

NEW APPROACHES TO LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

Culture and Power

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THE INDIGENOUS STUDIES TURN

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The past thirty years in Latin America have been marked by the struggles of indigenous peoples. Claiming citizenship and human rights, indigenous peoples have demanded both self-determination and political participation, pressuring nation-states to broaden their understandings of democracy. As we describe here, their efforts have met with varied success. In many countries, states have responded to the multicultural nature of their societies by recognizing their citizenship. In some countries, notably Bolivia and Ecuador, indigeneity has been transformed from a subaltern claim to the basis of revolutionary state-building. However, across the continent, indigenous peoples continue to fight against their states and transnational corporations for autonomy and territorial sovereignty.

In this essay, we trace the scholarship documenting the emergence and struggles of indigenous peoples. We cannot adequately cover all the robust and dynamic work our colleagues have produced; our goal instead is to trace the ways scholars have framed this topic, focusing on what we see as the most significant areas of contemporary scholarship. We begin with the question of how to define indigenous peoples and then describe the rise of indigeneity as political platform in the 1980s and 1990s. Then we turn to four themes that are animating scholarship today: (1) neoliberal multiculturalism; (2) indigenous relations to natural resources; (3) gender and intersectionality; and (4) the ontological turn.

Definitions of Indigeneity

At the beginning of the indigenous turn in the 1980s, scholars and activists devoted substantial energy to defining indigeneity. Perhaps the most widely cited was the definition of the 1986 UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples, which

stressed that indigeneity was a matter of self-identification by peoples with a "historical continuity" with pre-colonial societies, who "consider themselves distinct" from those dominant sectors prevailing on their territories (Martínez Cobo 379ff). Over the years, scholars have backed away from such specific definitions, arguing instead that who counts as indigenous is a fluid political consideration, emerging from struggles over particular social, cultural, environmental, and economic matters during particular moments (Postero "Negotiating Indigeneity"; García). We now suggest that indigeneity is a historically contingent formulation that changes over time. Moreover, indigeneity is relational; like all forms of identity, it emerges from contested and co-constituting social fields of opposition and sameness (de la Cadena and Starn 4). Thus, indigeneity is not a fixed identity but a discursive construction that emerges in particular circumstances to accomplish concrete goals. As we will see, however, difference remains a critical issue. We ask how difference is understood, articulated, and mobilized in distinct periods, inquiring specifically about how scholars theorize this difference.

Indigeneity emerged first during colonialism, as a category produced by and justifying the violent dispossessions of native peoples by settlers. Since colonial times, the Indian was opposed to the European, and later to the mestizo. In this early period, identity was measured in terms of blood and biology to describe the progeny of mixtures between native, European, and African peoples (Wade). Indigeneity was a sign of radical otherness, a discourse linked to savagery, danger, and nature that justified practices of colonialism, rape, and dispossession (Hall). It was also a fiscal category, as native peoples were forced to provide labor power and pay tribute to the colonizers (Platt). After independence from Spain, Latin American *criollo* elites opposed indigeneity to modernity, representing it as an obstacle to national progress and liberal Enlightenment ideals (Larson). Popular national imaginaries viewed their emerging countries as based in mestizaje, or the mixture of indigenous and Europeans. Mexico is the classic case of this, where elites created postrevolutionary unity on the image of the new *raza cósmica*, the Mexican mestizo (Vasconcelos).

While some did assimilate, many indigenous peoples maintained their lands, languages, and cultures, although under constant threat of dispossession through new legal systems. For much of the twentieth century, these groups were characterized not in ethnic or racial terms but on the basis of class: they were peasants, marked by rural poverty and/or subsistence agriculture. As Judith Friedlander suggested, they were Indians because they were poor, and they were poor because they were Indians (75). Much of the scholarship from the 1950s to the 1970s focused on peasant struggles, examining their poverty, their oppressive labor conditions (Nash), or the logics that kept them ensconced within nonmodern "closed corporate communities" (Wolf). Thus, class was a key framework of identity in political and scholarly circles. This was reinforced by the wave of agrarian reforms across the continent and the importance of peasant unions as a key form of political organization.

The Rise of Indigeneity: Human Rights and Multiculturalism

During the 1980s, however, the focus on class faded as native communities began to organize, taking up new identities as original peoples of the lands—in part with the help of anthropologists and NGOs—in order to make demands at both the national and international levels. These efforts drew on several larger transformations. First, this emerged in the period of democratization in Latin America, as countries emerged from dictatorship. This provided spaces for organizing that had been dangerous in earlier eras (Yashar). Second, they were part of neoliberal reforms, which linked market-driven practices with expanded forms of decentralized political participation. Third, this organizing was influenced by globalization, and especially the globalized struggle for indigenous rights. Alison Brysk demonstrated that in most countries, indigenous peoples did not identify with their nation-states and were often legally defined as second-class citizens. As a result they found working at the international level a more useful strategy (Brysk 9–10). Anna Tsing described how native peoples engaged in local struggles utilizing this emerging globalized discourse of rights, articulating what she calls an “indigenous voice” (38). Scholars began to theorize about indigenous peoples as part of the “new social movements,” challenging dominant power structures (Warren). Two events drew attention to indigenous peoples at this crucial moment. First was the 1992 *Quinto centenario* anniversary, which offered indigenous peoples a site for pan-continental alliances and spectacular re-representations. The second was the startling emergence of the Zapatista army in Mexico in 1994, which positioned indigenous peoples and their allies as key challengers of neoliberalism with the capacity to join with other social movements to organize globally (Dietz). The Zapatistas proposed alternatives including land rights and new forms of self-government, called *juntas del buen gobierno* (Speed).

Indigenous organizing in the 1990s gave rise to two parallel and interlocking efforts to gain rights and recognition. On the one hand, indigenous groups marshaled their allies to push for rights at the international level, using international institutions such as the UN, the International Working Group on Indigenous Peoples, and transnational NGOs. Engle argues that because powerful states saw indigenous demands for autonomy as threats to national sovereignty, indigenous organizations and their allies developed a discourse involving a “human right to culture” a less threatening foundation for indigenous claims (Engle 3). This can be seen in the key text of the era, the UN’s International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169, an agreement that was signed by the majority of states in the 1990s, thus becoming part of national law. The convention recognized “the aspirations of [native peoples] to exercise control over their own institutions, ways of life and economic development . . . and to maintain and develop their identities, languages, and religions, within the framework of the States in which they live” (ILO). One important result of this international organizing is the 2007 United Nation’s Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

On the other hand, indigenous groups used these key texts to push for expanded citizenship in their own countries. In response, nation-states reformed their constitutions, transforming citizenship regimes across the continent (Van Cott; Seider). Donna Lee Van Cott argued that indigenous peoples' efforts to seek inclusion expanded democracy for all citizens. Scholarship in this period focused on what indigenous citizenship meant in everyday life (García; Postero "Now We Are Citizens"), how indigenous groups were able (or not) to organize to raise the "Indian Question" in political arenas (Postero and Zamosc), and how these legal and political reforms altered state-civil society relations (Assies et al.).

Thus, the 1980s and 1990s saw indigeneity emerge as a central category through which local peoples were able to organize and make claims for rights and justice (Canessa "Conflict, Claim, and Contradiction"; Webber). Scholars, ever cautious about accepting discursive categories as natural, have documented the successes and struggles of indigenous peoples as they fought extractivist resource projects (Sawyer; Hindery), channeled NGO funding to their communities (Radcliffe), fought for territory (Fabricant and Gustafson), and struggled over representation and racism. In recent years, however, scholars have begun to rethink the category of indigeneity, theorizing more deeply about what indigeneity produces as it is taken up as both a site of governance and as new forms of liberatory politics (Postero "Negotiating Indigeneity"). We turn now to four areas of contemporary research.

Neoliberal Multiculturalism

The first area of critical research we point to is scholars' analysis of "neoliberal multiculturalism." The 1990s saw the wholesale adoption of a neoliberal model that linked global capitalism and democracy. This "market democracy" model encouraged nation-states to open up their markets, liberalize trade, and privatize state-owned industries, on the one hand, and to promote cultural shifts toward diversity and inclusion, on the other. Proponents of neoliberalism actively promoted "a substantive, if limited, version of indigenous cultural rights" (Hale "Does Multiculturalism Menace" 487) including recognition of indigenous languages, collective titles to certain indigenous territories, and new forms of political participation for its indigenous peoples (Van Cott). These reforms were supplemented by NGO-funded projects focused on cultural heritage and revitalization, as well territorial titling efforts.

As these reforms advanced, however, scholars began to note how these schemes of recognition enacted new forms of governance. Scholars utilized the insights of Foucault and other theorists to examine the ways neoliberal reforms created new forms of individualized and responsible subjects, as well as the ways market principles were asserted as solutions to political and cultural problems. They argued that although indigeneity proved a platform for claiming rights, in most countries, indigenous people remain subjects of national sovereignty and deeply implicated

in unequal relations of global capitalism. Charles Hale thus suggested that neoliberal multiculturalism has a "menacing" aspect: it creates new ways of governing indigenous subjects. Those whose claims fall within the logic of globalized capitalism (he terms them *indios permitidos*, or "authorized Indians") are supported, while those whose demands challenge the nation-state or its capitalist projects are prohibited.

Three cases make clear the importance of this turn. In the Guatemalan case Hale studied, multiculturalism established a package of rights to cultural difference, recognizing Mayan culture and language, as long as they do not challenge the underlying inequities of neoliberal capitalism (491). Thus, claims to intercultural language programs are acceptable, while demands for territorial sovereignty may not be. He demonstrated how Mayan politicians were forced to balance between pursuing a Mayanist agenda and being marginalized for making what seem like radical or dangerous demands. Like Hale, Postero's analysis of the Bolivian multicultural reforms concludes that neoliberal multiculturalism acts as a strategy of management and containment, with little systemic effect on the structures of racial hierarchy and economic inequality (Postero *Now We Are Citizens*). She showed that while indigenous peoples were invited to participate in municipal budget decisions, the structural relations of political domination by white/mestizo dominated political parties prevented any real redistribution of material resources. Ironically, frustrated with the failures of both multiculturalism and the economic model which privatized basic resources and exacerbated inequities, indigenous people took to the ballot box, eventually electing the first indigenous president in 2005. The Bolivian case demonstrates not only the limitations of neoliberal multiculturalism, but also the fact that its practices can form the terrain for further struggle.

Finally, in Chile, neoliberal multiculturalism produced very different results (Richards). Richards documents the ways that Chilean development continued the relentless expropriation of Mapuche lands for forestry and hydroelectric dams, while at the same time targeting them in poverty alleviation schemes. Where the Guatemalan and Bolivian cases showed that multicultural recognition trumped real redistribution, in Chile, the state was willing to pursue limited forms of ameliorative development projects, but it was never willing to allow indigenous peoples decision-making rights or any historic collective land rights. Yet, Richards points out similarities as well: while state development and health projects reinforce the actions of *indios permitidos*, Chilean state violence against Mapuche "insurrectos" may be the most extreme form of discipline in the region. Mapuche protesters are regularly tried as terrorists and sentenced to lengthy jail sentences.

These studies return us to the tensions underlying claims to indigeneity. Assertions of cultural difference may act as a form of radical politics, drawing attention to the exclusions inherent in liberal democratic societies. Yet, this very form of difference may be taken up by liberalism to support its agenda, coopting difference to its ends (Povinelli "Cunning of Recognition"). Indigenous experiences

with multiculturalism thus provoke a continued examination of liberalism, citizenship, and democracy. That is, the view from indigenous people's "position," to use Li's term, makes clear that liberalism continues to produce racialized exclusions, even when its proponents assert inclusionary intentions. This has prompted efforts to go beyond multiculturalism. Bolivia's 2009 constitution, for instance, established the country as "plurinational" and declares decolonization as the fundamental goal of the newly established state. While this new constitution is not the utopia indigenous activists hoped it would be, it does provide a new horizon for post-multicultural membership.

Natural Resources

A second area of research that has emerged over the past decade examines indigenous struggles over natural resources. This became increasingly important during the neoliberal period as countries increasingly opened their natural resources to exploitation by transnational corporations, and it continues to be a site of contention today. A wealth of popular and scholarly work explored how neoliberal governance sparked new forms of politics across race, class, and ethnic identity (Gustafson and Fabricant). This is particularly clear in Bolivia, where movements fighting for rights to resources used indigenous identity and practices as critical ways to mobilize. During the 2000 "water war" in Cochabamba, local people claimed traditional uses of water as a collective cultural right to fight privatization (Olivera and Lewis). Similarly, coca farmers fighting for the right to grow coca asserted its ancestral provenance. Urban residents in El Alto claimed national sovereignty in their struggle to reclaim/nationalize gas from transnational corporations in the "gas war" in 2003. Tom Perreault argues that both the water and gas wars mobilized indigeneity in order to obtain greater participation in decision-making regarding resource management, more equitable distribution of the economic benefits derived from resource exploitation, and a more socially oriented alternative to Bolivia's neoliberal economic model of development. More recent work has focused on communal *usos y costumbres* as a strategy to confront water scarcity in urban/rural regions of the Andes (Fabricant and Hicks).

Across Latin America, ideas about indigenous autonomy, territoriality, and the environment come together as a powerful discourse to mobilize against extractive industries and large-scale development projects. Yet, this has not stopped the juggernaut of extractivism: across the continent, we continue to see indigenous peoples' lands sacrificed to development, including oil and gas exploitation, mines, highway projects, and dams (Perreault; Gustafson; Hindery; Anthias). Suzana Sawyer demonstrates that recent contests over land and oil in the Ecuadorian Amazon were as much about reconfiguring questions of national and transnational inequality and rupturing silences around racial injustice, as they were about extraction of resources (Sawyer; Sawyer and Gomez). Becker has described the ways indigenous activists in Ecuador have drawn on *usos y costumbres* and rights to territory to

protest government's revised plans to drill oil in the ecologically sensitive Yasuni National Park in the eastern Amazon basin. The Ecuadorian case parallels the Bolivian, where scholars have described the controversy over the government's proposal to push a highway through an indigenous territory and park known by its acronym, TIPNIS (McNeish). These battles draw attention not only to the links between indigenous communities and their territories but also the ways that indigeneity has become a malleable discourse that many distinct groups—from the state to environmentalists to the right wing—can use to stake claims, often speaking for the “Indian” (Fabricant and Postero). In many cases, these actors rely on “romantic” or essentializing representations of indigenous people saving the planet. Thus, this area of scholarship also draws our attention to the tension that inhabits the category of indigeneity. Indigeneity can function as a powerful political force, utilized by indigenous groups as emancipatory politics or by others seeking to appropriate it for their own interests to enact forms of governance. The best scholarship goes beyond the simplistic notions of virtuous indigenous to examine the complex lived experiences of indigenous peoples today.

For instance, climate change across Latin America threatens to disrupt local economies and ways of life, and indigenous peoples are beginning to organize in response. Scholars have explored the ways in which indigenous movements mobilize the notion of “*buen vivir*” (living well, an alternative epistemological cosmological concept we might gloss as sustainable development) (*sumak kawsay* in Quicha, or *suma qamaña* in Aymara) as a way to combat extractive capitalism, which essentially has created the climate crisis (Albó; Radcliffe “Development for a Postneoliberal Era”). Nicole Fabricant questions whether the discourses of “Ayllu” (Andean collective forms of self-government) resonate with realities of urban Indians today, and whether they have the organizational capacity to address the complicated and multilayered structural problems associated with climate change. This disjuncture between discourses of indigeneity and realities of contemporary indigenous life is also key in Juliet Erazo’s work about cashing in on carbon-reduction policies in the Ecuadorian Amazon. She argues that while for some indigenous organizations, REDD (Reducing Emissions from the Deforestation and Degradation) and REDD+ programs merely justify capitalism, for others, these projects represent good wages and much-needed resources in indigenous and autonomous areas (Erazo 57).

This draws our attention to the central contradiction of indigenous self-determination, the continuing tension between recognition and redistribution. Where constitutions provide for indigenous territories or autonomy, they rarely provide the material means to make sovereignty more than symbolic. Often autonomous communities are unable to tax or collect annual dues from their residents. Instead, the leaders of indigenous territories must seek funds to support their governance tasks either by relying on funds from the central state or by working with outsiders, like NGOs or even transnational oil companies. Penelope Anthias’s work points directly to this contradiction. She looks at how Guaraní

in the Bolivian Chaco have abandoned negotiations with the state over territorial titling, instead negotiating directly with Repsol (the Spanish transnational oil company) authorizing continued oil exploitation in exchange for revenue to compensate the communities for environmental damage. For these organizations, indigenous autonomy is articulated as negotiating “*on our own*” with the transnational oil company. Anthias, like Erazo, points toward a key dilemma facing indigenous peoples: participating fully in the global capitalist market may be the only choice for survival, yet it may cause negative ecological, territorial, and even climatic consequences for their lands and peoples.

Gender and Intersectionality

One of the most powerful interventions in feminist theory at the end of the twentieth century was the articulation of intersectionality by women of color in the United States who argued that rather than being seen as separate or additive concepts, race, gender, ethnicity, and social class should be viewed as elements that simultaneously shaped and transformed the lived experience of women (and men) (see McCall; Denis; and Rousseau). In this section, we show how this concept of intersectionality has “traveled” to Latin America, challenging us to think about multiple and intersecting identities across time and scale. Particularly by examining the ways indigeneity and gender intersect, scholars in this turn problematize simplistic notions of indigeneity.

There is a large body of feminist scholarship recognizing the ways colonialism was always gendered (Choque Quispe; Rivera Cuscanqui and Barragán; Schiwiy). María Lugones argues that Europeans brought with them a conception of civilization that privileged white men as “the human being par excellence.” This turned “the colonized woman” into an empty signifier, a sort of “nonhuman” whose sex becomes a legitimate site of exploitation, violence, and terror (Lugones 744). These colonial legacies continue to be a site of struggle. As indigenous women have mobilized for change over the past few decades, scholars have documented the dilemmas they face: indigenous women activists can find themselves caught between their support for their movements’ collective projects of decolonization and autonomy, and their critiques of patriarchal practices and norms within their communities (Rousseau). Rousseau suggests that women’s role as agents for preserving and reproducing the community can be empowering as it strengthens endangered identities, but it can also act as an obstacle to full participation in public or political roles.

Yet scholars have also documented the creative ways in which these women have used indigenous ideas of complementarity to struggle for justice within their communities and within their families (Burman). While some reject feminism as a Western bourgeois notion and defend indigenous cosmovisions as a more legitimate space of resistance, others have increasingly put forward new forms of “indigenous feminism,” in which their positions as both women

and indigenous are mutually reinforcing (Hernández Castillo; Speed, *Rights in Rebellion*). In a provocative intervention into this debate, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui argues that indigenous organizing focused on recovering territories in fact ignores the issues most important to indigenous women who live and work in cities—issues of exploitative labor and sexual violence. By limiting their activism to questions of political or territorial rights, she says male indigenous leaders are missing broader and potentially more liberatory notions of rights (Rivera Cusicanqui 49–50).

Women are not the only focus of this new research. Andrew Canessa (“Intimate Indigenities”) describes how men in highland Bolivia are often forced to travel out of the villages to take part in the military and commerce. There, they not only experience historical injustices and racism but also assume a broader sense of citizenship than the women, who tend to remain at home. Linking macro forces to intimate spaces of sexuality, Canessa shows how indigeneity is both expressed and contested in the realm of desire. Men come to understand their own indigeneity through sleeping with women of other ethnicities, while village women are further deprecatd by their partners for symbolizing an indigeneity they cannot escape. Canessa demonstrates then that masculinity is enacted in the intersection of race, class, and gender.

Indigenous people’s intersectional positions have also proven an important site from which to think about issues such as human rights and development. Shannon Speed’s work with women migrating from Mexico to the United States points to the ways in which indigenous women are situated at the intersection of multiple axes of oppression (“Intersectionality”). Here Mexican women migrants are subjected to gendered violence in their homes, raped and kidnapped as they migrate, and face new violence, including incarceration if they ask for asylum, once they reach the United States. The plight of indigenous women caught in this “multicriminalism” makes clear that neither multiculturalism nor human rights has delivered on its promises. Sarah Radcliffe’s new work on indigenous women and postcolonial development asks how categories of social difference—including gender, race ethnicity, sexuality, disability, location, and class—come to be conceptualized and then acted upon in development. She argues that social heterogeneity is key to how development NGOs seek to enact their projects, and ultimately determines who receives aid and who does not. Because they are perceived to be different and less capable aid recipients, indigenous women are not targeted for the same sorts of development as mestizo women, or indigenous men. But precisely because of their position at the intersection of indigeneity and gender, indigenous women also have a privileged site from which to mount critiques of development.

Intersectionality has thus proven to be a rich site for rethinking both gender and indigeneity, problematizing categories of difference and describing the rich gendered and classed sites from which indigenous identity emerges. Given the ever more complex sites in which indigenous people live and work—in urban

spaces, in transnational circuits of commerce (Tassi et al.), and in mixed-ethnicity neighborhoods (Kirshner)—we anticipate that analyses showing the intersections between race/ethnicity and class will be emerging in coming days.

The Postcolonial and Ontological Turns

Perhaps the most provocative turn in indigenous studies is the “ontological turn” (Escobar “Ontological Turn”). These scholars begin with the idea that indigenous peoples may have ontologies that are very different from Western “modern” ontologies. Here ontology refers to how people understand the universe to be organized: what exists, the conditions of their existence, and the relations between them (Blaser “Political Ontology” 877). In part, this academic move parallels activism by indigenous peoples, who pushed beyond multiculturalism to argue for decolonization and plurinationalism alongside economic redistribution. Indigenous intellectuals and activists point to the hegemonic myths of Western superiority that continue to underlie modern liberal democracies, and argue for a radical revolution at the level of epistemology, demanding a reevaluation of indigenous customs, logics, and values (Bautista). This draws in part upon the work of modernity/coloniality scholars describing the discursive legacies of coloniality, what Quijano calls the “coloniality of power.” (See also Mignolo, Walsh.) This group argues that Euro-modernity took hold in parallel with the conquest of Latin America, and created a system of hierarchies (modern and nonmodern) that justified colonial violence against native peoples and continues to bolster contemporary racism.

As we described above, recognizing indigenous difference (albeit in a limited way) was a fundamental part of multicultural schemes of governance. In this period, indigenous knowledge was recognized as valuable and worth preserving and even promoting. Yet the ontological scholarship provides another explanation for why multiculturalism “failed”: because it is based on an effort to make indigenous difference commensurable to modernity and European models of development. These scholars rely on Latour and Descola’s science studies arguments that modernity is one ontological formation among others, but one that has particular power-laden effects. Most importantly, they suggest, modern ontologies separate nature from culture, and assume that other ways of seeing the world are based in superstition or religion. The result, says Latour, is the “Great Divide” between “moderns” who make this differentiation and others who do not (Latour 99). Eduardo Viveiros de Castro suggests that this divide has made it difficult for scholars to see the radically different “perspectives” or “worlds” that people inhabit. He argues that contrary to modern multicultural understandings, which posit one nature and many culturally situated perspectives of it, the indigenous peoples he studies envision many different kinds of natures. From this “multinaturalist” notion, he argues that scholars should explore the “equivocations” or misunderstandings that occur when different ontologies collide, recognizing that they are

evidence that different worlds are being enacted and assumed (Viveiros de Castro; Blaser "The Threat of the Yrmo" 4).

Two scholars demonstrate what is at stake when these ontological concerns are ignored. Marisol de la Cadena describes how indigenous Peruvians explain their opposition to mining in nearby mountains. They refer to the mountains as beings with whom they have relations and whose anger might threaten their communities. To many, these explanations appear as mystical or culturalist visions, instead of legitimate political arguments. Thus, de la Cadena argues that the epistemic maneuver Latour described dividing nature from culture effectively "bans" both indigenous beliefs as well as the nonhuman "earth beings" (the mountains at risk) from the sphere of politics (de la Cadena). She asks: what form might politics take if scholars and politicians took these emerging forms of indigeneity seriously? Thinking about Andean mountains as sites of equivocation that make visible the partially connected worlds between environmentalists and indigenous politicians might produce the sort of disagreement Rancière posits as the basis of political subjectivity (351).

Mario Blaser follows a similar argument, describing the equivocation between development NGOs and the Yshiro People in northern Paraguay. When the NGOs order a hunting ban in a degraded environment, the Yshiro fail to comply. Their ontological understanding of human-animal relations is completely different from that of the NGO. Their world is governed by a principle of relationality between humans and nonhumans, but the availability of fauna is not strictly a result of how humans treat animals. Instead, if animals are not available, it means that at some point in the network, the flow of reciprocity is failing, usually in the human-to-human interface (Blaser "The Threat of the Yrmo" 8). This equivocation demonstrates two different worlds at play. Blaser shows how the "factish" of endangered environment "performed" by the NGOs, the national parks, and ranchers was accepted as true, while the Yshiro's world was sidelined. He calls his analysis "political ontology," illuminating "the conflicts that ensue as different worlds or ontologies strive to sustain their own existence as they interact and mingle with each other" (Blaser "The Threat of the Yrmo" 3).

The ontological turn has produced enormous debates. Some see it as a dangerous return to essentialized notions of the Indian as linked to nature (Turner). Others suggest that it ignores the ways contemporary indigenous people are fully engaged in the logics of global capitalism, and particularly ignores the vulnerabilities this structural position implies (Bessire and Bond). Most importantly, it does not address what scholars of multiculturalism have repeatedly argued: that representations of radical alterity continue to form the basis of new regimes of inequality and governance (Povinelli "Cunning of Recognition"; Bessire and Bond 445). Yet, these ontology scholars have called attention to an essential question, especially for anthropology. If one of the central goals of studying indigenous peoples has been to understand and translate intercultural equivocality or difference, we must understand the conditions and assumptions that modern ontologies

bring to the endeavor. Viveiros de Castro makes a provocative claim: “The error or illusion par excellence consists, precisely, in imagining that the univocal exists beneath the equivocal, and that the anthropologist is its ventriloquist” (10). He proposes instead a “controlled equivocation,” a recognition of other ontologies on their own terms, a translation that “allows the alien concepts to deform or subvert the conceptual tools of the translator’s toolbox so that the *intentio* of the original language can be expressed within the new one” (3).

Conclusion

This chapter traced the dynamic scholarship following the rise of the indigenous rights movement in the 1980s and 1990s. We have identified four critical themes of this era—neoliberal multiculturalism, natural resources, intersectionality, and the ontological turn—arguing that what links these four areas of scholarship is how intellectuals and activists have theorized difference. In each of these areas, scholars have questioned naturalized notions of difference, pointing out that the category of indigenous can only be understood in relation to other discourses (like neoliberalism or modernity) or other categories (like gender or class). Yet, because indigenous peoples have been continually positioned as different from whites/mestizos or moderns, their experiences and struggles have illuminated many other fundamental questions, from colonialism to modernity to democracy. During the era of neoliberal multiculturalism, state efforts to recognize this difference showed both the flexibility of liberalism and its limitations. That is, while neoliberal forms of governance expanded their definitions of citizenship to allow for indigenous practices and organizations, the overarching lesson from scholars of multiculturalism seems to be that late liberal societies can only tolerate difference in limited doses, and only if it does not challenge the nation-state and/or global capitalism. Scholars of the ontological turn expand this conclusion, explaining liberalism’s limitations at the level of worldview or ontology. The fact that indigenous visions of human/nature relations are silenced or seen as totally exterior to politics or science is further proof of the hegemony of Western notions of modernity.

For scholars following indigenous peoples’ struggles over natural resources, difference plays a more complicated role. Situated on the faultlines between local livelihoods, capitalist extractivism, and global climate change, native peoples often bear the burden of being the alternative, of refusing, of opposing both states and corporate development plans, and of taking the role of the saviors of nature. Here indigenous positions have shed light on the rapacious nature of late capitalism, and the ways nation-states, even progressive ones, continue to sacrifice the most vulnerable to development. Yet, increasingly, scholars note the conflicted positions in which indigenous people find themselves, “enduring” precarious lives of poverty (Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment*) and engaging with capitalism. Here the gender and intersectionality scholars show how difficult it is to define difference,

instead arguing for a fluid multidimensional understanding of the complex discourses and fields of force at play in indigenous peoples' lives. We anticipate continued and productive debates between scholars who see difference as ontological and those who see it as emerging from multicontextual lived positions in the contemporary world.

While these have been important areas for exploring the ways scholars have engaged indigeneity in recent years, we end here with ideas for where scholarship on indigeneity might go in the next decade or so. It seems as though questions regarding the environment and natural resources will become ever more important in the upcoming years as resources become more finite and global climate change advances. It is our hope that scholars will continue to analyze these development projects to draw attention to both the inequities they can produce, as well as the alternatives being proposed to them. Decolonization and *buen vivir* offer new horizons for indigenous peoples to claim sovereignty and land rights, but these will no doubt continue to be deeply contested. Climate change is a product of enormously complex interactions between economic and political processes and uneven geographical developments across Latin America, so new work will have to address these multi-scalar intersects. Perhaps this will lead to new interdisciplinary work across the physical and social and humanistic sciences.

As we have argued in other papers, there is certainly space for more critical work on intersectionality between race, ethnicity, gender, and class. We hope to see more work on indigenous peoples engaged with capitalism, like the upwardly mobile Aymaras in La Paz. How and in what ways might they borrow from Aymara traditions of reciprocity and exchange to build political and economic networks that stretch across national/global space? We argue here for more attention to macro and micro shifts, as flows of capital and new markets open up across Latin America. How might indigenous people be engaging these markets as important actors in these new global spaces? The goal of the next decade is to create robust theories that look at the intersections of race, class, gender, and the multiple layers and levels of power shaping indigenous peoples' lives in rural and urban areas, spaces of governance, and in international decision-making.

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