

MÁS QUE UN INDIO **MORE THAN AN INDIAN**

Racial Ambivalence and Neoliberal
Multiculturalism in Guatemala

Charles R. Hale



School of American Research
Resident Scholar Book

s e v e n

Racial Ambivalence in Transnational Perspective

Seldom has whiteness been so widely represented as attuned to racial equality and justice while so aggressively solidifying its advantage.

—Robyn Wiegman (*in reference to contemporary United States*),
“Whiteness Studies and the Paradox of Particularity,” (1999)

I see discrimination, in any case, as something natural: we all discriminate, by sex, color, etc. If it is not exaggerated, it is normal. It is normal, for example, that you would not want your daughter to marry some big lazy black man (*un gran negro, que no quiere trabajar o nada*). The conflict is natural. But it doesn't happen to any great extent here: it is not a life and death matter.

—Frederico Melgar, *ladino chimalteco*, June 1998

I have struggled with the odd sensation, since about 2002, of being only in sporadic touch with Guatemala, and inevitably relying on a lens shaped by conditions closer to home to take stock of what I hope this book has conveyed. During the spring of 2004 we in the United States marked the fifty-year anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, in what can only be described as a deeply discouraging remembrance. Although much could of course be said about how much has changed for the better since those pre-Civil Rights Movement days, media reports and in depth analysis alike focused much more attention on racial equality's enormous unfinished agenda.¹ The University of Texas played its part in the remembrance by inviting John Hope Franklin to deliver a public address. A ninety-year-old eminent historian who had worked with Thurgood Marshall on the Brown case, Franklin talked mostly about the shocking racism he had encountered as a young man before the ruling, and about the

intense conviction, idealism, and esprit de corps of Marshall's legal team. Then, in the final moments of his speech, in a subtle and soft-spoken manner that might have led one to downplay the devastating critique, Franklin reflected on the chasm between conditions today and the new society that his generation of activists imagined themselves to be building. The problems are serious and getting worse, he concluded; they await a new civil rights movement that has yet to be imagined.

Parallels between Franklin's retrospective assessment and the central analytical problem of this book weigh heavily on my mind. Since the mid-1980s, Guatemalan society has undergone an extraordinary transformation. Rising from the ashes of a brutal and traumatic, state-directed counterinsurgency campaign, Maya collective actors have seized the moment. From barely perceptible grassroots organizing, to high profile national-level negotiations, to a dense web of relations with "global" civil society, Mayas have claimed rights and challenged racism with impressive results. Although the feverish energy and excitement associated with the first round of struggle—similar, perhaps, to how Franklin characterized the spirit of the Marshall legal team—largely has faded, this reflects at least in part a consolidation that brings its own advantages. This book has taken these impressive achievements, well documented by others, as a given in order to pose a different series of questions: How have ladinos, the relatively powerful actors in the drama, responded to the challenge? How have they shaped, and been shaped by, these transformations? Are there ideological and institutional limits built into this process of change and, if so, what effects do they have? Even without the three decades of additional hindsight that Franklin had, I contend that it is crucial to begin this assessment, abandoning the "wait and see" standpoint, moving beyond sterile debates about whether the glass is half full or half empty.

The arguments presented in the preceding pages, beginning with the observation that Maya cultural rights activism currently faces an impasse, are sober and cautionary. My understanding of the impasse does not, however, draw on extensive interviews with Mayas. While this research project grew out of a multifaceted dialogue with Maya activist-intellectuals, those very conversations led me to focus primarily on ladinos and to avoid making Mayas the direct subjects of ethnographic scrutiny. My analysis is grounded in the assumption that much could be learned about the reach and limits of Maya rights activism by examining the people and structures of power that this activism has been directed against. In this sense, to draw a more specific parallel between the problems Franklin identified and my project here, one would need to focus on white people and the structural positions we occupy. How have different sectors of whites responded to the rising, if still limited, power of African Americans and other people of color since the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement? Although the full-fledged comparative analysis that this question demands will have to await another occasion, even to frame the question in this way has been illuminating. The following section substantiates this assertion, suggesting how this study draws from, and might contribute to, analysis and political engagement focused on the dominant actors in racial entanglements.

Ladinos, Mayas, and Whiteness Studies

Influenced by theoretical work on whiteness and racial formation, I decided to write this book using the conceptual apparatus of race, where others might have deployed ethnicity.² The reader will search in vain in the preceding pages for ethnic terminology—because race worked better in many cases and, where it did not, because I opted to substitute another term. In part, the rationale for this decision goes beyond the particular analytical mandate of this book. A close association in recent years with African Diaspora scholars has engendered a commitment to analyzing and working on issues of indigenous and Afro-descendant Latin Americans in a unified, comparative frame.³ This endeavor calls forth the curious observation that, in the past thirty years, scholarship on black Latin Americans has tended to remain “racial” while their indigenous counterparts have been converted wholesale into “ethnics.” Even after registering all the internal cultural processes that might have contributed to this divergence, it must also be attributed in part to the differential effects of racial ideologies, which presented Indians as a font of authentic national culture and blacks as alien, impossible to assimilate, non-national. This generates a gnawing sense that ethnicity theory emerged in complicity with state projects of nationalization, and with the differential subordination of black and indigenous citizens. Critique along these lines has been amplified by indigenous activist-intellectuals across the hemisphere, who overwhelmingly reject “ethnic” as a term of collective self-appellation. It would make us appear woefully out of step with the political sensibilities of our allies (and embarrassingly “unanthropological”) not to follow suit.⁴

There are more specifically analytical rationales for this decision as well, which in the case of this book must be gauged not in relation to black and indigenous peoples, but rather, to the study of dominant culture ladinos or mestizos. I am far from alone in this move to re-center race in the study of inequality in Latin America; indeed, the steady flow of recent literature makes it appear to be something of a trend.⁵ This is race as cultural construct, of course, sharply differentiated from its pre-Boasian biological meanings, remnants of which persisted in social science into the 1950s, when they would be pushed aside by ethnicity theory.⁶ Indeed, the contrast with this antecedent literature reveals a telltale difference as racial analytics have returned to the fore: previously scholars used the term in reference mainly to racially marked peoples themselves, with scant concern for the workings of racial hierarchy, and no attention to whites and ladinos-mestizos as the dominant actors in their countries’ unfolding sociopolitical dramas. The rationale for the return of race to Latin American studies, in contrast, is that it generates insight into these broader social relations, and redirects the spotlight of analytical scrutiny toward those who are racially dominant.

There is much to be gained from the study of ladinos in Guatemala, and mestizos in other Latin American countries, in comparative and theoretical dialogue with US-based studies of whiteness.⁷ One principal catalyst for whiteness studies has been to analyze and contest the way white racial dominance has been reproduced through

assertions of universality, or more subtly still, by making white particularity stand as the unmarked, yet ubiquitous standard of social organization. Anthropology has been complicit with this racial hegemony in our consistent preference to study subordinate peoples, with ample respect for cultural particularity, but also with the implicit premise that difference from the dominant racial norm is what makes people into attractive subjects of study.⁸ Whiteness studies ask that we reverse the lens. A further contribution of whiteness studies has been to defer questions about whether a given individual, or a given utterance or practice, is "racist." Instead, proponents have defended a more structural conceptualization of racism—as an ideology of racial inferiority articulated with race-based power inequities. By focusing on whites as a dominant racial group, this work redirects attention to a wide array of social forces that keep white people collectively in a higher position on the racial hierarchy, quite apart from individual white people's attitudes, practices, and discourse. Ladinos, I argue here, constitute a dominant racial group in Guatemala; as such, many of the theoretical insights of whiteness studies have been useful for guiding my analysis of ladino-Indian relations.

Let me name and address the objections to this assertion from the outset. Can this phrase—ladino racial dominance—hold its own, given that boundaries among groups in Guatemala are so porous and hierarchies so heterogeneous? Negative answers to this question tend to rest on three principal objections. First, to think of ladinos as a dominant racial group immediately raises a question about their relationship to Euro-Guatemalans, who generally occupy a higher position in the racial hierarchy. How dominant is dominant? Second, the boundary between ladinos and the diverse peoples who occupy lower rungs of the racial hierarchy is also porous. A third objection focuses on the relationship between ladinos and the colossus to the north. If ladino political sensibilities, identity, and practice are shaped in part by the history of subordinate relations between Guatemala and the United States, then ladino racial dominance (toward Indians) and racial subordination (in relation to US imperialism) become two sides of the same coin; this is an especially challenging point, given that I am white North American. All three objections might be combined and summarized as follows. The very term "racial dominance" invokes a generalized, transhistorical condition, which gives way under scrutiny of the great variability, fluidity, and particularity of ladino-Indian relations in Guatemala.⁹

These objections key directly into a major debate in the literature on race in Latin America. To simplify considerably, this debate is between those who defend the usefulness of a general "racial formation" framework and those who emphasize particularity, fearing that any generalized notion of racial formation would do violence to the rich and extensive heterogeneity in the ways that race is signified across space and time.¹⁰ Although played out largely on conceptual grounds, the debate takes on an additional charge in cases where proponents of the racial formation approach themselves belong to, or are closely aligned with, a subordinate racial group. Critiques of racial formation, in these latter cases, extend to include the allegation (explicit or otherwise) that the analysts in question have failed to differentiate between their politi-

cal agenda (for example, some form of transnational or diasporic racial unity) and their analysis of how race is lived in a given context. The counterallegation (explicit or otherwise) is that the "particularists" underestimate transnational racial inequities and discount the racial unity that the protagonists themselves have found so crucial to their struggles for rights and redress. In the logic of this counterallegation, analysts who are reticent in naming and analyzing racial hierarchies run the risk of complicity with the ideologies that legitimate racism.¹¹ Perhaps a closer look at ladino-Indian relations in Guatemala will help to move this debate forward.

The approach I have taken here views ladino racial dominance and the contextual particularities of racial meanings in Chimaltenango not as opposing perspectives, in tension with one another, but rather as key pieces of the analytical whole. The basic conditions of ladino racial dominance imposed themselves so forcefully and consistently in my daily experience as an ethnographer that they often could have faded into the unremarkable background of the normal. I remember walking outside our house one morning to find a group of three young ladino boys playing in the street with a puppy. They egged the puppy on to jump and nip at them, scolded the puppy in feigned anger, and then coaxed him to jump again. "*Chucho de mierda*" (You shithead dog), one yelled gleefully; "*Chucho indio*" (You Indian dog), another chimed in. I found this commonsense ideology of indigenous inferiority, this pervasive idea that ladinos are "*más que un indio*" to be ubiquitous in everyday settings, although often suppressed in "civilized" public discourse. Persisting race-based political-economic inequality also was a fact of life, despite incremental changes in some realms. Yet even amid this ubiquitous evidence of ladino racial dominance, one could always find fluidity and ambiguity as well: individuals and whole families whose very existence defied the assertion of racial boundaries; inversions of the standard inequalities; layers of complexity; exceptions to the rule. My approach to this juxtaposition of seemingly contradictory observations—racial dominance and disruptive ambiguity—has been to place them in dialogue, insisting that each can be properly understood only in relation to the other.

The relationship between ladinos and Euro-Guatemalans is a revealing case in point. In Guatemala and throughout Latin America, there is a long and rich intellectual tradition of critical scholarship on white (or "Creole") elites, their subservience to western imperial ideas and interests, their inability to fashion an inclusive national identity, their racist precepts toward non-white members of their own societies.¹² While this critique was at first advanced with the mestizo ideal as explicit alternative, more recently it has gone further, acknowledging how the celebration of mestizaje generally came paired with an ideology of *blanqueamiento* (whitening), which separates the constituent parts of the mix and assigns greater value to the parts that are racially white and culturally Anglo-European.¹³ These very critiques, in turn, highlight the key question: how to think about racial dominance in Guatemala? In some respects ladinos and Euro-Guatemalans belong in the same loosely composed racial category: most ladinos endorse the ideology of *blanqueamiento*, and (in keeping with that

ideology) a ladino who accumulates substantial wealth and marries well might even be accepted in the elite stratum. In other respects, however, the division between these two groups remains analytically crucial: Euro-Guatemalans' general insistence on marking their racial difference from ladinos exerts a deep influence on how ladinos think about themselves and, by extension, on ladino relations with Indians. Combined, these two observations point to the same conclusion—it would not be analytically sufficient to focus solely on the structural relationship (ladino and Euro-Guatemalan as a racially dominant bloc) or solely on the particularity (the porous boundaries and contradictory internal relations between these two). The particularity disrupts any straightforward notion of racial dominance, while this very notion remains crucial to making the particularity intelligible, and to situating ladinos as a group in Guatemalan society.

A careful look at the relations between ladinos and those at the lower end of the racial hierarchy informs a parallel argument. As emphasized in the preceding pages, ladinos in Chimaltenango, and throughout the highlands, typically feel deeply invested in the stark boundary between themselves and indigenous people. While individual and even collective transgressions always have occurred, in the past their consequences have been managed to reinforce this basic distinction and to relegate Indians to spaces that are separate and unequal. In chapters 2 and 6, I provided evidence to suggest that the incidence of these transgressions is increasing, and that the line between (lower-class) ladino and Indian is growing more blurred and porous. In the past offspring of mixed unions between ladinos and Indians often were called "mestizos," a term with the connotation of instability and an assumption of inevitable assimilation to one group or the other. Today, in contrast, the counterpoint to the mestizo are the new mestizos, who refuse identification with either side, and who seem to be forging a distinct collective identity. This increasing presence of new mestizos, in turn, complicates my assertion that ladinos are a dominant racial group: do the new mestizos partake in ladino racial dominance? Or are they best understood as a distinct sector of non-Indian subordinates? Drawing on the ethnographic scrutiny summarized in chapter 6, my answer is "some of both." Middle-class ladinos chimaltecos typically view new mestizos as Indians who have lost their culture, and racialize them accordingly; new mestizos themselves, though defiant of ladinos, often explain their distance from Indians by drawing on the same racial ideology that these middle-class ladinos espouse. The notion of ladino racial dominance that I deploy here does not screen out this complexity, but rather highlights it: new mestizos are racially ambiguous precisely because they are subject to ladino racism, while lacking clear recourse to Maya identity and cultural resistance. Structural analysis situates new mestizos as members of the racially subordinate bloc, who have internalized the ideology of racial inferiority directed against them. However persuasive this view, it does little to help us understand how new mestizos also have constituted themselves as a distinct social group. Ethnographic scrutiny fills in this gap, but the portrayal becomes fully intelligible only when framed in reference to the structural position that the new mestizos occupy.

Finally, the notion of ladino racial dominance also directs useful attention to the global racial hierarchy and, more specifically, to relations between my ladino subjects and the United States. I could not focus on ladino racial dominance without evoking questions about my own racial position and its effects on this study. One facet of this problem is the way white racial dominance might have influenced how ladino informants responded to my inquiries. The quotation from Federico Melgar that serves as an epigraph to this chapter is an extreme version of a common cultural-political sensibility. My field notes record numerous instances where ladinos, in the course of an interview or informal conversation, drew a parallel between "our" Indians and "your" blacks, in what I took as a misplaced gesture of racial solidarity. This suggests that the ladino discourse analyzed here could contain a strained or overstated assertion of racial dominance resulting from their effort to connect with imagined mappings of my racial position and sensibilities as a white North American. Another facet of the problem is the triangle of relations among ladinos, Indians, and white foreigners. Many ladinos resent what they perceive as a growing bond of solidarity between white foreigners and Mayas, which precludes ladinos' traditional role as intermediaries between Indians and the outside world. Sensing this resentment, white foreigners deepen their ties with Mayas and develop an overly trenchant critique of ladino racism. Stated bluntly, the critique is that my emphasis on ladino racial dominance could be in part a manifestation of my own romanticized affinities with Mayas, which downplays the broader power inequalities that constitute all Guatemalans—ladinos and Mayas alike—as subjects of North American ethnographic scrutiny.

While the approach adopted here offers no easy response to these challenges, it has the distinct advantage of placing them centrally on the analytical agenda. After the first few times of experiencing the misplaced gesture of ladino racial solidarity, I had my antennas permanently raised for these racial eruptions, making sure to include them in my ethnographic renderings of the encounters (for other examples, see chapters 3 and 6). Making whiteness visible, contesting its unmarked status, is a first modest step toward addressing the problem of how white racial dominance might have affected the methods and conclusions of this study. Awareness of this problem also led me to listen with special attention to ladino histories of struggle to transform the Guatemalan national space, in opposition to both US imperialism and the Euro-Guatemalan oligarchy. It heightened my receptivity to many ladinos' skepticism of white North American solidarity with the Maya; in some cases, I came to endorse their analysis that this solidarity rested on a longstanding fascination with exotic peoples that has formed part of the culture of imperialism. At the same time, a keen awareness of the racial hierarchy engendered careful scrutiny of these ladino visions of Guatemala's *national* liberation, with special attention to how these political sensibilities so often have been conceived and deployed through the prism of anti-Indian racism.

The approach I have developed here, in sum, deploys the notion of ladino racial dominance in constant juxtaposition with ethnographic particularity. This approach

yields no ready-made conclusions about racial processes in Guatemala, and imposes no self-evident clarity on the ambiguities, internal tensions, and blurred boundaries of the racial identities that are the subject of study. To the contrary, the approach directs us precisely to these rough edges, obliging us to confront them in all their complexity. The basic theoretical principle, though at first counterintuitive and never simple to practice, has proven to be a reliable guide in working through the topic at hand: ladino racial dominance, a notion grounded in social structure, becomes more useful when it is disrupted by ethnographic particularity. Such disruptions, in turn, make the notion of ladino racial dominance all the more indispensable. This principle is a first step in the effort to draw conclusions from the extensive accounts of ladino responses to the Maya efflorescence presented in the preceding chapters. The next step is to situate this approach in relation to the theoretical ideas that framed the research, and to explore how my conclusions might help us challenge and refine the theory.

Guatemalan Racial Formation

Racial formation theory has an eclectic intellectual genealogy. To simplify considerably, we can portray it as the convergence of two principal flows of theoretical work. First, racial vindication scholarship, which (following the lead of W. E. B. Du Bois) places racial meanings and hierarchies at the center of social analysis.¹⁴ Second, cultural Marxism, in the tradition of Antonio Gramsci, which loosens the structural determinism common to Marxist thought, and redirects attention toward what we now call cultural politics. Gramscian analysis retains a Marxist emphasis on political economy, while assigning equal importance to how structural inequalities are signified, how political struggles are played out not just in the realm of material resources and coercive power but, in addition, often fundamentally, as struggles over meanings and representations. Building on these key interventions, racial formation theory directs our inquiry *both* to the structured relations of political-economic power and to how people signify these inequalities. It calls for a balanced consideration of structure and signification; directing attention to how racial categories and meanings change in the course of political struggle; but also insists that, amid this change, racial hierarchy and racism can persist, taking on new forms while producing strikingly similar consequences. Conceived in this way, racial formation theory provides a powerful guide for the narration of racial processes: how race is constitutive of the social order; how particular racial meanings congeal to represent the common sense of the moment; how these structures and meanings gradually fade, giving way to new ones; and how this change both conditions and is propelled by political struggle.¹⁵

My ethnography makes use of and generally endorses this framework, while also drawing attention to the need for further elaboration. The building blocks of structural inequality and signification serve well to guide my analysis, but they remain wooden and "experience-distant" in relation to the specifics: how people live with, reproduce, and contest racial categories and their associated cultural meanings. Racial formation theory does not preclude, but nor does it explicitly encourage, ethnographic

and theoretical work in the realm of what we now call political subjectivities. Ethnographically, this means being more attentive to people's thoughts, feelings, fears and desires, precepts and elements of common sense, forged in the course of everyday practice. Theoretically, racial formation analysis focuses primarily on how political subjectivities are constituted by powerful external forces (subject formation), and needs to devote greater attention to how collective and individual actors actively give meaning to the world around them (self-making). This, in turn, would help connect racial formation theory to the often perplexing everyday racial politics that I encountered in Chimaltenango: where racial categories were both ubiquitous and absent, where racial meanings saturated social relations in routine (often highly normalized) ways, but also disrupted those relations with unpredictable and unintended consequences. Racial formation theory, enriched by these ethnographic disruptions that challenge and de-center the general story line, can play a crucial role in explaining why racial hierarchies are so resilient, and how social change occurs. Below I elaborate on the first part of this argument, reviewing key elements of racial formation theory that have guided my analysis of relations between ladinos and Mayas in Guatemalan society. This discussion revolves around three key concepts: racial hierarchy, racism, and racial privilege. In the following section, I explore the "ethnographic disruptions"—when ladino practice interrupts, overflows, or otherwise messes with the structured processes that racial formation theory brings to the fore.

I have used the phrase "racial hierarchy" throughout this study in reference to a general feature of Guatemalan society: sharp differentiation among distinct strata along the lines of power and privilege, with ladinos generally occupying a higher stratum and Indians a lower one. In the past one strong tendency has been to characterize these strata primarily in class terms; indeed, reams of analysis on Guatemalan society and politics have been written using standard class categories (peasant, worker, oligarch, bourgeoisie, and so on), rendering Indians, and the role of Indian-ladino relations, nearly invisible. The most important impetus for critical revision of such analysis has been the rise of collective Maya claims for rights and empowerment, which called into question, at the very least, the salience of class as the primary basis for political identification. Class relations, of course, remain central in understanding how all strata of the racial hierarchy are composed, and in probing differentiation within any given stratum. To cite two examples: a small but important group of Mayas has reached the middle class and the class categories of worker and peasant include large numbers of ladinos. Even after fully registering such complexities, the notion of racial hierarchy is still indispensable to an understanding of how material inequality is experienced, contested, and reproduced. Historically, ladinos have claimed the prerogative to occupy a higher stratum than Indians, and they have tended to justify the resulting differentiation in racial terms. This racial differentiation lies at the heart of innumerable institutional arrangements and practices, which keep the Guatemalan social formation in place. Similarly, Mayas generally understand their disadvantage as a function of ladino dominance, and their resistance often (though certainly not

always) proceeds along racial lines. These basic empirical observations provide an initial rationale for using the term "racial hierarchy" and, once adopted, the term itself opens the way for further scrutiny.

My analysis also casts critical light on the transformation of racism in Guatemala, contributing to a growing literature on this topic. I have documented a shift, from the classic racism of times past to a new cultural racism, associated with the rise of neoliberal multiculturalism. This new racism comes embedded in a central and ubiquitous disavowal: those who preceded us were true racists, while we have overcome these problems. This disavowal flows directly from the "perpetrator" model, whereby racism only exists when we can identify an individual agent who espouses and acts on the assertion that people who belong to a given social category are inherently inferior. While Guatemala is still full of perpetrators who fit this description, they are decreasing in numbers and prominence, and increasingly subject to direct contestation by Mayas, and even other ladinos. The new racism, then, focuses not on perpetrators, but on consequences: the routinized reproduction of social inequality organized along racial lines. While overt biological justifications of inferiority are on the decline, ladinos still regularly note cultural differences between themselves and Mayas, and often point to these differences in explaining why Indians have remained in inferior social positions. Although ostensibly sensitive and respectful, this cultural discourse often is deployed to place limits on future Maya ascendancy (for example, pointing to proper cultural attributes that they lack) and to blame Maya for their own subordination (for example, Maya culture is poorly adapted to the rigors of modernity). I use the term "cultural racism" to mark this shift, and to trace how the rise of official multiculturalism, paradoxically enough, has made racial hierarchy more resilient. This claim at times has been misinterpreted to mean that racism was once all about biological inferiority, whereas now it revolves around (inferiorized) cultural difference. To the contrary, my research echoes others in demonstrating precisely the opposite: that racist ideology in Guatemala always has muddied the distinction between biology and culture, in commonsense understandings, political, and even academic discourse.¹⁶ We can affirm the longstanding character of this race-culture conflation, while at the same time noting a pervasive shift: references to inherent biological traits, animal analogies, and quasi-Lamarckian reasoning, once unselfconsciously center stage, have now receded to the discursive margins, living on as ambiguous metaphors or in terms of benign and fungible cultural difference.

This argument for cultural racism, in turn, invokes the ethnicity question. Especially since ladinos increasingly conceive of themselves, and their differences from Indians, in cultural terms, the argument goes, this is an obvious moment to adopt the theoretical language of ethnicity, precisely to register and fully explore that shift. An extension of this argument points to the rising currency of the self-appellation "mestizo"—bringing Guatemala in line with most of the rest of Latin America—which also draws centrally on this same cultural logic. Yet ethnicity theory, precisely because it is predicated on the strict dichotomy between cultural and biological reasoning,

turns out to be a poor guide for exploring how these two get entangled, or how ostensibly cultural reasoning can subtly take on inherent, quasi-biological properties. Moreover, while ethnicity theory certainly does not imply the absence of hierarchy, its use is associated with the era of state recognition of cultural difference; by extension, it is also associated with increased possibilities for subordinate groups to improve their status through assimilation or upward mobility. Race-centered analysis, in contrast, emphasizes continuities between past and current forms of racial hierarchy, tracing the particular entanglements of cultural and biological premises that justify each. These are elements that analysis guided by ethnicity theory would be likely to overlook.

A third and final key notion in my analysis is racial privilege: a historically imbued set of symbolic and material advantages that come with having a dominant position in the racial hierarchy.¹⁷ These advantages are not earned or actively worked for; rather, they are attributes of the dominant position itself, the cumulative benefits of long-term patterns of racism. The consideration of racial privilege is crucial because it turns our attention away from specific practices—for example, a ladina employer's treatment of an Indian domestic servant—toward analysis of general relations—a social structure predicated on the fact that in the past century Indians generally have been servants to ladinos. Moreover, assertions of racial privilege make no recourse to explicit attitudes or ideologies of racial superiority. Instead, a subtle assumption of superiority permeates—not automatically, but as strong, diffuse propensities and patterns—the entire range of life experiences, from job and career, to sex and marriage, to most other social relations and sensibilities. The diffuseness is crucial, because racial privilege is not defended through action in a specific context, but through a general inclination to keep existing institutions and social relations in place. When I contend, as I have throughout this book, that ladinos affirm the principle of cultural equality and yet are generally unwilling to cede racial privilege, this diffuse, enduring sense of superiority is the point of reference. People effectively defend racial privilege not through arguments for racial entitlements or prerogatives but, rather, through a general disposition toward a wide array of taken-for-granted material props and cultural values; in effect, an entire way of life. This notion of racial privilege directly informs what I have called racial ambivalence, the fusion of affinity and refusal that characterizes ladino responses to the Maya efflorescence.

Ethnographic Disruptions

This very image of ambivalent ladino responses to Maya ascendancy opens another line of inquiry, for which racial formation theory is necessary but insufficient. It does not encompass a fine-grained analysis of political subjectivities: How is racial ambivalence constituted and how does it feel? What kinds of practices does it engender? To what extent, and in what ways, is racial ambivalence acknowledged as such and, by extension, contested and transformed? The ethnographic approach taken in this book provides some answers to these questions, focusing special attention on the “affirming”

dimension of the ambivalence, that is, the widespread ladino affirmation of the cultural equality principle and the range of everyday practices that follow. This principle has generated a wide variety of political positions toward Mayas, from the mestizo universalism inspired by the October Revolution to the multiculturalism of the present, and a variety of everyday expressions of ladino solidarity. Indeed, the cultural equality principle is one force (though certainly not the only one) behind the increasingly popular move to abandon ladino identity altogether, in favor of the collective self-appellation "mestizo." The effects of this affirming dimension are not preordained and cannot be understood solely with reference to overall continuities in the racial hierarchy. Even if the inclination to maintain racial privilege generally acts to limit, derail, or partially neutralize the egalitarian impulse, there are countervailing possibilities and ample space for unintended consequences. The notion of racial ambivalence, in sum, must encompass both the imposing structural-ideological weight of racial formation and the open-ended variability of cultural-political practice and, most important, the interaction of these two.

This analytical focus puts me in critical dialogue with two major currents in the theoretical literature on race and identity. The first is the move "against race" and "beyond identity," which comes in a wide range of guises, some driven more by theoretical interventions, others by ethnographic preoccupations with complex cultural analysis of social process.¹⁸ While these diverse emphases yield very different kinds of intellectual products, they share a series of basic attributes. Their insistence on a Foucault-inflected notion of power—fluid, capillary, diffuse—generates skepticism toward, and general neglect of, the political-economic structuring of racial hierarchies and racism. Their insistence on the contingent and multiple character of social boundaries engenders skepticism toward the idea that ideological processes and lived experiences of racial subordination might yield consistent patterns of racial identities and politics over space and time.¹⁹ These "against and beyond" theoretical commitments have given rise to a bewildering proliferation of quotation marks around race, identity, and other such terms, to mark their contingent and constructed character; more substantively, they have produced work that is sharply critical of identity-based racial politics, unconvinced by antiracist analysis overly tied to the notion of racial dominance, and skeptical of overgeneralization of racial meanings from one site (generally the United States) to other settings.²⁰ While salutary in many ways, especially in their constant reminder to keep class, gender, and other crosscutting axes of inequality present in race-centered analysis, these approaches generally neglect the structural-ideological dimension of racial processes. The consequences of this neglect are especially evident when the dominant racial group is the focus of analysis. In regard to ladinos, for example, this neglect would lead notions of racial hierarchy and privilege to fade into the background, giving ladino racial ambivalence the status of a sensibility or an aesthetic. This would seriously understate the distribution of political-economic power that allows most ladinos to remain in a position of dominance, and it would reinforce the commonsense idea that the persistence of this hierarchy has nothing to do with racism.

Yet my close ethnographic reading of ladinos' defensive moves in Chimaltenango also disrupts any notion of a straight causal flow from structural-ideological conditions to political outcomes. A second strand of work on race and identity, much of it explicitly antiracist in focus and intent, tends to reproduce this problem. In part the problem lies in the deep allure of "racial interpellation," which allows little space for self-making within and against already constituted racial categories.²¹ Another telltale sign is a rigidly scripted analysis of racial formation, where individuals stand in for, and predictably play out, their preassigned positions in a racial hierarchy.²² Yet another is the legal studies contingent of critical race theorists who produce sophisticated, critical readings of racism in textual, legal, and institutional contexts, with scant attention to the day-to-day workings of racial politics.²³ My particular concern with ladino racial politics again helps to specify the key point of divergence. While I found no organized ladino-led movements of direct opposition to racism in Chimaltenango (and very few nationwide), there were many instances of individual disruption or transgression, and a general sense of instability in the emerging mode of governance. My ethnography does not mistake individual transgression for transformative politics, but I do insist on examining the reach and effects of the former, exploring the tension between ladinos' defense of racial privilege and their embrace of cultural equality. The theoretical point follows. These disruptions are not incidental or inconsequential noise in an otherwise stable racial hierarchy; they hold the key to understanding how the racial hierarchy is reproduced and challenged. Making sense of political process, in its unruly and open-ended complexity, is indispensable to my application of the racial formation approach.

These two lines of analysis—one emphasizing structural-ideological conditions and the other open-ended political subjectivities—themselves stand in partial tension with one another. Although reminiscent of the structure-agency conundrum, which animated so much thought in the 1980s, a number of developments have injected new energy into our thinking in this realm.²⁴ One is a much greater sophistication in theories of the subject—replacing previous assumptions of the sovereign, autonomous individual with the idea of subject formation. Another is a broadened understanding of the structural, toward an appreciation of the irreducibly multiple character of social inequality—what has come to be known as "intersectionality."²⁵ More generally, there is a much greater inclination to live with the tension in this binary, abandoning the quest for a synthesis. I have incorporated each of these developments into the general approach taken here. Throughout these pages I have traced the structural-ideological dimensions of racial formation in Guatemala, and used the notion of racial privilege and related concepts to formulate my analysis. At the same time, I have allowed my argument to develop ethnographically, tracing the subjectivities of ladino and ladina chimaltecos in the flow of everyday practice. In some ways, this ethnography directly substantiates the structural analysis, while in other respects troubling and disrupting it. Rather than take the resulting tension as a problem to resolve, I have cast it as an achievement. These spaces of disjuncture—where the structural-ideological conditions

and political subjectivities confound one another—are the generative sites of the most important findings of this study. In the following section I briefly note three such findings, both to encapsulate the book's contributions and to further specify my theoretical approach to the study of racial politics.

Racial Dominance and Political Process

Much recent work on racial identities and politics has neglected fine-grained, political-economic analysis in favor of an emphasis on the discursive. In contrast, I have assigned considerable importance to tracing the race-based distribution of political-economic power, in order to juxtapose ladino anxieties about losing ground to Mayas to separately derived data on this same question. These data, summarized in chapter 2, paint a complex and differentiated picture. Ladinos are indeed losing ground to Mayas in some areas, but also to powerful outsiders (both foreigners and elite Guatemalans) who exert increasing control over the local sources of economic dynamism. Moreover, the spatial distribution of racial hierarchy is changing. In some municipios (for example, Comalapa) ladino presence is minimal to nil, while in others (for example, El Tejar) non-Indians are consolidating power and demographic predominance. This consolidation, however, depends crucially on ladinos' ability to strengthen political affinities with the growing numbers of new mestizos who populate these spaces. Ironically, although the new mestizos pose no collective political challenge to ladinos (at least for the time being), their indifference toward, even scorn for, the prospect of becoming ladino could make them appear just as threatening as the Mayas. Political-economic analysis, in short, both confirms the basis for ladino perceptions of displacement, while also showing how ladinos exaggerate the threat, and tend to reduce a multiply constituted process to a single cause.

If political-economic data exerts a grounding influence on ladino discourse about and practice toward Indians, the reverse is true as well: attention to political subjectivities engenders welcome skepticism toward this very data. One great problem with political-economic analysis of this sort, a principal reason that studies of racial formation often look elsewhere for substantiation, is that the data themselves come in ideologically charged, racialized categories. By marshalling the data as if they provided a transparent account of a given social formation, the analyst can divert attention from the politicized interests at play in their creation, and even yield conclusions that are complicit with those very interests. Careful attention to how racial categories are constituted, by broader societal forces and by the daily practice of people who occupy them, offers a partial antidote to this problem. In this study, such attention has revealed anything but neatly bounded categories: there is no consensus about who is ladino, about how to think about the emergent, multifaceted category "mestizo," nor about what meanings follow from these designations. Racial categories are subject to deep flux, perplexity, and contestation. More specifically, there is no state-endorsed category for, no official means to count, an estimated 30 percent of the population in

some municipios of Chimaltenango who identify as mestizo. Most civil registrars have simply given up recording identities in birth and death records to avoid running afoul of one current or another in the charged emotions surrounding the politics of naming. Under these conditions, to call forth race-specific political-economic data without thorough scrutiny of how racial categories are made and contested would be at best an exercise in futility. Yet to use this fluidity as a rationale for abandoning the effort to map changing patterns of race-based political-economic power, would be capitulation to ideologically driven assertions that racial hierarchy and racism do not matter anymore. My response to this dilemma is to do both, and to embrace the tension that results.

The same goes for a second major finding of this study: ladino racial dominance persists, but under conditions of increasing indigenous irreverence and resistance, and a decreasing ability to represent racial inequality as natural or legitimate. The evidence presented here for Chimaltenango, combined with accounts from elsewhere in Guatemala, leaves no doubt that the racial composition of Guatemala's class structure is changing. The steady flow of indigenous upward mobility and the dismantling of the separate and unequal racial ideology of times past have yielded a proliferation of middle-class spaces that ladinos and Mayas share. Important as this diversification is, as a base for Maya movement activism and as general evidence that indigenous people are gaining ground, its limits are equally evident. In comparative demographic terms this class mobility is still miniscule, and drops off rapidly with each ascending rung in the economic hierarchy. Moreover, a significant portion of upwardly mobile Mayas still attempt to distance themselves from indigenous culture and identity, to blend in at the cost of affective ties and political affinities with the majority—although pressures for such assimilation are less intense than they were even a decade ago. In any case, more important than these transformations in the class-race hierarchy is the rise of myriad forms of contestation. Indigenous Guatemalans have acquired individual and even collective voice to contest racism and to challenge the injustice of their continued marginalization, even if, thus far, this voice has resulted in fairly marginal change in their structural relations with ladinos.

Daily interactions that I observed in Chimaltenango are full of examples of this disjuncture between increasing contestation of racial inequality and relatively marginal change in the racial hierarchy. Most ladinos I interviewed focused on the contestation, which had changed their daily relations with indigenous people in important ways: domestic servants who refuse to show the deference and humility that their employers deem proper; Indian youth who talk back to the parish priest; Maya intellectuals who miss no chance to denounce racist discourse in public settings. Yet since this contestation has advanced a blistering critique of racial meanings with a relative neglect of political-economic relations, the disjuncture remains. This generates marked instability in the present arrangement, with a rising sense of ladino anxiety that further change is in the air. One day, for example, I accompanied Guillermo Álvarez to San Andrés Itzapa, because he wanted to show me his land, in

past generations a small plantation, now rented out to an indigenous family. As we drew near the homestead on foot, a man on horseback approached; he was Valentín, the elderly father of the tenant family. As Valentín began to greet us, Guillermo cut him off brusquely: "*Vos Valentín, bajáte, queremos hablar contigo*" (Hey boy, get down, we want to talk with you).²⁶ Valentín slowly dismounted, and now stood a full foot shorter than the two of us. As we walked the rest of the way to the house, Guillermo talked down to Valentín (in both senses of the phrase) in a steady chatter. That brief "*vos Valentín, bajáte*" vignette vividly encapsulates the colonial race relations that have characterized Guatemala for so long and that in many ways persist, some blatant like this, others much more subtle. Our brief interactions with Valentín's family at the house, however, left a very different impression. Far from cowed by Guillermo, the assembled family members found him risible, perhaps even more than usual given his endeavor to impress a white North American friend with his now tawdry landed wealth. They almost seemed to mock him, staying just within the bounds of etiquette, but sending a clear message that the old patterns of ladino authority, which Guillermo imagined himself enacting, had long since lost their power of persuasion.

It remains to be seen how destabilizing this disjuncture will turn out to be. In some respects, of course, it is nothing new: another example of the age-old pattern whereby subordinate people defer to authority they cannot directly contest and then mock the very basis for this authority's legitimacy, up to the limits of what political conditions permit. Yet any disjuncture of this sort reaches a point where the claims to legitimacy grow so fragile, and the spaces of contestation so difficult to suppress, that the hierarchy becomes impossible to maintain. According to one scenario, Guatemalan society is moving steadily in that direction: toward a breaking point when the systemic basis for longstanding racial hierarchy would be directly and massively transformed. However, analysis in these pages points to a second scenario, whereby persisting racial hierarchy finds a substantively different basis for continued legitimacy: change generated in large part by the cumulative political force of indigenous resistance, but directed by the more powerful forces at play. Indigenous people are not inferior, but affirmed as equals; indigenous culture is to be respected, even celebrated; the few who make it to the middle class are welcomed, as bodily evidence of the new ethic of equality and as proof that something other than racism must explain why racial hierarchy remains virtually unchanged for the vast majority. Based on research in Chimaltenango, I have offered evidence that this sobering alternative scenario already has begun to unfold. At the same time, this analysis suggests that the disjuncture—between rising Maya contestation of racism and persisting racial hierarchy—continues to provide fertile ground for those working to give the transformative alternative a fighting chance.

Another dimension of the "*vos Valentín*" vignette provides an entrée to the final illustration of the analytical tension that I have sought to embrace. Ladinos chimaltecos, in loose articulation with dominant sectors more generally, have begun to fashion a new mode of governance, a combination of substantive concessions to Maya cultural

activism and preemptive strikes against more expansive demands. At the same time, deep forces at work in the ladino political imaginary threaten to disrupt and derail this arrangement, just as it begins to take hold. Even if Guillermo did get Valentín to dismount, even if he could still carry on a condescending conversation with his family as their *patrón*, he cannot have been pleased by their poorly concealed irreverence. It is precisely interactions like these, I argued in chapter 5, which provoke deep fears of treachery and betrayal. I have attempted to encapsulate this anxiety, documented with some consistency among a range of ladino informants, as a flash of intense feelings focused on the image of the insurrectionary Indian. The image comes to the fore, I argued, when ladinos feel that the premises of their position in the racial hierarchy are being called into question. This notion of the political imaginary complicates my central conclusion that a new mode of governance has begun to emerge. The emergent structural-ideological conditions, that is, the combination of concessions and preemptive strike, carries much more pent up, highly charged, emotional energy than it can contain. The fear of Indian men taking ladina women as bounty, a standard component in the insurrectionary Indian nightmare, is just one example of many. Whatever the explanation for this particular embellishment—and admittedly, my hypothesis presented in chapter 5 barely scratches the surface—its very existence points to a fundamental instability that will be difficult to overcome. The new mode of governance requires substantive ladino discourse and practice toward Mayas to be characterized by equality—a principle that most ladinos endorse but, deep down, in moments of danger, feel compelled to contradict. My insistence on keeping the political imaginary present in the analysis, without attempting to contain this “overflow,” stands as a call for further research on this topic, as a warning against facile solutions of “intercultural dialogue,” and as a reiteration of my theoretical approach. This emphasis on the ladino imaginary brings political sensibilities, in all their complexity, into the picture, noting their destabilizing influence on the new mode of governance, which otherwise seems to be gaining momentum and sinking roots.

These three instances of disjuncture between structural-ideological conditions and political subjectivities, drawn, roughly speaking, from chapters 2, 4, and 5, all play a part in giving shape to racial ambivalence, the central concept in this study. I use the concept to emphasize how ladinos both affirm the principle of cultural equality and set firm limits on its reach, how they both critique racism and cling to racial privilege as the guarantee that Maya ascendancy will not wreak havoc. By extension, this notion of racial ambivalence directs attention both to the increasing contestation of ladino dominance and its stubborn persistence. Especially by attending to the political imaginary, I explore the force of feeling of racial ambivalence, making it something deeper than merely an instrumental response to a collective predicament, giving it an intensity and volatility with unpredictable consequences. Indeed, my exploration of the political imaginary shows how ladinos themselves end up disrupting their own carefully articulated commitments to the principle of cultural equality with Mayas.

Constituted in this way—with attention to structural-ideological conditions,

political subjectivities, and the tensions between these two—the concept of racial ambivalence encapsulates ladino responses to the Maya efflorescence. This position—a local, untheorized collection of political sensibilities and practices—contains the essential building blocks of an emerging mode of governance, which I call neoliberal multiculturalism. Not all forms of ladino (or mestizo) identity and political practice fit this description. As I argued in chapter 6, some ladinos/mestizos work actively to contest or overcome racial ambivalence, even while continuing to embody it. These individuals—whom I refer to as ladino dissidents and mestizo militants—push the equality principle beyond its comfortable resting place and subject the powerful allure of racial privilege to critical scrutiny. I have argued that in general this equality principle exerts a stabilizing influence on the racial hierarchy, absolving ladinos from any further responsibility for persisting racial inequity. Yet this same principle, pushed to its logical conclusion, can also generate the opposite effect. Here, then, lies the paradox: the newfound affirmation that Mayas and ladinos are equal is both constitutive of, and a constant threat to, the dominant racial order in the making.

This paradox takes a broader sociopolitical form as well. I do not argue that middle-class ladinos in Chimaltenango neatly epitomize broader processes, nor that the “global” exerts an impact on this particular corner of the “local” in irresistible and determinate patterns. These influences certainly do take place, and to neglect them would be to fall back on one of the most notorious anthropological fallacies: the bounded community study. I argued in chapter 2, for example, that part of the squeeze that ladinos chimaltecos feel comes from the state’s newfound enthusiasm for multiculturalism and from the changing productive relations, both of which directly correspond to the globalized logic of neoliberalism. I extended this argument in chapters 4 and 5, pointing to how burgeoning flows of international aid to Maya civil society became a thorn in the side of ladino dominance. Yet the thrust of the study has not been to trace such global connections, but rather to argue that the problem of racial ambivalence and the paradox of cultural equality have been global from the start. We should be able to break into the global from any given site in this web of local-global relations and gain considerable (if ultimately partial) insight from that vantage point. In this case, the insight focuses on neoliberal multiculturalism, an emergent mode of governance throughout Latin America, of which ladino racial ambivalence is one local and idiosyncratic variant.

Neoliberal Multiculturalism: The Paradox in Global Context

The fit between ladino racial ambivalence, as documented in Chimaltenango, and the emergent mode of governance in post-conflict Guatemala, is far from seamless. In some dimensions, this relationship is one of dissonance, even conflict. I have noted, for example, that ladinos chimaltecos often expressed resentment over central government initiatives that affirmed Maya cultural rights and prerogatives, thereby displacing the traditional ladino role of intermediary. The analysis in chapter 2 emphasized the his-

torical continuity of this dissonance: during the decade of social democratic reforms (1944–1954) and in the period afterward, provincial ladinos acted to contravene the state's assimilationist impulse, in favor of the "separate and unequal" principle. In contemporary times, many provincial ladinos have clung to hopes for assimilation as a counterweight to the threatening prospect of state-endorsed multiculturalism.

While acknowledging this dissonance, we can also note instructive parallels and connections. Ladino racial ambivalence is not the product of Machiavellian calculation. It is a gradually emerging collective response to multiple forces in a rapidly changing world: from direct Maya contestation, to the eroding hegemonic influence of "ladinoization" (that is, the promise and process of becoming ladino), to the assertion that respect for indigenous culture is an indication of full-fledged modern and civilized status. My ethnographic data come from a time when ladinos chimaltecos clearly were struggling (individually, and in rare occasions collectively) to make sense of and respond to these forces; not surprisingly, these data document a range of positions, and lots of outright perplexity. Yet the aggregate political sensibilities point to an implicit compromise, born of a striking realization. To endorse cultural equality does entail risks and provoke anxiety; it does oblige us to rebuke the classic racism of times past. Yet it does not require us to cede racial privilege, and it yields a powerful inoculation against more expansive demands.²⁷ The rise of neoliberal multiculturalism both helps to constitute this compromise and represents a parallel response to national-level forces of change.

Neoliberal multiculturalism, I contend, will soon displace its counterpart ideology of the previous era: mestizo or ladino nationalism. The key innovations of this emergent mode of governance include the affirmation of cultural difference, the vigorous critique of classic racism, the explicit encouragement of indigenous political participation (and that of other groups defined as culturally different), and a principled openness to the negotiation of rights associated with this Maya efflorescence. Proponents of state-driven mestizo nationalism offered universal citizenship and viewed cultural difference as residual; their multicultural counterparts favor differentiated citizenship, for which cultural pluralism provides the essential rationale. The rise of a multicultural ethic among Latin American states and political-economic elites has been explained as the outcome of three powerful forces of change: grassroots and national mobilization from below, with ample support from "global" allies; neoliberal economic reforms, which eliminated corporate constraints on indigenous politics while accentuating inequality and economic distress; and, finally, democratization, which widened spaces of protest, and necessitated substantive responses from above. My argument does not dismiss any of these explanatory factors but, rather, adds a fourth, which in turn casts the first three in a different light.

Multiculturalism has also developed as a proactive response, born in a realization, strikingly parallel to that of the ladinos chimaltecos: a carefully designed package of cultural rights that are guaranteed not to threaten the fundamental tenets of the capitalist economy, and could actually strengthen them. Even aggressive neoliberal

economic reforms, which favor the interests of capital and sanctify the logic of the market, are more compatible with some facets of indigenous cultural rights than many would like to admit. The leading edge of neoliberalism's cultural project is not radical individualism, but rather the creation of subjects who govern themselves in accordance with the logic of globalized capitalism.²⁸ The pluralism inherent in this equation—the subjects in question can be individuals, communities, or even entire identity groups—makes for a comfortable fit with the multicultural ethos. Governance takes place not through the distinction between forward-looking ladinos and backward Indians, but rather between authorized and prohibited ways of being Indian.²⁹

Neoliberal multiculturalism is poised to remake racial hierarchies in national and global arenas, in ways that should be familiar from the local vantage point of Chimaltenango. The rise of cultural rights creates a series of authorized spaces, both in civil society and the state itself, which spokespeople and representatives of the broader indigenous population come to occupy. They do not necessarily submit or conform to the state's purposes; much to the contrary, they are forced to operate within certain constraints, both material and symbolic, associated with the spaces themselves. These spaces carry with them a basic dichotomy between two ways of being Indian. The authorized Indian has passed the test of modernity, substituted "proposal" for "protest," and has learned to be both authentic and fully conversant with the dominant milieu. Its Other is unruly, vindictive, and prone to conflict. These latter traits linger in minds of elites who have pledged allegiance to cultural equality, seeding fears of the havoc that empowerment of the Other Indians could wreak. In Chimaltenango, for example, such fears are fully embodied and expressed in the image of the insurrectionary Indian, discussed in chapter 5. Governance proceeds by proactively rewarding the authorized Indian, while condemning its Other to the racialized spaces of poverty and social exclusion. Those who occupy the category of the authorized Indian must convincingly prove they have risen above the racialized traits of their brethren by endorsing and reinforcing the authorized/prohibited dichotomy. In Chimaltenango this occurs not through explicit declarations of political allegiance, but rather in more subtle concessions: gratefully accepting the expressions of cultural equality, while swallowing the bile produced by the insult of the persisting racial hierarchy that discourses of cultural equality ignore and are not meant to change.

Between Nihilism and Naïveté

Guatemalan history since the middle of the twentieth century could be read as a series of grand political projects that failed, but in this very failure brought about unintended consequences that set the stage for the subsequent struggle. The revolutionary decade (1944–1954), far from achieving the stated goals of universal citizenship and social equality, ended in a bloody coup that polarized the nation, and for many provided incontrovertible proof that a moderate, democratic course of political change

was impossible. Yet with the benefit of hindsight, we can now see how part of that agenda of reforms persisted in the post-1954 counterrevolutionary environment, and how state authorities, rather than turning back the clock completely, sought to meld these reforms into their new strategy of governance. The army's rising commitment to an ideology of assimilation, in contrast to the persisting "separate and unequal" ideology of ladino elites in places like Chimaltenango, is but one case in point. The armed revolutionary movement also failed in its basic goal of seizing power and freeing the country from the stranglehold of a rapacious oligarchy. This failure eventually gave way to a burgeoning civil society, whose protagonists asserted autonomy from both sides in the preceding armed conflict, but were much more directly linked to global purse strings and political sensibilities than the still authoritarian state would otherwise condone. This broader transformation yielded highly improbable consequences: a Maya efflorescence, spawned by the previous experience of mobilization in the period of revolutionary fervor and by massive state violence against its civilian base. To what extent has the Maya movement—the most important and promising political project currently on the horizon in Guatemala—ended up following this well-established pattern?

My research, focused on ladinos, can provide only an indirect answer to this question. I did not systematically examine the political aspirations of the organizations that comprise the Maya movement, nor do I scrutinize the political sensibilities of the much wider range of Maya actors who constitute the aggregate effects of the Maya efflorescence. My analysis has been directed, instead, toward the adversaries of these cultural-political initiatives, guided by the hypothesis that these adversaries have changed much more than most Maya activists have been inclined to acknowledge. These new conditions—produced locally by ladino racial ambivalence and globally by neoliberal multiculturalism—have the potential to reshape Maya people's contestation in the image of their adversaries, opening certain spaces while summarily closing others. Stated in theoretical terms, these conditions have a great potential for subject-making, for the interpellation of indigenous people as subjects of the neoliberal multicultural state. One important objective of this work is achieved simply by emphasizing this menace, in hopes that it will motivate further analysis of and reflection on the question that follows. To what extent, and in what ways, have Maya actors been able to occupy these newly opened spaces, putting them to the service of alternative political ends?

While focusing on the menace of neoliberal multiculturalism, my study also brings ladinos solidarios to the fore, asking hard questions about their sensibilities and practice, and the consequences that follow. My analysis of these ladinos solidarios offers a glimpse of transformative possibilities. From a position of dominance in the local racial hierarchy, these ladinos (and mestizos) are reaching out to build bridges of solidarity with Mayas, going clearly beyond the standard responses that racial ambivalence entails. They critique the sanctimony of the cultural equality discourse, drawing attention to its preinscribed limits; they distance themselves from the trappings of

ladino hegemony, acknowledging how the ladino identity category itself has been predicated on the premise of indigenous inferiority; some have taken the logical next step of ladino-to-mestizo identity change; in a few cases, they renounce an additional measure of racial privilege, opting to work, for example, in a Maya-run organization.

While documenting these initiatives, the preceding analysis also emphasized their internally generated limits. In the first place, and most seriously in my view, I found a striking dearth of organized interracial political settings in Chimaltenango where these issues were being explicitly addressed. This leaves ladinos solidarios to ponder their predicament alone, perhaps with family members and friends, in fortunate cases (rare, according to my observations) with a trusted Maya friend. The one major interracial social movement that occurred in Chimaltenango during the course of my fieldwork, described in chapter 6, did not explicitly address racial questions, and indeed perpetuated racist precepts in confounding ways. Second, as argued at length in chapter 6, the attempts of ladinos solidarios to reach out to Mayas have foundered in part because they incorporate key precepts of the racial hierarchy that they set out to challenge. Militant mestizos, even while affirming Maya cultural difference, tread a very fine line, always at risk of appropriating Indianness while remaining relatively free from the racialization that Indians continue to experience. Ladino dissidents avoid that problem by keeping sharp lines of cultural difference intact, but have a hard time convincing Mayas of their egalitarian intent when speaking from a ladino subject position. It is doubtful that Valentín would be able to hear the words "vos Valentín" come from the mouth of a ladino, any ladino, in any context, without having Guillermo's meaning of the phrase come to mind. It will take a generation or two, at least, for this prior meaning to lose its potency. Finally, my analysis of the ladino political imaginary raises questions about the efficacy of the ladinos solidarios by focusing on what one informant called their "atavistic fears." To fully shake free from the effects of racial ambivalence, ladinos would have to come to terms with the haunting image of the insurrectionary Indian and its more linear counterpart, the indigenous demand for political autonomy. It is not even clear to me where such a process would best start, beyond my vehement, though admittedly weakly supported, assertion that it is better to "out" these fears than to keep them pent up inside.

In contrast to the militant mestizos and ladino dissidents, the new mestizos offer a refreshingly oblique challenge to the racial hierarchy, less apt to go awry because the challenge has no overt political intentions to begin with. New mestizos confound racial boundaries, mixing and mingling in a wide social space where everyone is of indigenous ancestry and no one really identifies as Indian. The new mestizo ethic is perhaps most subversive as it expands to unsettle the boundaries of the established racial identities: nudging ladinos to doubt their presumed superiority over Indians, and encouraging self-identified Indians to adopt a more fluid and flexible identity politics that, in some ways, could be liberating. Yet however compelling and theoretically resonant this subversive stance, it would be hasty to pin immediate hopes for transformative politics on new mestizo sensibilities. They live in racialized spaces, but are not

inclined to mount a direct challenge to that racialization; they stand in tension with the Maya movement, with little evidence of bridges being built; they provide much of the wage labor for the neoliberal economy, but have no direct claim to a category of rights that neoliberal multiculturalism has opened. They have great potential to contribute to the subversive reinvention of politics, along the lines that political theorist Cathy Cohen describes, but thus far, at least in my ethnographic rendering, they have demonstrated mainly the individually creative but politically conformist mestizo sensibilities that Chicano writer Richard Rodriguez champions.³⁰

In any case, the political affinities that I developed in the course of this study are invoked in chapter 3: a partly imagined, partly historical moment of struggle for progressive social change, including both ladinos and indigenous people, with the interests of the Maya majority as the guiding force. There are many Maya and a few ladinos who embody these sensibilities today, and a few organizations, working under great constraints, that promote them in a more public, systematic, political fashion. One of the most immediate constraints, apart from the omnipresent threat of political violence, is the commonsense understanding of the emergent mode of governance. The argument set forth in these pages is intended to challenge that common sense. My analysis demonstrates how racial hierarchy can persist even when classic racism is no longer a driving force; it shows how the indigenous majority can remain marginalized, even though the state selectively recognizes Maya cultural rights; and it insists that a growing ethos of cultural equality and multicultural citizenship among dominant actors does not necessarily signal the elimination of racism. My principal critique of this new mode of governance is not that the political spaces it allows are too limited (although this certainly is a problem) but, rather, that it discourages expansive thinking about political alternatives. This analysis endorses the need to work within the spaces of neoliberal multiculturalism, while refusing their built-in limits. Refusal, in turn, rests on two basic assertions: that racism is at work as long as racial hierarchy persists and that antiracist politics must confront the root conditions of persisting racial hierarchy, which may not include explicit, public ideologies of racial inferiority.

The strategy that follows from this analysis might be called a politics of "rearticulation," which joins the Maya majority and ladinos solidarios in common struggle. One key focus of rearticulation is relations among indigenous peoples of disparate social locations, bridging differences between rural and urban, between peasants and petty merchants, artisans, maquila workers, and even transnational migrants. By necessity, this would also defy the dichotomy between authorized Indians and their unruly, conflict-prone Others, a dichotomy that has become crucial to the rise of neoliberal multiculturalism. A second focus is the alliance between indigenous peoples and their ladino counterparts, who live in similar material conditions, and have little to lose from substantial Maya empowerment. These ideas are unabashedly utopian. Given the genocidal brutality of Guatemala's ruling elite, amply demonstrated in recent history, state responses to even very modest efforts along these lines are apt to turn ugly. It would be fatalistic to abandon hope in anticipation of this ugliness, but

irresponsible to advocate such a strategy without imagining some means to ease the transition, assuage the fears, lessen the polarization.

Here, perhaps, is where the ladino dissidents have an additional role to play. Their sensibilities and social position may be contradictory, but they do offer a bridge to the majority of ladinos, who view Maya efflorescence with deep anxiety and incomprehension. Ladino dissidents have engaged in a process of dialogue and reflection, perhaps even having forged ties of friendship and understanding with Mayas, perhaps even having begun to exorcise the insurrectionary Indian from their own political imaginaries. They still embody the predicament that Francisco Goldman so clearly evokes in the epigraph to chapter 1: as a strong supporter of Maya demands for economic and cultural rights, Moya finds himself having helped to forge a new society that he then feels compelled to flee, "to Paris, with a clean conscience at last, vos!" But the ladino dissidents portrayed here, unlike Moya, have begun to confront and move beyond this racial ambivalence. Yolanda and her family express strong support for Maya rights, but with little inclination to flee to Paris or New York, and with a growing commitment to antiracist practice in the ladino settings where they live and work. Their chosen path of struggle from within is not easy, and it has no guarantees. But at least we can be sure that they will always have a generous endowment of humor chapín to keep spirits up and to ease the pain.

to “marry up.” This path would generally be much more accepted for men than for women, thus the greater reaction when a woman crossed the race line.

32. My evidence on this point is anecdotal, mainly from discussions with friends who work in the Landivar University in the capital city, who described the sensibilities of their students from mainly elite backgrounds. This identity issue became more charged with the entrance of a large number of indigenous fellowship students into the university in the late 1990s. The fellowships were financed by USAID.

33. João Vargas’s (2004) essay on the hyperconsciousness of race in Brazil influenced my thinking on this point.

34. Don Luis, Yolanda’s father, epitomizes this point of view. It is also epitomized by the ladinos of Zaragoza, where Abelardo works as a teacher, and where he made his defiant gesture of resistance to the “identity” form. This is significant because the other teachers from Zaragoza marked “ladino,” with full claims to the associated prerogatives. To mark only “Guatemalan” in this context, is—at least rhetorically—to renounce those prerogatives.

35. In his response to the “identity question,” he said, “I am of mixed ancestry,” a family split between ladino and indigenous branches. Many have the tendency, in this case, to suppress the indigenous in favor of the ladino hegemony. Zavala advocates a different solution: “neither indigenous nor ladino, but Christian.”

36. The most extended work of Morales on this topic is his book, *La articulación de las diferencias* (1998)

Chapter 7

1. See for example, “Brown v. Board, 50 Years Later,” a four-part series in the *Detroit News*, available at <http://www.detnews.com/specialreports/2004/brown-board/>; “Brown At 50: King’s Dream or Plessy’s Nightmare?” (17 January 2004) available at <http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/reseg04/resegregation04.php>.

2. This is not as radical a departure from recent work on Guatemala as it might seem. Diane Nelson (1999), for example, emphasizes convergent premises in deployments of racial and ethnic terminologies, and avoids both as theoretical frames; Kay Warren (1997) details the fallacies associated with the deployment of ethnicity in Maya studies, and in general seems to rely very little on ethnicity theory to frame her analysis. Carol Smith (1999), in a comprehensive overview of Maya studies, calls for greater attention to racial processes.

3. For an example of this comparative approach, see chapter 4 of E. T. Gordon’s *Disparate Diasporas* (1998); one of the only general contemporary treatments is Wade (1997).

4. In a lengthy polemic against the sloppy overuse of the related concept “identity,” Brubaker and Cooper (2000) draw a basic distinction between “categories of practice” deployed by “ordinary social actors” for political purposes *versus* the “cate-

gories of analysis" used for strictly academic ends. This firewall between political and analytical terminologies, in turn, purportedly offers a ready rationale for "our" continued use of terms such as "ethnic" despite dissent on the part of indigenous intellectual-activists. I find this absolute distinction impossible to defend on either ethical or analytical grounds. Granted, analysts and actors do develop specialized and shorthand ways of thinking about what they do and communicating this to others. But actors also analyze, and the work of analysts can have great political impact. To erect the firewall is to suppress these complexities, rather than subject them to critical scrutiny as well.

5. See, for example, Appelbaum, Macpherson, and Rosenblatt (2003), de la Cadena (2000), Poole (1997), Smith (1995), and Weismantel (1997, 2001). Among Guatemalan scholars, prominent examples include the collection of essays in Heckt and Palma (2004) and the work of Casaús Arzú (1991, 1999). That the AVANCSO series on racism will include the present volume is another example.

6. The fact that this same trend did not occur in scholarship on black Latin Americans is what gave rise to the uncomfortable analytical divergence mentioned earlier. To my knowledge, the intellectual genealogy of this divergence has yet to be explored, although Wade (1997) has laid some important groundwork.

7. Scholarship on whiteness has burgeoned in recent years and I have no intention of providing either an exhaustive review of or a systematic analytical engagement with its many currents. I have drawn principally on the classic originating works, beginning with W. E. B. Du Bois and through the more contemporary contributions of Frankenberg (1994), Roediger (1991), Morrison (1992), and Lipsitz (1995). The edited collections I have reviewed and found useful include those edited by Frankenberg (1997), Fine et al. (1997), and Levine-Rasky (2002). Robyn Wiegman's recent review essay exerted an orienting influence on my analysis (1999), and I am especially grateful to John Hartigan, for allowing me to read two chapters of his forthcoming book *Odd Tribes* (2005), which provides an extensive review of and critical engagement with the whiteness literature.

8. I have never forgotten a time, early on in my dissertation research in Nicaragua, when a black (Creole) Nicaraguan introduced me in a community meeting of Creoles and Miskitu Indians: "This is Charlie; he's an anthropologist; anthropologists study" he paused, unsure how to finish his own sentence, and then finally found his voice, "anthropologists study people like us."

9. Since the debate on racial formation in Guatemala is recent and incipient, the back and forth cannot be referenced in the published scholarly literature. I have gleaned these three objections from dialogue with colleagues, both Guatemalan and foreign, in a diversity of settings.

10. The racial formation approach was originally named by Omi and Winant (1987), following on a long tradition of race-centered analysis. Winant's more recent book (2001) extends this analysis in important ways. Even to call it an "approach" may exaggerate the extent to which it is bounded and unitary. See also: Goldberg

(2002) and Harrison (1995). In developing these ideas, I have been especially influenced by the writing of, and ongoing dialogue with, Edmund T. Gordon.

11. This debate is most well developed in relation to race in Brazil, especially since Pierre Bourdieu and Lois Wacquant (1999) launched their critique of Michael Hanchard's monograph, *Orpheus and Power* (1994). Voluminous commentary around that exchange followed, including Hanchard's (2003) response.

12. Most of the extensive writing in the tradition of the Latin American nationalist and revolutionary Left strikes these themes. A classic work along these lines is Eduardo Galeano's, *Open Veins of Latin America* (1971). For a historical work that advances an especially trenchant version of this argument, see Burns (1980).

13. On blanqueamiento, see Gilliam (1988); specifically in relation to Guatemala, see Guzmán Böckler and Herbert (1971).

14. For an excellent summary of the Du Boisian legacy in anthropology, with implications for this broader realm of analysis, see Harrison (1992).

15. Key works in racial formation theory can be found in note 10 of this chapter.

16. See, for example, the recently published work of Ana Cumes (2004), and various works in the edited volume *Racismo en Guatemala* (Arenas, Hale, and Palma 1999). Diane Nelson (1999) also makes this point.

17. George Lipsitz (1998) has written extensively on this concept; see also Frankenberg (1997), McIntosh (1995), and Dalton (1995).

18. *Against Race* is the title of Paul Gilroy's recent text (2000). The thrust of much of Judith Butler's work urges us to move "beyond identity." See Butler (1990, 1993).

19. This is the principal critique of the "beyond identity" genre put forth by the authors of the edited volume *Reclaiming Identity* (Moya and Hames-Garcia 2000).

20. The critique of identity-based racial politics is best exemplified by the recent work of Paul Gilroy (2000, 2003). The questioning of antiracist politics grounded centrally in an analysis of racial dominance is a recurrent theme in John Hartigan's forthcoming book *Odd Tribes* (2005). Skepticism of racial formation as a generalized analytical approach is the principal issue at play in Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1999) critique of Michael Hanchard.

21. An example here would be Aiiwa Ong's (1996) analysis of racial processes among Asian Americans in the United States. While promising to provide a balanced view of subject formation and self-making, her emphasis is almost completely on the former. To be fair, this imbalance may be attributed in part to her effort to contest work on cultural citizenship in which she sees the pendulum as having swung too far in the opposite direction.

22. This is my criticism of the otherwise insightful and valuable work of Eduardo Bonilla-Silva on "racism without racists" (2003).

23. This is my impression, for example, of many of the works in the collection, *Critical Race Theory* (Delgado 1995).

24. When Stuart Hall, the master synthesizer of complex theoretical ideas, argued a few years ago that the critical problem in theories of identity is the “suture” between processes of subject formation on the one hand, and self-making on the other, it was hard not to hear echoes of that previous formulation (1996b). His essay continues to serve as a key theoretical reference for the ideas presented in this paragraph.

25. Black feminists have been central in developing the notion of intersectionality. Key works that I consulted include Carby (1982), Collins (2000), Combahee River Collective (1983), hooks (1984), and Sudbury (1998).

26. This does not fully render the charged racial meanings of the use of the “vos” form between ladinos and Indians. For more explanation of this point, see chapter 6.

27. There is an interesting historic parallel here in the debates over the elimination of forced labor during the final period of the decade of social democratic reforms (1944–1954). Those who opposed the measure feared that they would deprive coffee plantations of essential labor to harvest the crop. Once promulgated, however, these reforms provided an even more effective guarantee: “voluntary” participation in the labor market based on economic need.

28. This approach to understanding neoliberalism draws on critiques of liberalism (e.g., Mehta [1997]), and on theories of governmentality inspired by Foucault (e.g., Gordon [1991], Rose [1999]) as well as more epochal analyses, such as that provided by Hardt and Negri (2000). I differ from these theorists, however, in my preference to interpret the transformations through a Gramscian lens. See, for example, Hale (2002).

29. I develop this argument further in Hale (2004).

30. See Cohen (2004) and Rodriguez (2002).