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978-1-107-03497-6 - Social Resilience in the Neoliberal Era

Edited by Peter A. Hall and Michèle Lamont

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Social Resilience in the Neoliberal Era

What is the impact of three decades of neoliberal narratives and policies on communities and individual lives? What are the sources of social resilience? This book offers a sweeping assessment of the effects of neoliberalism, the dominant feature of our times. It analyzes the ideology in unusually wide-ranging terms as a movement that not only opened markets but also introduced new logics into social life, integrating macro-level analyses of how neoliberal narratives made their way into international policy regimes with micro-level analyses of how individuals responded to the challenges of the neoliberal era. The book introduces the concept of social resilience and explores how communities, social groups, and nations sustain their well-being in the face of such challenges. The product of ten years of collaboration among a distinguished group of scholars, it integrates institutional and cultural analysis to understand neoliberalism as a syncretic social process and to explore the sources of social resilience across communities in the developed and developing worlds.

Peter A. Hall is Krupp Foundation Professor of European Studies at Harvard University, where he has also served at various times as director of the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, director of Graduate Studies in Government, and associate dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. He is co-director of the Successful Societies Program for the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research. He is an editor of *Changing France: The Politics that Markets Make*; *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage*; *The Political Power of Economic Ideas: Keynesianism across Nations*; *Developments in French Politics I and II*; and *European Labor in the 1980s* and the author of *Governing the Economy*, which won the Woodrow Wilson Award for the best book in political science published in 1986. He has published more than eighty articles on European politics and public policymaking and comparative political economy and serves on the editorial boards of many scholarly journals and on advisory boards at Sciences Po, Paris; the Free University of Berlin; and the University of Birmingham.

Michèle Lamont is a Fellow of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research and is co-director of its research program on Successful Societies. She taught at Princeton University for fifteen years before moving to Harvard in 2003. She has published on the topics of inequality, culture, race, immigration, knowledge, theory, qualitative methods, and comparative sociology. She is the author of more than eighty articles and a dozen books and edited volumes, including *How Professors Think: Inside the Curious World of Academic Judgment*; *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration* (winner of the C. Wright Mills Award from the Society for the Study of Social Problems); and *Money, Morals and Manners: The Culture of the French and the American Upper-Middle Class*. Past responsibilities include chair of the Council for European Studies (2005–2009) and senior advisor on Faculty Development and Diversity, Faculty of the Arts and Sciences, Harvard (2008–2010).

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*This book is dedicated to Chaviva Hošek – visionary for a
better society.*

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Peter A. Hall is Krupp Foundation Professor of European Studies at the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies and a faculty member in the Department of Government at Harvard University as well as co-director of the Program on Successful Societies for the CIFAR. His publications include *Successful Societies* (with Michèle Lamont), *Varieties of Capitalism* (with David Soskice), and more than eighty articles on politics and policymaking in Europe.

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Child Development, Cambridge, 2011) integrates research across multiple disciplines in developmental science. His research program focuses on the connections between population developmental health and underlying developmental and biodevelopmental mechanisms.

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Michèle Lamont is the Robert I. Goldman Professor of European Studies and professor of sociology and African and African American Studies at Harvard University. She is also a Fellow of the CIFAR, where she co-directs the Program on Successful Societies. Her recent research concerns the cultural dimensions of inequality, the transformation of racial and ethnic boundaries, everyday responses to stigmatization, definitions of excellence in higher education, and evaluation processes.

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organizational and social psychological perspective. In particular, she examines the interplay among prejudice, discrimination, inequality, and beliefs about meritocracy as well as their consequences for well-being and social policy attitudes.

Ann Swidler is professor of sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. Her most recent book is *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters* (University of Chicago Press, 2001). Her current research explores how culture shapes institutions by analyzing global and local responses to the AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa.

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Foreword

Alan Bernstein

The Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR) brings together some of the world's most extraordinary thinkers to form global research networks that frame and answer important questions for humanity at the frontiers of human knowledge.

Most often, these exciting questions lie at the boundaries between disciplines. Accordingly, CIFAR research networks are deliberately made up of a diverse array of exceptional individuals who work together in an environment that encourages collegiality, collaboration, respect, trust, meaningful engagement, and vigorous debate and discussion.

Today, CIFAR's global research networks are addressing some of the most interesting and pressing questions of our time. Their work has the potential to improve human health and the environment, transform technology, build strong societies, understand human culture, and chart the universe. The results are as unpredictable as they are exciting, leading to new ways of thinking and addressing central questions that confront humanity.

CIFAR has three programs that fall under the theme of Building Strong Societies. Researchers in these programs are creating new frameworks to understand how our economies, institutions, and communities are best structured to serve their citizens. Their work is intended to inform and guide political and economic leaders around the world in setting new policies to improve the quality of human life.

The research in CIFAR's Building Strong Societies cluster is especially relevant today as movements such as the Arab Spring, the Occupy Movement, and the 2012 student protests in Québec grab international headlines. The twentieth century witnessed extraordinary improvements in living standards around the world, yet disparities within countries and between nations continue to grow, threatening to undermine the very progress that has been achieved over the past few generations.

Within this cluster, CIFAR's Program in Successful Societies unites epidemiologists, economists, sociologists, historians, political scientists, philosophers,

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psychologists, lawyers, criminologists, and geographers. Together, they are shedding new light on how social and cultural processes intertwine to advance or limit a society's collective well-being.

Most recently, these researchers in Canada and the United States have been studying two interconnected questions: How have three decades of intensified market competition changed people's life situations, group identities, and concepts of themselves? How has their capacity for social resilience allowed them to respond to new policy regimes based on neoliberal ideals?

This book shares their collective and intensive investigation into these questions. Combining two approaches that are usually divided by disciplines, this book provides a unique and deep understanding of the cultural frameworks within which groups create meaning in societies, integrated with analyses of the institutional frameworks shaping key social, economic, and political outcomes.

Social Resilience in the Neoliberal Era offers new ways of understanding the sweeping, long-term effect of neoliberal policies and the sources for social resilience as a creative and evolving response. From Africa to France to Canada and the United States, these essays provide a broad historical and geographical context and deep cultural analysis.

CIFAR's Program in Successful Societies was inspired by the accomplishments of CIFAR's programs in Population Health and Human Development, which concluded in 2003. These programs significantly advanced our understanding of social and economic determinants of health and how early childhood experiences affect well-being throughout life.

CIFAR's Program in Successful Societies picked up where these programs left off – to better understand the roots of social inequalities and the role of social, economic, and cultural institutions in fostering well-being.

In 2009, program members published their first collective volume titled *Successful Societies: How Institutions and Culture Affect Health*. The book offered new perspectives on inequalities in well-being. Stressing the contribution that institutional practices and cultural repertoires make to population health, the book explored issues of health and human development from multiple perspectives. This earlier volume laid a solid foundation upon which this most recent book has evolved.

I would like to congratulate all of the members of CIFAR's Program in Successful Societies on this landmark volume. In particular, I would like to recognize the extraordinary leadership that Peter A. Hall and Michèle Lamont, both of Harvard University, have provided as co-directors of CIFAR's Program in Successful Societies. Together, they have ensured that the very best of each program member informs the collective work of research, vigorous discussion, and the development of new frameworks of understanding that have the potential to inform real social change.

I also thank CIFAR's exceptional community of individuals; foundations; corporations; the Government of Canada; and the provincial governments of Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario. Most notably, I would like to express my appreciation to the Alva Foundation, BMO Financial Group, and Max

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Bell Foundation, which provide designated support to CIFAR's Program in Successful Societies.

Together, the nearly 400 researchers at 103 institutions in sixteen countries who make up CIFAR's networks are creating the knowledge that leads to entirely new understandings of the world we live in. Such insights and discoveries will inevitably enrich all of our lives.

Dr. Alan Bernstein, O.C., FRSC
President and CEO
Canadian Institute for Advanced Research
June 2012

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Prologue

Jonathan Arac

This extraordinary volume arises from a remarkable matrix, the Successful Societies Program (SSP) of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR). Since its founding in the 1980s, CIFAR has been committed to cutting-edge, long-term collaborative projects, which have helped to form new objects of knowledge and fields of research. The SSP itself arose from the intersection of two long-term CIFAR programs, one in population health and one in human development. Between the macro scale of demography and the micro scale of ontogeny, researchers realized there was a missing piece: call it society. Over several years of exploratory meetings and debates led by the president of CIFAR, Chaviva Hošek, this group of distinguished, innovative scholars emerged. They're a team of academic X-Men: each has a special super-power, and together they work wonders.

Their second collaborative book charts the contours of neoliberalism in relation to the issue of social resilience. The capacity to bounce back from trauma helps to define a society's success, but this book distinguishes itself because it focuses not on the larger unit but on the well-being of the individuals who comprise it, not simply the capacity of a state to maintain its power, which has too often been a default definition.

The SSP, under the leadership of this volume's editors, Peter A. Hall and Michèle Lamont, has gathered a group of scholars so diverse in their specializations that it might have seemed impossible to form a truly interactive conversation: criminology, cultural sociology, developmental psychology, epidemiology, history, political economy, political philosophy, political science, political sociology, social psychology, and urban geography. CIFAR's commitment to blue-sky exploration, with no obligation to deliverables, allowed for years of open conversation, in which the members of the group learned each other's perspectives, grasped and advanced the problematics and skills associated with their colleagues, and gained confidence that distinguished senior scholars could bring their work to new levels by joining other similarly

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distinguished, but differently skilled, researchers in a collaboration with no predefined goals.

What would we mean by a “successful society”? Scale defines one problem area: as Keynes memorably insisted, “In the long run we are all dead.” From the point of view of the universe, we know that before our sun is extinguished, it will expand to a giant that consumes the planet Earth, so no society will look very successful from that perspective. Was the Roman Empire successful? Perhaps yes, until it declined and fell. The scale, then, must be relatively short term, and success is never absolute, only relative. By what measure do we call some societies more successful than others? The SSP collaborators look beyond the most common current metric of social success, the growth of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. Studies of population health had demonstrated that after a certain point, increases in GDP do not lead to better results for life expectancy or health, as the United States demonstrates. Further studies had suggested that levels of social equality more sensitively correlated with changes in mortality and morbidity: the more equal, the better health. As the art critic and radical economic thinker John Ruskin argued in the nineteenth century, “The only wealth is life.”

For their first book, then, *Successful Societies: How Institutions and Culture Affect Health* (2009), the SSP group undertook to explore social success using health and well-being as relatively uncontroversial measures of success. Not all cultures at all times have agreed that long life and health override other measures of success. The classical Greek myths of Achilles and Hercules, for instance, both tell of young men who choose lives that are short but glorious, giving up the chance for a longer life without glory. Such aristocratic values do not suit our democratic sensibilities, but the cases illustrate the difficulty of reaching any simple consensus. Yet the SSP stands with Achilles and Hercules in one crucial respect: even though the group works with population-level data, the measure of success registers in the lives of individual human beings. It is not “the society” that succeeds by successfully reproducing itself, so that a system of governance or a religion or a set of stated values persists over time. Rather, societies succeed insofar as they afford individual people opportunities for better lives.

This new book on “resilience” likewise focuses on the possibilities for fruitful, active lives by individuals. Social resilience does not mean that a society faces challenges and recovers unchanged nor that it is better to be as little changed as possible. The methodological and the evaluative focus falls on persons even when viewed collectively for analytic purposes. This collaborative project operates within a liberal scheme of value. As the collaborators argue, liberal values have persisted without having been incorporated into neoliberalism. Social resilience contributes to successful societies by making it more possible for the people living in societies to lead good lives despite the challenges posed by a newly overriding emphasis on the market.

This volume performs a remarkable feat with the buzzword “neoliberalism.” It cleans up the term and also makes it more interesting. The term is generally

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used by those who oppose it. People do not call themselves neoliberal; instead, they tag their enemies with the term. The contributors definitely think that the neoliberal age, starting in the later 1970s, has posed severe challenges, but they make the term descriptively analytic. Evans and Sewell, for example, locate the term in four areas: in technical economics, as a political ideology, as a guide for policy, and as a “social imaginary.” Even those who know nothing of the technical arguments of Milton Friedman may believe that whatever a government does, it does inefficiently or, more largely, that an entrepreneur always does more for others than does a bureaucrat. This book does not argue that the economic theorists have defined an essence of neoliberalism that then expresses itself ever more widely and diffusely through three further phases. No simple chronological or causal relationship holds among these four aspects. This perspective on the key conception that the book addresses explains what Hall and Lamont, in their Introduction, mean by characterizing neoliberalism as a “syncretic process.” The term *neoliberalism* brings together divergent practices and meanings, which require exploration by distinct techniques. In the now quaint language of Freud, this would be called “overdetermined,” like a neurotic symptom. This book assembles worthy analysts to tease apart the layers and to delineate the new possibilities for life that show through.

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This volume is the result of an interdisciplinary collaboration among a group of fifteen scholars who met three times a year over a ten-year period to develop shared questions and original ways to address them. Our goal was to tackle problems on the research frontier that are not readily tractable using the analytical tools of a single discipline. *Social Resilience in the Neoliberal Age* is our second collective endeavor and it builds on our first, published in 2009 by Cambridge University Press as *Successful Societies: How Institutions and Culture Affect Health*.

None of this work would have been possible without the material and moral support of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR) and its president, Chaviva Hošek, who has been an unwavering champion of the Program on Successful Societies since its inception. On the landscape of research foundations, CIFAR stands out for its unique vision and ability to bring together large interdisciplinary teams to shape new domains of human and scientific inquiry. We have been fortunate to be able to work with the Institute's administrative team, Pekka Sinervo, Denis Thérien, and Penny Coddling. Along the way, Sue Schenk, CIFAR's program director, has offered unique guidance, and as program coordinator, Susan Leclaire has efficiently facilitated many of our meetings. At Harvard, Travis Clough provided crucial support for our collaborative work.

We thank the members of our advisory committee, Peter Gourevitch, Danielle Juteau, Biju Rao, and Richard Simeon, as well as its chair, Jonathan Arac, for important intellectual contributions and sage advice as this book developed. We also benefited from the comments of the junior Fellows in the program. Two are contributors to this volume, Marcos Ancelovici and Arjumand Siddiqi, and the others are Josh Evans, Chris McLeod, and Nathan Fosse. Three scholars took time from busy schedules to provide feedback on sizable portions of the manuscript: Nitsan Chorev, Richard Fantasia, and Carol Greenhouse. We thank them, as well as the reviewers who read the book for Cambridge University Press. We have benefited greatly from their insights. We

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are also deeply grateful to all the colleagues from a wide range of disciplines, countries, and institutions who discussed their work at program meetings as this book was taking shape. They will find traces of their ideas and comments throughout the pages of this volume. Many of those presentations inspired defining moments in this collaboration. For shepherding this work to publication, we are also grateful to the efficient team at Cambridge University Press and, in particular, to Lew Bateman, a great editor.

Last but not least, we want to acknowledge our *compagnons de route*, the members of this research program who have been an exceptional source of stimulation and a unique long-distance intellectual community for the past ten years. To all: thank you!