The correlation between literacy and confessional intensity is then considered in two points in time during the Spanish literacy process.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Religious or philosophical denominational affiliations are an important instrument in social analysis. Beyond the resulting classifications, individuals are attached to a denomination with more or less intensity. If there is universal suffrage and secret voting, the electoral reaction to a *Kulturkampf*, in which a religious affiliation is allegedly attacked, provides a privileged occasion to gauge confessional intensity. However, in the case of Prussia the reaction to the Kulturkampf par excellence combines religious and ethnic elements, a fact that impairs its value as indicator of confessional intensity (see Kerstin, Wohnsiedler and Wolf 2020). We consider instead the case of Spain during the Second Republic, where a Kulturkampf may plausibly be taken advantage of in order to construct a proxy variable for the intensity of confessional allegiance.

**2. LITERACY AND CONFESSIONAL INTENSITY IN SPAIN**

Even in the case of countries where the vast majority of the population belongs to only one confession (at least nominally), the study of the relationship between literacy and confessional intensity presents difficulties. It is not easy to gauge the intensity of confessional allegiance, understood as the degree of commitment to the community of believers and its tenets[[1]](#footnote-1). As expressed in statistical observables, commitment can be manifested through public actions (e.g., attendance at religious services), which may be affected by social pressure (especially in rural areas), or through acts within the confines of confidentiality (e.g., the vote). If there is universal suffrage and secret voting, the electoral reaction to a *Kulturkampf* provides a way to gauge confessional intensity.

We now take advantage of a Kulturkampf to construct a proxy variable for the intensity of confessional allegiance. The case of Spain in 1931-1933 is relevant at this respect. Article 26 of the Constitution of the Second Spanish Republic[[2]](#footnote-2) was a significant contributing factor in the mass mobilization leading to an unforeseen result in the general election of 1933. Perceived violation of fundamental rights of Catholics, together with the burning of around one hundred churches and convents in 1931, were important catalysts for a pact of heterogeneous conservative forces to set up an electoral cartel in the 1933 election. The members of this cartel were joined in their rejection of Article 26 by the oldest regionalist parties (Catalan *Lliga* and Basque *PNV*) and some small moderate republican parties[[3]](#footnote-3). It turns out that there is appreciable positive correlation between the male literacy rate in 1860[[4]](#footnote-4) and the intensity of (Catholic) confessional allegiance measured by the proxy variable of the electoral support in the first round of the general election of 1933 to the parties advocating the revision of Article 26[[5]](#footnote-5): ρ=0.67 if the province of Madrid is excluded, and ρ=0.63 otherwise[[6]](#footnote-6). As for female literacy, by 1910 the literacy process had gathered some momentum[[7]](#footnote-7) so that a spatial pattern of commitment to female literacy emerged. The correlation coefficient between the literacy rate for girls (aged 11-15) in 1910 and the intensity of confessional allegiance measured by the aforesaid proxy variable is ρ=0.71 if the province of Madrid is excluded, and ρ=0.68 otherwise.

This is not to say that there is always appreciable positive correlation between literacy and intensity of Christian confessional allegiances. The case of France has been considered in the literature. Although Alsace, Lorraine and Franche-Comté were among the most religious areas of France[[8]](#footnote-8), the relation between religiosity and the literacy process was complex (see Furet and Ozouf 1977).

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1. The level of fulfilment of the moral prescriptions of the confession is a different issue, greatly influenced by how demanding these prescriptions are. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Article 26 established the dissolution of the Jesuit order and the nationalization of its property, and, most importantly, barred all religious orders from teaching, even privately, and famously concluded: “The property of religious orders may be nationalized” (“Los bienes de las Órdenes religiosas podrán ser nacionalizados”). The Constitution was promulgated on 9 December of 1931, and rather promptly the Decree of 24/1/1932 dissolved the Jesuits, prohibited them to live in common in Spanish territory, confiscated their property and gave them ten days to leave their houses. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Namely *Conservative Republican Party* (*PRC*), *Progressive Republican Party* (*PRP*) and *Liberal Democratic Republican Party* (*PRLD*). The *Centrist Republican Party* (*PRC*), a local party of the Balearic Islands, controlled by millionaire Juan March, was not explicit about Article 26 (see Company i Matas 2015 and Viñarás y Domingo 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The adjustment of the data of the 1860 Spanish census to the population aged ten or over has been estimated in Gutiérrez and Quiroga (2023). The individuals who do not state their level of literacy are considered illiterate (also below in the 1910 census). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. We take as a basis the data of Villa García (2011), considering also the election commitments on Article 26 of some reported independents (see Monteiro Quintana 2004 and Company i Matas 2015). The electoral system was based on limited vote with panachage (see Gallagher and Mitchel 2005), with 60 constituencies. The system encouraged tactical electoral coalitions, since, in practice, in each constituency almost always all the seats obtained were divided between two lists, the majority list, which took on average three-quarters of the seats, and the minority list, which took the rest. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Internal migrations were spatially short-range before the 1930 census, with exception of the immigration to Madrid and a few industrial areas (see Nicolau 2005). In 1930, 87.3% of residents in Spain lived in the province of their birth. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In the provinces around Burgos constituting approximately the original Castile (Madrid does not belong here) the threshold of 75% in the male literacy rate had been reached already in the 1870s, whereas in a fifth of Spanish provinces, in the south and east of the country, it was less than 30% (see Gutiérrez and Quiroga 2023). At any rate, low female literacy was a burden spread throughout the country, to a greater or lesser degree, and only on the eve of the First World War the majority of women was literate in around one third of the provinces. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The most literate areas of France in 1866 were, apart from Paris and its surroundings, the north-eastern part of the country: Alsace, Lorraine, Franche-Comté and Champagne, with literacy levels above 75%. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)