

Multiculturalism

by Valentina Farías

I. Introduction:

Multiculturalism implies the social integration of the diverse ethnic groups which form a society; multicultural societies are those in which minorities have their own place and where governmental programs promote their integration (as for example in Canada).

Therefore, I would also like to make reference in this article to other concepts that must necessarily be differentiated from Multiculturalism: that is, the notions of Pluriculturality, Cross Culturality and Interculturality.

2. Pluriculturality – Identity

Presently, most societies are formed by more than one population group giving rise to the phenomenon of “Pluriculturality”; thus, this notion might be defined as the coexistence of two or more population groups in a society.

All over the world the phenomena concerned with Pluriculturality are the result of diverse ethnical movements:

These movements can be traced throughout history. Taking the case of nomad tribes, we can see that sometimes these tribes forged links with other groups while migrating to another region. Other instances were also the wars and invasions between different bands or tribes that resulted not only in cultural influence but in the inclusion of different population elements as happened with the Inca invasion to Chile or the European colonists who left their descendants in the new territories, mainly of Spanish origin in Latin America and English in North America. Some settlements of sedentary native people have remained in their traditional

homeland, like the case of the Inuit in Canada or the Mapuche in the rural areas of Chile, among others. But other times these First Nations were forced to move to other locations, like the Cree Reserve in Canada, or perhaps their members were even separated from their families and communities and were relocated in far off regions that had different ecosystems and climate.

In addition to these phenomena, there were migrations (either individual or collective through agreements between governments, as in the case of Italy with Argentina, or spontaneous) and wars.

Thus, as a result of all these movements, societies take shape.

Variations throughout history and times make Pluriculturalism a dynamic phenomenon.

When talking about the pluricultural constituents of a particular society or region one is describing the “parts” that form it. However, this description is not very simple because in all cases it requires an “ethnic” identity in addition to the identity conferred by nationality.

In Argentina, under the same nationality there coexist population groups of very different origins, cultures, locations, aims and problems. Sometimes these groups share more features with populations of other countries (with neighbouring countries, as in the case of the Koyas) than with their own conationals.

Ethnic identity makes it easier to visualize these different groups, simplifying the understanding of their needs. However, identities are not always present; sometimes because they were hidden and in other occasions due to the passage of generations and the ethnic intermingling.

Presently, native groups are reassuming their ancient identity, particularly in rural areas as in the case of the Mapuche and Aymará communities and

others, in Chile. On the other hand this tendency is not common in urban areas or when there has already been ethnical intermingling.

At the turn of the XIX century in Canada and the U.S.A., Native populations were relocated in closed communities called Reserves or Reservations. In such cases the indigenous identity was kept alive within the Reservation's boundaries.

The descendants of the people coming to the Americas at the time of the Conquest and afterwards became the major ethnic group in the "conquered" countries. In this way, the dominant population group in U.S.A. and Canada is formed by British descendants, whereas the native peoples of these countries constitute minority groups. The same is true for Latin America as concerns the Spanish descendants and our native peoples.

Those immigrants coming from Europe after the Civil Wars and World Wars wanted to "hacerse la América" (make it big in the Americas). The "New World" dazzled them, its riches and potentialities appeared immense as compared with those of a war-devastated Europe. They wanted to forget about war, poverty, hunger; they wanted to become citizens of that new land.

In Argentina, immigrants wanted to obtain "Argentine citizenship" and learn Spanish language to be included as soon as possible in the community. Then, they would be able to establish relationships with the other members of society.

They did not talk much with their children about their homeland and in the majority of cases there was no transmission of the mother tongue.

Immigrants wanted their children to become real Argentines and to speak just Spanish. This first Argentine generation was, in many cases, a generation touched not only by the trauma of the war in which their parents had been involved, but by the migration, the blurred identity and the so called "family secrets". Other disturbing factors were the sense of remoteness, the loss of any connection and even of family members that remained in the ancestral country or that perhaps had migrated to other

lands of hope. These phenomena entailed a considerable number of mental illness cases in the first generation of Argentines.

The majority of the families of post-war immigrants tended to unite and mix with other immigrants, whether they were compatriots or immigrants from other countries and also with the native population, a process which gave rise to the so called “melting pot”, a specific feature of our country. However, there were ethnical groups that remained quite apart from the rest like the Germans, Jews, Turks, Chinese and Japanese, who tended to keep their cultural roots, interrelating and interacting within their own group. In those cases there was an effective transmission of their mother tongue.

Immigrants coming from neighbouring countries in search of work intermingled freely within their own group. They became the poor minorities and were frequently marginalized and excluded. In some instances, like in the case of the “Gran Buenos Aires” (suburban Buenos Aires) area, migrants from the North and other Argentine regions joined in, also searching work and a better life.

As generations passed, the “Argentine” identity prevailed in most cases over the “ethnical identity”, making it difficult to specify the present pluricultural constitution of our societies.

However, native peoples as well as immigrants’ descendants are returning to their own roots. This process and their new identification is now taking place.

In Argentina, since the Constitutional Reform of 1994 native peoples began to reassume their origins and culture, recovering their lost identity. This process progressed slowly at first, because it was difficult for them to identify themselves with a marginalized part of the population, whose culture had been “aborted” a century before. However, the organization of native associations brought people together and gradually they began to emerge, to make themselves known.

Indigenous organizations urge people to identify themselves as natives not only in national census but in every other occasion and to manifest that they want to be recognized as a population with cultural identity. Thus they would be in a position to demand their lands back, the implementation of intercultural educational, health and justice programs, among other claims.

Presently, the European immigrant descendants have the possibility of obtaining “double citizenship”, that is, the Argentine by birth and the European one, inherited from their ancestors.

Some countries, like Italy, have created a Department for the compatriots living abroad (immigrants and descendants bearing the double citizenship) so that they may enjoy some rights, as for example voting in Italian elections while living in a far off country.

As a result of all these movements, when nowadays we talk about Pluriculturality in our country we are making reference to the cultural “blend” which emerged as time passed, and in some cases, we refer to differentiated ethnical groups, or in process of differentiation.

3. Cross culturality

My approach concerning the notion of Cross Culturality takes as frame of reference the one developed by J. W. Berry, Kingston University, Canada. This author considers the phenomenon in two spheres: the individual and the collective, analyzing the psychological and social level.

According to his definition there is cross-culturation when groups of individuals have continual and direct contact, with subsequent changes in the cultural patterns in one or in both groups (1).

The author establishes differences between Cross culturation and Cultural Change, for the latter is just an aspect of the first (1).

Cross culturation is defined according to its dynamics, in which we can see a selective adaptation of the value system (1).

Thus, the process of Cross Culturation comprehends the contact between two or more populations. One which originally lives in the territory and the second which arrives, as a consequence of wars, conquests, modification of borders, migration, and other factors.

In line with Berry's theoretical frame, the outcome of such contact may originally be: Integration, Assimilation, Segregation or Marginalization.

Those populations already inhabiting the American Continent before the arrival of Cristóbal Colón were the indigenous peoples. The advent of the white man brought about this continual and direct contact. But, the conquerors had no intention of taking cultural elements from the natives. They rather took their lands and riches and at the same time excluded native populations and imposed their western culture. In keeping with Berry's scheme, we can see that the Dominated Population was the indigenous one, while the new inhabitants were the Dominating counterpart. The selective adaptation of the value system was imposed by the dominating population and it did not hesitate in stigmatizing as "pagan" the native religious beliefs, which had to be changed by the Christian faith. Likewise, native customs were not accepted and natives were labelled "savages". Even some Europeans doubted if natives were really "human beings". *It would clearly constitute an example of Assimilation of the original cultural to the dominating culture.*

This first cross cultural phenomenon was followed by other actions imposed by the European monarchies and later on after the emergence of the nation-states, by the different national governments. Still, all these processes were in the same line, that is, to abolish the native culture and impose the western culture with the aim of "conquering". Altogether, it was a phenomenon imposed and controlled by the newcomers. It was neither desired nor sought by the receiving population. The result was *Assimilation*.

However, the Cross Culturation phenomenon occurred as a consequence of immigration to the Americas during the period that goes from the end of the XIX century to the post-IIWW times, is more complex and presents a wide range of possibilities that have to be analyzed by separate.

These immigrations were generally collective, formed by family groups that could not or found it very hard to survive in their own country. We do not observe here a conquest aim. Immigration “grew out of necessity”, from the need to sustain their own lives. The “New Land” appeared as the answer and solution to those lives devastated by war and hunger, as the place where to live “with dignity”. This is the reason why most of the immigration waves of that period sought adaptation and integration but not imposition.

In Argentina, in the Gran Buenos Aires, immigrants frequently settled in the same neighbourhoods as other compatriots with whom they interacted. It is a well-known fact the high percentage of Italian-origin people in “la Boca”, or Germans in “Villa Martelli”, the settlement of Jew tradesmen in the “Once” urban area, the Chinese neighbourhoods, just to mention a few examples.

In the interior of the country, groups of immigrant families sometimes formed “colonies”. That is the case of some colonies in the province of Córdoba, most of them of Italian origin, where the old-time traditions and customary gastronomy have been kept. Some of these colonies even have their own characteristic festivities, as for example in the city of Luque where every year the “Piamontesa Family Festival” takes place. For many days people celebrate with music, dancing and exquisite food, paying homage to the first Italian immigrants that arrived to that region (2) (3). Also in Córdoba we find the “Colonia Caroya” formed by immigrants from the Friuli, a location renowned for the manufacturing of cold cuts and appetizers (4).

In these cases their culture and values were preserved due to the direct relationship of immigrants with compatriots; however there was also a regular interaction with the exterior. *Here we may talk about Integration.* German colonies in the Provinces of Entre Ríos and Misiones and others, are also well known. Among them there is a particular colony, “La

Cumbrecita” in Córdoba, which was formed by the survivors from the German submarine Graf Spee at the end of the IIWW. The colony always kept itself apart from the rest, *and here we can talk of Segregation.*

In Argentine Patagonia there was an example of integration between the Tehuelche people from the province of Chubut and the Welsh immigrants, who afterwards formed Welsh colonies in said province.

The Welsh people arrived in our country after a “diaspora” occurred in Wales around 1860-1865. Unlike other migrations, Welsh people migrated only to few places in the world. Among those places they settled in our Patagonia. When these immigrants arrived to this region, a place completely different from their own country, they met the Tehuelche. The Tehuelche knew thoroughly the environment they lived in and were well-adapted to it. The “novelties” brought by the Welsh people aroused the interest of the Tehuelche and gave rise to interchange and integration.

After the “Campana del Desierto” (Desert’s Campaign) in which the native populations were attacked and defeated by the Argentine Army, the Welsh people settled in colonies. As many inter-racial marriages between the newcomers and the Tehuelche had taken place, colonies were no longer of pure Welsh origin. However, these particular settlements have kept their traditions and also interchange with Wales. The Eistedvodd is yearly celebrated in Trevellin (Welsh colony nearby the city of Esquel).

4. Multiculturalism

Canada defines itself as a multicultural country.

Multiculturalism began in Canada in the 60s. During this decade the country was seeking “national unity” due to regional, language and ethnical problems that had emerged in Québec. (6)

In 1971, the existing cultural diversity in the country gave rise to the institutionalization of Multicultural Policies. (6) Besides many documents supporting these policies, in 1988 the Canadian government passed the Multiculturalism Act to preserve and enhance the multicultural character of the country. (7)

The official languages are English and French. According to the Official Languages Act of 1969 Canada recognizes itself as a bilingual country.

(6)

These facts denote recognition of the diversity of languages and cultures, for Canada is a bilingual and multicultural country.

The aboriginal populations of Canada are constituted by the First Nations, the Inuit and the Métis.

The First Nations are the native ethnical groups that inhabited this part of North America. Those peoples were in many cases linked to the ones that live in the nowadays territory of the United States. More than 200 different ethnical indigenous groups are recognised in Canada.

At the end of the XIX century, native populations were relocated in Indian Reservations. These were frequently very far from the original area, placed in remote regions, where the ecological conditions were not favourable for the Reservation development.

Evangelization entailed subsequent phenomena of cross cultururation, the imposition of stay-in schools and family fragmentation.

Identities were disintegrated and native culture, which was always transmitted through oral tradition, began to be written by the evangelists, in cuneiform and syllabic script.

Thus, the indigenous identity was damaged even within the Reservations. Natives' descendants migrating to urban areas suffered even more deeply this loss of identity.

The Inuit are the denominated Eskimo groups, who according to anthropological theories came to America crossing the Bering Strait when the continent was separated from the rest. Their culture differs from that of the First Nations. They inhabit the North territory of Canada and the Artic.

In 1999 Canada created the territory of Nunavut, an Inuit state with political autonomy.

The Métis descend from the racial intermingling of the abovementioned native groups and white men. They live in Reservations and have a specific culture.

Both France and England established colonies in Canada, while Québec remained French (French-speaking Canada) the rest of the country is English-speaking.

In Canada there have been high immigration flows from every point of the globe.

Specifically, immigration increased since the post-IIWW period, extending throughout the country's territory. In some spots there exists higher immigration of certain groups, as for example the Italians in Toronto and the Koreans in British Columbia.

Canada's "ethnic mosaic" has a similar conformation as Argentina's. It results from the combination of native population, colonists and immigration.

Still, which would be the difference between the state policies of both countries?

Argentina tends to "homogenize" its population by means of the Argentine citizenship. This circumstance also allows all foreign people coming to the country to obtain citizenship. Still, we see that there are no governmental programs giving response to the resulting ethnic or cultural identity "atomization". Initiatives in that direction come from individuals, indigenous associations, and other groups.

In terms of immigration policies, even allowing people to obtain citizenship in some cases, Canada's actions are not grounded in the "homogenization of ethnic identities" but in the respect for diversity. This approach is consistent with the implementation of Multicultural Policies.

The following is a partial transcription of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988 (for the complete text refer to web site:

www.canadaespañol.com./multiculturalismo.htm)

(...)

AND WHEREAS the Constitution of Canada recognizes the importance of preserving and enhancing the multicultural heritage of Canadians;

AND WHEREAS the Constitution of Canada recognizes rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada;

AND WHEREAS the Constitution of Canada and the *Official Languages Act* provide that English and French are the official languages of Canada and neither abrogates nor derogates from any rights or privileges acquired or enjoyed with respect to any other language;

(...)

AND WHEREAS Canada is a party to the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, which Convention recognizes that all human beings are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law against any discrimination, (...) and to the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, which Covenant provides that persons belonging to ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities shall not be denied the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion or to use their own language;

(...) NOW, THEREFORE, Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada, enacts as follows: ...)

Multiculturalism policy

3. (1) It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to

(a) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage;

(b) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity and that it provides an invaluable resource in the shaping of Canada's future;

- (c) promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to that participation;
- (d) recognize the existence of communities whose members share a common origin and their historic contribution to Canadian society, and enhance their development;
- (e) ensure that all individuals receive equal treatment and equal protection under the law, while respecting and valuing their diversity;
- (f) encourage and assist the social, cultural, economic and political institutions of Canada to be both respectful and inclusive of Canada's multicultural character;
- (g) promote the understanding and creativity that arise from the interaction between individuals and communities of different origins;
- (h) foster the recognition and appreciation of the diverse cultures of Canadian society and promote the reflection and the evolving expressions of those cultures;
- (i) preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French, while strengthening the status and use of the official languages of Canada; and
- (j) advance multiculturalism throughout Canada in harmony with the national commitment to the official languages of Canada.

Some examples of Multicultural Policies in Canada

-Cooperation Agreements between Canada and the Aboriginal Peoples for the conservation, promotion and revitalization of native languages.

These actions include the idea of using native languages in communities' schools. These agreements comprehend the territories of Yukon, Nunavut and other Northwest territories and were proposed by the governments of Yukon, Nunavut and the territories of the NW. (8)

-Agreements on programs and policies concerning Copyrights, and guidelines for foreign investments in cultural industries that may encourage manifestations of Canadian culture. Promoted by the Federal Government. (9)

-A framework for the Canadian Cultural Diversity approach; it begins pointing out the impact of Globalization and declaring that the cultural diversity of societies constitute a considerable resource in terms of creativity and innovation stimulus.

-Canada plans to: put into practice programs on social security and participation in civic life, foster the expression of Cultural Diversity in society, create prosperity in a society with global information and address the specific needs of the developing world. The "Department of Canadian Heritage" through the International Relations and Policy Development Directorate is the first responsible before the Federal Government for the coordination and advancement of Canadian perspectives in the international dialogue within the context of a globalized world.

-On April 14 – 15, 2004 the International Committee on Public Education organized a Multicultural Program denominated "Serving Canada's Multicultural Population: Practical Approaches for Public Servants". This event was designed to provide to those functionaries that make policies and development schemes and that also implement official programs, some tools to address the concerns of the multicultural population of Canada. The work focused on the current multicultural, ethnic, religious and racial conditions in Canada, the ever-increasing cultural diversity, as well as the available resources to improve the services for the multicultural population. The information obtained is essential to incorporate multiculturalism in the development and implementation of

official programs and policies. Participants from several departments and federal agencies in a number of 152 attended the event.

-New Policies and Funds for musicians and for recording.

- The Northern Native Broadcast Access Program: Its aim is to provide funding and assistance to the production of radio and television programs in native languages that may reflect aboriginal culture, community issues, their concerns and other current topics.

-Official Languages Program designed to promote Linguistic Duality.

-Multipurpose Center for Aboriginal Youths: Its aim is to create an urban and multipurpose network for developing youth programs. The program provides to urban aboriginal youths projects, counselling, and other services, based on their culture and communities. It also facilitates its participation in pre-existent programs in order to improve their personal, social and economic development.

-Cross Cultural Health Programs implemented in Reservations as well as in urban centers.

These are only some of the many examples that we can find. The understanding of Diversity and Multiculturalism in areas such as Aboriginal Affairs, Anti-racism, Human Rights, Multiculturalism, Official Languages, and Women are essential. This point shows the connection between Cultural Diversity and Human Rights. Thus, Multiculturalism appears not only as the answer to the pluricultural composition of Canada, but as a true component of human respect.

5. Interculturality

Interculturality is understood as the discipline that comprises the perspectives, visions and actions between two or more peoples of different

origins, with the aim of living in harmony and benefiting from the situation.

At present, the countries of the Americas are trying to put into practice Educational, Health and Justice Intercultural Programs.

Still, Interculturality can be further applied to other issues.

One of the most frequent issues connected to Aboriginal Peoples is the claim to traditional lands. In the majority of cases these claims are worked out “politically” and do not address the real aboriginal rights to lands.

I have selected a case in which the resolution of a claim over the territory of James Bay is settled through an Intercultural action. The same highlights how Interculturality can work in problem solving. The original text, from which I have made a summary, can be consulted:

In a particularly interesting article, “James Bay: An Indigenous Region” (10), H. Peter Dörrenbächer describes this triadic region at the same time Indigenous, Quebecois and Canadian. It is hoped that the actual agreement can be implemented, respecting the triadic character of the population involved and serving as an operative model to be employed throughout Canada.

The first agreement between Canadians of European origin and Canadians of the First Nations, which was indeed the first of this type, was signed in 1975.

Taking into account that James Bay is an Indigenous Region (both Cree and Inuit), the following issues were analyzed: forms of territorial organization and restrictions to indigenous rights to autonomy; indigenous institutions; traditional school; control and preservation of traditional hunting and fishing; transport network managed by indigenous people; indigenous news media; the symbols of the indigenous territories; the existence of an indigenous territorial-social identity; the role and effectiveness of indigenous organizations.

Considering that James Bay is a Quebecois Region, we see that those territories are under the jurisdiction of Québec since 1898 – 1912. It has its own companies, like Hydro-Quebec and many big infrastructure enterprises which were developed in cooperation with companies acquired by the Province, as for example enterprises for road building, airports, telecommunications, and others. Therefore, the North part of Québec was included in the administrative territorial structure of the Province of Québec.

However, it would have been a mistake to characterize this region as an ordinary territory in the Province of Québec since the Cree from James Bay are, from the political point of view, organized as an NGO.

James Bay: a Triadic Region. Synthesis: James Bay Region can be characterized as an Indigenous Region provided that the indigenous population accepts the fact that at the same time it is a Quebecois and Canadian Region. On the other hand, Canada and Québec can further develop their official policies, provided that indigenous regional interests are respected and that such policies contribute to the protection of their culture and way of life.

The author adds that at that time the agreement was a crucial step for the negotiations among the three parties, and that now it has to be adapted to fit the demographical changes of the last years.

6. *In concluding*

I would like to clarify to all those who read articles in English that the term “Acculturation” is not always used in its real meaning. Frequently it is used for “Cross Culturation”.

These are, in my opinion, the basic notions of Multiculturalism as well as the notions of Pluriculturalism, Cross Culturality and Interculturality, which I hope might be helpful as reference for your works.

7. *References*

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