
REVIEW ESSAYS

FROM HUMAN RIGHTS TO CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS?

Recent Trends in the Study of Latin American Social Movements*

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SEARCHING FOR LIFE: THE GRANDMOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO AND THE DISAPPEARED CHILDREN OF ARGENTINA. By Rita Arditti. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999. Pp. 235. \$45.00 cloth, \$17.95 paper.)

TAKING ON GOLIATH: THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW LEFT PARTY AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY IN MEXICO. By Kathleen Bruhn. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997. Pp. 365. \$55.00 cloth, \$22.50 paper.)

SUBNATIONAL POLITICS AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN MEXICO. Edited by Wayne A. Cornelius, Todd A. Eisenstadt, and Jane Hindley. (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1999. Pp. 365. \$21.95 paper.)

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN LATIN AMERICA: THE QUEST FOR SELF-DETERMINATION. By Héctor Díaz Polanco. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1997. Pp. 162. \$62.00 cloth, \$18.00 paper.)

PEASANTS AGAINST GLOBALIZATION: RURAL SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN COSTA RICA. By Marc Edelman. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999. Pp. 308. \$55.00 cloth, \$22.95 paper.)

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- ACTIVISTS BEYOND BORDERS: ADVOCACY NETWORKS IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS.* By Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998. Pp. 228. \$45.00 cloth, \$15.95 paper.)
- THE COSTA RICAN WOMEN'S MOVEMENT.* Edited by Ilsa A. Leitinger. (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997. Pp. 366. \$49.95 cloth, \$22.95 paper.)
- DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA: MOBILIZATION, POWER, AND THE SEARCH FOR A NEW POLITICS.* By Geraldine Lievesley. (Manchester, Engl.: Manchester University Press, 1999. Pp. 232. \$69.95 cloth, \$24.95 paper.)
- WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN MEXICAN POLITICAL LIFE.* Edited by Victoria E. Rodríguez. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1998. Pp. 260. \$60.00 cloth, \$19.00 paper.)
- THE DIFFIDENT MOVEMENT: DISINTEGRATION, INGENUITY, AND RESISTANCE OF THE CHILEAN POBLADORES, 1973–1990.* By Ton Salman. (Amsterdam: Thela, 1997. Pp. 253. \$26.50 paper.)
- INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS AND THEIR CRITICS: PAN-MAYA ACTIVISM IN GUATEMALA.* By Kay B. Warren. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998. Pp. 288. \$55.00 cloth, \$16.95 paper.)

Paradoxically, while a growing number of studies are focusing on the shortcomings of Latin American democracies,¹ the literature on social movements is manifesting an unprecedented richness. This bounty stems from the breadth of issues and actors studied. It also reflects efforts by researchers to cross disciplinary boundaries and develop theoretical approaches whose sophistication is up to the task of understanding these complex social and political phenomena.

Although still critical of the romanticism associated with earlier studies of Latin American social movements (Roberts 1997), the recent literature has been noteworthy for implicitly if not explicitly rejecting the polarizing theoretical debates around the importance of “strategy” versus “identity” for social mobilization that have dominated the literature since the 1980s.² Instead, researchers are smoothly integrating a variety of factors arising from both schools of thought: structure, opportunities, and resources as well as norms, ideas, culture, and even individual personalities, to name but a few. Their goal is to understand actual mobilizational experiences—warts and all. This approach adds a distinctly human dimension to the study of social

1. For examples, see Agüero and Stark (1998), Oxhorn and Ducatenzeiler (1998), Chalmers et al. (1997), and O'Donnell (1994, 1996).

2. The terms were originally coined by Jean Cohen (1985) to stress the distinction between, on the one hand, theories emphasizing the importance of collective identities for understanding the so-called new social movements that began to emerge with the student and feminist movements in the 1960s and, on the other hand, resource mobilization theories that focused on the specific material objectives of social movements. See also Davis (1999).

movements, and the loss of any theoretical parsimony is more than compensated by a better comprehension of what are still fundamentally ambiguous social and political phenomena. Now that most Latin Americans live under what can be meaningfully described as democratic regimes, the eleven books under review here can help us understand what that actually might mean.

Latin America's Incomplete Transitions

Among the recent research critical of Latin American democracies, Geraldine Lievesley's *Democracy in Latin America: Mobilization, Power, and the Search for New Politics* stands out for the breadth of empirical cases covered.³ Lievesley juxtaposes two competing models of democracy: the "pacted model" that has become "the official or established orthodoxy" (pp. 2–3) and a "radical democratic model" founded on the role played by a strengthened and autonomous civil society. For Lievesley, the essential problem confronting Latin American democracies today stems from the elite compromises and ongoing political influence of the military that characterized these transitions. She argues that this pacted model of democracy has led to the demobilization of the myriad of social movements that emerged in the struggle for democracy in the 1980s and the consequent marginalization of popular sectors, particularly women. Yet the novel organizational styles—what Lievesley describes loosely as "a new political culture"—form the basis for the radical democratic alternative.

Lievesley suggests that understanding of these processes has been hampered by the conservative bias in much of the research on transitions, particularly the work of Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter (1986). In her view, they have placed too much emphasis on the "consolidated, 'pacted' systems" of Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico (p. 5). The experience of these countries, she argues, leads "the transitologists" to conclude that a trade-off exists between political democracy and the "real socioeconomic change" associated with radical democratic theory. As a prime example, Lievesley notes O'Donnell and Schmitter's call for what she labels "an undemocratic practice of electoral massage" to help ensure that the Right does well in the first elections that bring the transition to an end, directly at the expense of the Left (p. 12). She asserts that aside from being undemocratic, such advice has undermined the radical alternative and laid the founda-

3. Lievesley takes this coverage too far, however, devoting considerable attention to analyzing Cuba and Nicaragua under the Sandinistas. While these cases are salient, both are *sui generis* in ways that other countries in the region are not, being relatively recent popular-based revolutions that gave birth to regimes and ideologically driven conflict with the United States. Neither country now serves as a model for the alternate conceptions of democracy that are at the heart of the volume.

tions for future political instability, as confirmed by the political instability being experienced by the three consolidated pacted systems.

While most of the authors under review here would agree with Lievesley's sobering conclusions about the quality of democratic regimes throughout Latin America, *Democracy in Latin America* suffers from some important limitations. First, the literature on transitions was actually critical of the three cases of so-called consolidation, yet Lievesley tends to overlook those reservations. Moreover, the larger empirical record suggests that pacted democracies, despite their limitations, have had more success than the alternative, the mass-based democratic regimes that she favors (Karl 1990). In Lievesley's defense, it can be argued that the emergence of new social movements throughout the region may have changed that historical equation, making the presumed trade-offs less relevant than in the past. Yet this argument is only implicit at best in *Democracy in Latin America*.

More seriously, Lievesley's analysis of the radical alternative is limited. While highly critical of traditional political elites (and those who study them), Lievesley is much less critical in assessing the Left's responsibility for the kind of transitions that have predominated in the region. The empirical reality is that the Left did much worse than O'Donnell and Schmitter anticipated in the first (and often subsequent) elections without any help from well-meaning political engineers. The lingering fear of repression was no doubt one reason, but so too was the Left's inability to develop clear alternate policies. While the elite-driven transitions certainly contributed to the demobilization of social movements, the empirical evidence also suggests that this demobilization reflected the limitations of the movements themselves (Foweraker and Landman 1997). As analyzed by the other authors under review here, these limitations reflected divisions within the movements and the Left's inability or unwillingness to respect the movements' autonomy.

A good example of this direct focus on the popular movements is Ton Salman's *The Diffident Movement: Disintegration, Ingenuity, and Resistance of the Chilean Pobladores, 1973–1990*. Salman analyzes the demobilization of Chilean *pobladores* by looking at the weaknesses of the incipient popular movement as it emerged in Chilean *poblaciones* (shantytowns) after the 1973 coup, citing detailed, ethnographic research in three such settlements.

For Salman, the need to study the organizational dynamics of the *poblaciones* stems from the reductionist tendencies that have predominated in the literature on social movements. He takes issue with the relevance of debates between proponents of what he calls "the institucionalistas" and "the movimentistas," categories that correspond roughly to Lievesley's concepts of pacted and radical democracy. Subsumed in these categories are the various imported theoretical debates on social movements already mentioned. For Salman, the alleged romanticism of the *movimentistas* and the *institucionalistas*' supposed fears of social revolution are

equally unfounded and reflect a profound lack of understanding of the Chilean social context and the pobladores.

To explain the limited role played by the pobladores in Chile's democratic government, Salman introduces what he calls "an intermediate dimension." At the level of collective identity, Salman argues that the weak identification of shantytown dwellers with the collective identity of "poblador" explains the low levels of popular mobilization during and after the military regime as well as the tendency for more women and young people to participate than men. Collective identities, however, are mediated by what he calls "habitus": the underlying socialization processes dating back to the founding of Chile's "compromise state" in the 1930s. This experience provided Chileans with a "cultural codex" for interpreting political and social change, thus conditioning their ability to confront the changes ushered in by the coup in 1973. Together, collective identities and habitus are reflected in what Salman calls "social competence": "the development of capacities for adaptation and resistance" (p. 50). Salman concludes that social competence was low and that the level of distrust and the lack of solidarity among Chile's poor were much higher than the movimentistas claimed. Similarly, the goals and expectations for social change among pobladores were limited, as was their commitment to autonomous popular organizations. Pobladores were therefore susceptible to regime propaganda about its "economic successes," and they continued to support traditional local organizations that were tightly controlled by the military regime. Still, Salman believes that the movimentistas were correct in identifying a significant level of popular distrust of traditional political institutions and political parties.

Salman's effort to improve on dominant theories is to be lauded, but the shortcomings of *The Diffident Movement* also highlight more general issues involved in studying Latin American social movements. In rightly criticizing many of the limitations of existing theories, Salman may go too far in the opposite direction by trying to draw general conclusions on the basis of an unrepresentative sample. He chose not to study what he called the "famous poblaciones," those at the center of organizational and protest activities. While this strategy is a useful corrective to other works (including my own in Oxhorn 1995), the reality that Salman discovers is only partial. As he notes, perhaps 30 percent of pobladores were involved in popular organizations during the military regime, a larger group than many other actors such as organized labor, yet this faction is noticeably absent in the poblaciones Salman studied. These activist pobladores were the ones who largely determined the fate of the popular movement and its interactions with other actors, including the less-politicized segments of the urban poor and the political parties. One finds little discussion of the political parties that influenced the collective identities, habitus, and social competence in the poblaciones. A logical conclusion would be that parties were less active in these three poblaciones because there was so little organizational activ-

ity (Schneider 1995), a situation that makes it difficult to obtain insights into the role of political parties in the many poblaciones where they were active. What is ultimately missing from *The Diffident Movement* is an analysis of how differences, if not contradictions, in the outlooks and goals among pobladores and between them and other actors were or were not mediated.

Rita Arditti's *Searching for Life: The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and the Disappeared Children of Argentina* focuses much more directly on these differences and how they are mediated in Argentina. Arditti provides a detailed history of the Abuelas' movement and its often successful struggles in pursuing a single goal: "that the children who had been kidnapped as a method of political repression be returned to their legitimate families" (p. 37). These "desaparecidos con vida" (the living disappeared) are the hundreds of children who were either abducted with their parents or born in clandestine detention centers. The Abuelas envisioned this goal as one of "restitution": "an act of truth, a *vuelta a la vida* (return to life) that will restore to [these children] their proper identity, allowing them to grow up without secrets or lies" (p. 103). In the Abuelas' view, only when this goal is achieved will true justice and reconciliation be possible in Argentina.

After a discussing "the logic" behind the military regime's repression, Arditti explains how the Abuelas overcame their fear, sought one another out, and mobilized. Ironically, they were able to work in public places by "trying to look like conventional older women having tea and pastries, pretending to celebrate birthday parties or other family events" (p. 55). A turning point came in 1978, during the regime's most repressive period, when the major Argentine newspapers printed the Abuelas' open letter to those holding their grandchildren. This event thrust the Abuelas irrevocably into the public sphere and attracted impressive international support.

To date, the Abuelas can boast of a number of successes. Fifty-eight children have been identified, including thirty-one who were actually returned to their biological families. The Abuelas' ingenuity and determination led to new developments in forensic methods, including genetic testing that is now mandatory for persons involved in cases where the identity of a child is in doubt. To help ensure that the passing of time does not undermine the Abuelas' efforts, the Banco Nacional de Datos Genéticos was established in 1986.

The Abuelas also have pierced the Argentine collective conscience and entered the international arena to "travel and tell their stories to a wide variety of audiences" (p. 64). They have pursued their goals tirelessly through the United Nations and the Organization of American States, efforts culminating in their successful campaign to have "the right to identity" recognized at the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Despite claims of impunity and other setbacks in the struggle for human rights and in Argentina (including amnesty laws and restrictions on human rights prosecutions), the Abuelas succeeded in having crimes against children

exempted.⁴ The moral force they brought to bear in specific cases, often reinforced by international pressures, allowed them to confront the intransigence of the Argentine judiciary and other interests sympathetic to the military regime, including many families who claimed to be legal guardians of the abducted children.

In *Searching for Life*, Arditti also addresses questions about overlooked issues like the lack of male participation as well as more common theoretical issues in the literature on Latin American women's movements regarding traditional gender identities and "feminism." Arditti found that the lack of male participation can be traced to various factors, including the special nature of the mother-child relationship and women's greater ability to cope with pain. If this conclusion appears to reflect traditional gender stereotyping, that is the point: the Abuelas "were not interested in challenging the . . . sexual division of labor . . . ; they demanded the right as 'traditional' women to secure the survival of their families" (p. 80). Yet in the process, the Abuelas transformed their own traditional roles by taking on a much more public and political role.

In the end, Arditti demonstrates how one movement was able to make its own transition from the politics of authoritarian rule to democracy with considerable success. The Abuelas managed not only to exert appreciable influence on Argentine politics after the return to civilian rule but to avoid the divisions that weakened other human rights groups, including the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo. The Abuelas adapted their concerns to the exigencies of democratic politics (as in championing the right to identity), transforming their organization and strategy to achieve their goals within the institutional structure of Argentina's new democratic regime. This was no easy task. Few organizations born in opposition to authoritarian regimes have been able to make this transition (Foweraker and Landman 1997; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986).

The Challenge of Perfecting Incomplete Democracies

The recent election of Vicente Fox as president of Mexico ended more than seventy years of the near absolute lock on political power held by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). This event made social movement activity in Latin America more conditioned than ever by the nature of existing democratic regimes. Instead of the "democracy versus dictatorship" polarity that often dominated the world and the study of social movements in the 1970s and 1980s, the terrain has shifted to the role of social movements in determining the quality of region's democracies.

4. One result was that the first head of the military junta, General Jorge Videla, was arrested for abducting the children of disappeared parents after having been pardoned in 1990.

In many ways, however, the current struggles in the literature suggest that the old polarity was never as totalizing as movements and analysts had thought. While the immediate goal had to be ending authoritarian rule, much more was at stake than simply “democracy” and elections (Oxhorn n.d.). As the success of the Abuelas’ underscores, even the issue of human rights does not end once political repression ceases. It can be transferred to the public agenda after elections are held only through the deliberate, often problematic efforts by movements to make their concerns relevant in the context of democratic politics. Paradoxically, while it should be even easier to address issues like human rights, gender, and ethnicity successfully in the liberalized atmosphere of democratic rule, that has not turned out to be the case. The literature on social movements is now addressing this paradox.

This blurring of the distinctions between democracy and authoritarianism can be seen in Kathleen Bruhn’s *Taking on Goliath: The Emergence of a New Left Party and the Struggle for Democracy in Mexico*. The book ostensibly focuses on the role played by the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) and its founder, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, in Mexico’s transition to democracy. But even before the transition was completed when the PRD’s main rival in opposition, the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), won the 2000 presidential election, Bruhn noted that the PRD had failed to benefit directly from the political openings it had helped create. Yet the theoretical framework she develops to understand the PRD’s failure to capitalize on its own “success” raises questions of party formation and relations between political parties and social movements that transcend the transitions *problematique*.

Bruhn’s theoretical argument in *Taking on Goliath* is based on the distinction between political party emergence and consolidation. She argues that the same factors that contributed to Cárdenas’s unprecedented electoral success in the 1988 presidential election undermined his subsequent efforts to consolidate the PRD into a strong party capable of influencing politics independently of its electoral success. Those factors included the vagueness of Cárdenas’s proposals and his personal charisma stemming from the historic role played by his father, Lázaro Cárdenas, in institutionalizing the Mexican Revolution in the 1930s. Together, these factors allowed Cuauhtémoc to assemble a broad-based electoral coalition. Popular organizations played a central role, even if their support “resulted more from the initiative of their bases than from a deliberate decision on the part of their leaders to mobilize electorally” (p. 114).

This spontaneous mobilization is one reason why the PRD could not maintain a close relationship with popular social movements. But in 1988, the party made Cárdenas the most credible alternative to the PRI. According to Bruhn, “strategic voters” perceived a vote for Cárdenas as an effective way to restrain Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the PRI candidate, in his efforts to implement extensive neoliberal reforms. Most of them did not expect, much

less want, Cárdenas to win, but his momentum made him the ideal protest candidate in an authoritarian system where elections still served an important legitimating function.

In Bruhn's opinion, Cárdenas's principal challenge was to turn his phenomenal electoral support into an institutionalized political party. To do so, he would have to convince the large body of disaffected PRI voters who voted for him in 1988 to reattach themselves to his new party. The PRD's vague policies and Cárdenas's own charisma, however, were not enough to create a national party with a sufficiently large loyal following. Moreover, the PRD would not abandon its *plazismo* strategy of mobilizing crowds in massive rallies. Although that approach succeeded in the 1988 campaign, it failed to reach out to the independent voters that the PRD needed and ended up "preaching to the converted" (p. 292).

To make matters even worse for Cárdenas, the PRI did everything possible to prevent the PRD's consolidation into a party that could challenge PRI hegemony. This campaign included attempts by the PRI to deny the PRD local and regional elections through fraud and intimidation and to target resources to those areas that had shown the strongest support for Cárdenas in 1988. As Bruhn notes, the PRI also entered into a tacit alliance with the PAN, thus strengthening the opposition party that appeared less threatening after it endorsed Salinas's economic policies. The PRD's internal divisions made it even more difficult for the party to resist the PRI's aggressive strategy.

While persuasive, Bruhn's focus in *Taking on Goliath* on institution building and the self-interested motivations of many of the smaller parties, strategic voters, and even popular organizations may lead her to miss some important dynamics. Voter detachment is not limited to Mexico—party identification continues to decline among voters in most democracies. Moving beyond the question of democratic transition, what makes the Mexican case potentially unique is the possibility of large-scale voter reattachment to a new party. Although alternate parties have emerged, often on the Left like the PRD but usually at the local level first, only Brazil's Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) seems to have achieved a level of policy influence that would fit Bruhn's definition of consolidation. This finding may suggest a more important problem for the PRD or any new party: how to overcome the various tendencies weakening party systems more generally. Examples are increasing of challengers to entrenched parties who owe their success precisely to their ability to mobilize growing voter detachment from all parties. Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and Alberto Fujimori in Peru are only the most notable examples of this trend.

As Bruhn points out, the mobilization of support for Cárdenas in 1988 was more like a social movement than an electoral coalition led by political parties. Yet the lack of strong institutional ties, a shared ideology, or even a collective identity among the participants belied the presence of a strong

social movement. The possibility is discarded too readily that Cárdenas might have seen this type of nonparty (if not anti-party) mobilization lacking effective mediating structures between himself and his followers as the key to his future. Yet the levels of corruption and the PRI's responsibility for widespread economic hardship make Mexico as vulnerable to such an alternative as the more traditional party route that Bruhn focuses on. This scenario would suggest that Cárdenas was a more traditional populist leader (something also pioneered by his father), leaving the consequences for Mexico's democratic prospects unexplored (Roberts 1995).

The problems of divisions among the popular sectors and their representatives, the importance of symbolic politics, and popular demands for inclusion discussed by Bruhn in *Taking on Goliath* are central to other studies that focus more explicitly on the potential of social movements to help improve the quality of democratic regimes. Similarly, these studies highlight the importance of escaping what may have become the theoretical cul-de-sac of the democracy versus dictatorship axis in today's context. This point is clear in several recent books on women's movements in Mexico and Costa Rica. From their perspective, the consolidated institutions of Costa Rica's democratic regime dating back to the 1950s seem hardly more hospitable to collective efforts to address gender inequality than the limited openings associated with Mexico's *dictablanda*.

As the title of Victoria Rodríguez's edited collection, *Women's Participation in Mexican Political Life*, suggests, the situation facing Mexican women had transcended any simplistic distinction between authoritarian and democratic rule long before the PRI's monopoly on political power was broken. As is true of most social movements in other countries that had passed the democratic threshold of relatively free and fair elections for chief executive, Mexican women placed "their struggles within a larger concern for social justice and equality . . . , articulat[ing] their concerns as part of the larger discourse that demands democratic opening and a wider space to incorporate previously neglected actors" (p. 15). This observation is not meant to suggest that passing this "democratic threshold" is not fundamentally important. Rather, it underscores how from the perspective of women (and other disadvantaged groups), passing the democratic threshold is only one aspect of their demands. For example, Kathleen Staudt argues in her contribution to the volume that the problem is not a lack of institutional space or active female participation in civil society "but that those who 'man' top decision-making positions in the major parties rarely have accorded [gender] matters high priority" (p. 24). While the situation is changing, Staudt locates the problem in a political culture that leads organizations representing women's issues to avoid completely "mainstream politics or settle for the meager payoffs awarded them" (p. 24). Roderic Camp's essay demonstrates in a rich empirical analysis how women are systematically excluded from positions of political influence. In a nutshell, the problem is not so

much Mexico's limited democracy in institutional terms but the kind of democracy that those institutions embody.

This theme is echoed by other contributors to *Women's Participation in Mexican Political Life* who emphasize the ways in which women are marginalized from participating in the formal institutions of democratic politics and the fact that the few women who achieve positions of political influence often do not view women's issues as priorities. This significant finding highlights the fact that women have different positions and beliefs. As Nikki Craske warns, "there is a tension between diversity and solidarity" that makes it important to avoid the artificial "homogenization of women," both in politics and in analysts' understanding of women's participation more generally (p. 60). The various contributors to this volume show that much of what women's organizational activity entails is creating competing identities and mediating differences.

If it seems surprising that discussions of democratic politics in Mexico can sidestep fundamental issues relating to the institutional bases of authoritarian rule, it is even more surprising that these same concerns about the quality of democracy emerge in the literature on social movements in Costa Rica, the region's oldest and most successful democratic government. Many of the issues raised in *The Costa Rican Women's Movement: A Reader* are identical to those raised in Rodríguez's edited volume on Mexico, and they take on renewed urgency when juxtaposed with what many consider to be a democratic welfare state. As the volume's editor, Ilse Abshagen Leitinger, notes, "[I]n a society that is famous for its love of peace and tranquility, the perturbing record of violence against women is becoming painfully visible. . . . [I]n contradiction to their idealistic commitment to equality, Costa Ricans face the harsh reality of a growing inequality—largely an economic inequality—that hits women doubly hard" (p. xiii).

An overarching concern in the Leitinger volume, as in the Rodríguez volume, connects the problems created by political cultures denying women access to power and the difficulties involved in overcoming the various "myths about feminism" shared even by educated women (p. 13). As three activists conclude in their contribution on the activities of the Centro Feminista de Información y Acción in San José, an important challenge is the need to base feminist strategy on "the daily life of poor Costa Rican women and the needs those women themselves expressed" (p. 20). An outstanding example of the nature of this challenge is Ana Carcedo's analysis of why women's shelters in Costa Rica are an ineffective solution to family violence and are not supported by women's groups, despite their necessity as perceived by Northern activists and Costa Rican activists influenced by them. Similarly, the wide array of aspects of women's participation covered—including fascinating case studies ranging from women's participation in the arts, housing movements, and a crafts cooperative to groups dealing with violence, incest, and women with disabilities—demonstrate that while much

has been accomplished, Costa Rica's social democracy after fifty years still falls short on many key issues relating to gender equality.

Marc Edelman's *Peasants against Globalization: Rural Social Movements in Costa Rica* provides another example of the focus in social movement research on the quality of democratic regimes. The book also serves as an important corrective to what he sees as a tendency in much of the literature to almost reify the significance of discourse and identity politics at the expense of a more critical political-economy perspective that incorporates both class interests and the importance of the material needs of the poor. Echoing the challenge to Costa Rican feminists just noted to base their strategy on the needs expressed by poor women themselves, Edelman rightly objects to what he sees as a postmodern proclivity toward "trivializing the day-to-day experience and aspirations of those who suffer by either ignoring their grinding poverty, carping about bureaucrats and social scientists who try to measure it, or by locating it and all efforts to reverse it at the level of an elite discourse" (p. 9). In the process, Edelman reminds readers that identity politics, while important, are also divisive. The challenge is to mediate differences in ways that allow for effective collective action. For the Costa Rican peasant movements that he is studying, meeting this challenge involves focusing on the overlap of class and identity politics to avoid fragmentation and demobilization.

This is no easy task, and as a result, social movement "success" is always ambiguous and involves tangible material concessions as well as the transformation of consciousness. Conversely, the lack of mobilization may reflect movement defeat, inaction, or simply "an inability to balance constituents' different objectives, as well as those which may or may not be shared between leaders and movement participants" (p. 199). Ironically, the last problem comes to the fore precisely when social movement leaders attempt to engage democratic institutions directly by moving from "*la protesta a la propuesta*" in "the belief and hope that they themselves were in the struggle for the long haul, that they had real alternatives to offer their constituencies and their country . . ." (p. 155). Paradoxically for the Costa Rican peasant movement, just as its leaders were achieving "a startling degree of legitimacy and political recognition," they also were suffering from diminishing militancy and support at the grassroots level (p. 199).

In many ways, indigenous movements present the most fundamental challenges for understanding the quality of democratic regimes and for theories of social movements. Their distinctly non-Western experience, history of violent abuse, and understanding of rights in collective rather than liberal-individualist terms all seem to set them apart from other movements, and perhaps even from the context of "civil society" in which they are frequently placed. Yet the nature of their struggles is directly related to questions of democracy, difference, and political economy, as suggested by the two books under review looking at indigenous movements: Héctor Díaz

Polanco's *Indigenous Peoples in Latin America: The Quest for Self-Determination* and Kay Warren's *Indigenous Movements and Their Critics: Pan-Mayan Activism in Guatemala*. Theoretically, these struggles can be understood in terms much like those applied to other movements of disadvantaged groups. What is unique about indigenous movements serves to highlight the shared strengths of much recent research on social movements in Latin America.

The starting point for Díaz Polanco is Latin America's colonial experience. Although he tends to understate the violence of hundreds of years of intra- and inter-state warfare that created this experience, Díaz Polanco argues that Western European capitalist development did not have to confront the problem of social heterogeneity. Instead, "the bourgeoisie proposed a model of society based not on sociocultural or ethnic differences but on the unity established by 'equality' among citizens, free labor, the regulatory action of the market, and open competition" (p. 5). In Latin America, this example led the region's elites to view ethnic heterogeneity as a major obstacle to capitalist development that had to be overcome through assimilation if not physical elimination. Their task was only complicated by colonial rule. The feudal institutions that the Spanish Crown relied on to maximize resource extraction meant that "ethnic stratification was superimposed on the class structure, complicating and reinforcing it" (p. 8). The wars for independence were only the first step as modernizing elites attempted to create the kind of homogenous society they felt was necessary for development. According to Díaz Polanco, "the criollos' emerging national consciousness [was] incapable of incorporating living Indians into a viable national project" (p. 14). Their communal organizations were viewed as "a cancer that had to be extirpated" (p. 16).

Díaz Polanco tends to analyze the colonial experience in structural terms that lead him to overemphasize the material interests of the actors and to ignore the overtly racist discourses and ideologies that justified them. He nonetheless makes an important point in *Indigenous Peoples in Latin America* about the contingent nature of indigenous culture. The syncretic melding of Catholicism with preexisting indigenous religions, the ways in which colonialism selectively preserved and restructured indigenous institutions of self-government (often with the collusion of traditional indigenous elites), and the re-creation of indigenous communities around "Indian towns" built by the colonial authorities to fragment and disarticulate larger indigenous communities all underscore the artificial and contested nature of "indigenous cultures." As Díaz Polanco concludes, "the colonial system created the Indian," and the continuing challenge since then has been to recover "a unity of purpose that transcends the communal and parochial world in which indigenous peoples were submerged by the colonial regime" (p. 58).

Only in the 1940s did a less violent alternative began to emerge, what Díaz Polanco calls "integrationist indigenism." Although the stated goal of

such policies was to integrate indigenous peoples into national societies while respecting their social and cultural uniqueness, these policies retained the same modernizationist assumptions that equated indigenous culture with backwardness. Assimilation was still the long-term goal, and these policies generally “left behind a tragic trail of cultural dissolution, destruction of identities, political repression, and ethnic-national conflict” (p. 68).

After reviewing centuries of failure, including what Díaz Polanco considers an “inverted ethnocentrism” that essentializes indigenous culture by positing its inherent superiority to anything Western, he perceives an unprecedented opportunity in the emergence of a new kind of indigenous movement that seeks to articulate indigenous peoples’ demands with national democratic projects. Such projects are based on the idea that “the firmest [national] unity is based upon respect for diversity” (p. 141). Reaching out to other actors as potential allies, indigenous movements throughout the region are basing their incorporation into national society on the premise of regional autonomy, but an autonomy that respects the territorial integrity of existing countries. Some of Díaz Polanco’s examples seem to undercut the persuasiveness of this alternative (such as the former Soviet Union and Spain’s Second Republic of the early 1930s, and his brief references to the former Yugoslavia and Tibet in China). But the goal, as pressed by indigenous movements themselves, may be the ultimate example of how differences need to be mediated by alternate ideologies or discourses as well as novel institutional mechanisms.

Many of these themes are picked up in Warren’s examination of Pan-Mayan activism in Guatemala. These activists form a small, mainly urban group of Maya intellectuals who are reaching out to Guatemala’s largely rural population in an effort at “cultural revitalization.” In *Indigenous Movements and Their Critics*, Warren focuses directly on the cultural and political dimensions of social movements that she finds often missing in the literature. While the books reviewed here suggest that this situation is changing, her point is well taken in that she addresses the contested nature of culture with a richness and a balance (despite her own sympathies) that underscore the important role played by cultural struggles in generating social change. What Warren considers important are “the ways Mayas have employed and transformed their culture to challenge social arrangements that have historically subordinated and marginalized them” (p. 178).

Even more than Díaz Polanco, Warren stresses the dynamic nature of indigenous culture, what she calls “the rolling distinctiveness that is Maya—the continued practice of embracing all sorts of intersecting ideas and identities—in a multicultural world and state” (p. 12). Warren powerfully demonstrates the role played by the violence of Guatemala’s recent civil war in effecting cultural change. She views the repression directed at the Maya as an attack on difference per se. Yet the 1996 Peace Accords have

marginalized indigenous issues, particularly in their actual implementation. To a certain extent, this outcome represents a real weakness in a movement that is unable or unwilling to mobilize large numbers in defense of indigenous issues. The efforts “of a social movement that has pursued scholarly and educational routes to social change and nation building” may be highly significant (p. 4). But they are clearly insufficient because “the Pan-Maya movement has yet to convince Guatemalans that racism is an issue that affects all citizens” (p. 61).

This problem is compounded by the contested nature of cultural identities. As Warren explains, the Pan-Maya as a movement is but one controversial representation of indigenous culture. It has come under harsh criticism from both the Right and the Left in Guatemala. Moreover, its ultimate goal of re-creating a unity of purpose that will transcend the communal and parochial world in which indigenous peoples live, to paraphrase Díaz Polanco, is made more difficult according to Warren by Mayan complicity in the repression that devastated the communities. Warren’s hope (shared by Díaz Polanco) is that the Pan-Maya movement will succeed in transforming policies to decentralize the Guatemalan state into an opportunity for autonomy and Maya self-governance. Much remains to be done, but significant progress has been made. Most important for the long term, “there is little doubt that the movement has already contributed to a paradigm shift in the way . . . many indigenous and Ladino Guatemalans think about the country” (p. 205). For a movement representing one of the most repressed and marginalized peoples in Latin America, this is a major accomplishment.

Transnational Support for and Subnational Resistance to Better Quality Democracy

Up to this point, the focus in the books under review has been on national political systems. Even when focusing on local or regional levels, the emphasis has been on the opportunities that this level offers social movements or the obstacles to realizing those opportunities coming from the central government. Yet national democratization projects can encounter stubborn resistance from more localized authoritarian interests, as is made clear in the volume edited by Wayne Cornelius, Todd Eisenstadt, and Jane Hindley, *Subnational Politics and Democratization in Mexico*. Given the growing emphasis on state decentralization among international and national policy makers, this volume reminds readers of an obvious question that is too often ignored: who is actually in control of newly empowered institutions of local and regional self-governance?

As the various chapters in this edited volume demonstrate, the answer varies considerably according to the cases studied. The main shortcoming of *Subnational Politics and Democratization in Mexico* is the absence of

an overarching theoretical framework that can help make sense of a wide array of distinct local and regional experiences. Although Cornelius emphasizes the effect of decentralization in strengthening authoritarian resistance in his introductory essay, other contributions discuss the potential of decentralization for the growth of civil society and democratic political parties as well as the problems created when opposition parties make strategic errors or are not organizationally strong enough to take advantage of the newly opened spaces. A number of essays highlight the ability of civil society to fill and even expand newly opened spaces, while others suggest that the weakness of civil society has allowed for authoritarian retrenchment. For some contributors, political culture is also important. Drawing comparative inferences is left to the reader. Given the richness of the case studies in the volume, however, it is worth the effort for those interested in Mexican politics or the impact of state decentralization more generally.

Finally, in assessing current trends in the study of social movements, particular attention must be given to various transnational influences. Some reasons why transnational actors have become so central are explored in *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* by Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink. Advocacy networks are distinguished by the “centrality of principled ideas or values in motivating their formation” (p. 1). More specifically, the members of these networks “plead the causes of others or defend a cause of proposition” (p. 8). Keck and Sikkink are masters at blurring disciplinary boundaries, melding theory on international relations with a broad range of theories on the formation of domestic social movements.⁵ They also do an impressive job of tracing the origins of these networks historically, including case studies of the mid-nineteenth-century anti-slavery movement and the movement for female suffrage.

Keck and Sikkink focus on three modern advocacy networks: those centering on human rights, environmental protection, and violence against women. They are formed by a myriad of actors, including national and international nongovernmental organizations of various types, local social movements, philanthropic foundations, the media, trade unions, churches, intellectuals, and even parts of the executive and legislative branches of governments. These networks’ power comes from their ability to introduce alternate visions and voices and to “mobilize information.” As with domestic social movements, the success of transnational advocacy networks is closely related to their ability to mediate difference—a problem compounded by their inherently cross-cultural character.

Keck and Sikkink are careful to include in *Activists beyond Borders* examples of relative success and failure in their case studies. This plan allows the authors to develop theoretical arguments about the potential of transnational advocacy networks to effect change as well as their limits. Central to

5. In the process, these authors also effectively blur the division among social theories.

their argument is what Keck and Sikkink call “the boomerang pattern”: the ability of domestic groups to overcome the intransigence of their own governments by seeking external allies who can apply pressure on officials. This pressure takes various forms that include symbolic politics, leverage politics, and accountability politics. All of them involve a creative search for credible material threats and the moral authority to compel governments to change their behavior. This argument implies that transnational advocacy networks will be more successful when the larger international community engages actively with the target government rather than seeking to isolate it. Trade and development assistance provide leverage through the threat of curtailment; treaties provide a basis for assigning accountability; and countries that want to be part of the international community can be “morally shamed” into complying with, for example, minimal human rights standards.

According to Keck and Sikkink, transnational advocacy networks are most effective in resolving “problems whose causes can be assigned to the deliberate (intentional) actions of identifiable individuals [in comparison with] problems whose causes are irredeemably structural . . .” (p. 27). The human faces associated with the systematic violation of human rights—of both victims and victimizers—have provided the most fertile field for successful transnational advocacy. Similarly, the murder of the charismatic leader of the Brazilian rubber tappers’ movement, Francisco “Chico” Mendes, in 1988 proved to be a watershed in galvanizing transnational advocacy networks dedicated to preventing ongoing deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon. The importance of victims and victimizers also helps explain why transnational advocacy networks have been more successful in mobilizing support for legislation to control violence against women than in other areas dealing with gender inequality.

The example of Chico Mendes also underscores the centrality of domestic actors in anchoring transnational advocacy networks domestically. Mendes’s ability to organize the rubber tappers and seek out the international allies that formed this particular transnational advocacy network was a prerequisite to the network’s success in influencing Brazil’s environmental policies after his death.⁶ Where local actors are weak (as in Mexican human rights organizations until the mid-1980s, according to Keck and Sikkink), such networks have little impact. Ultimately, transnational advocacy networks can support but cannot displace the central role played by domestic civil society in improving the quality of democratic governance.

6. Unfortunately, Mendes’s significance is also apparent in the networks’ limited recent impact.

Social Movements and the Social Construction of Citizenship

Given the richness of the theoretical and empirical material presented in these volumes, the ambiguity of the state of democracy in Latin America and the impact of social movements seems almost inevitable. The differences, if not contradictions, within civil society, the multiple levels and types of "power" relevant to understanding politics, and the various authoritarian legacies from the not-so-distant past when most countries in the region did not have even minimally democratic governments combine to underscore the historical uniqueness of the current situation. At this juncture, the old, often simplistic dichotomies of dictatorship-democracy, Left-Right, strategy-identity, race-class, and even public-private no longer serve as useful guides for understanding Latin America's social and political realities.

Despite these fundamental ambiguities, several themes running through this literature can provide a basis for a framework for disentangling them. First, in spite of growing concerns about the threat of "globalization" to the ability of states to pursue national interests and despite economic reforms often intended to reduce the state's capacity to do so, the state is still a central focus of social movement activity. Whether the organizations are human rights groups, women's movements, peasant organizations, indigenous movements, or even transnational advocacy networks, national states remain the primary referent for seeking change, opening spaces, and improving the quality of democracy. Second, all these actors, perhaps for the first time, are unambiguously linking their demands to maintaining and improving the basic institutions of political democracy. This is true even of indigenous movements that stress the importance of collective rights and have experienced individual rights as "part of a sustained effort to erase the Indian from the national horizon" by declaring them formally equal under the rule of law (Díaz Polanco, p. 66).

From this perspective, perhaps what links all these movements and approaches is what I would call "the social construction of citizenship" (Oxhorn n.d.). In their own particular ways, with their own specific dimensions and concerns, and with varying levels of success, the movements discussed here are trying to change what it means to be a citizen in their own countries. Viewed in this way, citizenship is an inherently multidimensional concept involving legitimating norms and cultures, identities, and even the right to be different. Emerging conceptualizations of citizenship reflect the distribution of power within democratic systems but may lead to a redistribution of power in accordance with the outcome of specific struggles. Citizenship becomes a historically contingent concept whose breadth in terms of rights (individual and collective) results from the "struggle and bargaining between expanding states and their subjects [that] created citizenship where it had not previously existed" (Tilly 1996, 9). The

challenge of women's and poor people's movements, human rights groups, peasant organizations, and indigenous mobilizations is to create more inclusionary definitions of citizenship, just as those who seem to oppose them attempt to maintain or further restrict what it currently means to be a citizen. Understanding the ambiguity of democracy in Latin America thus becomes an empirical question focusing on which groups are or are not involved in the negotiations and struggles, determining the factors that condition their outcomes. Unfortunately, this perspective on the social construction of citizenship also suggests that the limits of democracy in Latin America today reflect the weaknesses of its civil societies and the social movements that often propel important struggles for citizenship. Such a conclusion would come as no surprise to the various authors reviewed here.

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