

IDENTITY AND
POLITICAL PROCESS:
Recent Trends in the Study of
Latin American Social Movements

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STRUCTURES OF POWER, MOVEMENTS OF RESISTANCE: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE THEORIES OF URBAN MOVEMENTS IN LATIN AMERICA. By Willem Assies, Gerrit Burgwal, and Ton Salman. (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Center for Latin American Research and Documentation, 1990. Pp. 242. \$30.00 paper.)

LOS MOVIMIENTOS POPULARES EN AMERICA LATINA. Edited by Daniel Camacho and Rafael Menjívar. (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1989. Pp. 560.)

THE MAKING OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN LATIN AMERICA: IDENTITY, STRATEGY, AND DEMOCRACY. Edited by Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1992. Pp. 383. \$59.95 cloth, \$18.95 paper.)

POPULAR MOBILIZATION IN MEXICO: THE TEACHERS' MOVEMENT, 1977-87. By Joe Foweraker. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Pp. 204. \$59.95 cloth.)

LA DEMOCRACIA EN LA CALLE: CRONICA DEL MOVIMIENTO ESTUDIANTIL MEXICANO. By Gilberto Guevara Niebla. (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1988. Pp. 312.)

WOMEN AND GRASS ROOTS DEMOCRACY IN THE AMERICAS. Edited by Dorrit Marks. (Miami, Fla.: North-South Center, University of Miami, 1993. Pp. 237. \$14.95 paper.)

"VIVA" WOMEN AND POPULAR PROTEST IN LATIN AMERICA. Edited by Sarah A. Radcliffe and Sallie Westwood. (London: Routledge, 1993. Pp. 270. \$16.95 paper.)

Scholarly interest in Latin American social movements increased markedly during the 1980s. A diverse cross section of social scientists undertook research aimed at assessing the role of organized civil resistance in the months and years leading up to the many cases of democratic transition. The appearance of seemingly new social movements at a time when new kinds of scholars were introducing and experimenting with new conceptual approaches gave the literature a whole new look. Marxist

variations, so popular during the 1970s, were out, and democratic theories starring actors from civil society were in.

Much of the literature associated with the transition period was extremely optimistic about the ability of movements to help shape politics during the consolidation of democratic institutions and practices. But as it turns out, radical movements and their leaders have been unable to shape the new governments and state institutions in their own image. Neoliberal policies and electoral procedures have been susceptible in some cases to movement-sponsored reforms, but efforts to create social democracies or even more deeply transformative projects (as often advocated by “new” movements) have been decidedly unsuccessful. The study of social movements has reflected these changes in part by paying more attention to identity politics and less attention to analyzing the relatively disappointing political power of the movements, as measured by their ability to shape the policy process.

Exceptions to this general observation can be found. Some studies have adopted a model that focuses on political process.¹ Furthermore, scholarly attention to identity and culture as well as the insistence that power should not be measured solely in terms of the ability to change institutional behavior have provided important antidotes to the structural rigidity that characterized studies published in the 1970s. I believe, however, that such an orientation ignores (partly by design) detailed analysis capable of determining how much influence movements are having or failing to have on institutional arrangements and practices. When too much of the literature takes this tack, then scholars remain underinformed about theory and case studies needed to analyze the relative success and failure of movements in this important arena. If one of the goals of this kind of research is to assist the movements in pursuing their goals (as is so often suggested), then to the extent that the literature fails to provide critical evaluations regarding institutional change, researchers have a problem.

Much of the work published has been carried out by movement activists. Even a larger percentage of today’s authors would openly admit to the hope that their work will further the goals of the movements they are studying. Thus a central question should be, to what extent has the focus on identity hindered the literature by emphasizing celebration at the expense of critical insight? Have we moved from Marxist (and Marxist-inspired) analysis too often written from a perspective that overemphasized class relations or revolutionary conditions into an era of thinking

1. The political-process model focuses on how political, social, and economic contexts (micro and macro) create political opportunities that are exploited with relative degrees of success and failure by social movements. Political-process studies ideally make use of the comparative case-study method, providing insight into the relative utility of particular organizational structures, strategies, and tactics operating within comparable contexts.

that overemphasizes the existence of alternative epistemological communities at the expense of sober political analysis?

Research on social movements has become an increasingly important subfield within Latin American studies, as measured by the numbers of related LASA panels, academic publications, and graduate and undergraduate university courses. Scholars tend to identify more strongly with the subfield than with their original disciplines of sociology, history, anthropology, or political science. The point is not that the respective disciplinary bias of a particular author can no longer be detected but that stop signs at disciplinary boundaries are routinely ignored. The explicit goal in much work has become to create the most fruitful interdisciplinary approach. Particularly important have been efforts to balance identity politics and the analysis of institutional political outcomes. It is easier (and perhaps therefore more common) to strike this balance when assessing a set of articles or books than to blend the two concerns effectively within an individual work. Despite the difficulty of the task, this aim should continue to guide future work. The point is not that disciplinary democracy should be achieved but rather that cultural meanings and the institutional practices of parties and states are best understood in relationship to one another. The extent to which a social movement or social-movement organization shapes cultural meanings and identities for those within and without the movement depends directly on the extent to which the movement is able to influence the institutional composition and behavior of political parties and the state.

The seven books under review have been divided into four categories: those dealing with theory, edited volumes, studies of Mexico, and studies that focus on women. Individual volumes will be evaluated in terms of the broad questions just raised and in relationship to one another.

Works on Theory

Structures of Power, Movements of Resistance: An Introduction to the Theories of Urban Movements in Latin America provides a rather extensive review of the literature that will probably be most useful to newcomers, particularly those unfamiliar with the European tradition in this field. It also includes a detailed bibliography covering research conducted through 1989.

Willem Assies, Gerrit Burgwal, and Ton Salman detect misplaced enthusiasm first about the socialist potential of the movements during the 1960s and 1970s and more recently about their democratizing potential. The authors relate “the new celebration of the individual actor and his/her emancipation/disalienation . . . to an overly exclusive focus on the internal process of social movements” (pp. 3–4). The problem arises when the internal focus comes at the expense of a proper understanding of the

context in which movements operate and their ability to influence their environment. The authors' extensive review of the Marxist tradition sets forth the convincing argument that this attention to internal dynamics and the inclination to celebrate individual victories are related to the fact that social movements to date have not turned out to be the new revolutionary subject capable of transforming society. Post-Marxists consequently remain driven to find transformation wherever it might be occurring. Although Assies is concerned about this turn of events, Salman's contribution does not disparage those who might appear naive in their celebratory claims but rather views the debate between skeptics and euphorics as mutually enriching.

Assies's contribution consists of two distinct parts: the first three-quarters of his ninety-page essay summarizes intellectual traditions since Marx that are deemed to make up the historical context of ideas and debates about today's social movements. The discussion encapsulates the Lenin-Luxembourg debates, Georgy Lukács and Antonio Gramsci's corrective to the Second International, and Louis Althusser's structuralism versus the structuralist critiques of Jean Lojkin, Ernesto Laclau, and others. Assies next moves on to discussing a more focused debate in the 1970s concerning "the urban question," featuring Manuel Castells and Jordi Borja. Assies then takes up "post-1970s" perspectives on social movements and the great debate over "newness," featuring Claus Offe, Alain Touraine, Alberto Melucci, Klaus Eder, Tilman Evers, Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe.² Although Assies's text suffers at times from being too cryptic for the uninitiated and insufficiently analyzed for the well-read, his first section reminds seasoned observers of the intellectual tradition in which we are involved, perhaps even reframing the debate occasionally in a fresh way. It also will alert new students to the fact that the debate over urban social movements did not begin with *The City and the Grassroots*. It should be noted, however, that Assies's review is limited to European and Latin American thinkers, making no reference to U.S. debates about collective action.³

The second part of the essay summarizes current Latin American debates and offers a number of important insights. Echoing the impor-

2. Assies cites Evers as calling for the need to somehow balance the drive for power, the currency of political and legislative change, and autonomy to present real alternative visions and identities, asserting that each dimension expands at the inevitable cost of the others. My view is that we should seriously question Evers's assertion that "the more power, the less identity and the more alienation" (cited in Assies, p. 59).

3. Fortunately, Salman's chapter in the volume addresses the U.S. literature on psychological and social-psychological perspectives, individual and rational-choice perspectives, and resource-mobilization and political-process perspectives. Even here, however, *Structures of Power* is weak in covering U.S. approaches, as suggested by the fact that it does not mention the works of Piven and Cloward (1979) or Tarrow (1989a, 1989b) in discussing political-process approaches or other topics.

tant work of Ruth Cardoso, Scott Mainwaring, and Eduardo Viola, Assies effectively critiques several cherished notions, including the celebration of autonomy associated with Castells and with Laclau and Mouffe. New social movement theory, as practiced in Latin America, is notable for the inability (or unwillingness) of its adherents to perceive the relationships that actually exist (irrespective of scholars' personal preferences) between movements, parties, and the state. While new social-movement theory correctly points out the importance of meaning formation and that not all influence need be registered in political practice or legislation, most social movements indeed work on this level.⁴ Assies wants to believe that the commonsense notion of autonomy (greatly encouraged by the impact of Castells's work on Latin American scholars) has become "increasingly problematic" and that "more sober" views have come to the fore. I remain unconvinced.

The second chapter in *Structures of Power*, "Between Orthodoxy and Euphoria," seeks a middle path between celebration and pessimism regarding capacities of social movements for political and cultural transformation. Salman rejects macro theorizing in either the Evers and Touraine style of "euphoria" or the more pessimistic assessments. Salman is bemused by the idea that anyone taking the time to review a significant selection of the voluminous historical case studies coming out of Europe and the Americas could theorize about a homogenous, universal phenomenon. The reality is simply too diverse. Echoing a well-known theme, Salman suggests that the distinction between old and new must be taken with a grain of salt and that in any case, new social movements are "obviously" a European (or Western) phenomenon (p. 101). His reasoning is that the demands of social movements in Latin America remain largely material ones, in contrast to the goals of the "new" and middle-class European movements that Offe, Touraine, and Melucci have theorized about.

Salman's comments regarding the errors of overgeneralization and misappropriation of exogenous theory to Latin America are merely steps along the path in his effort to chart a more appropriate theoretical and methodological course that can assess the political meaning of social movements in urban Latin America. Salman's major critique is that the divide between the why and the how of movements is artificial and counterproductive, as is the distinction between sociocultural and political transformations. He clearly wants to bring these themes together and does so explicitly in the final section of his contribution. The more appro-

4. My own research suggests that one issue most worthy of research is explaining the pressures that movements are under to not be new (in the sense of being radically democratic and maintaining sufficient levels of relative autonomy from the state) and the outcomes of their efforts to resist these pressures, that is, to return or succumb to authoritarian populist politics.

ropriate approach, however, is to bring together three levels of analysis: a focus on structures that delimit but also create the range of possibilities for social movements at any particular historical moment; attention to mobilization of potential resources and exercise of them; and what Salman describes as “maybe the most complicated and underdeveloped terrain, the analysis of the intermediate level that asks how ‘conditions’ are transformed into competence, identities, experiences, attitudes that facilitate and/or hinder collective action” (p. 139).

Edited Volumes

The editors of *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy, and Democracy*, Arturo Escobar and Sonia Alvarez, make clear at the outset that the “rich mosaic of identities is at the heart of our project” (p. 2). Over the course of the last decade or so, the diversity of resistance and collective struggle has expanded dramatically in direct relationship to political openings and democratic transition. No other volume in any language begins to speak so effectively to this diversity. Few movement types go unrepresented in this compilation, which contains chapters on peasant movements, indigenous peoples, Christian base communities, homosexual identities, feminisms of different stripes, urban popular movements, squatters, and ecological movements. The intended impression is that Latin American social movements cannot be adequately defined as being exclusively or perhaps even primarily focused on material concerns.

Although *The Making of Social Movements* is rich in cultural detail, individual chapters are frequently weak in detailed arguments on the political implications of these movements for changes in laws, new legislation, the party system, public opinion, and the balance of power within the state organization. Some of this problem may arise from the millenarian impulses of post-Marxism. Other contributing factors are the lingering propensity to celebrate what may be an imagined degree of autonomy from the state and the notion that the duty of left-leaning scholars is to project the movements in their brightest light, regardless of limitations on the ground.⁵ Finally, disciplinary orientations may lead some scholars away from detailed analysis of institutional politics. Whatever the combination of explanatory factors, it is ironic that at the same time that this diversity of identities is being celebrated, governments throughout Latin America, including those democratically elected, are embarking on neo-liberal development paths that are antithetical to the social movements under discussion.

With some exceptions (most notably the contributions by Orin

5. The contribution by Judith Adler Hellman challenges many of these assumptions in an interesting discussion of autonomy as it relates to political parties.

Starn, Ruth Cardoso, John Burdick, and Eduardo Canel), the celebratory mood of *The Making of Social Movements* magnifies a common tendency to exaggerate or at least inadequately prove power and influence by such movements, whether cultural or political. Another tendency is to assume that movements are somehow inherently democratic and consistently live up to their emancipatory rhetoric (the most notable exception being Burdick's critical assessment of Christian base communities in Brazil). Although the editors' introduction plugs the benefits associated with empirically based case studies that "cross-pollinate" identity-centered and political-process approaches, only the contribution by Orin Starn deserves an ovation for having pulled it off.

Escobar and Alvarez were motivated in part to respond to widely read publications of the 1980s that described the declining role of social movements in Southern Cone countries following their dynamic role in transition (for examples, see Mainwaring 1987; Cardoso 1987). Movements have not so much declined in importance in the wake of democratic transition as changed form. As a result, their influence cannot be understood properly when attention is focused too narrowly on policy processes and outcomes.

Despite the limitations of a volume that ranks identity over political process, it must be emphasized that *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America* is a significant book—required reading for anyone concerned with the changing nature of Latin American social movements. Its value is further enhanced by the fact that it presents the work of many scholars and movements generally unknown to the English-speaking world, making the volume a great asset to undergraduate and graduate studies. Furthermore, the book reflects a significant change in the shape of Latin American social movements. Although the traditional array of national liberation movements, populist movements, labor unions, and peasant movements continue to function, they no longer dominate the landscape. New types of movements with new kinds of concerns have changed the nature of the social-movement sector in general and have also influenced relationships among movements. Thus whether they like it or not, populist labor unions are finding themselves operating in some of the same public arenas as the gay, feminist, and environmental movements. The details and the cultural and political implications of these relationships offer a fruitful avenue for future research.

If the Escobar and Alvarez volume represents best what is new, the work edited by Daniel Camacho and Rafael Menjívar is a classic example of the "preneoliberal era." *Los movimientos populares en América Latina* contains fourteen case studies, one each from Mexico, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Paraguay, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, the Caribbean, and Central America. Many were written by well-known authors, and all attempt to determine the importance of social

movements in the context of national politics. Although this collection was published in 1989, most of the contributions appear to have been written much earlier, focusing on the years from 1970 to 1983.

Even in a field propelled (perhaps excessively) by the most recent historical and conceptual events, *Los movimientos populares en América Latina* is valuable as an assessment of the “now-distant 1970s.” The task of the mostly successful case studies is to place social movements in their broader context, to explore the whys and the “so whats” of the social-movement sector (as opposed to particular social-movement organizations) for the national political economy and society of each country.

Readers are given the opportunity to review the important decade of the 1970s, when discussions of “newness” were still new for movement activists and observers alike. This edited work also allows readers to view movements in national context from a more “traditional” perspective, which in the Latin American context means a more Marxist perspective focusing on political economy. Most of the essays never stray far from the notion that “all social movement activity has as its objective political society, which is to say, the state” (p. 18). The 1970s were a time when supporters wrote without using quotation marks “Para la toma del poder, un movimiento social, y más específicamente el movimiento popular, requiere de una vanguardia política.” A time when the term *social movement* was invoked only at those rare historical moments when a movement had reached the stage capable of transforming society and the state. A time when movements were usually viewed in class terms, as were exploitation and domination—back when the success stories were Cuba in 1959 and Nicaragua in 1979, and when the failed “in blood” attempts were unambiguously mourned, as in Bolivia in 1952, Chile in 1972, and Guatemala in 1954. A time when environmental and women’s movements were assessed in terms of their assault on capitalism and the capitalist state, whether they perceived themselves in those terms or not.⁶

Works on Mexico

Joe Foweraker’s *Popular Mobilization in Mexico: The Teachers’ Movement, 1977–87*, focuses on the Coordinadora Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación. The CNTE has elicited widespread attention in the Mexican and international press, within movement circles throughout Latin America, and by academics (see especially Street 1992 and the forth-

6. The clearest exception is the contribution by Rafael de la Cruz, appropriately titled “Nuevos movimientos sociales en Venezuela,” which argues against viewing class as the sole motor of history and defines popular movements as autonomous of class, political parties, and syndicates. Similarly, Fernando Calderón and Roberto Laserna argue against the tendency of much Latin American critical theory to perceive conflict solely in class terms, asserting that this bias has undermined comprehension of dynamics that cannot be properly understood in these terms.

coming work by María Cook). According to many observers, the CNTE is the most important union movement in Mexico. Its position is even more intriguing because it exists as a dissident movement within Latin America's largest union, the corporatist-linked Sindicato Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación (SNTE). Thus the CNTE's position can reveal much about the workings of the Mexican regime.

A major strength of *Popular Mobilization in Mexico* is found in the sections dealing with the relationships among the CNTE, the SNTE, the ruling Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), and the Mexican state. Foweraker's focus on Chiapas is another strength, for as he notes, that state "was the pioneer of political mobilization by teachers nationwide" (p. 103). The recent eruptions of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) and related efforts to consolidate much of the Mexican progressive forces under the umbrella of the Convención Nacional Democrática makes Foweraker's book particularly timely.

Popular Mobilization in Mexico will be praised by readers dedicated to the idea that organization matters, even if informed Mexicanists might not always agree with Foweraker's account and conclusions. He devotes close attention to inter-organizational relationships and the internal workings of the CNTE, how they changed over time, and to what effect. The politics and costs of factionalization within the Chiapas CNTE and problems of interregional coordination also receive detailed examination.⁷ The sections dealing with the elite and institutional rivalries that created political opportunities for CNTE teachers are particularly intriguing.

Foweraker knows where he stands, and it is not on the side of new social-movement theory or identity politics: "To study popular movements is to study the ways in which [social] agency finds political expression and projection, and the ways in which popular organizations find strategic room for political maneuver on the legal and institutional terrain of the political system" (p. 11).⁸ Foweraker emphasizes the difference between Europe and Mexico, arguing that in the latter, "a noninstitutional style of politics" is incompatible with the demands of popular movements. These demands remain primarily material, and their redress depends on institutional recognition by the state. In keeping with his orientation toward the political-process model, Foweraker stresses the importance of good relations with others in civil society and provides details on CNTE relationships with parents, peasant leagues, and elements of the Catholic Church.

7. Costs associated with regionalism include the fact that the federal government is better able to deal with regional groupings on a case-by-case basis and an occasional tendency for local actors to overlook opportunities presented at the national level, as in inter-institutional or inter-elite splits.

8. Foweraker views the work of Claus Offe (1985) and the radical postmaterialism of Alberto Melucci (1989) as particularly ill suited for understanding most Latin American popular movements (pp. 179–80). This stance contrasts starkly with many of the contributions to Escobar and Alvarez's *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America*.

Using the political-process perspective, several critiques can be made. While *Popular Mobilization in Mexico* benefits from the focus on the inner workings of the Chiapas movement, it does not fare as well in attempting detailed comparisons with the most important regional cases that emerged between 1979 and 1982, those in the states of Oaxaca, Morelos, Mexico, Guerrero, and Hidalgo. Second, one finds no insider insights on actions taken by the SNTE, the Secretaría de Educación, or other relevant party and state actors because all Foweraker's interviewees came from the teachers' movement. Readers are treated to a good story about internal rivalries and outcomes but often must infer the motives and debates of state actors.⁹

Another problem arises with the subject of internal ideological and power struggles. Many social movements experience internal conflicts, and it is often difficult to distinguish strategic and ideological differences from contests over control of the movement by individuals or factions. Differences over ideas and strategy can testify to internal pluralism or they can tear a movement apart. Commonly, one tendency wins out over the other, leaving the "loser" to acquiesce to the winning position or leave the movement. Trotskyists and a national organization called Línea Proletaria competed for personal and strategic control of the CNTE. In this case, ideological differences ended up undermining the movement's capacity to realize its goals.

Foweraker is clearly biased against the more radical Trotskyist faction. He obviously supports the Línea Proletaria faction, which is well known for its position that properly executed negotiations leading to concessions need not result in a decline in mobilization.¹⁰ Foweraker is entitled to his opinion, but readers should be aware that his dismissal of those most wary of negotiation as "unsophisticated" and his explicit preference for those he deems "more flexible" are taking on new dimensions in a changing political environment. Change is even more the case as radicals have succeeded in building a powerful movement based precisely on the notion that authoritarianism must be attacked head-on and that "business as usual" must be curtailed, even if it entails short-term costs in losing state-sponsored concessions.¹¹

9. It is perhaps only fair to note that Foweraker's book should not be singled out on this count, which is characteristic of almost all the literature on social movements. Even those works that highlight institutional politics tend to be detail-rich on the movements themselves and detail-deficient on the state. In fact, Foweraker pays more attention to state actions and strategy than is usual in the literature, particularly in Chapter 8, "Institutional Controls."

10. Mobilization is viewed by many scholars and activists as necessary for maintaining the capacity to inflict institutional disruption, which is in turn necessary for ensuring that the state implements agreements and the movement maintains its ability to extract future concessions.

11. This observation should not be interpreted to mean that the Zapatistas have adopted

Consistent with his earlier works, Foweraker argues that Mexican popular movements are contributing to Mexican democratization (see Foweraker 1989, 1990). It may be “plausible to suggest that popular politics have come to encompass more of the Mexican people, as more numerous popular movements have succeeded in mobilizing ‘new,’ or previously passive, political actors” (p. 3) and that movements are effectively challenging *caciquismo*. But it is far from clear to what extent popular movements have actually succeeded in forcing a wide political opening and whether events that have transpired since 1989 have succeeded in pulling Mexico back from the brink of becoming more democratic. The character and results of the August 1994 elections in Mexico have not been widely perceived by popular movements as major steps in a democratic direction.

Gilberto Guevara Niebla's *La democracia en la calle: Crónica del movimiento estudiantil mexicano* is an entirely different kind of work. It was written in direct response to the student protest movement in 1986–1987 centered at Mexico City's gargantuan Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM).¹² Guevara is consequently much less concerned than Foweraker about theoretical debates in the field and much more interested in providing political advice, especially in advising students as to when, how, and why the student movement has failed to accomplish more and how it might do better in the future. Guevara's measure of success is the degree of democratic influence on university governance and the larger society and its political institutions.

La democracia en la calle covers student movements from 1929 to 1987. Guevara is a passionate man who has devoted much of his life to his topic, including a three-year prison sentence (1968–1971) resulting from his role in the 1968 student movement. His is the quintessential insider's account, and I found it a pleasure to read a book-length political history written by someone so intimately familiar with his subject.

Guevara also places student mobilizations in their political and institutional contexts. For example, in discussing student mobilizations in the late 1950s, Guevara emphasizes the implications of student activists' relationships with electricians, primary teachers, telegraph and telephone workers, petroleum workers, peasants, and the famous case of the railroad workers. He locates the demands of these groups in the widening gap between wages and prices for basic commodities and details how

the Trotskyist position. Their strategy differs considerably from either faction of the Coordinadora Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación. The major point from the perspective of the political-process model is that individual strategies must always be analyzed in terms of particular political environments. As recent events in Chiapas also make clear, when and how to negotiate is usually more important than whether: at issue most commonly is not whether to negotiate but on what terms.

12. UNAM is the largest university in Latin America. In 1987 it enrolled 350,000 students (one-fifth of all Mexican students). UNAM also employs more than 50,000 persons in a wide range of capacities.

actions taken by the administration of President Adolfo Ruíz Cortines (1952–1958) influenced movement strategies and political outcomes. *La democracia in la calle* focuses consistently on leadership, emphasizing the implications of worldview, strategy, and party affiliations.

Guevara devotes considerable attention to the “political opening” during the administration of Luis Echeverría (1970–1976), which followed the famous Tlatelolco student massacre in 1968. He provides interesting insights into the machinations of the Mexican inclusionary authoritarian regime. Student leaders were released from jail, and many of them found government jobs and funding for education substantially increased. State repression continued, but more according to what Guevara calls “preemptive measures” implemented via *porrismo*, referring to government infiltration of popular movements by *porros* (hired agents provocateurs) and their creation of paramilitary groups at the grass roots among unemployed youth living on the outskirts of Mexico City. Thus Guevara provides a fascinating case study of how the Mexican state has often succeeded in encouraging vanguardism and sectarian politics in which populist paternalism replaces a national democratic agenda.

Whereas the student movement of 1968 was centered on democratic transformation of society, the democratization of the university itself is what galvanized the UNAM student movement of 1986–1987. Three issues were given priority: educational quality; lack of adequate representation by students, teachers, and university employees in governance bodies; and the wide gap between university curriculum and popular culture. Since the 1940s, UNAM had consistently reflected developmentalist priorities. Much of the book is taken up with describing and analyzing how the Consejo Estudiantil Universitario (CEU) sought to challenge this model through a combination of mobilizations (involving one hundred thousand protesters by some estimates), student strikes, alliances, and negotiations with university administrators—all in an atmosphere of stagflation and public austerity measures.

While the CEU helped move the Mexican student movement out of its 1970s morass, it could not achieve its most important goals. Resolving the real problems of the university would have required a dialogue characterized by conciliation and synthesis on the part of both administration representatives and students. Unfortunately, two monologues preempted effective dialogue and led to intransigent polarization in bargaining positions (p. 147).

Guevara therefore blames the primary limitations of the university reform on the unwillingness of both sides to engage in realistic discourse. Curiously missing from his analysis, however, is attention to the split between the successive proposals made by the UNAM rector that scrupulously avoided the issue of increased university funding, which the CEU just as scrupulously continued to demand. A rector is clearly in no

position to double university funding and can only lobby the office of the president to do so. The politics transpiring between Rector Jorge Carpizo and President Miguel de la Madrid are not part of Guevara's discussion, and they probably should have been. My suspicion is that limitations on university reform were and still are rooted as much or more in the fiscal and political policies of the state (especially the president's office) as within the confines of UNAM. Once again, readers cannot understand movement outcomes more fully due to inadequate attention to the most important intra- and inter-organizational dynamics within the state.

Works on Women's Movements

The volume edited by Dorrit Marks, *Women and Grass Roots Democracy in the Americas*, grew out of a conference sponsored by the League of Women Voters, held in January 1992 at the University of Miami's North-South Center, as part of a larger effort to build bridges between U.S. and Latin American nonprofit organizations. The autonomy of popular movements is often believed to be enhanced when nonprofit groups become capable of providing funding, thereby undermining the near monopoly exercised by many national governments. The meeting's premise was to bring together U.S. and Latin American civic leaders in the Tocquevillean conviction that strong and numerous civic organizations are essential to democracy. The aim was to promote institutional linkages across the Americas between women involved in such organizations.

This topic is undoubtedly germane to the hemisphere, with so many countries still consolidating democratic transitions begun in the 1980s. Latin American participants were primarily representatives of member organizations of the Organización Cívica Panamericana, "organized in 1988 to promote civic awareness, coordinate regional meetings, provide technical assistance and advice to member organizations, and run a center for information, documents, and exchange of methodology and material" (p. 7). U.S. participants included representatives of state chapters of the League of Women Voters and other women's organizations, media-affiliated organizations, and some business organizations.

Much of the text simply affirms and reaffirms League convictions: that civic groups involved in the legislative process and public education foster democracy; that civic groups can play an important role in keeping elected officials accountable to voters; and that civic groups need to influence the media more effectively. Some portions provide rather introductory "how-to" comments on fund-raising, increasing media access, and other important issues. Almost a third of the book consists of speaker biographies, description, and contact information for civic organizations. This listing would be useful to anyone wanting to get in touch with civic groups conducting voter education and promoting electoral democracy in Latin America.

Sarah Radcliffe and Sallie Westwood's edited volume, *'Viva': Women and Popular Protest in Latin America*, brings together contributions by nine university women from Brazil, Venezuela, Great Britain, Australia, and the United States. The editors' introductory chapter sets the theoretical tone and is followed by eight case studies that address issues of importance to women engaged in popular protest in El Salvador, Guatemala, Venezuela, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Ecuador, and Peru.

Radcliffe and Westwood argue for a change in focus in seeking to understand women's protest, away from what they term the "externalities" of political protest—preexisting political organizations, socioeconomic structures, and reproductive responsibilities—and toward uncovering "some of the 'internalities' of political protest, like gender and political identities, images and practices that shape everyday behavior, symbolism and place in political culture. . . . Our task has been to deconstruct the homogenizing, universalizing account of Latin America that contributes to the exoticization and 'Otherization' of the peoples of Latin America, and, instead, to give full attention to diversity and the specific ways in which racisms, gender and class relations are articulated in the different states of the Americas" (pp. 1, 5). The editors consider the volume to represent opposition to the "Eurocentric model," and they declare war on neocolonial thought and practices, as carried out in the industrialized West and within Latin America. Radcliffe and Westwood stress the importance of self-awareness on the part of Western scholars regarding the complicity of social science disciplines in the "Modern Project" that operates and often continues to advocate on the false assumption that the relationship between progress and accumulated knowledge is rational. Radcliffe and Westwood's mission is to deconstruct modernist representations and replace them with new and more emancipatory images of women involved in collective dissent.

The unambiguous focus on identity construction and discourse from a feminist perspective means that institutions like the Catholic Church, policies such as recent structural adjustment programs, and class configurations such as the presence of a European-oriented elite are viewed primarily in terms of how they influence the formation of female identities in specific national and local contexts. The dichotomy between "strategic" and "practical" gender concerns, with strategic concerns usually ascribed to more middle-class versions of feminism and practical concerns to low-income women, is refuted on a number of counts in both the introduction and the case studies. Notions about organizational space and the particularities of the physical sites in which popular protest emerge are emphasized by several contributors. Grandiose Marxist narrative has been replaced by nonessentialist postmodern thinking.¹³ Em-

13. Somewhat along the same lines, assumptions about *dependencia* are shunned in favor

phasis is placed on desegregating universal concepts like nationhood, nationalism, authoritarian populism, citizenship, and democracy. Some of the essays highlight the importance of the human body as the primary location for the technologies of domination in terms of race, gender, and class.¹⁴

The case-study chapters celebrate the virtues of popular movements in a number of ways. For example, Nikki Craske describes how Mexican women involved in the Organización Independiente de Colonias Populares del Oriente “are giving women a political experience that is profoundly affecting their lives, leading them to question the power relations that limit them at societal level, as well as within their personal, familial relations.” This approach is in sharp contrast with the PRI’s Federación de Colonias Populares de Jalisco, which continues to operate along corporatist lines with little or no feminist agenda (p. 112). Jennifer Schirmer’s essay on Guatemala and El Salvador illustrates the bravery mustered by women in resisting state-sponsored terrorism. María-Pilar García Guadilla’s contribution focuses on the way in which women’s environmental groups (a subgrouping within the larger Venezuelan ecology movement) differ from those dominated by men in terms of demands, organization, and political impact on government and public opinion. In her view, “Ecological organizations led by women tend to be more successful in opening new spaces of political significance, that is, in transforming the ecological into a new political fact” (p. 67). Not surprisingly, the ability of women’s popular protest to develop counterhegemonic discourses is viewed as a more important indicator of power than that of changes in state policy.¹⁵

Some of *Viva* emphasizes the difficulties and limitations experienced by popular movements during recent economic stabilization programs and restructurings. Caroline Moser’s statistically detailed and longitudinal case study analyzes Barrio Indio Guayas in Guayaquil, the largest city in Ecuador. Moser concludes that structural adjustment programs have forced women to reorganize their work days of twelve to eighteen hours in order to give more attention to paid work outside the home and community-managing activities that would ensure the successful functioning of nongovernmental organizations filling the vacuum left by decreased state services—all at the expense of domestic activities. She observes, “The fact that paid work and unpaid [community] work

of the recognition that politics and “political development” (meaning democratization) have their own rhythms independent of changes in international and more local economies.

14. *Viva* adopts the feminist critique of Michel Foucault, who is viewed as too often ignoring the importance of gender in assessing the politics of the body (de Lauretis 1987; Diamond and Quinby 1988).

15. See in particular Radcliffe’s contribution on Peru, Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes on Brazil, and Catherine Boyle on Chile.

were competing for women's time had important impacts on children, on women themselves and on the disintegration of the household" (p. 194). Moser paints a glum but persuasive picture, in which only about 30 percent are managing to "cope" (via stable relationships and dual or combined family incomes), with the rest either being "burnt out" or just "hanging on" (pp. 194–95). Even for those who are coping, it seems likely that they have little time left for strategic political involvement.

Concluding Remarks

Moser reminds readers of what should be more obvious: "Not all women could cope under crisis and it is necessary to stop romanticizing about their infinite capacity to do so" (p. 194). The next step is to stop romanticizing what has happened to Latin American social movements since the heady days of democratic transitions in the 1980s. The creation of alternative identities and counterhegemonic discourses is vital in assessing the significance of political movements. It should not, however, dissuade us from the importance of analyzing closely the limitations of the movements in shaping public policy more powerfully. This is especially true of low-income popular movements, which are the focus of much of the literature reviewed here. The study of social movements by sympathetic scholars should be dictated (as it sometimes has been) by abiding vigilance regarding the degree to which movements can marshal resources (broadly defined) and employ them to improve the lives of those they claim to encompass and represent. The goal of most "politically engaged" scholarship on social movements is to provide analysis useful to the movements themselves. Scholars must learn more about the details of changing political opportunity structures that include a state institutional dimension along with concerns about discourse, autonomy, and identity. Critical theory must be used to scrutinize the movements themselves as well as the contexts that make them necessary.

Regarding the future research agenda, 1989 produced two widely read edited volumes on Latin American social movements. One was Camacho and Menjívar's *Los movimientos populares en América Latina* (reviewed here), in which all the essays came from contributors based in Latin America or the Caribbean; the other was Susan Eckstein's *Power and Popular Protest: Latin American Social Movements*, written by a cross section of North and Latin Americans working in conjunction with U.S. universities. Since that time, no other volumes have attempted coverage as representative or comprehensive. The insights of the Camacho and Menjívar volume come for the most part from the political-economy perspective prevailing in the 1970s. The Eckstein volume, whose essays were written much closer to the year of publication, took as its central theme the role of the social-movement sector in democratization. While Escobar

and Alvarez's *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America* is also broad in its case studies, it does not provide empirically based studies that explore the meaning and political implications of entire social-movement sectors. From my perspective, the literature in general suffers from the lack of national case studies that would explore more broadly the whys, hows, and so whats of social-movement sectors (rather than specific movements or movement organizations) and would cover the period from democratic and neoliberal transition through efforts at consolidation.

Finally, most research on social movements focuses on actual cases of mobilization to the exclusion of nonmobilization. Sometimes, the work interprets the environmental conditions that influenced the emergence of movements at the site of the case study. Rarer still are studies that explain regional variations among cases of mobilization and nonmobilization under seemingly similar environmental conditions.¹⁶ Comparative research in the future should pay more attention to why movements do not emerge, or if they do, why they so often fail to realize their stated goals more fully. Comparative analysis of relative degrees of success and failure within specific local and national contexts (cultural, economic, and political) is the key to furthering our understanding of Latin American social movements. Although changes in institutional practices and policy outcomes need not be the focus, ignoring this terrain is counterproductive.

16. An example of such work is John Gaventa's excellent study of quiescence and rebellion in an Appalachian valley (1980). To my knowledge, such an approach has never been adopted in constructing a Latin American case study.

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