Brumley, Krista M.
An Analytical Framework for Studying Non-Governmental Organizations in Monterrey, México (Parte a)
Revista de Humanidades: Tecnológico de Monterrey, núm. 11, 2001, pp. 95-136
Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey
Monterrey, México

Disponible en: http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=38401108
An Analytical Framework for Studying Non-Governmental Organizations in Monterrey, Mexico

Krista M. Brumley
ITESM, Campus Monterrey

México, como el resto de Latinoamérica, ha experimentado dramaticos cambios políticos y económicos durante las últimas dos décadas. Así mismo ha aumentado el número de actores diversos en el escenario político del México que reta formas tradicionales de hacer política y las nociones de la ciudadanía. De esta reestructura política y económica emergen preguntas con relación a cómo esto ha afectado las relaciones sociales del país, y en particular, el grado al cual los ciudadanos mexicanos tienen acceso al proceso político. El propósito de este artículo es analizar el papel de las organizaciones no gubernamentales (ONG) en la participación política en México. Debido a la proliferación de ONG en años recientes en el ámbito local e internacional, así como la complejidad en la variación de estas organizaciones, es imperativo comprender su papel en el proceso político. Basado en el trabajo de Diane Davis (1999) propongo un marco para analizar las ONG que incluye varios temas. Primero las estrategias y tácticas de las ONG para obtener acceso a la estructura del poder político. Segundo, los tipos de demandas de la ciudadanía de las ONG y quiénes son el blanco de sus demandas. Y por último, la interconexión del liderazgo y la identidad de los miembros (por ejemplo: género y clase) y el acceso de las ONG al proceso político.

Mexico, like the rest of Latin America, has been undergoing dramatic political and economic changes over the past two decades. There has also been an increasing number of different actors on the Mexican political scene that challenge traditional ways of doing politics and notions of citizenship. This political and economic restructuring raises questions as to how it has affected the social structure. That is, how have these changes affected the social relations of the country, and particularly, the degree to which Mexican citizens have access to the political process? The purpose of this article is to examine the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in political participation in Mexico. Because of the proliferation of NGOs in recent years from the local level to the international level, as well as the complexity in the variation of these organizations, understanding their role in the political process is imperative. Building on the work of Diane Davis (1999), I propose a framework to analyze NGOs that encompasses several themes. First, the strategies and tactics of the NGOs to gain
Introduction

Given recent political changes in Mexico, a central concern for researchers has been the degree to which there is a widening space for citizen access to the political process. This has become increasingly important because of the multitude of actors that are visible on the political scene. The purpose of this article is to continue this line of questioning by proposing a framework to analyze the role of one type of political actor, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and what their role has been in political participation within the context of Mexico. My central argument is that political participation is about the struggle over and challenge to the boundaries of the multidimensional aspects of citizenship (political, social, and civil).

Toward the objective of understanding how NGOs facilitate citizen participation in the political process, I ask three main questions. First, what strategies and tactics do NGOs use to gain access to the political power structure? Second, what are the types of citizenship demands of the NGOs, who do they claim to represent, and who are the targets of their demands? And, third, how does NGO access to the political process differ by the identity of the leadership and rank-and-file membership (i.e., gender-based, class-based)? In order to answer these questions, I examine the relationship of NGOs, citizens, and the Mexican government at the state level in Nuevo Leon, located in the northern part of Mexico.

I divide this article into five main sections. I begin with a discussion of the rise of NGOs in Latin American politics. I then address the issue of citizenship and how this concept is not a static analytical tool but one that varies in time and space. I then discuss the research context for this article by focusing on the role of government and the role of political participation in shifting relations between the State and society in Mexico. I pay particular attention to understanding the social, political, and economic context within which NGOs have developed in Mexico. After setting the stage for the research context, I briefly outline the theoretical framework for this article by
highlighting some of the major debates and issues from the literature. In the last section, I present my analytical framework for examining the role of NGOs in Monterrey, Mexico.

The Rise of NGOs in Latin American Politics

Although I ask the question of NGOs within the context of Mexico, the issue is of importance throughout Latin America. In recent years, scholars of social sciences have begun to recognize the importance of NGOs, particularly as potential advocates for citizenship rights (Álvarez 1998, 1997; Bebbington and Thiele 1993; Einhorn 1993; Foweraker 1998; Fox and Hernández 1992; Hipsher 1998; Jelin and Hershberg 1998; Lind 2000; Lilliott 2000; Lister 1997, 1998; Radcliffe and Westwood 1993; Reygadas 1998; Schild 1998; Segarra 1997). It is unclear, however, as to what the role of NGOs has been generally, and, particularly, whether or not NGOs provide a new political opportunity for communities to have their interests heard by local and national political structures.

Part of the difficulty in understanding NGOs has been the question of "what is an NGO?" Scholars do generally agree that NGOs are located in civil society, rather than in the formal political arena, such as political parties (Álvarez 1998, 1997; Arellano-López and Petras 1994; Bebbington and Thiele 1993; Fox and Hernández 1992; Hipsher 1998; Segarra 1997). Scholars, however, have not agreed upon what comprises an NGO, and many argue that the term no longer has any coherent meaning (Arellano-López and Petras 1994; Bailey 1998; Meyer 1999). NGOs can be "large or small; national or local; self-sufficient or dependent on domestic or international funding; run by outsiders or by people interested in helping themselves; or staffed by volunteers or paid employees" (Bailey, 1998, p. 8). In addition, NGOs vary in organizational form, goals, and strategies, as well as in having a variety of different issues ranging from social services to advocacy groups (see, for example, Álvarez 1994; Bolos 1995; Chuchryk 1994; Chinchilla 1994; García Guadilla 1993; Lind 2000).

Despite the differences of NGOs, scholars suggest that one characteristic they tend to have in common is the strength in their collective voice, whereby NGOs create competition for existing governments and political parties, and encourage participation and activism by citizens (Lehmann and Bebbington 1998; Segarra 1997). In
fact, it is exactly the "loudness" of their voice, the geographical range, and the scope of their demands that have turned the heads of political leaders over the past two decades. Because of the "NGOization" of society (i.e., the range, scope, and extent of NGOs), the organizations represent a challenge that extends from local and regional levels to national and international levels, whereby the organizations contest traditional forms of political power and new ways of doing politics (Álvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998; Jaquette 1994; Jelin 1994; Lehmann and Bebbington 1998; Meyer 1999; Sternbach, et al. 1992). That is, they are disputing the boundaries of what should be included in the political arena and thus challenging traditional notions of political participation and citizenship. Scholars, however, do not agree whether NGOs represent a form of political participation, a social movement, or some other form of collective action.

Notwithstanding this current debate among scholars, NGOs have contributed throughout Latin America to political resistance, social welfare, and grassroots action dating back to the 1960s (Bebbington and Thiele 1993). During this decade and into the 1970s, local, national, and regional NGOs demonstrated their tenacity by challenging authoritarian dictatorships. It was in the mid-1980s, however, that NGOs grew in substantial numbers and influence (Arellano-López and Petras 1994; Bebbington and Thiele 1993; Lilliott 2000; Meyer 1999; Segarra 1997). It was also at this time that NGOs became more visible at the international level, most notably through the women's caucuses at the United Nations.

NGOs' visibility also grew, arguably due in part to the debt crisis that proliferated throughout Latin America during the 1980s. During this time, governments throughout Latin America began to shift responsibilities traditionally provided by the State to the private sector because the State was either unable or unwilling to continue its role in social-service provisions. Because of the failure of the state-centered model, Segarra (1997) argues that there is increasing interest in the role that associations in civil society can play. The question remains, though, as to what role NGOs can play in expanding citizenship rights and how NGOs represent a new form of political participation as a link between society and state, particularly for marginalized groups. Therefore, scholars have begun to call for more research that links the
role of NGOs, particularly, and social movements, generally, with expanding citizenship (Foweraker 1998; Jelin 1998).

The formation of NGOs, however, is different in Mexico than the rest of Latin America. Since 1985, NGOs have grown within civil society of Mexico and continue to pressure the State, some more successfully than others. Though NGOs have increased in Mexico, they continue to have a limited presence in comparison to both Chile and Peru, which have smaller populations. Scholars argue that part of the reason for this limitation is the political structure as directed under the PRI, or Institutional Revolutionary Party (Fox and Hernández 1992; Meyer 1999; Piester 1997). Therefore, while NGOs generally appear to represent a form of political participation, whether they are a social movement or some other form of collective action remains unclear in the context of Mexico.

Citizenship and Political Participation in Latin American Politics

Citizenship has its roots as a formal matter of birth or oaths registered by the state (Tarrow 1998), whereby it is "...a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to rights and duties with which the status is endowed" (Lister, 1997, p. 14). Citizenship emerged because of interactions between social movements and the initial development of the nation-state, where "rights discourse" became increasingly visible from both the American and French Revolutions in the struggle for greater political participation and representation, and ultimately democracy (Tarrow 1998).

The concept of citizenship, however, is hotly contested and, I argue, not a static analytical tool. That is, citizenship is historically and socially contingent. Traditional notions of citizenship focus solely on political citizenship, which is the right to participate in the exercise of political power, whether through voting, as a member of a political party, or as an elected official of that party (Marshall and Bottomore 1992). Citizenship, however, is not merely the ability to exercise your "duty" to vote, it includes civil and social aspects of life (Fox 1994; Lister 1997; Marshall and Bottomore 1992; Sapiro 1984).

According to the contemporary model of citizenship, civil citizenship is the rights necessary for individual freedom and liberty,
such as freedom of speech, the right to own property, and the right to a fair judicial system. Social citizenship encompasses the "right to economic welfare and security," as well as "the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in that society" (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992, p. 8). This includes the right to education, health care, and employment. Therefore, we can think of the detainment of an individual without proper legal recourse as a violation of an individual's civil citizenship, such as the case of students who have protested against the government (Pozas Garza, 1995). The land invasions of the early 1970s in Monterrey are good examples of collective demands for social citizenship (Bennett, 1995; Castells, 1982; Pozas Garza, 1995).

Citizenship is more than rights and includes two other aspects: obligations and access (Lister, 1997, 1998; Mouffe, 1992; Sapiro, 1984). Where "rights" is traditionally associated with electoral rights, obligations consider political participation a civic duty and the expression of the citizen's full potential as a political being. Access, then, is the conditions for practicing the relationship between citizen and community and is understood, again traditionally, as access to electoral politics. Access to the political system, however, hinges on social, cultural, economic, and political structures of inclusion and exclusion. Simply put, there is unequal access to political power based on social characteristics, such as gender, class, race, and ethnicity. In addition to differential access, these same social characteristics affect how individuals practice politics. Some scholars now contend that practicing politics takes on many different forms, and these more recent challenges to the State represent new ways of "doing politics" and thereby expands political citizenship.

In fact, it is exactly the critiques by many scholars over how to define political participation that illustrates how the use of citizenship in its traditional form is problematic. Specifically, scholars have critiqued the definition of political citizenship because it relies on traditional notions of political participation. While formal participation is typically electoral politics, informal participation includes voluntary associations and neighborhood coalitions, social movements and other
forms of collective action and, more recently, NGOs (Álvarez 1998; Craske 1999; Lister 1997; Sapiro 1984).

Because of these critiques, scholars argue further that it is necessary to move beyond the use of citizenship where it refers only to political citizenship in terms of voting, political parties, and electoral offices. Rather, political citizenship needs to include both formal and informal types of politics because continued reliance on traditional notions of political participation masks the participation of women, the poor, and other marginalized groups (see, for example Lister 1997; Sapiro 1984). That is, women's work (and other marginalized groups' work) becomes invisible (Daniels 1997). For example, it is predominantly women in Latin America that participate in urban popular movements that struggle for urban services such as water, educational services, and housing (Foweracker and Craig 1990; Radcliffe and Westwood 1993; Jaquette 1994; Jelin 1994). If political citizenship is restricted to only formal means of political participation, then a percentage of women and other marginalized social groups appears not to be as politically active. Thus, I argue in this article that political participation is about the struggle and challenge to the boundaries of citizenship, as a more expansive and inclusive concept. By expansive, I mean that citizenship rights go beyond merely political participation at the voting polls to include social, economic, and civil aspects. By inclusive, I mean that access to the political power structure is increased for social groups that have traditionally been on the margins of politics, namely women and the poor.

Whether it is framed as "new ways of doing politics," or formal versus informal political participation, or institutionalized versus non-institutionalized, the debate over the definition of political participation is not a new debate, nor is it a new argument. In fact, early stages in the development of collective action theory in the United States debunked the notion of normal politics (Jenkins and Perrow 1977; McCarthy and Zald 1973; see also discussions in Isaac and Kelly 1981; Rubin, Griffin, and Wallace 1983). These scholars raised the importance of collective-action as a legitimate form of political participation, rather than an act of irrational political behavior. What is new about this debate between institutionalized and non-institutionalized political participation is that there are more and
different actors emerging as avenues of political participation, such as NGOs. It is the appearance of NGOs and other types of organizations that appear to represent a new form of political participation that has encouraged and revived the debate. In addition, the more recent focus on marginalized populations beyond social class to include gender, race, ethnicity, religion, geographical location, and sexuality also adds to the continued importance of this debate.

**Research Context: The Case of Mexico**

As with the rest of Latin America, NGOs are no stranger to Mexico at national, regional, and local levels in terms of pressuring governments. While the proliferation in Mexico is linked to the debt crisis and state downsizing of service provisions, it can also be linked to the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City, which left parts of the city completely devastated and hundreds of thousands without homes and employment (Fox and Hernández 1992; Piester 1997). Because of Mexico’s checkered history and difficulties in electoral politics, as well as its varying successes of collective action for voicing concerns, many marginalized groups in Mexico are turning toward alternative means of having their voices heard, such as through NGOs (Craske 1993; Espinosa 1998; Foweraker and Craig 1990; Middlebrook 1986; Shefner 1998, 1999; Ramos Escandón 1994).

Since the mid-1980s, NGOs in Mexico seemingly have played an active role in political participation toward expanding citizenship. For example, Alianza Cívica (Civic Alliance) has the objective to “build” democracy in Mexico, particularly through election monitoring (i.e., political citizenship); El Barzón assists people with injustices and illegalities committed by the banking industry following the 1994 peso devaluation (i.e., social citizenship); Tierra y Libertad (Land and Liberty), active since the early 1970s, focuses on obtaining land tenure in Monterrey (i.e., social citizenship); and the National Coordination of Women’s NGOs, also in Monterrey, targets a wide range of issues, including human rights, poverty, employment, and reproductive health (i.e., civil and social citizenship) (Bailey 1998; Bennett 1992; Pozas Garza 1995). As with other countries in Latin America, this brief list of NGOs in Mexico demonstrates the wide variety that have been actively challenging what should be considered “political” and thus,
I argue, challenging the boundaries of citizenship and political participation.

While Mexico, technically, has a democratic political system, few would argue that Mexico is a democratic state and thus adequately incorporates all aspects of citizenship. For example, in terms of political citizenship, it was only in the past national election that there was a change of party leadership in 71 years. Not only has political citizenship suffered in terms of party politics, there have been varying degrees of repression of citizen participation in politics, particularly in terms of collective action. With respect to social (and economic) and civil citizenship, many groups in society, primarily women and the poor, remain outside social, economic, and legal systems, suggesting that citizenship and thus democracy has a long way to go before Mexico can legitimately argue the consolidation of a democratic state has taken place.

Because of recent moves in Mexico toward a more inclusive (i.e., democratic) political process, the question of the role of NGOs in this process is timely. On the one hand, political citizenship appears to be expanding and thus decreasing social inequality. This is due to specific actions by the government, but also because of pressure from collective action within civil society that has opened political systems in terms of voting, the number of political parties eligible for elections, and the fluctuations of party control at the state and municipal levels. Conversely, the other side of the argument suggests that while political citizenship may be expanding, social and civil citizenship are not. Rather, these types of citizenship are becoming more unequal, particularly for women and other individuals based on race/ethnicity, class, and geographical location (Craske 1999; Lister 1997; Schild 1998).

In the next two subsections, I address this dialectical relationship between the State and Society in Mexico and discuss how citizenship expands and contracts over time.

**Shifting Relations between the State and Society in Mexico: The Role of the Government**

Many scholars begin with the 1968 student demonstrations in Mexico City and the subsequent repressive actions by the then PRI-led government as the beginning of major changes between the State
and Society (Craske 1993; Foweraker and Craig 1990; Davis 1997; Hellman 1994; Middlebrook 1986; Reygadas 1998). As with many other parts of the world during the late 1960s and early 1970s, where social movements took on a new and more forceful role, students as well as non-students (i.e., workers, peasants, and popular middle classes) in Mexico also began to more openly challenge the political system. The 1968 demonstrations took place in the same year that Mexico hosted the Olympics, thereby creating an international spotlight on the country. The government, under former President Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970), violently repressed the movement on October 2, 1968, when government troops fired upon the peaceful demonstration and killed an estimated 200 people, thus leaving Mexican citizens and the world questioning the legitimacy of the Mexican government (Bennett 1992).

While following the 1968 massacre relations between the State and Society became increasingly strained, it was also the next two presidential terms - Luis Echeverría (1970-1976) and López Portillo (1976-1982) - that brought election reform to light and the initial movement toward decentralizing power (Bennett 1992; Craske 1993; Middlebrook 1986). Echeverría’s administration, in an attempt to regain legitimacy, initiated the “democratic opening” by decreasing state censorship of the press and diminishing control of the labor movement (Hellman 1994). The administration’s concern centered on a growing urban middle class that could not easily be incorporated into the Mexican political system by traditional means (i.e., a corporative political structure) (Middlebrook 1986). Echeverría’s development strategy included tackling issues of income distribution and unemployment, raising the population’s standard of living, reducing external dependency, and controlling foreign investments (Rodríguez 1998). Another significant goal of this sexenio (six-year term) was to initiate decentralization of power and policies (i.e., economic, health, and social policies) from the capital city (Davis 1997; Rodríguez 1998). In particular, Echeverría focused on public investments for development of the rural areas in Mexico, and in the urban areas he focused on industrial decentralization.

López Portillo took the “opening” further by establishing electoral reforms that included legalizing left-wing parties and giving them an opportunity to occupy seats in Congress, depending on the total votes
received. It is important to note that despite these reforms, electoral fraud continued to prevail (Hellman 1994). With respect to economic and social issues, this sexenio also promoted the Plan Global de Desarrollo (Global Development Plan), aimed chiefly at urbanization problems (Rodríguez 1998). This plan, however, was not implemented until the last two years of the sexenio, which corresponded with the beginning of the debt crisis for Mexico and all of Latin America. Therefore, the decentralization policies and programs developed by both Echeverría and López Portillo, scholars argue, had “almost no impact whatsoever on the development of states and municipalities – as industry still tended to locate in the Valley of Mexico” (Mexico City) (Rodríguez, 1998, p. 167). Furthermore, attempts to correct both economic and social problems remained primarily through and guided by formal government channels.

Changes again in Mexican State and Society relations occurred after the 1982 announcement by the Mexican government, under the leadership of Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988), of the inability to repay the existing external foreign debt. Coupled with the beginning of the debt crisis or the “lost decade,” the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City plunged the vast majority of Mexicans into severe economic and social conditions. In response to the crisis, de la Madrid’s sexenio promoted the opening of Mexico’s economy to foreign investment as well as the reduction of state control in the economy (Davis 1997; Shefner 1998; Silva 1998). In addition to responding to the economic crisis, de la Madrid continued to focus on decentralization as a way to develop Mexico economically, socially, and politically. Again, both economic and social policies aimed at improving the living conditions for all Mexicans were largely steered through the formal routes of politics rather than connected with the population on a broad-based scale.

On the heels of the Mexican debt crisis, the 1985 earthquake, and shifting political terrain in State-Society relations, Carlos Salinas de Gortari took office amidst much controversy at the voting polls (Davis 1997; Haber 1994). As a result of what many view as blatant voter fraud and manipulation of election results, the PRI suffered a loss of legitimacy, whereby suggesting that Mexico had not moved toward democracy or had even taken several steps backward in time. In an effort to recoup a legitimate power structure, as well as to drive a
wedge between the leftist PRD (Democratic Revolutionary Party) and popular movements, Salinas put forth a series of welfare-like programs, such as the National Solidarity Program (PRONASOL) (Bruhn 1997; Cornelius 1994; Haber 1994; Rodríguez 1998). These programs were to work towards alleviating poverty and reducing the inequality of income distribution (i.e., social citizenship). PRONASOL, better known as Solidarity among Mexicans, was a community participation program whereby any organization could request funds from the administration for public-works projects. Organizations included those located in civil society, as well as state or local government offices (Rodríguez 1998).

One of the directives of PRONASOL was to decentralize government power and give more strength to those organizations located in civil society, such as local associations, neighborhood coalitions, or grass-roots organizations. There were conditions, however, attached to the funds, which included the requirement of the organization to establish a solidarity committee that would create space for the state and municipal authorities to work with the organization in order to define, manage, and execute the programs, and thus potentially undermine the autonomy of the organizations (Piester 1997). Despite these conditions, the linkage represents a contrast from the previous administrations and provides yet another marker in changing State-Society relations in Mexico. Importantly, however, NGOs were notably absent from the PRONASOL program, where funds were funneled from the State to other locally based organizations (Piester 1997).

Despite Salinas' attempt to "strengthen" civil society, controversy continued to plague Salinas' sexenio, and research suggests that PRONASOL only reflected the PRI's interests in targeting areas of oppositional party strength, particularly the PRD in urban areas (Haber 1994). Moreover, PRONASOL experienced interference by PRI state and local officials, thus impeding the redistributive programs and harming the strength of those organizations located in civil society (Cornelius 1994; Rodríguez 1998). Recent research suggests that the nature of PRONASOL actually thwarted the role of NGOs in civil society, whereby cooperation between the State and NGOs was minimal during Salinas' sexenio (Piester 1997; Segarra 1997). For
example, during this time the government changed the laws so that it was able to treat NGOs as private profit-making corporations (Piester 1997). In addition, one study demonstrates that proximity mattered, for which organizations received funds so that independent organizations in areas with growing opposition to PAN (National Action Party) or PRD were more successful in attaining the funds (Piester 1997).

Not only did Salinas initiate PRONASOL, but in a seeming contradiction his term in office also ushered in full-force Neoliberal economic policies that have arguably increased poverty and diminished the distribution of income. Research in Mexico (and Latin America) has illustrated that the Neoliberal reform policies have had an unequal and devastating effect on women and poor communities (Benería and Feldman 1992). Although gross national product (GDP) grew in Mexico by 4.5% in 1990, it fell, during Salinas' administration, to 0.4% in 1993 and 0.6% in 1994 (Urquidi 1994). Furthermore, the rate of employment has not kept pace with labor-force growth. And, while the years 1989 to 1992 (during Salinas' administration) demonstrate a decrease in overall extreme poverty, many scholars argue that such aggregate data masks the inequalities that are increasing in rural areas, as well as the differences based on gender, class, and race/ethnicity. Scholars are now grappling with whether Neoliberal, economic reforms will provide the basis for expanding citizenship and, ultimately, consolidating democratic countries (Cornelius 1994).

The most recent major economic and social upheaval in Mexico's history was the December 1994 peso devaluation under recently outgoing president Ernesto Zedillo. Because of excessive foreign debt already accrued and over-borrowing at the very end of the Salinas sexenio, Mexico was plunged into a severe economic crisis. Approximately 250,000 Mexicans became unemployed within the first three months of the peso devaluation (Schulz 1998). In response to the economic crisis, the Zedillo administration was forced to accept a “bail-out” package, thus leaving Mexico further dependent on the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and particularly the U.S. Throughout his administration, Zedillo continued along the lines of Neoliberalism and furthered the linkages of Mexico's economy with global capitalism.
While Zedillo, Salinas, de la Madrid, López Portillo, and Echeverría all initiated policies to combat social and economic inequalities (i.e., social citizenship) as well as decentralization as an attempt to expand citizenship participation in politics (i.e., political citizenship), some scholars argue that continued dependency exists on the centralized power structure in the capital city. Other scholars argue that there has been some level of decentralization as evident by more state-level control over fiscal policy and a widening of political participation by citizens.

Despite the uncertainty of the policies, what is important is that this widening of citizen participation has remained largely within “informal” ways of doing politics—NGOs, social movements, and other civil society groups—rather than electoral and party politics dating back to the de la Madrid sexenio. In fact, the refusal of the de la Madrid administration to “recognize” the various social movements under the auspices of coordinating bodies led to increased strength and larger membership (Haber 1994). And, in response to Salinas’ sexenio, rather than retreat, NGOs formed a network (mostly in Mexico City) to challenge the government and work toward changing the profit-making statute (Piester 1997). Finally, in response to Zedillo’s Neoliberal economic policies, NGOs have continued to exist and grow in numbers. In fact, it is in this context of Neoliberal reforms (which are occurring throughout the world) and the era of globalization that NGOs as a new avenue of political participation are squarely situated.

In light of these political, economic, and social shifts in State-Society relations, the question remains as to what degree the previous five Mexican presidents succeeded in economic and political restructuring in such a way as to promote and expand citizenship. And, on the other hand, to what degree and how have different political actors in civil society, whether NGOs, social movements, or other civil society groups, contributed and responded to the restructuring of Mexico with respect to citizenship? Part of the answer is that despite the severe strain on State and Society relations dating back to the Mexican government’s crushing response to the 1968 student movement, informal politics in a variety of forms did not become obsolete.
Shifting Relations between the State and Society in Mexico: The Role of Political Participation

Since 1968, there has been an increase in political participation, particularly Urban Popular Movements, which challenge existing policies and procedures of the government, especially in regard to housing, education, health, and other urban services (Haber 1994; Ramos Escandón 1994). These initial challenges by urban popular movements occurred primarily in the North and in the southern region of Chiapas (Bennett 1992; Craske 1993). Indeed, it was also in the 1970s that the women’s movement in Mexico (as well as other parts of the world) began to rise, take form, and flourish. The student movements in Mexico City and Monterrey became more radical and stronger, and collective action by other marginalized groups became visible (Pozas Garza 1995; Ramos Escandón 1994). Importantly, this continued rise of collective action also took place under the political restructuring of the administrations of Echeverría and López Portillo, thereby suggesting that, despite electoral reform, many Mexicans continued to participate politically outside of institutionalized channels of political participation.

In response to Mexico’s devastated economy throughout the 1980s, social movements and other forms of collective action have continued to flourish, particularly in Mexico City, and more specifically following the 1985 earthquake. It is in Mexico City where urban popular movements have continued to become increasingly visible and vocal (Craske 1993; Foweraker and Craig 1990; Shefner 1998; Ramos Escandón 1994). The strength and number of these social movements were not only visible at the neighborhood level, but the movements brought the problems of everyday life to the forefront at the regional and national levels (Bennett 1992; Ramos Escandón 1994). And, importantly, these movements also made visible how everyday life, politically, socially, and economically, differed among various social groups. That is, these movements have challenged traditional notions of what politics is by raising issues of a variety of demands and articulating these demands as rights, whether labor rights, human rights, or land rights (Foweraker and Craig 1990).

Interestingly, corresponding with the women’s movement, urban popular movements have largely been dominated by women’s
participation. While female participants outnumber males in the urban popular movements, when examining the organizational structure of the urban popular movements, women's invisibility becomes evident as women are either underrepresented or absent from the formal leadership structure (Hellman 1994; Stephen 1992). This, I contend, raises additional questions about the plurality of movements and the degree to which they represent citizens' interests. In other words, there appears to be a widening of civil society in the public sphere for all citizens, but it also appears that civil society remains hierarchically structured, where women and the poor continue to be marginalized.

Following the 1994 peso devaluation, responses from society again took on a variety of forms of collective action. Two of the most visible responses by society were social movements from the Zapatistas and the debtors' movement El Barzón (Harvey 1998; Williams 1996; Schulz 1998). The Zapatista uprising was in protest to the peso devaluation, but it was also a protest against global capitalism and indigenous rights. El Barzón was begun by farmers without credit to buy seed or fertilizer and was aimed directly at bankers and bondholders. The movement quickly spread to urban areas, primarily including the middle class, because many people and businesses in urban areas facing economic crisis lost their jobs, filed bankruptcy, and/or abandoned their homes because they simply could not make payments (Williams 1996). In addition to the Zapatista uprising and El Barzón, the vast majority of the NGOs were created after 1994 in response to growing citizens' needs that were quickly becoming abandoned by the federal government's pursuit of Neoliberal economic policies and desire to become incorporated into the global economy.

As this short summary presents, changes in social, economic, and political processes are not only responded to by the government, but also society, thereby suggesting a dialectical relationship between State and Society. On the State side, there were actions taken by the government in response to strong collective actions in society. Interestingly though, there were also actions taken by the government that should have curtailed the ability of social groups to organize. Instead, political participation and, particularly, collective action continued to thrive.
What is important about the rise of collective action in the 1970s and its continuation for the next two decades is that there was a flurry of new actors and new ways of doing politics on a political, social, and economic landscape that was changing rapidly (Bennett 1992; Hellman 1994). Moreover, it also suggests that there was an increasing existence and strength in organizations located in civil society. Scholars of citizenship, gender, and social movements all argue that having multiple forms of political participation is a vital aspect for the extension of citizenship and the development of a more democratic society (Álvarez 1997; Arato and Cohen 1999; Fraser 1993; Foweraker and Craig 1990; Hipsher 1998).

While Mexico is characterized by a rich history of political participation, there are important regional differences that must be acknowledged. There is no shortage of recent scholarly documentation about collective action, particularly social movements in Mexico City, Guadalajara, and the region of Chiapas during the past 15 years (see, for example, Shefner 1999; Cook 1996; Foweraker and Craig 1990). There does appear to be a gap in the literature about collective action in the north, specifically in Monterrey after 1985. Interestingly, while collective action increased in numbers in Mexico City during the 1980s, collective action in Monterrey became more and more docile as fragmentation and co-optation characterized the political landscape (Bennett 1992; Castells 1982; Pozas Garza 1995; Vellinga, Vera, and Rae-Lee 1993).

What created this difference in collective action and, specifically, social-movement activity over the past 15 years between Mexico City and Monterrey? Part of the answer is due to the very different history that Monterrey has compared with the rest of Mexico dating back to pre-revolutionary times, as well as a unique power structure and labor-control techniques (Vellinga 1979; Vellinga, Vera, and Rae-Lee 1993). This is certainly not to suggest that collective action has not existed in Monterrey. On the contrary, there have been periods of strong political activity. For example, during the 1930s the political terrain in Monterrey was characterized by intense labor protests (Snodgrass 1996). Forty years later, this political terrain widened to include student movements, guerilla groups, land invasions, and urban popular movements, such as the water protests in the early 1980s (Pozas Garza 1995). Visible protest, however, appears to have waned in the past...
decade. Certainly resistance and challenges still exist, but what form have they taken in the north, and how do new actors (such as NGOs) challenge the government?

It is in this context that I extend an analytical framework to examine what role NGOs play in political participation in order to expand citizenship, as rights, obligations, and access. It is also the unique setting of Monterrey that begs for further research in an effort to add to social knowledge. Tilly (1984) argues the need to compare social structures and processes. I suggest that examining NGOs supports a variation-finding strategy in such a way that it elucidates the differences among them. In addition, studying NGOs in a city that is seemingly an outlier not only in Mexico, but also in Latin America, provides the basis for an overall individual comparison of Monterrey to other cities in the region.

**Theoretical Framework**

In order to analyze the role of NGOs in facilitating political participation in Monterrey, Mexico, I draw on theoretical frameworks from the literature on collective action, gender, and citizenship. There are two central themes for the theoretical underpinnings of this article: gendering political participation and gendering state relationships.

With respect to gendering political participation, there are two issues. The first one is to account for the role of gender identity (or race, or ethnicity) in political participation. By gendered political participation, I mean that gender becomes an organizing principal in the movement, with respect to tactics, strategies, and resources used in the movement. My use of gender as a constituent building block of society thus contextualizes gender, both politically and socially, rather than obscuring gender as a meaningful construct. Moreover, I argue that social change cannot be understood without attention to the gendered structure of social and political movements that challenge the existing order of social relations. Therefore, I contend that research addressing collective action should pay particular attention to investigating the various ways that gender dynamics, beliefs, and assumptions are embedded in relationships, whether social, economic, or political. This is particularly important if the issue surrounding the political participation is not about a gender issue per se. Some
scholars recognize the importance of understanding political participation through a gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality lens and explicitly analyze the action based on a gender lens (Bennett 1995; Bouvard 1984; Einwohner, Hollander, and Olson 2000; Irons 1998; Fonow 1998; Neuhouser 1995; Taylor and Whittier 1998; Valocchi 1999). Other scholars tend to focus on the importance of gender identity and how that collective consciousness informed the mobilization (Jaquette 1994; Jelin 1994).

The second issue in gendering political participation is related to the role of identity in the formation, emergence, and success of the action and focuses on how to merge identity and structure into a coherent theoretical model. It is widely recognized in the collective action literature and more recently in the gender literature that the link between social structure (i.e., political processes and resources) and culture (i.e., collective identity) is under-theorized (Bernstein 1997; Escobar and Álvarez 1992; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; Mueller 1992; Radcliffe and Westwood 1993; Taylor and Whittier 1999). On the one hand, there is a new social movement theory largely derived from European scholars, where new social movement theorists stress culture and claim that identity is the basis for collective action (Laraña, Johnston, and Gustfield 1994; MueLLer 1988; Scott 1990). On the other side are the political process theories developed in the United States, where theorists claim collective action arises and develops as a result of an opening in the political system and emphasizes strategy (McAdam 1982; Piven and Cloward 1977; Tilly 1978). These scholars typically define the core elements of political opportunities as influential allies, increasing political access, elite divisions, and declining state repression (see discussion in Schock 1999).

Both camps have been the subjects of considerable critique by the other. New social movement theory has been critiqued for tending to ignore social structures that guide, maintain, and perpetuate social relations and inequality (Lo 1992; Morris 1992; MueLLer 1992; Scott 1990). That is, new social movement theorists analyze collective action around the issue of identity without recognizing that identity is embedded in social structures, in part maintained by the State. Similarly, scholars of new social movement theory critique the political process theorists for being overly structurally determined and
providing little space for individual agency (Morris 2000). The central complaint leveled against political process theories is that too much weight is given to external factors, such as political opportunities or movement linkages with elite organizations, rather than to the group formation itself.

The dilemma of merging collective identity and structure, as well as unpacking the role of identity, is particularly important because it is women that comprise the vast majority of much of the informal political participation, such as urban popular movements. Upon closer examination, however, the invisibility of gender becomes clear in that most of the leaders are men, and women make up the backbone of the movement (Foweracker and Craig 1990; Jaquette 1994; Jelin 1994; Radcliffe and Westwood 1995; Ramos Escandón 1994). Furthermore, examining identity illustrates the divisive nature of collective identities, rather than simply a unifying force (Chow 1996; Hooks 1981, 1984; Mueller 1992; Stembach et al. 1992; Taylor and Whittier 1992).

Certainly progress has been made on both of the above addressed issues. I would suggest, however, that the theoretical models still lack the nuances necessary to understand identity dynamics. For example, on the one hand, scholars have begun to explore the linkages among the literatures with respect to gendering political participation and collective action and exploring the complexities of social structures and identity formation in challenging aspects of citizenship (see for example Álvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998; Escobar and Álvarez 1992; Kriesi, et al. 1995; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; Mueller and Morris 1992). On the other hand, much of the literature that exists on the identity/structure debate, social movements and citizenship either remains at the theoretical level, relying on previous research as support, or focuses on the industrialized world of the U.S., Europe, and Australia.13

Understanding the influence of gender (i.e., identity) and political participation within collective action is not only important, but understanding how gender structures the participants' relationship to the State is important as well. This second theme of gendering state relationships is important because it is the State which determines and enforces citizenship rights, obligations, and access in a given country. Moreover, it is also the State’s responses to political
participation that can affect the outcome and change the course of the mobilization. For example, governments may pass legislation which creates an opening in the system, but governments may also pass legislation that curtails social and political mobilization (see for example, Oltzak and West 1990; Rubin, Griffin, and Wallace 1983; West 1995). In this way, the State has an active role in creating opportunity for mobilization to occur.

I do not argue that it is only the State that creates opportunities for political participation. Rather, it is a dialectical relationship, whereby analyzing the State and analyzing the role that identity formation plays are vital, particularly in circumstances of highly repressive regimes (see for example, Bouvard 1984; Fisher 1989). My position is that the relationship individuals have with the State in terms of their citizenship is highly structured by their location in the social structure (Gordon 1990; Fraser 1989; Lister 1997; Mouffe 1992). What I mean by this is that individuals in a society have different relationships depending on their social class, gender, race/ethnicity, and geographical location. That is, citizenship, whether rights, obligations, or access, is simply not equal for all members of a society, and thus identity affects the opportunities that some have for challenging the political system.

While there are many diverse theories of the State, my perspective is that the State is neither class-neutral nor gender-neutral, nor is it race-neutral, and this has direct implications for collective action theories in general and specifically for this research on political participation. In fact, it is exactly the nature and role of the State that some scholars argue Latin America are different and thus debate how or even if to use certain theories of collective action, particularly the political process theories (Davis 1999; Escobar and Álvarez 1992; Foweraker 1995).

Some scholars argue that the case of Latin America is different because the origin and character of the State are different from those forms of political power that developed in Europe and the United States and thus do not fit Latin America. In addition, collective action has flourished in Latin America during times of incredible repression, which does not lend support for political process theories' argument about external political openings (Álvarez 1998; Schild 1998). In contrast,