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Slantwise

Beyond Domination and Resistance on the Border

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Drawing on extensive participant observation and interviews concerned with barriers to census enumeration in *colonias* (irregular migrant settlements along the United States–Mexico border) and Mexican migration to the United States, we argue that recent ethnography has overemphasized the role of domination and resistance. While power is fundamental to cultural analysis, we also need to examine behavior we call slantwise, that is, actions that are obliquely or only indirectly related to power relations. Ethnographic fieldwork from both sides of the United States–Mexico border uncovered a range of behaviors (including unorthodox building techniques in colonias, hybrid language practices, complex and fluid household structures, nonlinear mobility patterns, and unpredictable political loyalties of migrants) that do not fit neatly into the domination-resistance axis. We argue for the relevance of the slantwise concept for understanding such behaviors, not as a replacement for studies of naturalized domination and resistance, but as a complement to them.

Keywords: *domination; resistance; Mexico; border; colonias; migration*

Recent ethnographic literature has emphasized power and agency vis-à-vis culture (Brown 1996; Crehan 2002). The analytical framework in most of this literature falls along an axis with two endpoints, resistance and naturalized or internalized domination (Hebdige 1979; Comaroff 1985; Taussig 1987; Hodson 1991). It is not that these works fit neatly into one or the other of the two endpoints, but rather that complexity and contradiction are still conceived of through a combination or interaction of the two extremes (Marcus 1998). It is in this regard that we refer to it as an axis.

This axis, while important and insightful, misses an important set of phenomena in which action makes little or no sense in terms of the naturalized meanings and practices within the society and seems contrary, even disruptive, to socially dominant groups. At the same time, such phenomena

are not intentionally resistant (cf., Merton 1936),¹ even if we consider a wide definition of intent that includes acts that consciously violate dominant norms and power orders (such as theft for survival) without a goal of bringing about systematic change (cf., Scott 1985). We are thus pointing to cases in which people frustrate the normal play of a given power relation by acting in ways that make sense in their own frameworks but are disconnected or oblivious to that power relationship's construction or assumptions (Sykes and Matzka [1957] refer to a similar phenomenon as "techniques of neutralization" [p. 667]). Because such actions do not readily follow the axis between resistance and naturalized domination, we refer to them as slantwise—that is, intersecting that axis from an oblique angle. To illustrate slantwise action, we draw on ethnography of the United States–Mexico border, examining informally planned urban settlements (*colonias*) and their relationship to the United States state (especially the census bureau) and then the complex zigzagging behavior of Mexican undocumented migrants relative to United States and Mexican power arrangements.

Our point is not simply that there are a variety of social-cultural phenomena beyond power, though we do consider in our final discussion the need for more open-ended and less completely power-saturated views of the human condition. Our point is, rather, that such slantwise action affects power orders, sometimes changing them and sometimes being absorbed by them, even reinforcing them. Although we focus on subalterns, we recognize that elites also may act in a slantwise fashion in ways more likely to reinforce power structures than undermine them. Furthermore, multiple forms of power and official version of naturalized meaning exist, as do manifold types of slantwise behavior or narratives (Vila 2000). Slantwise is a concept that is most applicable to complex societies including multiple cultural frames of reference in a relatively open social system, not more uniform, closed social contexts.²

We can think of the slantwise concept as sharing the same agenda as the naturalized domination-and-resistance concepts to understand analytically the place of power in culture and social relations. It contributes through widening what we are able to perceive about power, and it makes the most sense when seen against a backdrop of this already existing scholarly discourse. Slantwise is a significant contribution because the resistance-naturalization axis has resulted in widespread distortion of ethnographic material, notably by analysts forcing accidental defiance, avoidance, and similar phenomena into resistance, a category best reserved for actions and meanings that actors themselves understand to be defiant.

Slantwise is an outside-observer-based (etic) category that organizes ethnographic observations to deepen the existing analytical framework of naturalization and resistance; it makes sense and has coherence against that context.

It is not a meaningful framework for the actors themselves (emic), who act for a variety of reasons. To understand the emic level, we might consider how inherited frameworks of domination and resistance are imported into new contexts, as well as goals and improvisations made without discernable reference to power (on the emic/etic distinction, see Harris 1968). For reasons we explain below, we consider an important defining feature to be the actors' lack of intentions vis-à-vis the power orders they immediately face, but this does not fully encompass the range of meanings and intentions they do have. It is pragmatically appropriate to abstract out and highlight the slantwise dimension from a wider ethnographic whole because of the great importance of power in recent ethnographic and theoretical work. Our concept makes the ethnographic study of power more ample, gives us stronger tools for its analysis, and renders it more compatible with a multidimensional view of humanity in which a variety of actions both intentionally and accidentally feed into and play off of power relations.

The Slantwise Concept vis-à-vis Literature on Domination and Resistance

Domination and struggles against it are classic themes in the social sciences (e.g., Marx, Weber, Simmel, Gramsci, Foucault, etc. [Lukes 1986]). The rise of the combined everyday resistance-naturalized domination axis in the past two decades constitutes a great step forward in analyzing the workings of power when struggles do not occur openly (see Lukes 1974 on this central problem). This pair of terms is not fully adequate, however, so literature contains awkward attempts to force nonconforming phenomena into a dualistic framework, and likewise, internal critiques. Thus we need to step outside the axis. The slantwise concept by no means solves all of the problems emerging in the literature (cf., Abu-Lughod 1990), but it is an addition that enables us to get out of identifiable traps.

We begin with two exemplary works that illustrate the endpoints of the resistance-naturalized domination axis. In a compelling synthesis of work on domination and culture, Sylvia Yanagisako and Carol Delaney (1995) describe naturalization as “differentials of power [that] come already embedded in culture,” in which “power appears natural, inevitable, even god-given” in domains such as gender, kinship, race, nation, and class (p. 1). Breaks in naturalization then either challenge or reinforce hegemonic power. The authors illustrate this with a border-crossing, migratory example:

When the order is disrupted or when people are uprooted from the sites where these stories and identities make sense (such as is occurring with the

contemporary movement of peoples on a world-wide scale), then not only are identities challenged but so too is the hegemonic order. For some people this situation contributes to an erosion of faith in the explanatory schemes, while for others it leads to championing their own particular visions more emphatically. (p. 2)

It is notable how this passage assumes a one-dimensional axis, with disruption either challenging or reinforcing domination. It does not conceive of the breakdown or transformation of naturalized power through other more indirect or accidental processes.

James Scott (1985) defined everyday resistance as prosaic struggles between dominant and subordinate classes over material and symbolic resources, carried out through individual and small-group actions and involving simple tactics such as insults, humor, foot-dragging, and theft. He contrasts everyday resistance with large-scale, public acts of defiance and also with the conscious acceptance and obedience of normal, routine power. Following Scott's formulation, the notion of resistance became one of the main approaches in the social sciences from the 1980s to the present (Taussig 1980; Herman and Musolf 1998; Gorman 1998; Levi 1999; Groves and Chang 1999; Kates and Belk 2001; Haenfler 2004).

As perceptive as Scott's (1985) argument is, it frays at some places. He acknowledges that to use the word *resistance* requires some degree of intentionality, "that [such words and actions] are intended to mitigate or deny claims made by superordinate classes or to advance claims vis-à-vis those superordinate classes" (p. 32; also see Fegan 1986). This is a position with which we concur, especially in pointing out as resistance actions that people conduct knowing that such actions are frowned on by the dominant laws, ideologies, and so on, even if done for purely practical and not organized political reasons. However, Scott soon considers the fact that much action by the weak addresses immediate needs and seizes upon the easiest (or better said, only possible) ways to fulfill those needs:

[R]esistance is not necessarily directed at the immediate source of appropriation. Inasmuch as the objective of the resisters is typically to meet such pressing needs as physical safety, food, land, or income, and to do so in relative safety, they may simply follow the line of least resistance. Prussian peasants and proletarians in the 1830s, beleaguered by dwarf holdings and wages below subsistence, responded by emigration or by poaching wood, fodder, and game on a large scale. (p. 35)

While poaching from state or aristocratic forests readily fits everyday resistance, migration fits it awkwardly, if at all. As we shall see, this raises a

whole set of activities that are not done with conscious awareness of their defiant qualities or have interestingly mixed intentions vis-à-vis power orders. We are here encountering the limits of the domination-resistance axis.

One response to such issues has been to turn away from the extreme ends of the axis and instead explore the complicated combinations in between. Dirks, Eley, and Ortner (1994), in a major statement on culture, power, and history, continually move back and forth between naturalized domination and resistance. For example, they speak of “questions of conformity and opposition” when they point out that the feminist insight that “the personal is political” has opened up awareness of noninstitutional aspects and arenas of power (p. 4, also see p. 5, top). Later, when they consider practice, they describe it as “naturaliz[ing] the boundaries of the subject’s aspirations” and also involving “practices of resistance . . . which denaturalize and transform the boundaries of exploitation, oppression, and prejudice” (p. 17).

Likewise, these authors explore how strong theories of subjectification (e.g., Foucault) can give rise to resistance. As they point out, it is not a matter of choosing either power or resistance endpoints. Rather, individuals who are heavily constituted within power-saturated culture and history retain enough incoherence and incomplete subjectification to be in a potentially critical situation. This is quite consistent with our analysis of the slantwise situation, but they concentrate on how it serves as a basis for “petty rebellions and inchoate discontent” (p. 18). They remain focused on resistance and do not address the political effects of incoherence and incompleteness of power in and of themselves. More broadly, we suggest that going back and forth between naturalization and resistance is not a sufficient response to ethnographic cases that fit incompletely within either rubric. Sherry Ortner (1995) in particular recognizes the problems of stuffing protean ethnography into this framework, though she is mainly critical of the resistance end of the axis. To go beyond her emphatic negative critique to create new understandings of ethnography, we feel that additional analytical tools are needed.

We close the literature review with one final point: a widespread vocabulary now used in the social sciences excessively constrains our analytical strategies concerning action with respect to power orders. We do not provide voluminous citations of this vocabulary, since social scientists will readily recognize its existence. On the side of resistance, we note words such as *transgress*, *subvert*, *invert*, *challenge*, *question*, *contest*, *oppose*, *claim*, *demand*, *assert*, *struggle*, and *penetrate* (in Paul Willis’s [1981] usage). Conversely, naturalization words and phrases include *dominated*, *inscribed*, *shaped*, *reproduced*, *colonized*, *embodied*, *incorporated*, *subjected*, *subjectified*, *conform*, *take for granted*, *power/knowledge* and *governmentality* (in Michel

Foucault's sense [Burchell, Gordon, and Miller 1991]), and many uses of *hegemony* and *discourse*. In the latter set, one might note the widespread use of past-participle and passive verb forms. Some words point to ambiguous combinations of domination and resistance or can be used in either direction, depending on context, including *hybridize*, *appropriate*, *borrow*, *localize*, *reinterpret*, *negotiate*, *mediate*, and *contradict*.

When we get to slantwise action, however, we notice fewer words that are currently fashionable. They include *emerge* and *emergent*, *invent*, *stumble on*, *inadvertent*, *trial and error*, *willy-nilly*, *skip around*, *pick-and-choose*, *disappear*, *reappear*, *bypass*, *frustrate*, *inconsistent* (when seen from above), *irrational* (ditto), *unpredictable* (ditto), *intersect*, *impinge*, *improvise*, and *autonomous*.³ As we know, analytical vocabulary indicates the assumptions of a field, so a new vocabulary can widen and strengthen the perception of phenomena. In the sections that follow, we offer ethnographic observations about Mexican migrants and colonias (informal Mexican-origin settlements in the United States). These phenomena involve naturalized power domains within the United States and Mexico, such as the United States Census, which broadly fits Foucault's concept of governmentality (Burchell, Gordon, and Miller 1991). A widespread set of working-class Mexican and Chicano actions frustrate such power orders, sometimes with systematically important effects. These actions might be shoved into the vocabulary of resistance except that they do not constitute knowing resistance, even of the everyday variety. Our slantwise vocabulary brings out the power dynamics of this ethnographic material in a more satisfactory fashion.

Slantwise Behavior, Border Colonias, and the United States Census

State bureaucracies are concerned about and affected by both resistance and the slantwise behaviors of the populace. The United States Census Bureau, for example, recently announced a pilot project in Mexico, France, and Kuwait to try to count the number of United States citizens living abroad (Ikeda 2004). The bureau estimates the number of foreign residents is between one million and four million, a range that indicates its inability to keep track of large numbers of citizens engaging in unpredictable behaviors. The census bureau also struggles to enumerate the population within national boundaries, especially among the mobile Mexican-origin population (Skerry 2000).

Along the United States–Mexico border, a new housing phenomenon known as colonias has emerged that confounds existing census categories (Vélez-Ibañez 2004). Colonia settlements represent a survival strategy for poor Mexicans, or in Vélez-Ibañez's terms, "the distribution of sadness" in "regions of refuge" (p. 14), rather than organized, deliberate resistance to the state (Silva and Campbell 1998). The predominantly Mexican and Mexican American working-class colonias, which began to grow in the 1950s, contain as many as one million residents and are located along the southern borders of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. In Texas, about five hundred thousand people reside in fifteen hundred colonias (Ward 1999). El Paso County possesses the second-largest number of colonias among Texas counties. Approximately seventy-three thousand people live in 157 El Paso colonias. They generally lack running water, adequate sewage systems, paved streets, health facilities, and police protection. Houses and lots are frequently irregular and cannot meet urban zoning standards. Fifty percent of Texas colonia residents fall below the poverty line. The majority of colonia dwellers (65 to 80 percent) are United States citizens. About one-third do not speak English.

Until recently, the colonia population was ignored or severely undercounted. In 2000, the census bureau conducted the first major census study of colonia residents to address the undercount and refine census enumeration techniques. Sociologist Manuel de la Puente coordinated the project. His staff included anthropologists Carlos Vélez-Ibañez, Howard Campbell, Duncan Earle, Gina Núñez, and Travis Dubry. Research on census activity was conducted in California, Texas, and New Mexico. Border colonias present unique challenges to census enumeration because they involve a primarily Spanish-speaking, migratory population living in unorthodox settlements with nonstandard housing and street patterns and other idiosyncratic features.

Many colonias are located in isolated, remote Southwest desert and canyon regions that are difficult for the census to find. Colonias frequently do not have named streets or numbered household addresses. Colonias often are not recorded on maps, and the settlements themselves may not even be named. A cultural pattern in colonias that may further complicate census enumeration is extended family households. Additionally, many people living in colonias engage in constant border crossings or labor migration, aspects of the behavioral complex we call slantwise. This is especially common in agricultural areas like the Lower Valley of El Paso, where Campbell conducted his colonia study.

Methodology and Research Setting: An Ethnography of Barriers to Census Enumeration in an El Paso Colonia

Methods

In what follows, we will examine the census bureau's efforts to enumerate colonia dwellers and thus present an ethnographic case study of state attempts to detect or account for people engaged in slantwise behaviors. Using qualitative methods, Campbell researched the bureau's activities in "Cotton"⁴ colonia in east El Paso County, Texas, from March to August, 2000. He studied the degree to which limited English skills, confidentiality concerns, fluid and complex household structures, and irregular housing posed barriers to census enumeration. Campbell made general ethnographic observations of the colonia (concerned with type of housing, layout of streets and basic infrastructure, and lifestyles and customs of residents) and accompanied census enumerators. He also observed (bilingual) enumerators' interactions with colonia residents.

Participant observation over a ten-year period in Cotton colonia, made possible by Campbell's extensive network of social acquaintances and in-laws in the area, contributed to the research. Thus, he obtained a long-term perspective on the way of life of colonia residents and their engagement with the larger El Paso and United States society. Campbell also examined training sessions at the El Paso Census Bureau office, actual field enumeration in Cotton colonia, and the use of cultural facilitators (assistants to the census enumerator who were chosen from the colonia). The census bureau's exploratory use of cultural facilitators is clear indication of the challenge colonia living arrangements present for enumeration. Campbell also achieved an in-depth insight into the interface between the census bureau and colonia residents through formal and informal interviews with census workers and the local residents they encountered.

Campbell conducted and tape-recorded three focus groups and did thirty ethnographic interviews with colonia residents who were census respondents. He used the main questions (concerning language fluency, self-described ethnic and racial identity, size of household, type of dwelling, marital status, gender, and other demographic issues) on the United States census form as an interview guide. Campbell examined interviewees' responses to the census questions to determine which questions produced confusing, inaccurate, or ambiguous answers. Approximately 66 percent of

interviews were conducted in Spanish, and the rest were in English, often mixed with Spanglish (a hybrid blend of the two languages).

There were six to eight participants in each focus group, which took place on Saturday mornings in colonia residents' homes. The first group consisted of seven men and one woman, the second contained five men and one woman, and the last was evenly mixed. Participants ranged in age from twenty to sixty years old. All were either (Hispanic) United States citizens or legal residents of Mexican descent. The thirty ethnographic interviews, conducted at colonia residents' homes, included fourteen women and sixteen men as primary interviewees. Other family members in attendance contributed additional comments and observations. All interviewees had the same ethnic background as the members of the focus groups, with the exception of one South American woman and one mixed (Anglo-Hispanic) woman.

Research Setting

Cotton colonia is situated in east El Paso County near Valle, Texas (population 1,025), less than five miles from the United States–Mexico border and the Rio Grande. The colonia is located on flat, formerly agricultural land in far-west Texas, close to the New Mexico border. The settlement is bounded by Interstate 10 and sandhills to the north, cotton and pecan fields to the east, and the El Paso suburbs and small towns of Valle and Socorro, Texas, to the west. There are about 150 households in Cotton, distributed in three sections. Most residents are originally from El Paso County, or Chihuahua or other northern Mexican states. Spanish is the main language in the colonia, although most of the youths and young adults speak English with varying degrees of competency. At the time of research, Cotton did not have piped potable water or other basic municipal services besides electricity, telephone lines, and rustic streets.

Many Cotton houses are surrounded by chain-link fences or rock walls. House construction styles vary considerably because residents often build their own homes without building permits. At any given time, many houses are unfinished or in various stages of construction. In general, colonia houses, layouts, and occupancy patterns do not correspond with urban middle-class norms. This does not represent efforts by colonia residents to create a distinctive, resistant cultural style but simply to make the best of the limited resources and services available to them. This epitomizes what we call slantwise activity.

Historical Context

Valle, Texas, adjacent to Cotton colonia, is a small, predominantly Mexican farming community. It has been the center of one of the most important cotton-producing regions in the United States. El Paso is also a major producer of pecans, chiles, and onions; however, the latter two crops have declined in recent years due to water shortages. Historically, white ranchers ran the farming economy and employed thousands of legal and undocumented Mexican laborers (Campbell 2005). Since the 1960s, the demography of the region has shifted because of large-scale Mexican migration. Today, Mexicans and Mexican Americans compose the vast majority of the population, although white farmers retain substantial political and economic power.

El Paso colonias are a product of expansion of the population beyond city limits into the fertile farmland along the Rio Grande. Land developers and farmers subdivided fields and desert land and sold it to low-income Mexican immigrants with limited housing options. Normally, the lots were sold with no municipal services in unincorporated areas. The Spanish word *colonias* became the commonly used term to refer to these communities. Such settlements often are not tightly organized, and they lack most social institutions and public services that most United States residents and many urban Mexicans take for granted.

Cotton Colonia during Census 2000

In Cotton colonia, the only public building of any kind is a small church, and the area is only minimally represented by political officials. As of 2000, the Valle School Board contained no colonia residents. Local politicians are much more responsive to town dwellers than to the isolated, relatively powerless colonia population. Although Hispanics and Anglos generally interact smoothly in everyday life, lingering tensions persist based on past (and sometimes current) discrimination, language barriers, and social inequalities. Today, the local Border Patrol and Customs and Border Protection offices are staffed predominantly by Mexican Americans. But this is little consolation for undocumented Mexican immigrants and others (including colonia dwellers) who allege abuse or live cramped, fear-filled lives as a consequence of intense surveillance practices. Colonia residents, whether documented or undocumented, also fear drug violence, which has become a serious threat in the El Paso–Ciudad Juárez area over the past fifteen years with the rise of the Juárez drug cartel. During Campbell's research,

a Mexican census enumerator was murdered in Juárez, supposedly by narcotic smugglers. Other sources of fear include the Internal Revenue Service and building and health inspectors who patrol colonias for taxation, zoning, and safety violations.

Because of these factors, the 2000 census occurred within a somewhat conflictive social context in Cotton colonia. Yet the local residents, though apprehensive about outside authorities and politically and geographically isolated, actually cooperated quite willingly with census enumerators in most cases, with some exceptions. Thus, to interpret the colonia residents' behavior vis-à-vis the census as a standard case of resistance would be quite misleading. Colonia settlers moved to these neighborhoods in a slantwise fashion to improve the material conditions of their lives, not, for the most part, to avoid census enumeration or deliberately defy or resist the state. Colonia house construction and other efforts by colonia residents to provide their families with food and shelter involve some evasion of the law but generally without an ideological commitment to defiance of the state. Instead, a survival orientation is the primary motivation.

Slantwise Behavior and the United States Census in Cotton Colonia

Campbell and other ethnographers studying the census examined the extent to which irregular housing patterns posed a barrier to enumeration in colonias. In Texas colonias, nonstandard housing forms include a variety of self-made houses, mobile homes transformed into permanent dwellings, train cars and trucks made into homes, old school buses modified into houses, and trailers and standard houses melded together. In Cotton, many lots contain simultaneously a trailer and a house under construction. The most recently constructed home frequently obscures the view of the original dwelling. The original dwelling then may be used by relatives or renters.

Regarding building practices in Cotton, one long-time resident observed, "One of the houses facing the freeway was built with used brick, because the man works in construction, so whatever was left over from the job he would bring home and use in his house." The colonia developed through practical efforts such as this, rather than blueprints and plans. One man stated, "when we first moved [we] built an outbuilding for a bathroom and shower . . . we had no water, so my uncle dug a well and he would bring *baldes de agua* [buckets of water] . . . the water was very, very salty." As people constructed their homes in the colonia, a sprawling pattern emerged that was quite different from

the neat geometries of suburban neighborhoods and often confusing to outsiders such as census takers.

The small church in Cotton hides at least two houses that were not listed on the census-bureau roster. The census enumerator did not see one of the houses until the cultural facilitator who accompanied her pointed it out. Subsequently, the enumerator discovered another house, adjacent to the church, that consisted of a small trailer home enclosed in a wood frame that caused it to look like a shack. The enumerator did not recognize that the trailer portions of two eighteen-wheel trucks sitting on blocks next to the houses probably also were used as homes.

The modification of mobile homes into various kinds of dwellings is a kind of practical art form in colonias. When a trailer becomes too small for a growing family, it is seldom entirely abandoned but instead is converted into a storage area or tool shed or occupied by another family. A new trailer or house then is constructed on the same lot. The census enumerators in Cotton occasionally were stymied by the complexity of housing forms. The enumerators could not enter the dwellings unless invited in by residents. Therefore, trailers, utility buildings, outbuildings, and other structures that probably functioned as dwellings escaped enumeration because there was no respondent to explain which buildings were occupied and by how many people. In one case, residents stated that various outbuildings were not lived in despite signs of recent occupation, including cooking facilities and electrical hook-ups. One especially complicated scenario stood out from the rest. In this instance, a woman evidently owned four dwellings in a small cluster overlapping several lots. The woman's relatives lived in some of the dwellings. Renters occupied others. The residents of the dwellings provided incomplete and confusing information about the houses and their ownership, perhaps fearing punishment for violation of zoning laws. Cultural facilitators from Cotton clarified some ambiguous housing arrangements but prudently ignored others.

In general, it should be noted that the diversity of colonia housing is a result of the lack of infrastructure, the precarious cash flow of colonia residents, and individual creativity, rather than attempts to hide from the census or other authorities (although that may also occur). A colonia resident with an acute eye for local practices noted, "One of my cousins has an adobe house [in Cotton], another cousin built an extra room onto a trailer . . . You don't hear about contractors, about builders or building permits . . . You're out in the county, so you do it yourself."

Mobile homes, because of their mobility, are difficult to keep track of. Campbell observed one mobile home on a lot in March 2000 that was no

longer there in July 2000. In colonias, mobile homes and small houses may be constructed so quickly as to confound inattentive census enumerators. Campbell recorded another case at the beginning of his fieldwork in which a family lived in a small mobile home but one month later occupied a small cement house on the same lot. A census enumerator entering a complex colonia like Cotton has a very hard time determining the number of people who occupy it, because of the residents' migratory habits and the creative, improvisational character of their houses and lives. Hence, a slantwise lifestyle often confounds state attempts at regulation and demographic inventory.

Mainstream conceptions about the physical form and placement of a home (i.e., a consolidated brick or wood-frame house in the middle of a lot) may prevent enumerators from identifying the myriad ways trailers are used as homes or the various styles of owner-built structures that serve as dwellings in colonias. The El Paso census enumerator training session attended by Campbell included no discussion of the vagaries of colonia housing. Consequently, enumerators in Cotton made some mistakes that could have been avoided with proper training. In one instance, an enumerator observed a worn mobile home with an attached carport next to a rock wall. A for-rent sign was affixed to the mobile home. Therefore, the enumerator, trying to meet her quota of respondents, quickly assumed that the dwelling was vacant. Yet, there was no proof that the place was, in fact, unoccupied. Another problem presented by colonia housing configurations is the placement of a house dozens of feet from a locked chain-link fence or tall cement-rock wall, often guarded by a dog. This is a formidable barrier to census enumeration. Such barriers may aim at state agents, such as police, but they also address tensions and fears among local residents and must be labeled as resistant (or slantwise) only after careful household ethnography. Other obstacles include junked cars, debris from construction projects, household trash, old appliances, and other discarded items obstructing movement that may be found in the lots surrounding colonia houses.

One woman, who is proud of Cotton but no longer lives there, explained why Cotton looks as it does:

If you're not from here, you'd think you were going to Juárez, but our colonia is not your Sparks [an older, poorer colonia] . . . People think 'Oh, how dirty it is,' but residents have to accumulate stuff, be a kind of hoarder. The little they have they refuse to get rid of . . . One man has a camper shell lying in his yard for his truck, old wood he can use for a fence or a walkway. He collects *paletas* [wooden pallets] for a fence. This is their own recycling method, so they won't have to buy stuff. Someday, they'll need it.

A distinctive feature of many colonias, including Cotton, is the lack of clearly marked streets and house numbers. In Cotton, house addresses are written in paint or by other means on rocks, poles, makeshift signs, and the walls of mobile homes or houses. Legibility and visibility may be a problem, and the absence of a consistent pattern is a problem for enumerators. Postal delivery is also precarious, which prevents some colonia residents from receiving census information by mail and responding to it in a timely fashion. Furthermore, Campbell's colonia informants stated that they probably would not reply to a mailed written questionnaire due to literacy problems or because the questionnaire would get lost in the piles of junk mail that accumulate between infrequent mail deliveries. Cotton residents said they only pick up their mail once per week or so because of the inconvenient location of mailboxes, which are located in a line along a highway far from their homes.

One resident of Cotton described the living conditions of the colonia (soon after its founding in the late 1980s) as follows:

It wasn't shacks. It wasn't your typical Juárez [Mexico] kind of place . . . It was poor people trying to make a middle-class kind of place. Physically, the street wasn't paved, it was caliche. In the yards a lot of people were starting to grow trees. It was a brand-new neighborhood. Mr. Baker used to own the land, it had been a farm. The lots were of all different sizes. People sort of built their own fences. My dad built his fence with recycled materials, such as *paletas* [wooden pallets]. My cousin would also steal railroad ties for the fence. There were no signs, numbers on houses, or other identifying features. Most of us didn't have running water. We dug a well and took baths with salty water and we went to the bathroom in an outhouse with a *tejabán* [rustic outbuilding with a wooden roof]. My dad would warm up water in *tambos* [fifty-gallon drums].

In addition to physical obstacles created by colonia infrastructural circumstances, Campbell's ethnographic fieldwork encountered a significant degree of avoidance behavior vis-à-vis the census bureau. Members of a focus group composed of Cotton residents explained the reasons for avoidance behaviors as follows:

Mexican immigrants come from a political system ruled by patronage and personalism. They think that the United States system is different, but they are not sure how and do not understand it. Hence, they are reluctant to cooperate with government institutions like the census.

Behavior such as this requires an analytical prism that privileges neither domination nor resistance but includes a notion of slantwise behavior.

Certainly, avoidance falls to the resistance side of the spectrum. It is intentional, and it defies specific claims made by dominant actors by preventing their enactment (e.g., state regulation). It is part of Scott's (1985) list of low-level resistance tactics, even when it stems from a primarily practical, survival motivation; characteristic instances are tax evasion and hiding from military service. However, as the colonia example demonstrates, avoidance often accompanies slantwise behaviors in an effort to maintain invisibility and freedom of action and may not always represent an effort to avoid claims made by dominant actors (as Scott's examples emphasize). Furthermore, slantwise action itself, with no explicit intention of avoidance, may lead to inadvertent avoidance, including difficultly identified residences, lack of use of telephones and postal boxes, and constant mobility.

In other cases, avoidance may indeed be an intentional but weak form of resistance, as suggested in the quote above, indicating a vague but pervasive distrust of authorities among Mexican immigrants. In this instance, an action framework developed in one context (Mexican power relations) transfers into a new context where it does not quite match the new rules of power. People in Mexico often reveal as little as possible to any agent of the state. In the United States, the characteristic way of dealing with the state is more complex; people alternately hide and disclose their activities, depending on the exact nature of the question and the state agency involved. Recent immigrants do not, we suspect, understand this novel approach and its tactical uses within the United States. Realistic fear of United States immigration law enforcement exacerbates this. In summary, to understand avoidance behaviors, it is helpful to have a continuum of analytical devices between resistance and domination, allowing for greater subtlety in handling each situation.

As relatively new communities, colonias may not have complex histories or unified identities. Cotton colonia, which was named by Campbell for ease of the reader, has no generally accepted name, nor does a tight-knit community exist. The local residents consider Cotton to be broken into three sections that are somewhat disconnected. The relative ethnic homogeneity of colonias does not mean, ipso facto, that they possess the social cohesiveness of the much older, urban barrios. In fact, many colonias are essentially poor people's suburbs (though obviously separated from upper-middle class suburbs by income and political power) with the problems of isolation and anomie we associate with suburbs generally. Hence, in Cotton, in several cases, enumerators could not elicit much information from residents about their neighbors because the residents barely knew them.

A key barrier to accurate census enumeration in colonias is the English language (or Spanish language) census form itself, which asks culturally biased

questions that may produce confusing, equivocal, or wrong information (Skerry 2000). The race question on the census form (“choose one or more races”), for example, presented conundrums for Hispanic respondents whose cultural constructions of racial categories, rooted in a different political history of racial and ethnic experience, were not commensurate with the Anglo-centric categories used by the census bureau. This often produced enigmatic or amusing responses in the field. One Hispanic male respondent, for example, described his wife’s race as “half and half, how do you say it, ‘*cuarterona*’” (literally, quarter-breed or quadroon).

The meanings and histories of such naturalized quasiracial categories are too complex to discuss here. The point of this example is simply to illustrate how recent Mexican migrants, drawing on concepts and experiences from a separate country in which mixed racial ancestry and skin color often have quite different connotations, respond to United States Census questions in ways that frustrate the purposes of the census even if the respondents are making no attempt to resist it. Another colonia resident was asked by the enumerator if he was white. The man, perhaps aware of the census bureau’s historical lumping of Mexican-origin people into the white category, looked at his spouse, grabbed his bronze-skinned arm, guffawed, and said, “*¿Somos blancos, verdad vieja?*” (We’re white, aren’t we old lady?).

Spanish is the primary language in Cotton, and most colonia residents have relatively low educational levels. In Cotton, census enumerators administered most of the census questionnaires in Spanish, which was helpful for the predominantly Spanish speakers but a barrier to those residents whose Spanish vocabulary was limited. Furthermore, many Cotton residents customarily speak Spanglish (Stavans 2003), a hybrid of English and Spanish that occasionally presented problems for a monolingual Anglo enumerator, whereas a Mexican American census enumerator speaking Spanglish had difficulty communicating with elderly respondents who spoke more traditional Spanish from the interior of Mexico. Indeed, Spanglish epitomizes what we call slantwise because it is a language form developed at the grassroots that state bureaucracies and national societies have difficulty coping with in both the United States and Mexico (Stavans 2003).

In addition to language fluency and translation problems, the wording of some of the questions presented other paradoxes in addition to those related to the race question. In border-colonia households, it is common for families to host relatives or friends from Mexico for several months of the year. Thus, at any particular time, a home might house nine people and then a few months later, only five. Therefore, the census question about the number of inhabitants of a dwelling could be confusing to colonia respondents because the

number fluctuates from year to year or even month to month. Additionally, many undocumented residents of colonias do not have birth certificates and other official papers that would establish accurate census information.

It is important to note that colonias were established on the border by poor Mexican immigrants and Mexican American working-class people seeking better employment and living conditions, especially the opportunity to own their own homes. Individuals moved to colonias because of a shortage of inexpensive housing in the inner cities and small rural towns and because of the chance to own their own property and build their own homes at relatively low cost. Sandra Leyva's family, for example, was evicted from its adobe house on a cotton farm when the owner died. She describes the family's move to Cotton colonia as follows:

We went into this house with no running water or natural gas, but my parents had their own home . . . it was our house and we could do whatever we wanted. My dad and his friends and coworkers built the house. It was livable, but we didn't have a lot of furniture. Now, we had a mortgage payment, but at least we owned our home. My dad got a job as a janitor at a local school, which was the only work available for an ex-farmworker who spoke no English and had little education. You could tell the houses in the colonia were built with a lot of struggle . . . people were struggling to build their houses by themselves. They weren't built by some fancy contractor.

As this statement indicates, although the existence of colonias may present problems for the state and its bureaucracies that attempt to count and control people, most colonia residents moved to colonias not consciously to resist state power per se but to seek a better life. Aspects of colonia lifestyles that present challenges to the census, such as remote settings, unorthodox street patterns and housing construction, frequent migration, and so on, for the most part, do not reflect efforts of colonia dwellers to escape the clutches of the state but simply to make a living, build their homes, and create communities given the often limited means available to them. Thus, intentional defiance or avoidance was not the primary factor in the establishment of colonias. However, collectively and cumulatively, the individual decisions of thousands of colonia settlers have produced many problems and challenges for federal, state, and local government officials. These include basic census enumeration (who and how many people live in colonias) and demands for expensive public services such as potable water, paved roads, sewer systems, electricity, lighting, and piped natural gas.

Although public discourses portray colonias as sources of poverty, disorganization, and problems (in essence, the culture of poverty), ironically,

colonia residents often epitomize the strong work ethic and commitment to economic betterment known as the American Dream. In fact, many colonia dwellers are seeking greater incorporation and rights and services within mainstream American society and its institutions, rather than less.

Colonias, Migration, and Zigzag Behavior across the United States–Mexico Border

As discussed in this article, slantwise is an analytical concept for understanding subjectivity or agency that is not reducible to intentional resistance or naturalized hegemony. We also use the organizing concept of zigzag, which captures the idea of a nonlinear, slantwise life trajectory epitomized in the nomadic lives of colonia residents and other aspects of border lifestyles. Vélez-Ibañez (2004) vividly describes the mobility of New Mexico colonia residents as follows:

During January and February, and again in May, *colonos* migrate to Alabama, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Mississippi. Almost every household owns two trucks and automobiles that are called *muebles* (furniture). The term is symbolic of the nomadic nature of migratory existence in which their households are carried literally with them to points far from the colonias themselves. (p. 11)

During his research, Campbell interviewed a Mexican farmer, Jesús Gómez, who left his small ranch in Aguascalientes because he could not survive there. Gómez came to work at a small business in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. He worked in the business long enough to obtain the papers he needed to enter the United States legally. The former farmer then crossed the border and obtained a job on an American cotton farm. He lived in a colonia in the El Paso Lower Valley while still maintaining ties to Aguascalientes and Juárez. Soon, about one-third of his family crossed the border, some legally and some illegally, and established residence in the United States. Gómez family members continued to influence social and cultural life in their Mexican hometown through remittances and periodic visits. Throughout this life course, Gómez's and his family members' actions involved neither direct protest against an unjust political and economic system nor acceptance of its ideology, but in trying to survive, they made it difficult for either the Mexican or United States governments (e.g., the census) to keep track of or control them.

Another of Campbell's informants, Juanita Martínez, left a tiny *ejido* in Zacatecas because of the lack of economic options for women. Martínez

migrated to a *colonia popular* on the outskirts of Ciudad Juárez and went to work in a *maquiladora* factory. When she tired of *maquiladora* work, Martínez earned a living as a prostitute in a bar near her Juárez home. Eventually, she went back to the *maquiladora* and worked long enough to be able to document long-term formal employment and thus meet an essential requirement for a local passport that allowed her to enter El Paso legally to shop, visit, and so on, but not to work. Using her local passport, she obtained off-the-books employment as a maid for an Anglo-American family in an El Paso suburb. Throughout this time, she continued to stay in touch with her relatives in Zacatecas and Juárez while establishing a new network of friends and associates in the United States. Border people like this move back and forth, violating simple notions of folk-urban, push-pull migration, or domination-resistance. It is a zigzag trajectory more like that of a football half-back than a fullback charge straight up the gut. Individual actions of this sort may be relatively inconsequential, but combined with the actions of thousands of others doing the same thing, they collectively have an impact on power structures—locally, nationally, and internationally.

Mexican migration to the United States, a slantwise move involving at least ten million people, has profoundly shaped both societies economically and culturally. Currently, Mexican workers in the United States send an estimated \$13.2 billion per year in remittances back to family members in Mexico (Gilot 2004). In fact, remittances have become Mexico's second-largest source of revenue after oil. Migrants and their money have transformed the physical infrastructure of villages and cities all over the country (Wides 2004). These investments have been labeled by one Mexican politician as "*inversiones de la nostalgia*" (nostalgic investments).⁵ Migrants also have organized clubs and organizations to collect resources and push for change in Mexico.

These forces have affected national political alignments (Smith 2003). In the 2000 elections, thousands of migrants and large sums of migrant money backed Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) and Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) opposition to the ruling Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) political party. The PRD's presidential candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, attracted strong support from migrants, as did the eventual winner, the PAN's Vicente Fox (especially through the fundraising organization Amigos de Fox that obtained considerable sums from Mexicans living in the United States). José Guadalupe Gómez, a member of the club Jalpa (an organization devoted to promoting public works in the small Mexican town of Jalpa) and the president of the Federación del Estado de Zacatecas in Southern California, states that migrant remittances

“have revolutionized the way our [i.e., the Mexican] government perceives us” (Wides 2004, 9A).

Obviously, migrant support of anti-PRI candidates can be interpreted as resistance to hegemonic power, but the initial reason for the migration was essentially apolitical: economic betterment. It also should be noted that the powerful PRI also has established organizations of Mexican migrants in the United States to channel migrant remittances into pro-PRI projects (Wides 2004). The future political direction of Mexican migrants is a much-debated but unresolved question (Bakker and Smith n.d.). In any case, the Mexican state has been unable to control the outflow of migrants or the impact of their remittances, political attitudes, and lifestyles on the domestic population (Quiñones 2001). As Gonzalo Arroyo, founder of the Federación Michoacán in Aurora, Illinois, phrases it, “One cannot continue limiting themselves to observing the impact that immigrants have here or there . . . They have begun to work in both worlds” (Wides 2004, 9A). In one especially dramatic case, a candidate for mayor (Andrés Bermúdez, aka *el rey del tomate*, the tomato king) of a small city in Zacatecas was a charismatic, self-made millionaire who had made his fortune in the United States and spent decades away from his hometown (Bakker and Smith n.d.). In that case, there was considerable doubt about whether the candidate was even technically eligible for office because of his long-term residency in the United States and absence from his hometown (Thompson 2004). Bermúdez was eventually declared mayor of Jalpa, Zacatecas, a town of originally twenty-five thousand people, 75 percent of whose residents now reside in the United States.

Indeed, the entire state of Zacatecas in north-central Mexico has been transformed by migration to the United States. Approximately one-half of all Zacatecanos reside in the United States or in other parts of Mexico, a phenomenon that has affected the state at every level from family to village to city. The Zacatecas government, attempting to address new migratory realities, modified state law to officially designate Zacatecas a binational state. New laws also require the election of *diputados migrantes* (migrant representatives) to the state assembly. Leftist governor Amalia García argues that as a consequence of cyclical migration, Zacatecas is developing “*una nueva cultura, una cultura binacional*” (a new culture, a binational culture).

Campbell interviewed one of the two *diputados migrantes*, Román Cabral, whose rags-to-riches life is emblematic of the unpredictable, transformative effects of slantwise migrations. *Diputado* Cabral left his hometown of Valparaíso, Zacatecas, in 1971 in pursuit of a better income and greater opportunities in Chicago. After working without immigration documents in countless service jobs (washing dishes and cars, cleaning yards,

pumping gas, etc.), the resourceful Cabral moved to the Los Angeles area and saved enough capital to start two businesses: a car dealership and a construction company. Cabral got involved with one of the approximately 300 clubs of Zacatecas migrants in the United States (Goldring 2002) and became the general secretary of the federation of Zacatecas clubs in California in the 1990s. In 2004, he was elected to the Zacatecas state congress to represent Zacatecanos residing in the United States, although he considers himself a *residente binacional simultáneo*, a simultaneous binational resident.

Cabral's remarkable life illustrates our argument that zigzagging behavior, while not representing direct, intentional resistance to power, has important but unforeseen political consequences. As a child, Cabral had no intention of leaving Mexico for the United States. He came to work in the United States, dodging *la migra*, out of economic necessity, not as a conscious political strategy. His improved economic fortunes allowed him to reinsert himself into the social networks of his home state. Formerly a poor man, Cabral now could have an impact on the politics of his home state. Yet, back in Zacatecas, Campbell witnessed how the *diputado migrante* struggled to present a political speech in Spanish in front of his more polished Mexican colleagues in the Zacatecas state congress. Cabral was now a man of two countries but not completely at home in either. Likewise, Campbell learned that local, nonmigrant Zacatecanos were somewhat resentful of the growing economic and political influence of their migrant countrymen.

Analytical Discussion

Undocumented migration and irregular colonia settlements along the United States–Mexico border are, as illustrated above, ambiguous phenomena that challenge the simple dichotomization of resistance and domination. From a global perspective, Mexican migration is clearly a systematic process structured by international capital and the policies of the Mexican and United States states. On one hand, it involves the self-supply of labor to the point of production, often under exploitative conditions (although it also may mean leaving behind exploitation or marginalization in the place of origin). It also may mean entering into other relations of exploitation with colonia landlords, money lenders, labor contractors, and even relatives and friends who help the migrant, all of which may be naturalized as relations of mutual aid (Heyman 1998). On the other hand, undocumented crossing involves intentional defiance of the laws and police forces of the United States. One could interpret

this conscious illegal act as transgression of several dominant discourses, including the identification of citizenship with territorial integrity and legality, and behind this, persistent racism against Mexicans (Nevins 2002). Hence, both domination and resistance occur simultaneously. Yet, the migrant may be operating from within a logic and *modus vivendi* we have called *slantwise*, as opposed to intentional resistance.

The reality is that United States migration policy itself is contradictory, with dominant-society forces pressing in both repressive and facilitative directions (Heyman 1998). Categorizing undocumented migration or *colonia* dwelling as either dominated or defiant appears to us to prioritize the concerns and intentions of the dominant society. From the point of view of the migrants and *colonia* residents, the motivation and meaning of their actions may be immediate, personal, and, in our terms, *slantwise* to power, even though migrants basically do know the landscape of domination that they deal with. It is only the consequences or effects that can be described in the language of naturalization or resistance (or in this case, both at the same time). We are not necessarily privileging the *slantwise* intentions over the power effects—indeed, all are important—but rather, we aim to demonstrate the need for more complex models of action *vis-à-vis* power.

That undocumented immigrants sometimes explicitly resist domination illustrates our point by contrast. Christian Zolniski (2003) followed the course of the Justice for Janitors unionization campaign in Silicon Valley, specifically, a group of undocumented Mexican janitors who were subjected to speedup and mistreatment through subcontracting arrangements. These janitors unionized effectively and forced significant improvements in working conditions but retreated from their position of explicit resistance after Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) workplace document checks frightened the Mexican community and brought about an atmosphere of renewed caution. This renewed caution could best be described as avoidance behavior, as discussed above. Weakening the union by avoiding public visibility ostensibly defies the surveillance and migration control of the United States state, but truthfully, it increases the domination imposed by subcontracting systems of labor control. In the case of the migrants and *colonia* residents, then, avoidance of the United States state makes a very poor candidate for labels like transgression or resistance.

The phenomena described here—*slantwise* activities, including zigzagging and so forth—do not replace resistance or naturalization, but rather, add to them in the effort to understand power relations. *Slantwise* itself is a generalization, an ideal type, and should be handled with flexibility and processuality to give it life. As we examine the Mexican-migrant and *colonia*-settlement patterns cases here, for instance, we notice *slantwise* activity occurring when

outsiders enter a new social setting or break radically with an established one.⁶ Perhaps these dynamic developments place people in novel situations where they act based on inherited frameworks of naturalized domination or intentional resistance that no longer carry such implications in the new context. In other words, slantwise may be most marked in situations of change (although that would not be the case when slantwise behavior is used by power elites).

If we follow through on this idea, we are led to an interesting set of questions about slantwise actions over time. One might envision that slantwise actions in early stages of change could emerge into more explicit alternatives having the character of resistance or alternatively could submerge over time into naturalized power routines. This scenario is only one possibility. It allows us, however, to examine the political implications of slantwise action, in particular through Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony (see also Crehan 2002). An astute reader will note that we did not include hegemony under naturalized domination, because the theory of hegemony involves active struggle as well as subjugation. Hegemony is not the same as internalization of power, though they are often confused (e.g., Scott 1985).

Hegemony emerges out of a widely varied set of actions and understandings (common sense) rooted in class experiences and historically accumulated understandings. Some aspects of common sense are, in Gramsci's (1971) terms, "spontaneous" (pp. 198-9); to him, this includes both unplanned resistance and the wider range of what we call slantwise perspectives and actions. This spontaneity is particularly heightened in the periods of change. Common sense is incoherent in itself, but it can be orchestrated into one or another direction of class struggle. Key intellectuals and organs of intellectual formation (media, schools, the military, churches, etc.) make hegemonic formations out of inchoate common sense through broad contests over popular understanding. Building on Gramsci's insights, we can explore how initially fragmented slantwise behaviors and understandings either are orchestrated as more organized resistance or submerged into routinized control. This is a stronger approach to hegemony as political process than seeing it as completely internalized domination with resistance being its polar opposite.

In addition to slantwise phenomena emerging from situations of change (such as migration), this concept also points to the effects on power orders of the persistent incompleteness and incoherence of life (see Murphy 1971). One problem in recent critical social science is a tendency toward oversystematicity, assuming a closed universe in which one either embodies or resists domination, when the social field is actually more open, ambiguous, and creative. Graeber's inspiring manifesto for an anarchist anthropology (2004) suggests that nonstate societies and loosely structured oppositional political forces have

always existed. He laments anthropology's failure to articulate the experiences and politics of self-governing communities despite anthropologists' deep knowledge of egalitarian cultures and historical proximity to anarchist thinking. We share Graeber's concerns yet differ from him in our emphasis on modes of behavior and experience that are not overtly political or antistate, even though they ultimately have political consequences.

Conclusions

As we have seen, colonias and Mexican immigration on and across borders do not neatly fit resistance or domination models. Colonia settlements and Mexican migration patterns often frustrate the United States Census Bureau and other government agencies, as well as political parties in the United States and Mexico. We characterize this nonlinear activity and behavior as slantwise. The zigzagging lives of colonia residents and Mexican migrants epitomize our arguments. Improvising, shifting, and constantly seeking better living conditions on both sides of the United States–Mexico border, migrants and colonia residents feel the effects of power and sometimes oppose it but in general pursue improved conditions in ways that neither directly capitulate nor resist. This way of living may be beneficial to the individuals involved but ultimately a challenge to state bureaucracies that seek to identify and control them.

A limitation of this research is that it lacks historical depth. In the United States, colonias are a relatively recent phenomenon. Future ethnographic studies are needed to evaluate the extent to which they become incorporated into the mainstream United States society or become marginal, subcultural outposts. Likewise, future studies may examine the degree to which Mexican immigrants—whether living in the United States or returning to home communities—continue to impact Mexican domestic politics (and United States national politics) or whether they will have primarily economic and cultural effects.

Our point is neither to embrace totally nor to ignore the study of power (the two extremes between which anthropology and cognate fields have alternated) but to give power its place within the wider study of human culture and to find concepts that help us to bridge the two levels of understanding. The slantwise concept helps us do this and can be fruitfully applied to realms of human experience entailing improvisation, mobility, and obliquity. Important work has addressed power through the binary concepts of domination and resistance, but that framework, while productive, has entered its mature phase and increasingly shows its limitations as ethnographers try heavy-handedly to

label diverse phenomena as either resistance or domination. By moving beyond this binary, we can more effectively study ethnographically diverse, fluid populations in a globalized, transnational world.

Notes

1. Our notion of slantwise concerns social outcomes similar to those Merton (1936) refers to as unanticipated consequences of purposive social action. However, the concept of slantwise does not depend on actions' necessarily having any significant consequences for the social system, although they often do. In this article, we focus on actions that are unintentional within one system, though perhaps intentional within another. This is the case for Mexican migrants engaging in practices that may be customary in Mexico but not the United States and vice versa. It is also relevant to the engagement of actors with multiple systems of power and control within a single society, as, for example, in the case of migrants who may be open and direct in their actions with some aspects of the United States bureaucracy, such as the census, but less direct in dealing with, for example, homeland security.

2. We note that Sykes and Matzka's seminal article (1957) on techniques of neutralization is primarily concerned with how deviant members of one society justify their behaviors within the concepts of that society, whereas in the border context of our study, at least two not entirely commensurable cultural schemes overlap, producing behaviors that might be mainstream in one society (in this case, Mexico) and slantwise in the other (the United States).

3. Two widely used terms, *agency* and *practice*, also merit mention. *Agency* is very general, so that it encompasses but does not point specifically to the oblique action that *slantwise* highlights. *Practice* (Bourdieu 1977; see Ortner 1989) points to fluid performance and gradual transformation of an established structure, which is not the same as the mismatched relation of action and structure to which the term *slantwise* points.

4. This is a pseudonym used to maintain confidentiality. Pseudonyms will be used throughout to refer to the colonia, a nearby town, and colonia residents. Translations from Spanish are by Howard Campbell.

5. This comment was made by Zacatecas Economic Development Secretary Rafael Sescosse on April 14, 2005. His government has been in the vanguard of creating strategies to channel migrant resources and energies back into the home state, such as the three-for-one program in which for each peso invested by migrants in Zacatecas' productive activities and projects the state promises to also invest a peso, as does the affected municipality. This discussion of Zacatecas migrants is based on research conducted by Campbell in April 2005.

6. In one sense, the United States and Mexico form a single social system linked by processes of combined and uneven development, including migration, but at the experiential level with which we are concerned, they remain quite different social settings.

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