Gabriel Granato

Haas School of Business, University of California, Berkeley
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Education

University of California, Berkeley 2027 (expected)
Ph.D. in Business and Public Policy, Haas School of Business
Dissertation: *Essays on Leadership and Informal Institutions*

M.Sc. in Economics, PUC-Rio 2020

B.A. in Economics, IBMEC 2017

Research Fields

Development Economics; Political Economy; Organizational Economics

Research Papers

Can Religion Bridge Ethnic Divides? Pastors, Chiefs, and a Field Experiment on Collective Action

With Elie Kabue Ngindu

Job Market Paper

Ethnic fragmentation is often associated with worse economic development. In one prominent mechanism, free-riding in heterogeneous societies prevents public good provision. This paper examines whether ethnic and religious leaders can sustain cooperation in a voluntary public-works program in an ethnically diverse city in the D.R. Congo. Residents are randomly assigned to ethnically homogeneous or mixed work teams that either include an ethnic chief, a pastor, or no leader at all. Chiefs raise participation in public good provision by 6.0 percentage points in homogeneous teams and have no detectable effect in mixed ones; pastors raise participation by 5.8 points in mixed teams and have no detectable effect in homogeneous ones. A cross-randomization that makes individual contributions public helps identify distinct enforcement strategies. Chiefs are effective only when each resident's own contribution is visible to teammates, consistent with social sanctioning. Pastors, by contrast, are only effective when individual contribution records are not publicly disclosed, consistent with internal incentives governed by a fear of divine oversight. The paper provides the first experimental evidence on when religious leaders can substitute for customary authority in sustaining voluntary public-goods provision in fragmented societies.

Formal and Informal Justice in a Fragile State

With Augustin Bergeron, Eva Davoine, Marina Mavungu Ngoma, James Robinson, and Jonathan Weigel

Data collection complete

Can informal customary justice offer a more effective path to building legal capacity than formal legal institutions? The answer depends both on whether authorities can settle disputes at all and on whether justice provision is impartial. Experiences with justice allow citizens to learn about the authorities' competence to deliver settlements and also their willingness to promote just outcomes, potentially shaping their willingness to finance the state. We study these questions through a field experiment in Kananga, Democratic Republic of the Congo, randomly assigning registered disputes to free arbitration by customary chiefs, state-licensed lawyers, or a control group. We compare the two systems' ability to secure lasting settlements and restore social relations, using independent assessments of pre-arbitration accounts to identify when arbitrators unjustly favor someone from their own ethnic group. Cross-randomizations of written documentation and access to higher authorities allow us to examine which features contribute to their effectiveness. We then examine how experiences with arbitration shape perceptions of authorities' competence and impartiality and willingness to finance the state, using changes in beliefs and actual property-tax payments.

Is Pentecostalism Eroding Support for Redistribution in Africa? Evidence from the DRC

With Clotaire Boyer and Jonathan Weigel

Work in progress

Why should the rich pay more? Preferences for redistribution depend on whether people view economic success as the reward for effort and merit or the result of luck and circumstances beyond individual control. An individual moral economy stresses personal responsibility for prosperity and giving back; a collective moral economy emphasizes unequal opportunities and shared responsibility for poverty. Religious traditions place different emphasis on these accounts, with potentially different implications for redistributive preferences. We study their implications in the context of a progressive taxation reform through a randomized experiment with churches in Kananga, Democratic Republic of the Congo. The tax administration asks pastors to relay property-tax information to their congregations. Pastors are randomly assigned to four groups: no materials; the request alone; the request with suggested sermons framing progressive taxation as an individual responsibility; or the request with sermons framing it as a collective responsibility. Pastors choose whether and how to convey these messages. Recorded sermons, congregant surveys, and administrative payment records measure message uptake, beliefs about poverty and wealth, support for progressive taxation and redistribution, and tax compliance. We test whether these appeals motivate citizens to finance the state and how their effectiveness varies with pastors' and congregants' religious beliefs.

Research Grants

2026: CEPR ReCIPE Compact Research Grant, £30,000, with Jonathan Weigel, James Robinson, Augustin Bergeron, and Marina Mavungu Ngoma.

2025: Weiss Fund for Research in Development Economics, $36,894; CEPR ReCIPE PhD Research Grant, £18,000; CEGA Development Economics Challenge, $19,500; Center for Governance and Markets, University of Pittsburgh, $5,000; Haas Departmental Seed Grant, $30,000; Berkeley Center for Workplace Culture and Innovation, $5,000; Institute for Business Innovation, Williamson PhD Fellowship Fund, $5,000.

2024: Berkeley Economy and Society Initiative / Network for a New Political Economy, $3,454.25.

2023: J-PAL Governance Initiative, Multidisciplinary Grant, $9,999.

Fellowships and Honors

Andrew and Mary Thompson Rocca Fellowship for Dissertation Research, UC Berkeley, $10,000 (2026); Network for a New Political Economy Fellowship, UC Berkeley (2021–); Business and Public Policy Doctoral Fellowship, UC Berkeley (2020–); Sumon C. Mazumdar Fellowship, UC Berkeley; CAPES and PUC-Rio master's fellowships, including CAPES internationalization fellowship (2018–2020); highest honors and highest graduating-class GPA, Economics, IBMEC (2017); full undergraduate scholarship, IBMEC (2014–2017).

Teaching Experience

Graduate Student Instructor, University of California, Berkeley

2026	Ethics and Responsible Business Leadership, MBA (Spring)
2024, 2025	Economics for Business Decision Making, Executive MBA (Fall)
2024	Microeconomics, undergraduate advanced mathematics track (Spring)
2023	Economics for Business Decision Making, MBA (Fall)
2022	Econometrics, undergraduate (Spring)

Teaching Assistant, IBMEC

2015–2016	Linear Algebra; Statistics I; Econometrics I; Microeconomics III; Macroeconomics III; Financial Markets

Selected Presentations

2026	Northeastern Universities Development Consortium (NEUDC), Cornell University (scheduled, November 7–8); CEGA Research Retreat; Association for the Study of Economics, Religion, and Culture, Chapman University; Development and Political Economics Ph.D. Student Conference (DevPEC), Stanford University; Oliver E. Williamson Seminar, Berkeley
2025	Center for Governance and Markets, University of Pittsburgh
2020	Northeastern Universities Development Consortium (NEUDC); Sociedade Brasileira de Econometria

Research Experience

2022–2023	Research Assistant to Jonathan Weigel, UC Berkeley; fieldwork in Kananga, DRC (October 2022–July 2023)
2020	Visiting Research Student, University of British Columbia; Claudio Ferraz
2019–2020	Research Assistant to Gabriel Ulyssea, University of Oxford

Languages and Computing

Portuguese (native); English and Spanish (fluent); French (intermediate)
R, Python, Stata, MATLAB, SurveyCTO

References

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