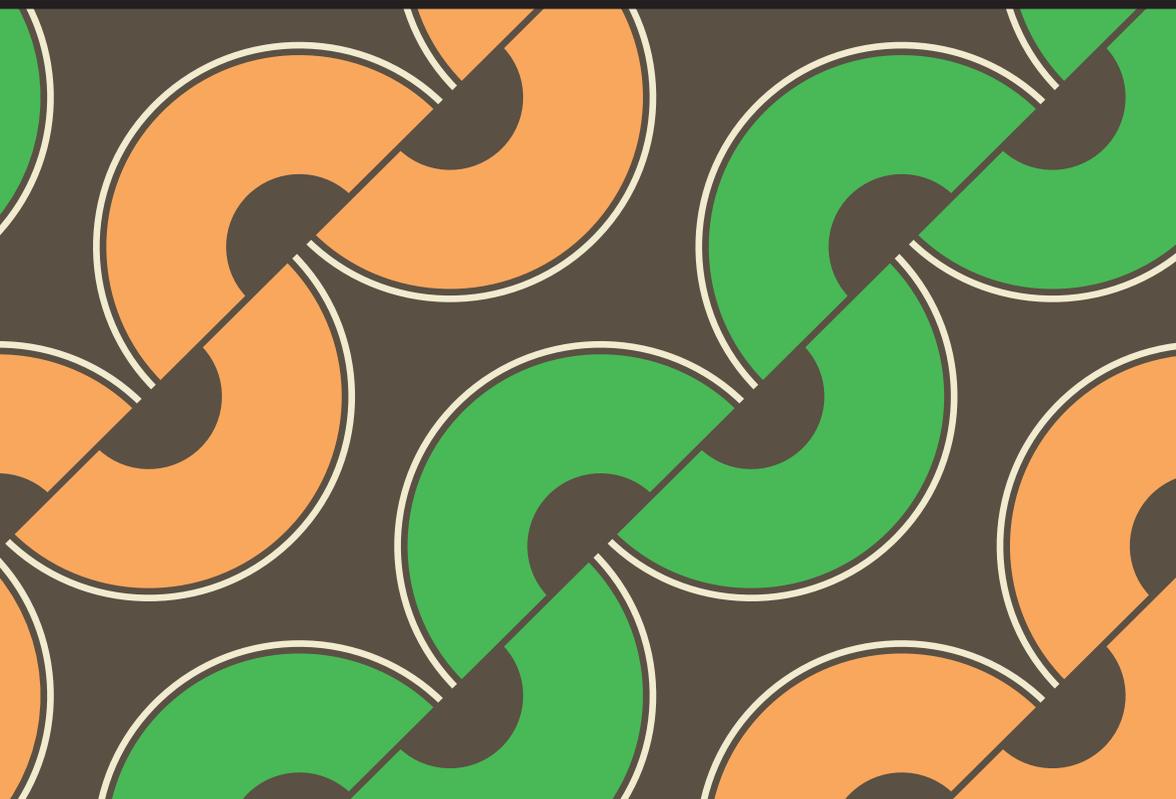




**NEW APPROACHES TO RESISTANCE**

**IN BRAZIL AND MEXICO**



**John Gledhill and Patience A. Schell, EDITORS**

**New Approaches to Resistance  
in Brazil and Mexico**

John Gledhill and  
Patience A. Schell, editors

Duke University Press *Durham & London*  
2012

© 2012 Duke University Press

All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ☺

Typeset in Arnhem Blond by Tseng Information Systems, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
appear on the last printed page of this book.

## Acknowledgments

First and foremost, our thanks are due to the Arts and Humanities Research Council of the United Kingdom for funding the interdisciplinary research project on which this book is based. We are also grateful to Dr. Jocélio Teles dos Santos, director of the Center of Afro-Oriental Studies (CEAO) of the Federal University of Bahia, for allowing us to hold the public sessions of our seminars in the CEAO, to Dr. Federico Besserer for doing the same on the first day of our work in Mexico City, at the Anthropology Department of the Metropolitan Autonomous University, Iztapalapa, and to Dr. Jean Meyer for making the facilities of his own institution, the Center for Economic Research and Teaching, available to us during the rest of our stay. In Manchester, we were fortunate to be able to count on the efficient administrative support of Claudia Natteri and Charlotte Jackson in the School of Social Sciences for handling the complex travel, accommodation, and subsistence arrangements necessary to bring an international group of scholars together in the same place at the same time. Charlotte Liddell provided us with valuable editorial support in preparing the manuscript for initial submission to the press, funding for which was provided by Manchester's School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures. We are also grateful to Parvathi Kumaraswami for helping us arrange translation from Spanish or Portuguese, and we are grateful to our translators: Lucy Lawton, Sarah Magee, Sarah Maitland, Monica Morales Moreno, Tara Plunkett, and Richard Reed. Finally, thanks are due to Valerie Millholland and Miriam Angress at Duke University Press for their support in bringing our thoughts on resistance to publication.

## INTRODUCTION

### A Case for Rethinking Resistance

JOHN GLEDHILL

This book explores what the notion of “resistance” can contribute to scholarly understandings of the history and contemporary social and political life of Latin America’s two largest countries, Brazil and Mexico. Our case studies aim to contribute to broader theoretical debates at the interface between history and the social sciences. This introduction reviews debates about the usefulness of resistance from the perspective of an anthropologist. Alan Knight closes the book with a historian’s overview of the broader implications of our findings.

At first sight, our theme might seem anachronistic. Although “resistance studies” became an academic boom industry in the 1980s (D. Moore 1998, 348), the next decade brought a wave of critiques. Some critics, such as Sherry Ortner (1995), remained sympathetic to the idea that resistance studies possessed a worthwhile object of analysis but called for that analysis to become more theoretically nuanced and more grounded in ethnography. Others, however, argued that misplaced moral fervor had driven anthropology toward an obsession with resistance that, by trying to explain everything, ended up explaining nothing (M. Brown 1996; Sahlins 2002). Given such critiques, one anthropologist, Robert Fletcher, confessed to thinking twice about including “resistance” in the title of his paper, for fear of alienating potential readers. Yet he went on to argue that “rethinking” could “resurrect a troubled but significant field of research.” “Fundamentally,” he insisted, “studies of resistance are concerned with the struggle for equality, the fight to end exploitation and achieve a more just and humane society” (Fletcher 2001, 44).

It also seems important that “resisting” is often what our research sub-

jects say they are doing when they struggle, to defend their lands, culture, or religion, or to achieve *new* rights and social dignity in situations of inequality and discrimination. For example, the people of a Nahua indigenous community that I studied in Ostula, Mexico, took pride in their successful historical resistance to very real threats of genocide and dispossession (Gledhill 2004a). In 2006, newly allied with the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, Ostula was declared a “community in resistance” to government agrarian certification programs (see Baitenmann, chapter fourteen). This was a new move in a longstanding dispute over lands usurped by invading ranchers in the early twentieth century, a dispute made more acute by growing capitalist interest in developing the tourism and mining potential of Ostula’s communal territory. The stakes remain high in these conflicts. The village schoolteacher elected to head the commission pursuing the land claim was brutally murdered in July 2008. A year later, following a confrontation in which shots were fired at indigenous men, women, and children, Ostula turned its communal police into a self-defense force and seized control of the disputed terrain. In the face of this spectacular action, which made headlines in national newspapers, the state government agreed to compensate the ranchers for returning the lands to the community, but Ostulans continued to suffer violent reprisals.

This is another good reason to take resistance seriously. Yet Fletcher’s case study presented analytical dilemmas that this book demonstrates are ubiquitous in studies of resistance. Although some of his research subjects, Chilean indigenous people threatened with displacement by a hydroelectric dam, mounted a vigorous campaign with the support of indigenous-rights NGOs, environmental and alter-globalization activists, and university intellectuals to defend their land and way of life, the majority not only seemed willing to embrace resettlement as a positive opportunity to experience “development” and “progress,” but gave their votes to the political ultraright. This led Fletcher to criticize James Scott’s (1985; 1990) paradigmatic formulation of “everyday forms of resistance” for making it difficult to account for actors who do not seem to find their situations as oppressive as outside activists and academics think they should. Understanding why people in apparently similar “situations of domination” react differently is a central issue in rethinking resistance integral to many analyses in this book and systematically explored by Robert Slenes in chapter five in the case of slaves in the Brazilian southeast. Fletcher’s argument also raises the issue of possible bias on the part of resistance

theorists regarding the types of actors and movements deemed worthy of investigation. Should actors who are not at the bottom of the social scale, such as the Catholic women discussed by Patience Schell in chapter nine, or “subaltern” actors not struggling for a more just and humane society, be included in studies of resistance when they are challenging the will of governments and elites (including, perhaps, “liberal multicultural elites”)? These are some of the questions that we asked contributors to this book to address.

One way forward is to expand the discussion of resistance from Scott’s everyday forms of resistance to the broader field of what Sidney Tarrow calls “contentious politics.” Contentious politics embraces any “collective activity on the part of claimants—or those who claim to represent them—relying at least in part on non-institutional forms of interaction with elites, opponents, or the state.” It therefore encompasses the study of social movements, which Tarrow, following Charles Tilly, defines as “sustained challenges to powerholders in the name of a disadvantaged population living under the jurisdiction or influence of those powerholders” (Tarrow 1996, 874). The usefulness of pursuing a broader perspective is illustrated by Jean Meyer’s and Schell’s discussions of Catholic opposition to the state in postrevolutionary Mexico (chapters eight and nine). Much of the rest of this book shows that we need to look more closely at the interactions and alliances between subaltern groups and other social and political actors. Although the latter are generally less humble social actors who find themselves opposed to those currently exercising power, as illustrated by some of the nineteenth-century alliances described by Marcus de Carvalho in chapter four, we also sometimes find the clandestine hand of the powerful at work in ways that “manage” the rebellious actions of the poor, as Javier Auyero shows in his analyses of the role played by the Peronist political machine and police in the Argentine food riots of 2001 (Auyero 2007). This suggests that the study of resistance should be embedded in more complex accounts of the *practices* of power. Among the lines of analysis that we pursue in this book are the ways in which the exercise of power is furthered by state responses institutionalizing movements that generate “contentious politics,” a line of analysis exemplified by Ilka Boaventura Leite’s study of the “juridical-formal” *quilombo* in chapter twelve, and the broader role of multicultural policies within contemporary neoliberal techniques of rule. Yet as Guillermo de la Peña concludes in chapter eleven, none of these critical perspectives on the workings of power rela-

tions eliminate the need to consider the role of “subaltern projects in the march of history,” even if, as Patricia Pessar notes in chapter six, the identities, meanings, and practices that inspire such projects will inevitably shift with the times.

This book is based on intensive discussions between anthropologists and historians in three four-day research seminars funded by the British Arts and Humanities Research Council and held in Salvador, in the Brazilian state of Bahia, Mexico City, and Manchester, England. Our basic question was whether resistance studies could still be revitalized through further new thinking, bearing in mind the volume of new research that has accumulated since the original boom. Although some participants remained skeptical about the value of resistance studies, our discussions did show that asking searching questions about resistance was a productive framework for advancing new interpretations. Indeed, as Felipe Castro Gutiérrez shows in chapter two, a high level of skepticism about the inevitability of indigenous resistance to colonialism, and a wariness of reading the past in terms of present social and political concerns, can stimulate original research on deeper and less obvious manifestations of indigenous “indignation and irritation” that offer interesting parallels to Matthew Gutmann’s account in chapter fifteen of the contemporary “compliant defiance” of working-class Mexicans. The remainder of this introduction provides a more detailed review of the evolving debate and the areas in which this book seeks to move it forward.

### **Resistance Studies in Historical Perspective**

In chapter two Castro Gutiérrez suggests that an archeology of the notion of resistance could trace connections between its appearance in modern Latin American movements, such as the “Five Hundred Years of Indigenous and Black Resistance” campaign, and European antecedents such as nineteenth-century anarchist thought and the struggles of the French partisans under Nazi occupation. Nevertheless, the intellectual movement that generated the boom in resistance studies in the 1980s was the product of a more recent historical conjuncture. In the United States, resistance studies emerged, as Gutmann notes in chapter fifteen, in the climate of “diminished expectations” associated with the triumph of Reaganism. In Latin America, the conjuncture was different, with military regimes still in power in many countries until the mid-1980s. A few countries, such as

Guatemala, were still locked in conflicts between Leftist insurgents and authoritarian regimes backed by Washington well into the 1990s. Nevertheless, the experience of dictatorship scarcely enhanced the credibility of revolutionary Left projects, while resistance theory, as a celebration of the decentered “popular subject,” subsequently took its place alongside “new social movements theory” as a tool for thinking about more radically democratic alternatives in an era in which democratization generally got off to a cautious start.

Interest in resistance theories in Latin America was, however, further stimulated by the attempt to incorporate indigenous peoples into revolutionary movements. Northern intellectuals wished to show solidarity with the struggles of groups that revolutionary socialists and capitalist modernizers alike had deemed a reproach on national dreams of achieving “modernity” (Beverley 1999). David Stoll (1999) has controversially argued that the solidarity work of U.S. scholars around the iconic *testimonio* book *I, Rigoberta Menchú* actually prolonged violence in Guatemala, since without it the military would have eliminated the guerrilla completely (see Knight, conclusion). From Stoll’s perspective, Menchú was a Marxist revolutionary wolf masquerading in the sheep’s clothing of a Maya peasant woman, but the resistance theme was taken up by Latin American intellectuals working against the grain of both the assimilationist policies of developmental states and orthodox Left positions in which issues of class override questions of ethnicity, race, and gender. Although Scott’s work has been criticized for its focus on “an analytics of class to the exclusion of other productive and social inequalities (notably gender, age and ethnicity),” (D. Moore 1998, 350) Mexican scholars focusing on indigenous issues, such as Adriana López (1996) and Marcela Coronado (2000), found his ideas useful.

Latin American scholarship is not a simple replication of gringo scholarship, even if the Northern academy remains “hegemonic” (Restrepo and Escobar 2005). For example, the Gramsci of Latin American scholars generally looks more like the Italian Communist strategist than the “lite” version appropriated by North American cultural anthropology (Crehan 2002). Nor has the politics of Latin America stood still since the mid-1980s. Yet whether the politics is one of state capture, as achieved by Evo Morales’s Movement for Socialism in Bolivia, or pluralistic radical democratization from below that eschews electoral participation, as advocated by the Zapatistas in Mexico, much of it does not seem to be an “infrapolitics”

focused on muttered defiance behind the backs of the dominant of the kind on which Scott focused our attention, “an unobtrusive realm of political struggle” based on “the veiled cultural struggle and political expression of subordinate groups who have ample reason to fear venturing their unguarded opinion” (1990, 183–84).

Nevertheless, although the historical conjunctures that gave birth to the resistance theories of the 1980s have passed, some issues that were part of a broader concern with power relations remain at the center of current debates. In particular, we have the influence of Michel Foucault and his contention in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* that “where there is power, there is also resistance” (1978, 95–96). In a critique of the “romanticism” of first-generation resistance theorists, Lila Abu-Lughod turns Foucault on his head by re-rendering his dictum that “resistance is never in a position of exteriority to power” as “where there is resistance, there is power” (Abu-Lughod 1990, 42). For Abu-Lughod, the advantage for anthropologists’ “using resistance as a diagnostic of power” was that they could move away from abstract theories of power to the ethnographic “study of power in particular situations” and the way emancipation from one form of hierarchy or oppression can lead to new forms of hierarchy and oppression. In her ethnographic examination of the apparently safe spaces in which Bedouin women could enjoy a smoke and elaborate their “hidden transcripts” about such matters as male vices and arranged marriages, Abu-Lughod discusses the ambivalent implications of the social and economic changes that led some women to wear makeup and add negligees to their trousseaux. She concludes: “In resisting the axes of kin and gender, the young women who want the lingerie, Egyptian songs, satin wedding dresses, and fantasies of private romance their elders resist are perhaps unwittingly enmeshing themselves in an extraordinarily complex new set of power relations. These bind them irrecoverably to the Egyptian economy, itself tied to the global economy, and to the Egyptian state, many of whose powers depend on separating kin groups and regulating individuals.” Nevertheless, after posing the question of whether “certain modern forms and techniques of power work in such indirect ways, or seem to offer such positive attractions, that people do not as readily resist them,” she goes on to show how the adoption of modest Islamic dress and participation in Islamic movements represents a reaction to the contradictions that these new entanglements with global capitalism and the state pose for women who remain relatively socially marginalized. But funda-

mentalist practices not only entail yet another set of disciplines, they tie the participants to new transnational structures, the religious nationalisms of global Islam (Abu-Lughod 1990, 52).

Here, then, Foucault leads us toward a more complex account of the mutual relationships between power and resistance. As Donald Moore (1998, 351) points out, Scott's theory of infrapolitics combines the hidden transcript metaphor with spatial metaphors, in particular the binary opposition, borrowed from Erving Goffman, between "on-stage" and "off-stage." "Hidden" resistance takes place by assumption in places, such as slave quarters, where it is assumed that "power does not saturate or colonize" subaltern consciousness. No consideration can be given to how spaces and places, and the boundaries between them (such as "public" versus "private"), are constructed through the workings of power relations and challenges to them. Following earlier objections to Scott's idea of "power free" spaces of subaltern autonomy (Starn 1992, 94), Moore also points out that Abu-Lughod's position can be seen as one that Gramsci anticipated in speaking of the "limited and partial autonomy" of subaltern groups, which remain subject to the "activity" of dominant groups even when they are struggling against them (D. Moore 1998, 352). In chapter six of this book, Pessar argues against Scott's view of millenarianism as an exclusively subaltern "subculture" by showing how it is also an element of a mutually constituted dominant culture.

However, as Ortner (1995, 174–75) points out, one positive effect of Scott's drawing attention to "everyday forms of resistance" was to foment debate about which acts might reasonably be characterized as resistance and which not. This led to a series of revisions that highlighted the ambiguity of the acts themselves and the ambivalent subjectivities that tended to accompany relations between actors from dominant or subordinate groups. Not only were practices of "collaboration" often co-present with apparent practices of resistance, but it rapidly became apparent that subaltern groups had to be unpacked into actors differentiated by age, gender, status, and other "subject positions" (Ortner 1995, 175–76).

The "subject position" concept is central to poststructuralist and postmodernist thinking, and here Ortner also highlights the difficulties of Scott's tendency to ascribe a single and fixed identity to subalterns within a preconceived and objective "structural grid of class oppositions" (D. Moore 1998, 350). Identities and subjectification are in part the results of being classified and stigmatized by socially superior others (classifica-

tions that subalterns, such as slum-dwellers, can either affirm or reject, but not necessarily *escape*, in the practice of their daily lives). In contemporary societies, cultures of consumerism and “lifestyle” expand the possibilities of individuals’ constructing their own identities, although they still tend to do so according to current social ideas about what it takes to earn the “respect” of others, and even according to transnational models of what it means to be “cool” or “modern.” Yet possible subject positions remain multiple in most contexts: the same woman can be a woman, a poor woman, a peasant woman, a virtuous mother, a Catholic woman, etc. Subject positions are also situational, with one aspect of identity being appropriate for one context and another aspect, possibly contrasting with or even conflicting with the first, more suited to managing different types of social interactions. A canny and well-connected peasant politician will often find it convenient to become a humble and uneducated son of the village, for example. Yet while all this is useful, Ortner also points out that there is a danger, exemplified by the deconstructionist work of Gayatri Spivak, of “dissolving” the subject as living agent in a social context altogether (Ortner 1995, 184–86). Despite resistance theory’s apparent expansion of the definition of “political” action, it ironically did not contain enough politics at the end of the day, for the dominant-subordinate dichotomy often concealed the lively internal politics *within* subaltern populations (Ortner 1995, 177). Closer analysis of the internal politics of subalterns is a major theme of this book.

A defender of Scott’s pioneering work could, however, argue that these revisions enriched rather than invalidated a paradigm that served as a useful corrective to previous thinking, complementing other seminal contributions such as the work of E. P. Thompson and U.S. and Brazilian historians of slavery (see Slenes, chapter five). Scott challenged distinctions habitually made between “pre-political” forms of action and supposedly more “effective,” politically and socially transformative, types of consciousness. Bringing the politics of marginalized social groups onto the analytical agenda encouraged new thinking about dismissing particular forms of infrapolitical practices as “utopian” and “millenarian,” in particular those associated with religion. Many of the practices discussed in the resistance literature deserved recognition and study, even if further analysis showed that some that were too hastily identified as resistance were susceptible to more complex readings. There was considerable value in recognizing unvoiced and subterranean practices of resistance in forms

of behavior that had not previously been considered in such terms and in contexts where too much had been assumed about the docility of subaltern groups and the depth of their complicity in their own domination. The work of anthropologists such as Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff (1991) might be accused of exaggerating the real challenge to power relations posed by movements such as that of the Zionist churches in southern Africa, but it highlighted the limitations of trying to think about such contexts in terms of occidental Marxist ideas about what “working-class consciousness” should look like and the yardstick of an equally occidental vision of “revolutionary” politics.

Nevertheless, resistance theory produced its own blind spots, as Gutmann (chapter fifteen) shows in his critique of Scott’s account of “lower-class politics.” Scott presents the subaltern as a deeply knowing, nonmystified elaborator of rich cultural practices of disguised resistance inhibited from more overt action only by a shrewd assessment of its impracticality. Another important bias was the tendency to ignore “popular movements” that appeared to be reactionary by traditional Left standards, as well as forms of resistance that adopted pacific and nonconfrontational forms for reasons other than fear (see Meyer, chapter eight). In the areas where Mexican Catholics did take up arms in the Cristero rebellion, peasant insurgents seemed to be resisting the apparently more progressive agrarian reform movement in the name of an institution that generally seemed to be on the side of the landlords, the Catholic Church. Yet using the label “progressive” immediately betrays judgments on the part of the observer, judgments not only about what counts as “objective class interest” but also about what peasants should want most out of life (see Knight, conclusion). Since people in apparently similar socioeconomic situations could be found in opposing camps, the Cristiada not only returns us to Fletcher’s problem of explaining such differences but also forces us to consider which variables might be most relevant in explaining political differences among subalterns.

### **From Resistance to Power and “Hegemony”**

The most trenchant critiques do not stop at critiquing resistance. Marshall Sahlins attacked an obsession with power as “the latest incarnation of Anthropology’s incurable Functionalism” (Sahlins 2002, 20–21). Ortner maintained, “Resistance, even at its most ambiguous, is a reason-

ably useful category, if only because it highlights the presence and play of power in most forms of relationship and activity” (Ortner 1995, 175). Yet Sahlins found such assertions of the pervasiveness of power in human life disturbing, while Michael Brown (1996, 4) argued that Foucault merely offers us “culture as prison, culture as insane asylum, culture as ‘hegemonic domination of the [insert Other of choice].’” This is not the view of Abu-Lughod, whom Brown also cites: she simply points out that most forms of emancipation have their price. In a similar way, Sahlins’s huffing and puffing overstates its perfectly reasonable case for not trying to explain *everything* in the world of culture as either a product or expression of power relationships by seeming to turn down the opportunities that Ortner welcomes for looking at how power relationships might enter into the production and transformation of culture.

More recently, Foucauldians have, in fact, challenged the kind of critique that Brown makes of their mentor. Diane Nelson (2005) examines two “biopolitical” interventions by the Guatemalan military state, one the counterinsurgency campaign against indigenous communities of the 1980s and the other the “all out war” against malaria declared by the Guatemalan Health Ministry in 1955. Her first step is a rethinking of indigenous insurgency. By 1988, when it was clear that the guerrillas had lost the armed struggle and split into factions, it was also clear that many indigenous people were now rejecting the shared emphasis of the state, nonindigenous guerrilla leaderships, and their (now decimated) indigenous allies on “modernizing the country” by leaving indigenous culture behind. The war itself, and experiences of racism in the guerrilla ranks, encouraged different visions of liberation, including organization around Maya identity and cultural rights (Nelson 2005, 223). The army followed its scorched-earth policy of the early 1980s with a “development pole” strategy that combined discipline and surveillance with food aid, housing, and health care programs that attracted funds from churches and NGOs as well as foreign governments (223–24). Thus, in place of simple opposition between a pure resisting “people” and a brutal military regime, the war revealed more complex alignments and tensions, putting into question whether “collaboration” was simply the result of fear of death, and it ended up delivering more of the things that indigenous people in Guatemala had previously been demanding, such as schools and health care.

In the case of malaria eradication campaigns, a quintessential expression of deployment of the techniques of “modern government” to regulate

the “vitality” of a population, there is another kind of two-sidedness in what is at stake in terms of power. The implementation of the programs required intimate knowledge of the population at the level of households (to ensure the success of medication programs), knowledge that could later be put to life-destroying purposes, but which, in this original context, also fostered a new interest among peasants in collaborating with the state (and with each other), even though some refused to cooperate, as they also did in the case of the guerrillas’ call to arms (Nelson 2005, 233).

Malaria eradication was not a wholly humanitarian enterprise. The campaigns made the lowland environment and an indigenous labor force weakened by disease more productive for capitalists. Yet malaria eradication cannot be reduced to that one-dimensional sociopolitical explanation, because hygiene is not simply a matter of social control. Although the campaigns strengthened the state in some ways, they did not undermine the case of coastal labor organizers that improved health care was as necessary as better wages and working conditions (obliging the state and the landlords to continue to murder those organizers). Nelson argues that these two biopolitical processes illustrate the principle that new sources of power and legitimacy are constantly introduced into political processes since human actors are neither totally autonomous subjects nor “docile automatons” but are bound up in relations “through which power always flows in more than one direction,” obliging the powerful to concede the legitimacy of some popular demands, even if this is often an unintended consequence of their pursuit of other agendas (2005, 234).

If Foucault can be defended against the critiques of Brown and Sahlins, it is also worth following up Moore’s suggestion that Foucault’s claim that “resistance is never in a position of exteriority to power” was anticipated by Gramsci’s account of the politics of subalternity (D. Moore 1998, 353). In making this argument, Moore draws on William Roseberry’s critique of Scott’s interpretation of Gramscian “hegemony” as a variant of the “dominant ideology” thesis and Roseberry’s alternative proposal that hegemony should be explored “not as a finished and monolithic ideological formation but as a problematic, contested, political process of domination and struggle” (351).

As Kate Crehan (2002, 173) points out, anthropological appropriations of Gramsci often reduce hegemony “solely to the domain of ideas, beliefs, meanings and values.” The same is true of Scott’s arguments, developed as a critique of the idea that subalterns are afflicted by a “false consciousness”

produced by “a dominant or hegemonic ideology” (J. C. Scott 1990, 71). On this basis, Scott distinguishes between “thick” and “thin” concepts of hegemony, the former representing a situation in which subalterns simply accept the legitimacy of rule by the dominant, and the latter a situation in which the subalterns are convinced by the dominant that they are powerless to change the system (72). Scott rejects both types of hegemony on the grounds that subalterns are never mystified by the ideologies propagated by their betters and are therefore always predisposed to “resist” exploitation and domination, yet will not rebel against the system if they judge rebellion too costly an option.

Fletcher (2001, 47) follows Timothy Mitchell (1990) and Charles Tilly (1991) in arguing that an individual-rational-actor model lies at the heart of Scott’s arguments on hegemony. Rebellion, in Tilly’s words, becomes a matter of “crude individualized rationality,” while the propensity of all subaltern populations to rebel, given the opportunity, is guaranteed (and therefore put beyond the need for further explanation) by Scott’s assumption that there is always a “unitary and shared” hidden transcript that expresses their inevitable “resistance” (Tilly 1991, 599). Tilly concludes that “such an argument displaces to another level the questions that bedevil theories of hegemonic ideology,” such as “how do subalterns construct, share and change their discourses?” (598). These problems do not bedevil Gramsci’s account of hegemony. Hegemony is never synonymous with ideology in Gramsci’s writings, since it “always involves *practical activity*, and the social relations that produce inequality, as well as the ideas by which that inequality is justified, explained, normalized, and so on” (Crehan 2002, 174, emphasis added).

Although Gramsci subscribed to the Marxist thesis of “determination by the economic base in the last instance,” he did not think it possible to understand the concrete realities of a country without taking into account a range of social, cultural, political, and institutional variables, all products of a particular history. In place of a simple “dominant-subaltern” binary opposition, he offers us “historical blocs” of differentiated elite groups (such as landowners, merchants, and the officer corps) and institutions (such as the Catholic Church) confronting equally differentiated “popular” classes. Gramsci urged communist militants to strive to understand the “feelings” of the “popular element” in order to understand how people *lived* their class situations, how differences within and between subalterns reflected the impacts of particular forms of domination and ex-

ploitation on their subjectivities and “contradictory consciousness” (Crehan 2002, 206–7; also see Gutmann, chapter fifteen). Although Gramsci was as antagonistic to “fanaticism” as any Latin American revolutionary, he had no doubt, for example, about the need to understand the way rural people drew on religious values and symbols in the construction of their material and social lives (see Pessar, chapter six). He was equally certain that even subaltern practices that sought to change the social order of things would never be sufficient to create a new society without the guidance of the party and its intellectuals. Yet these practices would have an impact on how rule was accomplished—through the existing hegemony—by affecting the overall balance of social and political forces.

Gramsci’s view was that although the actions of subaltern groups influenced the state of power relations, their practices of resistance could not be fully autonomous from those relations. This brings us back to Roseberry’s reading of Gramsci, which Pessar (chapter six) and Margarita Zárate (chapter ten) employ in their analyses. Roseberry (1994, 363) argued that “the dominated” are obliged to use the same language as the dominant for their demands to be heard and that this has material consequences. Yet against Scott’s treatment of the languages of power and contestation as fixed “scripts” in what Donald Moore (1998, 351) describes as a “static theater of resistance,” Roseberry suggested that hegemony should be used to understand struggle rather than consent: “What hegemony constructs, then, is not a shared ideology but a common material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about, and acting on social orders characterized by domination” (Roseberry 1994, 361).

### **Changing Historical Contexts**

This book offers a wide range of historical case studies, and as John Monteiro shows in chapter one, some processes studied in contemporary contexts, such as ethnogenesis, are also relevant to the past. Nevertheless, historical change is important. A recurrent theme in chapters on contemporary situations is the extent to which neoliberalism has reconfigured the possibilities open to “resistance movements” since the 1980s.

Nestor García Canclini (1995b) has argued that neoliberal globalization has brought about a “cultural reorganization of power” in the region that means that power now works more “obliquely” than vertically. One facet of this is the commodification of the production of personhood in con-

temporary market society. Livio Sansone (2004), for example, has shown how young black men from the poorest districts of Salvador, Bahia, reject the low-paid menial jobs accepted by their fathers, are less likely to seek solace in Afro-Brazilian religion, and less deferential to their white social superiors, but still find ways of participating in a globalized black consumer culture. He argues, however, that their everyday struggles for recognition as “persons” through consumption do not foster an “oppositional consciousness” in relation to dominant social groups (see Schell, chapter nine). As Maria Gabriela Hita shows in chapter thirteen, this reading does not fit all poor young black people in the city, but ambiguities in the way “oppositional consciousness” is expressed do reflect the role of the market in construction of the self.

Many Brazilians and Mexicans do participate in explicitly antineoliberal social movements, including place-based movements supported by transnational activist networks against development projects involving foreign corporations backed by the local state. The people of Atenco, in the state of Mexico, for example, won a famous victory against the expropriation of their farmlands to build a new airport for Mexico City (Stolle-McAllister 2005). Yet the state of Mexico is also one of the parts of the country where lynchings are most common (Vilas 2002). Enraged “self-help” popular justice may be a way of resisting the socially corrosive effects of neoliberalism and defending “community integrity,” but it reflects the oblique power effects of living in a deteriorating economic and social situation when the official justice and police systems principally serve the defense of privilege and victimize less powerful citizens.

Another major area of debate concerns the potentially demobilizing effects of neoliberal styles of government. What Nikolas Rose (1999) termed “government at a distance” advanced substantially in Latin America in the 1990s, with transfers of administrative functions and budgetary resources to local government and a heightened role for nongovernmental organizations. Some social movements have been transformed into NGOs, and their leaderships professionalized or incorporated into government, leading analysts such as Joe Foweraker (2001) to argue that “democratization” diminished the force of social movements during the 1990s. From that perspective, neoliberal “inclusion” of the poor and ethnic minorities defuses resistance by creating empty public rituals of participation accompanied by backstage cooptation and continuing political clientelism and hidden

behind the rhetoric of “recognizing the capacity of the disadvantaged to exercise their citizenship.” Yet such an assessment seems too pessimistic. Even if “socially progressive” NGO interventions often have ambiguous effects, as highlighted by de la Peña, Luis Nicolau Parés, and Hita in this book, and some NGOs and governments actively seek to promote a society of self-reliant, self-disciplining, neoliberal citizens, such projects seem to produce unintended consequences (resistances) that militate against those citizens becoming completely docile, particularly in conditions of extreme social inequality (Postero 2006). To return to Nelson’s point, neoliberal governmentality projects seldom produce *simply* the effects that their architects desired.

Nevertheless, although neoliberal ideas about citizen “participation” and “empowerment” offer spaces for subalterns to gain new influence in the public sphere, the potential trap, as Charles Hale (2002) points out in discussing neoliberal multiculturalism, is that institutionalization of these spaces creates a boundary that separates movements and demands that are acceptable from those that are “too radical.” As opportunities to “participate” increase, including opportunities for former social movement activists to work within government programs, more people opt to work within that boundary rather than beyond it: as Zárate shows in chapter ten, even “radical” movements now worry about questions of “legality.” The logic of neoliberal governmentality is to canalize resistance into manageable channels and to limit the challenge that demands for rights and recognition present to the most politically influential capitalist interests. Yet we still have much to learn about how this works out in practice. As Helga Baitenmann shows in chapter fourteen, the new agrarian tribunals created by President Salinas’s neoliberal “reform” of Mexico’s landholdings have enabled some subalterns to use new state institutions to contest past state actions, thereby extending the state’s role in agrarian affairs after the official end of land redistribution, much of it based on disputes between peasants rather than direct conflicts between peasants and large landowners. Contributions to this book suggest, however, that the artifices of neoliberal governmentality are far from extinguishing popular challenges to the current order of things, despite the fact that where artifices fail, state terror is still an option, as Gutmann reminds us in his discussion of the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca in chapter fifteen. Yet neoliberal artifices do complicate subaltern politics and often, as Parés

suggests in chapter seven, oblige us to ask new questions about where we are mostly likely to find practices of resistance that might unsettle power relations.

All contributors to this book agree that historically contextualized analyses that tackle inconvenient facts, such as the way some subalterns ally with the “enemy” while others are rebelling (see Viqueira, chapter three), are essential for providing a response to such questions. Different chapters address the foundational works of resistance theory discussed in this introduction in different ways. Some build on insights that the original wave of resistance theory produced, others largely reject that framework; some address gaps in past work, and others embed the question of resistance within broader analyses of power, hegemony, and contentious politics in order to refocus debate. Yet throughout, the aim of understanding “subaltern politics” remains central. In his concluding discussion, Knight offers some general reflections on how resistance, as a concept, might rise in our conceptual hierarchy to achieve the status of those “big, old concepts,” such as power and hegemony, whose status he sees as “bolstered by useful theoretical and practical knowledge.” The most productive readings even of “big old” concepts are sometimes still subject to dispute, as I suggested in the case of hegemony, but whatever the ultimate fate of resistance, this book shows that “useful theoretical and practical knowledge” can still emerge from thinking about it, providing that we recognize its limits as well as its possibilities as a force in history and the way that history itself changes the conditions under which subaltern struggles take place.

### **Brazil and Mexico as a Comparative Framework**

The final question that I should address is how and why we have attempted to compare Brazil and Mexico in this project. This is not an attempt to explore how common structural variables relate to each other in different national contexts of the kind that characterized efforts to explain the occurrence or nonoccurrence of agrarian revolutions in literature that preceded the resistance boom, such as that of Jeffery Paige (1975). Nor do we adopt the quantitative multivariate analysis paradigm used by some historians and social scientists to explore questions regarding the impact of economic cycles on social mobilization and political conflict through systematic intercountry comparisons (Tarrow 1996, 877). Our approach is to

use case studies to advance theory-building in a way that contributes to the goals of comparative analysis (Lijphart 1971).

Anthropology's method is always implicitly "comparative" in this sense. Anthropologists question the universality of the taken-for-granted assumptions of their societies by holding them up to the mirror of "the other." That is, anthropologists think about what they observe with other possible instances in mind, favoring a view of society and culture as "constructs" reflecting the diversity of humankind. The historical framework of this book reminds us that even the recent past was often different: today's "indigenous people" may be yesterday's "peasants," for example, because claiming an indigenous identity has become a more effective way of capturing resources (see de la Peña, chapter eleven).

Historically and ethnographically grounded case studies offer the virtue of contextualization that is absent from theorizing that assumes, for example, that the experience of being a slave is the same everywhere: as Slenes shows in chapter five, those experiences are not necessarily the same, even in a single region at a single point in time. We recognize that Brazil and Mexico do not exhaust all the variations that Latin America offers with regard, for example, to ideas about "race," *mestizaje*, and "indigeneity." Much of this book highlights the importance of taking into account transnational and transregional processes in all historical periods. Thinking outside conventional national frames and divisions between "North" America and "Latin" America is likely to provide further insights into "hidden histories" of subaltern action (see, for example, Shukla and Tinsman 2007). Nevertheless, there are important cultural, social, and political similarities across Latin America, and by taking examples from two countries that take us from the colonial period to the present day, our project considers similarities and differences to enhance the theory-building potential of the case study approach by drawing the contributors into thinking about how their analyses might play out in the other context.

Brazil and Mexico are both profoundly unequal societies built on foundations of colonial conquest and enslavement. This is the frame in which social movement activists and engaged academics talk of the resistance of indigenous and black people to domination and exploitation, one of the connotations, for example, of the Quilombola movement in Brazil, discussed by Leite in chapter twelve. Yet we can see another kind of resistance in the historical reproduction of cultures and identities with roots in aboriginal America or Africa: resistance as conservation and temporal conti-

nuity, a conservative rather than revolutionary process (see Pessar, Parés, and de la Peña, chapters six, seven, and eleven). Although our discussion is not restricted to historical actors who see themselves as “indigenous” or “afro-descendent,” it is appropriate that such actors occupy a prominent place in our discussions.

Nevertheless, differences between the countries also have a direct bearing on debates about resistance, society, and politics. Brazil achieved its independence in 1822 as an empire still ruled by a member of the Portuguese royal family and dominated by slave-owning landed classes. The Muslim slave revolt of 1832 in Salvador (Reis 2003) was one of the consequences of the slave owners’ ability to resist the extension to society as a whole of the liberal principles to which the empire’s constitution paid lip service (see also Slenes, chapter five). Even after British pressure sufficiently strengthened the hand of Brazilian abolitionists to end the Atlantic trade in 1850, it took thirty-eight years for the emancipation of existing slaves to be completed, and freedom did not necessarily imply a great deal of positive change in the lives of rural plantation workers. Slavery had enduring effects on Brazilian society: it affected the status of free lower-class Brazilians, creating a society in which all depended on the “favor” of their social superiors (Schwarz 1992).

Yet despite the legacies of slavery, society in colonial or independent Brazil cannot be reduced to a two-class model of homogeneous agrarian elites dominating an equally homogeneous subaltern population, leaving aside the massive immigrations that made Italian, German, and Japanese Brazilians important constituents of the national population. Not all colonial subalterns were slaves, or former slaves, or “blacks” or mulattos. Many poor backlands people saw themselves as “whites” or as *mestiços* produced by race mixing between the aboriginal inhabitants of Brazil and Europeans. The popular notion that Brazil’s Indians largely “died out” or vanished through race mixing will not get us very far in understanding Brazilian history, as Monteiro’s and Carvalho’s chapters demonstrate. A degree of social mobility was possible, especially for mulattos who followed a “whitening strategy” that affirmed elite values. From the point of view of resistance theory, a crucial problem seems to be that subalterns often seemed to be “collaborating” rather than resisting, although our contributors also show that this distinction is seldom as simple as it seems.

Similar issues emerge in the chapters on Mexico by Castro Gutiérrez and Juan Pedro Viqueira. Yet some differences are striking. Despite the growth of landed estates, the Spanish Crown's prohibition of indigenous enslavement and desire to exploit indigenous people as tribute payers to the greater benefit of the empire entailed a degree of "protection" for the colonially created "indigenous community" that left an indelible mark on Mexican national history. Although Mexico's population is as diverse in its origins as that of Brazil, and it is now becoming politically attractive to valorize the contribution of once-stigmatized immigrants from China and Japan, the country has the largest absolute number of citizens professing an indigenous identity of any Latin American country, despite the efforts of nineteenth-century liberal reformers to abolish the Indian corporate community by denying it legal personality and privatizing communal lands. Liberal efforts to create a new society of individual property-owning (and property-less) citizens "equal before the law" were followed by equally determined efforts on the part of the postrevolutionary state to encourage indigenous people to assimilate culturally into a mestizo national mainstream through land reform and the adoption of "peasant" class identities (Boyer 2003). Why these projects did not fully achieve their goals is a key issue in Mexican history.

The law was also used to limit the access to land of Brazil's former slaves. Brazil has also deployed notions of "mixing" in the building of national identity through a "myth of racial democracy," a myth now challenged by black movements to a degree that has brought significant changes in government policies, even though many Afro-Brazilians continue to reject racialized politics. Yet the absence of a comprehensive land reform in Brazil is a major point of contrast in the modern histories of the two countries. At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, it is tempting to see an incipient divergence of historical trajectories, with Brazil increasingly seen as a "rising power" on the world economic and diplomatic stage, and Mexico, with an escalating drug war and an economy more dependent on the United States, seemingly less well placed to face the future. There are also differences in the quality of the democracies that followed the end of military rule in Brazil and the continuous, seventy-year rule of the Institutional Revolutionary Party in Mexico. Yet similarities in political cultures and practices, not to mention underlying social problems, remain striking, and it would be a mistake to assume that authori-

tarianism has entirely disappeared from democratic Brazil. As this book demonstrates, the affinities between the cases make the detailed analysis of differences and their implications so instructive.

\* \* \*

This book is divided into three parts. The first presents historical studies from the sixteenth century through the nineteenth. The second focuses on religious institutions and movements, so often relegated to epiphenomenal status in relation to class oppositions or treated as simply “reactionary,” combining historical and contemporary perspectives. The third part focuses on more contemporary, ethnography-based studies. Each part has its own short introduction, and our discussions produced interesting dialogues between the chapters, across the divisions between sections, periods, countries, and disciplines. Nevertheless, some readers may prefer to read Knight’s concluding overview before delving into the more detailed studies.

© 2012 Duke University Press

All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ☺

Typeset in Arnhem Blond by Tseng Information Systems, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

appear on the last printed page of this book.

## Contents

Acknowledgments ix

### INTRODUCTION

A Case for Rethinking Resistance

John Gledhill 1

**Part One: Resistance and the Creation of New Worlds 21**

### CHAPTER ONE

Rethinking Amerindian Resistance and Persistence  
in Colonial Portuguese America

John Monteiro 25

### CHAPTER TWO

Rituals of Defiance: Past Resistance, Present Ambiguity

Felipe Castro Gutiérrez 44

### CHAPTER THREE

Indian Resistances to the Rebellion of 1712 in Chiapas

Juan Pedro Viqueira 63

### CHAPTER FOUR

The “Commander of All Forests” against the “Jacobins” of Brazil  
*The Cabanada, 1832–1835*

Marcus J. M. de Carvalho 81

### CHAPTER FIVE

A “Great Arch” Descending

*Manumission Rates, Subaltern Social Mobility, and the Identities of  
Enslaved, Freeborn, and Freed Blacks in Southeastern Brazil, 1791–1888*

Robert W. Slenes 100

**Part Two: Resisting through Religion and for Religion 119**

CHAPTER SIX

Millenarianism, Hegemony, and Resistance in Brazil

Patricia R. Pessar 123

CHAPTER SEVEN

Where Does Resistance Hide in Contemporary Candomblé?

Luis Nicolau Parés 144

CHAPTER EIGHT

Catholic Resistances in Revolutionary Mexico  
during the Religious Conflict

Jean Meyer 165

CHAPTER NINE

Gender, Resistance, and Mexico's Church-State Conflict

Patience A. Schell 184

**Part Three: Rethinking Resistance in a Changing World 205**

CHAPTER TEN

Tracing Resistance

*Community and Ethnicity in a Peasant Organization*

Margarita Zárate 211

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Resistance, Factionalism, and Ethnogenesis  
in Southern Jalisco

Guillermo de la Peña 230

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Transhistorical, Juridical-Formal, and  
Post-Utopian Quilombo

Ilka Boaventura Leite 250

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

From Resistance Avenue to the Plaza of Decisions  
*New Urban Actors in Salvador, Bahia*

Maria Gabriela Hita 269

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Contestation in the Courts:

The *Amparo* as a Form of Resistance to the Cancellation of Agrarian Reform in Mexico

Helga Baitenmann 289

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Beyond Resistance

*Raising Utopias from the Dead in Mexico City and Oaxaca*

Matthew Gutmann 305

CONCLUSION

Rethinking Histories of Resistance in Brazil and Mexico

Alan Knight 325

Bibliography 355

About the Contributors 389

Index 391

## Acknowledgments

First and foremost, our thanks are due to the Arts and Humanities Research Council of the United Kingdom for funding the interdisciplinary research project on which this book is based. We are also grateful to Dr. Jocélio Teles dos Santos, director of the Center of Afro-Oriental Studies (CEAO) of the Federal University of Bahia, for allowing us to hold the public sessions of our seminars in the CEAO, to Dr. Federico Besserer for doing the same on the first day of our work in Mexico City, at the Anthropology Department of the Metropolitan Autonomous University, Iztapalapa, and to Dr. Jean Meyer for making the facilities of his own institution, the Center for Economic Research and Teaching, available to us during the rest of our stay. In Manchester, we were fortunate to be able to count on the efficient administrative support of Claudia Natteri and Charlotte Jackson in the School of Social Sciences for handling the complex travel, accommodation, and subsistence arrangements necessary to bring an international group of scholars together in the same place at the same time. Charlotte Liddell provided us with valuable editorial support in preparing the manuscript for initial submission to the press, funding for which was provided by Manchester's School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures. We are also grateful to Parvathi Kumaraswami for helping us arrange translation from Spanish or Portuguese, and we are grateful to our translators: Lucy Lawton, Sarah Magee, Sarah Maitland, Monica Morales Moreno, Tara Plunkett, and Richard Reed. Finally, thanks are due to Valerie Millholland and Miriam Angress at Duke University Press for their support in bringing our thoughts on resistance to publication.

## INTRODUCTION

### A Case for Rethinking Resistance

JOHN GLEDHILL

This book explores what the notion of “resistance” can contribute to scholarly understandings of the history and contemporary social and political life of Latin America’s two largest countries, Brazil and Mexico. Our case studies aim to contribute to broader theoretical debates at the interface between history and the social sciences. This introduction reviews debates about the usefulness of resistance from the perspective of an anthropologist. Alan Knight closes the book with a historian’s overview of the broader implications of our findings.

At first sight, our theme might seem anachronistic. Although “resistance studies” became an academic boom industry in the 1980s (D. Moore 1998, 348), the next decade brought a wave of critiques. Some critics, such as Sherry Ortner (1995), remained sympathetic to the idea that resistance studies possessed a worthwhile object of analysis but called for that analysis to become more theoretically nuanced and more grounded in ethnography. Others, however, argued that misplaced moral fervor had driven anthropology toward an obsession with resistance that, by trying to explain everything, ended up explaining nothing (M. Brown 1996; Sahlins 2002). Given such critiques, one anthropologist, Robert Fletcher, confessed to thinking twice about including “resistance” in the title of his paper, for fear of alienating potential readers. Yet he went on to argue that “rethinking” could “resurrect a troubled but significant field of research.” “Fundamentally,” he insisted, “studies of resistance are concerned with the struggle for equality, the fight to end exploitation and achieve a more just and humane society” (Fletcher 2001, 44).

It also seems important that “resisting” is often what our research sub-

jects say they are doing when they struggle, to defend their lands, culture, or religion, or to achieve *new* rights and social dignity in situations of inequality and discrimination. For example, the people of a Nahua indigenous community that I studied in Ostula, Mexico, took pride in their successful historical resistance to very real threats of genocide and dispossession (Gledhill 2004a). In 2006, newly allied with the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, Ostula was declared a “community in resistance” to government agrarian certification programs (see Baitenmann, chapter fourteen). This was a new move in a longstanding dispute over lands usurped by invading ranchers in the early twentieth century, a dispute made more acute by growing capitalist interest in developing the tourism and mining potential of Ostula’s communal territory. The stakes remain high in these conflicts. The village schoolteacher elected to head the commission pursuing the land claim was brutally murdered in July 2008. A year later, following a confrontation in which shots were fired at indigenous men, women, and children, Ostula turned its communal police into a self-defense force and seized control of the disputed terrain. In the face of this spectacular action, which made headlines in national newspapers, the state government agreed to compensate the ranchers for returning the lands to the community, but Ostulans continued to suffer violent reprisals.

This is another good reason to take resistance seriously. Yet Fletcher’s case study presented analytical dilemmas that this book demonstrates are ubiquitous in studies of resistance. Although some of his research subjects, Chilean indigenous people threatened with displacement by a hydroelectric dam, mounted a vigorous campaign with the support of indigenous-rights NGOs, environmental and alter-globalization activists, and university intellectuals to defend their land and way of life, the majority not only seemed willing to embrace resettlement as a positive opportunity to experience “development” and “progress,” but gave their votes to the political ultraright. This led Fletcher to criticize James Scott’s (1985; 1990) paradigmatic formulation of “everyday forms of resistance” for making it difficult to account for actors who do not seem to find their situations as oppressive as outside activists and academics think they should. Understanding why people in apparently similar “situations of domination” react differently is a central issue in rethinking resistance integral to many analyses in this book and systematically explored by Robert Slenes in chapter five in the case of slaves in the Brazilian southeast. Fletcher’s argument also raises the issue of possible bias on the part of resistance

theorists regarding the types of actors and movements deemed worthy of investigation. Should actors who are not at the bottom of the social scale, such as the Catholic women discussed by Patience Schell in chapter nine, or “subaltern” actors not struggling for a more just and humane society, be included in studies of resistance when they are challenging the will of governments and elites (including, perhaps, “liberal multicultural elites”)? These are some of the questions that we asked contributors to this book to address.

One way forward is to expand the discussion of resistance from Scott’s everyday forms of resistance to the broader field of what Sidney Tarrow calls “contentious politics.” Contentious politics embraces any “collective activity on the part of claimants—or those who claim to represent them—relying at least in part on non-institutional forms of interaction with elites, opponents, or the state.” It therefore encompasses the study of social movements, which Tarrow, following Charles Tilly, defines as “sustained challenges to powerholders in the name of a disadvantaged population living under the jurisdiction or influence of those powerholders” (Tarrow 1996, 874). The usefulness of pursuing a broader perspective is illustrated by Jean Meyer’s and Schell’s discussions of Catholic opposition to the state in postrevolutionary Mexico (chapters eight and nine). Much of the rest of this book shows that we need to look more closely at the interactions and alliances between subaltern groups and other social and political actors. Although the latter are generally less humble social actors who find themselves opposed to those currently exercising power, as illustrated by some of the nineteenth-century alliances described by Marcus de Carvalho in chapter four, we also sometimes find the clandestine hand of the powerful at work in ways that “manage” the rebellious actions of the poor, as Javier Auyero shows in his analyses of the role played by the Peronist political machine and police in the Argentine food riots of 2001 (Auyero 2007). This suggests that the study of resistance should be embedded in more complex accounts of the *practices* of power. Among the lines of analysis that we pursue in this book are the ways in which the exercise of power is furthered by state responses institutionalizing movements that generate “contentious politics,” a line of analysis exemplified by Ilka Boaventura Leite’s study of the “juridical-formal” *quilombo* in chapter twelve, and the broader role of multicultural policies within contemporary neoliberal techniques of rule. Yet as Guillermo de la Peña concludes in chapter eleven, none of these critical perspectives on the workings of power rela-

tions eliminate the need to consider the role of “subaltern projects in the march of history,” even if, as Patricia Pessar notes in chapter six, the identities, meanings, and practices that inspire such projects will inevitably shift with the times.

This book is based on intensive discussions between anthropologists and historians in three four-day research seminars funded by the British Arts and Humanities Research Council and held in Salvador, in the Brazilian state of Bahia, Mexico City, and Manchester, England. Our basic question was whether resistance studies could still be revitalized through further new thinking, bearing in mind the volume of new research that has accumulated since the original boom. Although some participants remained skeptical about the value of resistance studies, our discussions did show that asking searching questions about resistance was a productive framework for advancing new interpretations. Indeed, as Felipe Castro Gutiérrez shows in chapter two, a high level of skepticism about the inevitability of indigenous resistance to colonialism, and a wariness of reading the past in terms of present social and political concerns, can stimulate original research on deeper and less obvious manifestations of indigenous “indignation and irritation” that offer interesting parallels to Matthew Gutmann’s account in chapter fifteen of the contemporary “compliant defiance” of working-class Mexicans. The remainder of this introduction provides a more detailed review of the evolving debate and the areas in which this book seeks to move it forward.

### **Resistance Studies in Historical Perspective**

In chapter two Castro Gutiérrez suggests that an archeology of the notion of resistance could trace connections between its appearance in modern Latin American movements, such as the “Five Hundred Years of Indigenous and Black Resistance” campaign, and European antecedents such as nineteenth-century anarchist thought and the struggles of the French partisans under Nazi occupation. Nevertheless, the intellectual movement that generated the boom in resistance studies in the 1980s was the product of a more recent historical conjuncture. In the United States, resistance studies emerged, as Gutmann notes in chapter fifteen, in the climate of “diminished expectations” associated with the triumph of Reaganism. In Latin America, the conjuncture was different, with military regimes still in power in many countries until the mid-1980s. A few countries, such as

Guatemala, were still locked in conflicts between Leftist insurgents and authoritarian regimes backed by Washington well into the 1990s. Nevertheless, the experience of dictatorship scarcely enhanced the credibility of revolutionary Left projects, while resistance theory, as a celebration of the decentered “popular subject,” subsequently took its place alongside “new social movements theory” as a tool for thinking about more radically democratic alternatives in an era in which democratization generally got off to a cautious start.

Interest in resistance theories in Latin America was, however, further stimulated by the attempt to incorporate indigenous peoples into revolutionary movements. Northern intellectuals wished to show solidarity with the struggles of groups that revolutionary socialists and capitalist modernizers alike had deemed a reproach on national dreams of achieving “modernity” (Beverley 1999). David Stoll (1999) has controversially argued that the solidarity work of U.S. scholars around the iconic *testimonio* book *I, Rigoberta Menchú* actually prolonged violence in Guatemala, since without it the military would have eliminated the guerrilla completely (see Knight, conclusion). From Stoll’s perspective, Menchú was a Marxist revolutionary wolf masquerading in the sheep’s clothing of a Maya peasant woman, but the resistance theme was taken up by Latin American intellectuals working against the grain of both the assimilationist policies of developmental states and orthodox Left positions in which issues of class override questions of ethnicity, race, and gender. Although Scott’s work has been criticized for its focus on “an analytics of class to the exclusion of other productive and social inequalities (notably gender, age and ethnicity),” (D. Moore 1998, 350) Mexican scholars focusing on indigenous issues, such as Adriana López (1996) and Marcela Coronado (2000), found his ideas useful.

Latin American scholarship is not a simple replication of gringo scholarship, even if the Northern academy remains “hegemonic” (Restrepo and Escobar 2005). For example, the Gramsci of Latin American scholars generally looks more like the Italian Communist strategist than the “lite” version appropriated by North American cultural anthropology (Crehan 2002). Nor has the politics of Latin America stood still since the mid-1980s. Yet whether the politics is one of state capture, as achieved by Evo Morales’s Movement for Socialism in Bolivia, or pluralistic radical democratization from below that eschews electoral participation, as advocated by the Zapatistas in Mexico, much of it does not seem to be an “infrapolitics”

focused on muttered defiance behind the backs of the dominant of the kind on which Scott focused our attention, “an unobtrusive realm of political struggle” based on “the veiled cultural struggle and political expression of subordinate groups who have ample reason to fear venturing their unguarded opinion” (1990, 183–84).

Nevertheless, although the historical conjunctures that gave birth to the resistance theories of the 1980s have passed, some issues that were part of a broader concern with power relations remain at the center of current debates. In particular, we have the influence of Michel Foucault and his contention in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* that “where there is power, there is also resistance” (1978, 95–96). In a critique of the “romanticism” of first-generation resistance theorists, Lila Abu-Lughod turns Foucault on his head by re-rendering his dictum that “resistance is never in a position of exteriority to power” as “where there is resistance, there is power” (Abu-Lughod 1990, 42). For Abu-Lughod, the advantage for anthropologists’ “using resistance as a diagnostic of power” was that they could move away from abstract theories of power to the ethnographic “study of power in particular situations” and the way emancipation from one form of hierarchy or oppression can lead to new forms of hierarchy and oppression. In her ethnographic examination of the apparently safe spaces in which Bedouin women could enjoy a smoke and elaborate their “hidden transcripts” about such matters as male vices and arranged marriages, Abu-Lughod discusses the ambivalent implications of the social and economic changes that led some women to wear makeup and add negligees to their trousseaux. She concludes: “In resisting the axes of kin and gender, the young women who want the lingerie, Egyptian songs, satin wedding dresses, and fantasies of private romance their elders resist are perhaps unwittingly enmeshing themselves in an extraordinarily complex new set of power relations. These bind them irrecoverably to the Egyptian economy, itself tied to the global economy, and to the Egyptian state, many of whose powers depend on separating kin groups and regulating individuals.” Nevertheless, after posing the question of whether “certain modern forms and techniques of power work in such indirect ways, or seem to offer such positive attractions, that people do not as readily resist them,” she goes on to show how the adoption of modest Islamic dress and participation in Islamic movements represents a reaction to the contradictions that these new entanglements with global capitalism and the state pose for women who remain relatively socially marginalized. But funda-

mentalist practices not only entail yet another set of disciplines, they tie the participants to new transnational structures, the religious nationalisms of global Islam (Abu-Lughod 1990, 52).

Here, then, Foucault leads us toward a more complex account of the mutual relationships between power and resistance. As Donald Moore (1998, 351) points out, Scott's theory of infrapolitics combines the hidden transcript metaphor with spatial metaphors, in particular the binary opposition, borrowed from Erving Goffman, between "on-stage" and "off-stage." "Hidden" resistance takes place by assumption in places, such as slave quarters, where it is assumed that "power does not saturate or colonize" subaltern consciousness. No consideration can be given to how spaces and places, and the boundaries between them (such as "public" versus "private"), are constructed through the workings of power relations and challenges to them. Following earlier objections to Scott's idea of "power free" spaces of subaltern autonomy (Starn 1992, 94), Moore also points out that Abu-Lughod's position can be seen as one that Gramsci anticipated in speaking of the "limited and partial autonomy" of subaltern groups, which remain subject to the "activity" of dominant groups even when they are struggling against them (D. Moore 1998, 352). In chapter six of this book, Pessar argues against Scott's view of millenarianism as an exclusively subaltern "subculture" by showing how it is also an element of a mutually constituted dominant culture.

However, as Ortner (1995, 174–75) points out, one positive effect of Scott's drawing attention to "everyday forms of resistance" was to foment debate about which acts might reasonably be characterized as resistance and which not. This led to a series of revisions that highlighted the ambiguity of the acts themselves and the ambivalent subjectivities that tended to accompany relations between actors from dominant or subordinate groups. Not only were practices of "collaboration" often co-present with apparent practices of resistance, but it rapidly became apparent that subaltern groups had to be unpacked into actors differentiated by age, gender, status, and other "subject positions" (Ortner 1995, 175–76).

The "subject position" concept is central to poststructuralist and postmodernist thinking, and here Ortner also highlights the difficulties of Scott's tendency to ascribe a single and fixed identity to subalterns within a preconceived and objective "structural grid of class oppositions" (D. Moore 1998, 350). Identities and subjectification are in part the results of being classified and stigmatized by socially superior others (classifica-

tions that subalterns, such as slum-dwellers, can either affirm or reject, but not necessarily *escape*, in the practice of their daily lives). In contemporary societies, cultures of consumerism and “lifestyle” expand the possibilities of individuals’ constructing their own identities, although they still tend to do so according to current social ideas about what it takes to earn the “respect” of others, and even according to transnational models of what it means to be “cool” or “modern.” Yet possible subject positions remain multiple in most contexts: the same woman can be a woman, a poor woman, a peasant woman, a virtuous mother, a Catholic woman, etc. Subject positions are also situational, with one aspect of identity being appropriate for one context and another aspect, possibly contrasting with or even conflicting with the first, more suited to managing different types of social interactions. A canny and well-connected peasant politician will often find it convenient to become a humble and uneducated son of the village, for example. Yet while all this is useful, Ortner also points out that there is a danger, exemplified by the deconstructionist work of Gayatri Spivak, of “dissolving” the subject as living agent in a social context altogether (Ortner 1995, 184–86). Despite resistance theory’s apparent expansion of the definition of “political” action, it ironically did not contain enough politics at the end of the day, for the dominant-subordinate dichotomy often concealed the lively internal politics *within* subaltern populations (Ortner 1995, 177). Closer analysis of the internal politics of subalterns is a major theme of this book.

A defender of Scott’s pioneering work could, however, argue that these revisions enriched rather than invalidated a paradigm that served as a useful corrective to previous thinking, complementing other seminal contributions such as the work of E. P. Thompson and U.S. and Brazilian historians of slavery (see Slenes, chapter five). Scott challenged distinctions habitually made between “pre-political” forms of action and supposedly more “effective,” politically and socially transformative, types of consciousness. Bringing the politics of marginalized social groups onto the analytical agenda encouraged new thinking about dismissing particular forms of infrapolitical practices as “utopian” and “millenarian,” in particular those associated with religion. Many of the practices discussed in the resistance literature deserved recognition and study, even if further analysis showed that some that were too hastily identified as resistance were susceptible to more complex readings. There was considerable value in recognizing unvoiced and subterranean practices of resistance in forms

of behavior that had not previously been considered in such terms and in contexts where too much had been assumed about the docility of subaltern groups and the depth of their complicity in their own domination. The work of anthropologists such as Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff (1991) might be accused of exaggerating the real challenge to power relations posed by movements such as that of the Zionist churches in southern Africa, but it highlighted the limitations of trying to think about such contexts in terms of occidental Marxist ideas about what “working-class consciousness” should look like and the yardstick of an equally occidental vision of “revolutionary” politics.

Nevertheless, resistance theory produced its own blind spots, as Gutmann (chapter fifteen) shows in his critique of Scott’s account of “lower-class politics.” Scott presents the subaltern as a deeply knowing, nonmystified elaborator of rich cultural practices of disguised resistance inhibited from more overt action only by a shrewd assessment of its impracticality. Another important bias was the tendency to ignore “popular movements” that appeared to be reactionary by traditional Left standards, as well as forms of resistance that adopted pacific and nonconfrontational forms for reasons other than fear (see Meyer, chapter eight). In the areas where Mexican Catholics did take up arms in the Cristero rebellion, peasant insurgents seemed to be resisting the apparently more progressive agrarian reform movement in the name of an institution that generally seemed to be on the side of the landlords, the Catholic Church. Yet using the label “progressive” immediately betrays judgments on the part of the observer, judgments not only about what counts as “objective class interest” but also about what peasants should want most out of life (see Knight, conclusion). Since people in apparently similar socioeconomic situations could be found in opposing camps, the Cristiada not only returns us to Fletcher’s problem of explaining such differences but also forces us to consider which variables might be most relevant in explaining political differences among subalterns.

### **From Resistance to Power and “Hegemony”**

The most trenchant critiques do not stop at critiquing resistance. Marshall Sahlins attacked an obsession with power as “the latest incarnation of Anthropology’s incurable Functionalism” (Sahlins 2002, 20–21). Ortner maintained, “Resistance, even at its most ambiguous, is a reason-

ably useful category, if only because it highlights the presence and play of power in most forms of relationship and activity” (Ortner 1995, 175). Yet Sahlins found such assertions of the pervasiveness of power in human life disturbing, while Michael Brown (1996, 4) argued that Foucault merely offers us “culture as prison, culture as insane asylum, culture as ‘hegemonic domination of the [insert Other of choice].’” This is not the view of Abu-Lughod, whom Brown also cites: she simply points out that most forms of emancipation have their price. In a similar way, Sahlins’s huffing and puffing overstates its perfectly reasonable case for not trying to explain *everything* in the world of culture as either a product or expression of power relationships by seeming to turn down the opportunities that Ortner welcomes for looking at how power relationships might enter into the production and transformation of culture.

More recently, Foucauldians have, in fact, challenged the kind of critique that Brown makes of their mentor. Diane Nelson (2005) examines two “biopolitical” interventions by the Guatemalan military state, one the counterinsurgency campaign against indigenous communities of the 1980s and the other the “all out war” against malaria declared by the Guatemalan Health Ministry in 1955. Her first step is a rethinking of indigenous insurgency. By 1988, when it was clear that the guerrillas had lost the armed struggle and split into factions, it was also clear that many indigenous people were now rejecting the shared emphasis of the state, nonindigenous guerrilla leaderships, and their (now decimated) indigenous allies on “modernizing the country” by leaving indigenous culture behind. The war itself, and experiences of racism in the guerrilla ranks, encouraged different visions of liberation, including organization around Maya identity and cultural rights (Nelson 2005, 223). The army followed its scorched-earth policy of the early 1980s with a “development pole” strategy that combined discipline and surveillance with food aid, housing, and health care programs that attracted funds from churches and NGOs as well as foreign governments (223–24). Thus, in place of simple opposition between a pure resisting “people” and a brutal military regime, the war revealed more complex alignments and tensions, putting into question whether “collaboration” was simply the result of fear of death, and it ended up delivering more of the things that indigenous people in Guatemala had previously been demanding, such as schools and health care.

In the case of malaria eradication campaigns, a quintessential expression of deployment of the techniques of “modern government” to regulate

the “vitality” of a population, there is another kind of two-sidedness in what is at stake in terms of power. The implementation of the programs required intimate knowledge of the population at the level of households (to ensure the success of medication programs), knowledge that could later be put to life-destroying purposes, but which, in this original context, also fostered a new interest among peasants in collaborating with the state (and with each other), even though some refused to cooperate, as they also did in the case of the guerrillas’ call to arms (Nelson 2005, 233).

Malaria eradication was not a wholly humanitarian enterprise. The campaigns made the lowland environment and an indigenous labor force weakened by disease more productive for capitalists. Yet malaria eradication cannot be reduced to that one-dimensional sociopolitical explanation, because hygiene is not simply a matter of social control. Although the campaigns strengthened the state in some ways, they did not undermine the case of coastal labor organizers that improved health care was as necessary as better wages and working conditions (obliging the state and the landlords to continue to murder those organizers). Nelson argues that these two biopolitical processes illustrate the principle that new sources of power and legitimacy are constantly introduced into political processes since human actors are neither totally autonomous subjects nor “docile automatons” but are bound up in relations “through which power always flows in more than one direction,” obliging the powerful to concede the legitimacy of some popular demands, even if this is often an unintended consequence of their pursuit of other agendas (2005, 234).

If Foucault can be defended against the critiques of Brown and Sahlins, it is also worth following up Moore’s suggestion that Foucault’s claim that “resistance is never in a position of exteriority to power” was anticipated by Gramsci’s account of the politics of subalternity (D. Moore 1998, 353). In making this argument, Moore draws on William Roseberry’s critique of Scott’s interpretation of Gramscian “hegemony” as a variant of the “dominant ideology” thesis and Roseberry’s alternative proposal that hegemony should be explored “not as a finished and monolithic ideological formation but as a problematic, contested, political process of domination and struggle” (351).

As Kate Crehan (2002, 173) points out, anthropological appropriations of Gramsci often reduce hegemony “solely to the domain of ideas, beliefs, meanings and values.” The same is true of Scott’s arguments, developed as a critique of the idea that subalterns are afflicted by a “false consciousness”

produced by “a dominant or hegemonic ideology” (J. C. Scott 1990, 71). On this basis, Scott distinguishes between “thick” and “thin” concepts of hegemony, the former representing a situation in which subalterns simply accept the legitimacy of rule by the dominant, and the latter a situation in which the subalterns are convinced by the dominant that they are powerless to change the system (72). Scott rejects both types of hegemony on the grounds that subalterns are never mystified by the ideologies propagated by their betters and are therefore always predisposed to “resist” exploitation and domination, yet will not rebel against the system if they judge rebellion too costly an option.

Fletcher (2001, 47) follows Timothy Mitchell (1990) and Charles Tilly (1991) in arguing that an individual-rational-actor model lies at the heart of Scott’s arguments on hegemony. Rebellion, in Tilly’s words, becomes a matter of “crude individualized rationality,” while the propensity of all subaltern populations to rebel, given the opportunity, is guaranteed (and therefore put beyond the need for further explanation) by Scott’s assumption that there is always a “unitary and shared” hidden transcript that expresses their inevitable “resistance” (Tilly 1991, 599). Tilly concludes that “such an argument displaces to another level the questions that bedevil theories of hegemonic ideology,” such as “how do subalterns construct, share and change their discourses?” (598). These problems do not bedevil Gramsci’s account of hegemony. Hegemony is never synonymous with ideology in Gramsci’s writings, since it “always involves *practical activity*, and the social relations that produce inequality, as well as the ideas by which that inequality is justified, explained, normalized, and so on” (Crehan 2002, 174, emphasis added).

Although Gramsci subscribed to the Marxist thesis of “determination by the economic base in the last instance,” he did not think it possible to understand the concrete realities of a country without taking into account a range of social, cultural, political, and institutional variables, all products of a particular history. In place of a simple “dominant-subaltern” binary opposition, he offers us “historical blocs” of differentiated elite groups (such as landowners, merchants, and the officer corps) and institutions (such as the Catholic Church) confronting equally differentiated “popular” classes. Gramsci urged communist militants to strive to understand the “feelings” of the “popular element” in order to understand how people *lived* their class situations, how differences within and between subalterns reflected the impacts of particular forms of domination and ex-

ploitation on their subjectivities and “contradictory consciousness” (Crehan 2002, 206–7; also see Gutmann, chapter fifteen). Although Gramsci was as antagonistic to “fanaticism” as any Latin American revolutionary, he had no doubt, for example, about the need to understand the way rural people drew on religious values and symbols in the construction of their material and social lives (see Pessar, chapter six). He was equally certain that even subaltern practices that sought to change the social order of things would never be sufficient to create a new society without the guidance of the party and its intellectuals. Yet these practices would have an impact on how rule was accomplished—through the existing hegemony—by affecting the overall balance of social and political forces.

Gramsci’s view was that although the actions of subaltern groups influenced the state of power relations, their practices of resistance could not be fully autonomous from those relations. This brings us back to Roseberry’s reading of Gramsci, which Pessar (chapter six) and Margarita Zárate (chapter ten) employ in their analyses. Roseberry (1994, 363) argued that “the dominated” are obliged to use the same language as the dominant for their demands to be heard and that this has material consequences. Yet against Scott’s treatment of the languages of power and contestation as fixed “scripts” in what Donald Moore (1998, 351) describes as a “static theater of resistance,” Roseberry suggested that hegemony should be used to understand struggle rather than consent: “What hegemony constructs, then, is not a shared ideology but a common material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about, and acting on social orders characterized by domination” (Roseberry 1994, 361).

### **Changing Historical Contexts**

This book offers a wide range of historical case studies, and as John Monteiro shows in chapter one, some processes studied in contemporary contexts, such as ethnogenesis, are also relevant to the past. Nevertheless, historical change is important. A recurrent theme in chapters on contemporary situations is the extent to which neoliberalism has reconfigured the possibilities open to “resistance movements” since the 1980s.

Nestor García Canclini (1995b) has argued that neoliberal globalization has brought about a “cultural reorganization of power” in the region that means that power now works more “obliquely” than vertically. One facet of this is the commodification of the production of personhood in con-

temporary market society. Livio Sansone (2004), for example, has shown how young black men from the poorest districts of Salvador, Bahia, reject the low-paid menial jobs accepted by their fathers, are less likely to seek solace in Afro-Brazilian religion, and less deferential to their white social superiors, but still find ways of participating in a globalized black consumer culture. He argues, however, that their everyday struggles for recognition as “persons” through consumption do not foster an “oppositional consciousness” in relation to dominant social groups (see Schell, chapter nine). As Maria Gabriela Hita shows in chapter thirteen, this reading does not fit all poor young black people in the city, but ambiguities in the way “oppositional consciousness” is expressed do reflect the role of the market in construction of the self.

Many Brazilians and Mexicans do participate in explicitly antineoliberal social movements, including place-based movements supported by transnational activist networks against development projects involving foreign corporations backed by the local state. The people of Atenco, in the state of Mexico, for example, won a famous victory against the expropriation of their farmlands to build a new airport for Mexico City (Stolle-McAllister 2005). Yet the state of Mexico is also one of the parts of the country where lynchings are most common (Vilas 2002). Enraged “self-help” popular justice may be a way of resisting the socially corrosive effects of neoliberalism and defending “community integrity,” but it reflects the oblique power effects of living in a deteriorating economic and social situation when the official justice and police systems principally serve the defense of privilege and victimize less powerful citizens.

Another major area of debate concerns the potentially demobilizing effects of neoliberal styles of government. What Nikolas Rose (1999) termed “government at a distance” advanced substantially in Latin America in the 1990s, with transfers of administrative functions and budgetary resources to local government and a heightened role for nongovernmental organizations. Some social movements have been transformed into NGOs, and their leaderships professionalized or incorporated into government, leading analysts such as Joe Foweraker (2001) to argue that “democratization” diminished the force of social movements during the 1990s. From that perspective, neoliberal “inclusion” of the poor and ethnic minorities defuses resistance by creating empty public rituals of participation accompanied by backstage cooptation and continuing political clientelism and hidden

behind the rhetoric of “recognizing the capacity of the disadvantaged to exercise their citizenship.” Yet such an assessment seems too pessimistic. Even if “socially progressive” NGO interventions often have ambiguous effects, as highlighted by de la Peña, Luis Nicolau Parés, and Hita in this book, and some NGOs and governments actively seek to promote a society of self-reliant, self-disciplining, neoliberal citizens, such projects seem to produce unintended consequences (resistances) that militate against those citizens becoming completely docile, particularly in conditions of extreme social inequality (Postero 2006). To return to Nelson’s point, neoliberal governmentality projects seldom produce *simply* the effects that their architects desired.

Nevertheless, although neoliberal ideas about citizen “participation” and “empowerment” offer spaces for subalterns to gain new influence in the public sphere, the potential trap, as Charles Hale (2002) points out in discussing neoliberal multiculturalism, is that institutionalization of these spaces creates a boundary that separates movements and demands that are acceptable from those that are “too radical.” As opportunities to “participate” increase, including opportunities for former social movement activists to work within government programs, more people opt to work within that boundary rather than beyond it: as Zárate shows in chapter ten, even “radical” movements now worry about questions of “legality.” The logic of neoliberal governmentality is to canalize resistance into manageable channels and to limit the challenge that demands for rights and recognition present to the most politically influential capitalist interests. Yet we still have much to learn about how this works out in practice. As Helga Baitenmann shows in chapter fourteen, the new agrarian tribunals created by President Salinas’s neoliberal “reform” of Mexico’s landholdings have enabled some subalterns to use new state institutions to contest past state actions, thereby extending the state’s role in agrarian affairs after the official end of land redistribution, much of it based on disputes between peasants rather than direct conflicts between peasants and large landowners. Contributions to this book suggest, however, that the artifices of neoliberal governmentality are far from extinguishing popular challenges to the current order of things, despite the fact that where artifices fail, state terror is still an option, as Gutmann reminds us in his discussion of the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca in chapter fifteen. Yet neoliberal artifices do complicate subaltern politics and often, as Parés

suggests in chapter seven, oblige us to ask new questions about where we are mostly likely to find practices of resistance that might unsettle power relations.

All contributors to this book agree that historically contextualized analyses that tackle inconvenient facts, such as the way some subalterns ally with the “enemy” while others are rebelling (see Viqueira, chapter three), are essential for providing a response to such questions. Different chapters address the foundational works of resistance theory discussed in this introduction in different ways. Some build on insights that the original wave of resistance theory produced, others largely reject that framework; some address gaps in past work, and others embed the question of resistance within broader analyses of power, hegemony, and contentious politics in order to refocus debate. Yet throughout, the aim of understanding “subaltern politics” remains central. In his concluding discussion, Knight offers some general reflections on how resistance, as a concept, might rise in our conceptual hierarchy to achieve the status of those “big, old concepts,” such as power and hegemony, whose status he sees as “bolstered by useful theoretical and practical knowledge.” The most productive readings even of “big old” concepts are sometimes still subject to dispute, as I suggested in the case of hegemony, but whatever the ultimate fate of resistance, this book shows that “useful theoretical and practical knowledge” can still emerge from thinking about it, providing that we recognize its limits as well as its possibilities as a force in history and the way that history itself changes the conditions under which subaltern struggles take place.

### **Brazil and Mexico as a Comparative Framework**

The final question that I should address is how and why we have attempted to compare Brazil and Mexico in this project. This is not an attempt to explore how common structural variables relate to each other in different national contexts of the kind that characterized efforts to explain the occurrence or nonoccurrence of agrarian revolutions in literature that preceded the resistance boom, such as that of Jeffery Paige (1975). Nor do we adopt the quantitative multivariate analysis paradigm used by some historians and social scientists to explore questions regarding the impact of economic cycles on social mobilization and political conflict through systematic intercountry comparisons (Tarrow 1996, 877). Our approach is to

use case studies to advance theory-building in a way that contributes to the goals of comparative analysis (Lijphart 1971).

Anthropology's method is always implicitly "comparative" in this sense. Anthropologists question the universality of the taken-for-granted assumptions of their societies by holding them up to the mirror of "the other." That is, anthropologists think about what they observe with other possible instances in mind, favoring a view of society and culture as "constructs" reflecting the diversity of humankind. The historical framework of this book reminds us that even the recent past was often different: today's "indigenous people" may be yesterday's "peasants," for example, because claiming an indigenous identity has become a more effective way of capturing resources (see de la Peña, chapter eleven).

Historically and ethnographically grounded case studies offer the virtue of contextualization that is absent from theorizing that assumes, for example, that the experience of being a slave is the same everywhere: as Slenes shows in chapter five, those experiences are not necessarily the same, even in a single region at a single point in time. We recognize that Brazil and Mexico do not exhaust all the variations that Latin America offers with regard, for example, to ideas about "race," *mestizaje*, and "indigeneity." Much of this book highlights the importance of taking into account transnational and transregional processes in all historical periods. Thinking outside conventional national frames and divisions between "North" America and "Latin" America is likely to provide further insights into "hidden histories" of subaltern action (see, for example, Shukla and Tinsman 2007). Nevertheless, there are important cultural, social, and political similarities across Latin America, and by taking examples from two countries that take us from the colonial period to the present day, our project considers similarities and differences to enhance the theory-building potential of the case study approach by drawing the contributors into thinking about how their analyses might play out in the other context.

Brazil and Mexico are both profoundly unequal societies built on foundations of colonial conquest and enslavement. This is the frame in which social movement activists and engaged academics talk of the resistance of indigenous and black people to domination and exploitation, one of the connotations, for example, of the Quilombola movement in Brazil, discussed by Leite in chapter twelve. Yet we can see another kind of resistance in the historical reproduction of cultures and identities with roots in aboriginal America or Africa: resistance as conservation and temporal conti-

nuity, a conservative rather than revolutionary process (see Pessar, Parés, and de la Peña, chapters six, seven, and eleven). Although our discussion is not restricted to historical actors who see themselves as “indigenous” or “afro-descendent,” it is appropriate that such actors occupy a prominent place in our discussions.

Nevertheless, differences between the countries also have a direct bearing on debates about resistance, society, and politics. Brazil achieved its independence in 1822 as an empire still ruled by a member of the Portuguese royal family and dominated by slave-owning landed classes. The Muslim slave revolt of 1832 in Salvador (Reis 2003) was one of the consequences of the slave owners’ ability to resist the extension to society as a whole of the liberal principles to which the empire’s constitution paid lip service (see also Slenes, chapter five). Even after British pressure sufficiently strengthened the hand of Brazilian abolitionists to end the Atlantic trade in 1850, it took thirty-eight years for the emancipation of existing slaves to be completed, and freedom did not necessarily imply a great deal of positive change in the lives of rural plantation workers. Slavery had enduring effects on Brazilian society: it affected the status of free lower-class Brazilians, creating a society in which all depended on the “favor” of their social superiors (Schwarz 1992).

Yet despite the legacies of slavery, society in colonial or independent Brazil cannot be reduced to a two-class model of homogeneous agrarian elites dominating an equally homogeneous subaltern population, leaving aside the massive immigrations that made Italian, German, and Japanese Brazilians important constituents of the national population. Not all colonial subalterns were slaves, or former slaves, or “blacks” or mulattos. Many poor backlands people saw themselves as “whites” or as *mestiços* produced by race mixing between the aboriginal inhabitants of Brazil and Europeans. The popular notion that Brazil’s Indians largely “died out” or vanished through race mixing will not get us very far in understanding Brazilian history, as Monteiro’s and Carvalho’s chapters demonstrate. A degree of social mobility was possible, especially for mulattos who followed a “whitening strategy” that affirmed elite values. From the point of view of resistance theory, a crucial problem seems to be that subalterns often seemed to be “collaborating” rather than resisting, although our contributors also show that this distinction is seldom as simple as it seems.

Similar issues emerge in the chapters on Mexico by Castro Gutiérrez and Juan Pedro Viqueira. Yet some differences are striking. Despite the growth of landed estates, the Spanish Crown's prohibition of indigenous enslavement and desire to exploit indigenous people as tribute payers to the greater benefit of the empire entailed a degree of "protection" for the colonially created "indigenous community" that left an indelible mark on Mexican national history. Although Mexico's population is as diverse in its origins as that of Brazil, and it is now becoming politically attractive to valorize the contribution of once-stigmatized immigrants from China and Japan, the country has the largest absolute number of citizens professing an indigenous identity of any Latin American country, despite the efforts of nineteenth-century liberal reformers to abolish the Indian corporate community by denying it legal personality and privatizing communal lands. Liberal efforts to create a new society of individual property-owning (and property-less) citizens "equal before the law" were followed by equally determined efforts on the part of the postrevolutionary state to encourage indigenous people to assimilate culturally into a mestizo national mainstream through land reform and the adoption of "peasant" class identities (Boyer 2003). Why these projects did not fully achieve their goals is a key issue in Mexican history.

The law was also used to limit the access to land of Brazil's former slaves. Brazil has also deployed notions of "mixing" in the building of national identity through a "myth of racial democracy," a myth now challenged by black movements to a degree that has brought significant changes in government policies, even though many Afro-Brazilians continue to reject racialized politics. Yet the absence of a comprehensive land reform in Brazil is a major point of contrast in the modern histories of the two countries. At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, it is tempting to see an incipient divergence of historical trajectories, with Brazil increasingly seen as a "rising power" on the world economic and diplomatic stage, and Mexico, with an escalating drug war and an economy more dependent on the United States, seemingly less well placed to face the future. There are also differences in the quality of the democracies that followed the end of military rule in Brazil and the continuous, seventy-year rule of the Institutional Revolutionary Party in Mexico. Yet similarities in political cultures and practices, not to mention underlying social problems, remain striking, and it would be a mistake to assume that authori-

tarianism has entirely disappeared from democratic Brazil. As this book demonstrates, the affinities between the cases make the detailed analysis of differences and their implications so instructive.

\* \* \*

This book is divided into three parts. The first presents historical studies from the sixteenth century through the nineteenth. The second focuses on religious institutions and movements, so often relegated to epiphenomenal status in relation to class oppositions or treated as simply “reactionary,” combining historical and contemporary perspectives. The third part focuses on more contemporary, ethnography-based studies. Each part has its own short introduction, and our discussions produced interesting dialogues between the chapters, across the divisions between sections, periods, countries, and disciplines. Nevertheless, some readers may prefer to read Knight’s concluding overview before delving into the more detailed studies.