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Grado en Estudios Ingleses

TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

Social Diversity in the United States: from Melting Pot and
Multiculturalism to the New Mestiza

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2016-2017

ABSTRACT

This work focuses on the cultural diversity of the United States, in particular on the three main theories that have been developed on this issue: the Melting Pot, Multiculturalism, and the New Mestiza. The objective of this study is to explore in detail the evolution of these social theories or conceptions and the differences among them. In order to achieve this objective, the methodology used consists on the compilation and organization of data from different sources, especially from two detailed studies: *The Opening of the American Mind*, by Lawrence W. Levine, and *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, by Gloria Anzaldúa. The results show that these theories originated in the social diversity present in the United States, and that the evolution from one theory to another resulted from the need to complement or replace the previous ideals, and that they present many differences.

Key words: United States, society, Melting Pot, Multiculturalism, New Mestiza

Este trabajo se ha centrado en la diversidad cultural de los Estados Unidos, particularmente en las tres teorías más importantes que se han desarrollado en torno a este asunto: el Melting Pot, el Multiculturalismo, y la New Mestiza. El objetivo del estudio ha sido profundizar en la evolución de estas teorías o concepciones sociales y las diferencias que presentan entre ellas. Para ello se ha usado una metodología de compilación de datos de diferentes fuentes, principalmente de dos libros: *The Opening of the American Mind*, de Lawrence W. Levine, y *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, de Gloria Anzaldúa. Los resultados han mostrado que el origen de estas teorías fue la diversidad social estadounidense, que la evolución de unas a otras se ha dado por la necesidad de complementar o sustituir los ideales anteriores, y que estas presentan muchas diferencias.

Palabras clave: Estados Unidos, sociedad, Melting Pot, Multiculturalismo, New Mestiza

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Introduction

The United States of America represent one of the most culturally diverse societies in the world. This cultural diversity is one of the main characteristics of this country. In fact, one of the last censuses of American population has shown that nowadays American society comprises six main ethnic groups: white Americans, African-Americans, American-Indians and Alaska Natives, Asians, Hispanics, and Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders (See Annex 1). Everyone is well aware of this issue, but have you ever wondered about the origins of this cultural diversity? Have you ever thought about how American society accounts for that significant variety of ethnic groups? Or, taking into account that Multiculturalism is one of the most famous theories on American society, have you ever considered the existence of other social models? All these reflections will be explored in detail throughout this work.

There are several works dealing with the study of the different theories or models applied to American society. Some of these works talk about the Melting Pot, such as *The Academic Melting Pot: Catholics and Jews in American Higher Education*, by Stephen Steinberg (1977); other books focus on American Multiculturalism, like *Multiculturalism and the Canon of American Culture*, by Hans Bak (1993); and some others deal with the evolution from American Melting Pot to American Multiculturalism, as is the case of one of the books used in this project: *The Opening of the American Mind*, by Lawrence W. Levine (1996). There is another relevant work for this topic, which includes a new philosophy for the American social system. This work is *Borderlands = La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, by Gloria Anzaldúa (1999), and it will also be explored in this project. However, there are no works that analyze the evolution between the three theories previously mentioned and that study them in depth. For this reason, the present study will provide a different, though necessarily brief, perspective to the study of American social diversity and will modestly complement previous studies.

Considering all this, the objective of this work is to explore the evolution of the social theories or conceptions that have been developed as a way of managing the cultural differences present in American society, as well as the differences among them.

The theories investigated here, as said before, have been the most popular and with the most relevant consequences in the United States of America. The first theory to be considered is the Melting Pot, which evolves towards the second one, known as Multiculturalism. Finally, the philosophy known as the New Mestiza, which tries to replace the previous ones, is explored as well. In the three cases, the information that is offered includes a definition of the theory, its origins and evolution, and the real or possible implications for American society.

The methodology followed for the elaboration of this work is based on the compilation and organization of information related to the three social theories mentioned before. For the compilation of data on Melting Pot and Multiculturalism, the key work is *The Opening of the American Mind*, by Lawrence W. Levine (1996). The information dealing with the New Mestiza philosophy comes from a book by Gloria Anzaldúa titles *Borderlands = La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1999). All this material is collected, organized and complemented with analysis and comments to allow the reader to understand the different theories of American society.

The development of this work is divided into four main sections, together with a brief conclusion. The first section is titled “A history of migration” and it includes a historical context which explains the different migratory processes that formed the American country and its diverse society. At the same time, this section is subdivided into four parts chronologically organized: migration before the colonial period, immigration during the colonial period, immigration after the colonial period, and implications of these migratory processes. The second, the third and the fourth sections of the work, as their titles indicate, deal with “The Melting Pot”, “American Multiculturalism”, and “The New Mestiza”, respectively. These three sections are subdivided in a similar way, so that they include an explanation of the theories, a study from their origins to their decline, and the social implications of each theory. Lastly, a final section provides a conclusion in which the main ideas and results of the work are recovered and summarized.

1. A history of migration

A great part of the history of the United States has been characterized by the issue of immigration. This fact has been very relevant for this country, since the different immigrants who moved to that new land, regardless of their origin or of their objectives, have been the ones who created the United States; a country which could be defined as a mixture of cultures, nationalities and races that live under the same roof.

This history of immigration began much before America was discovered and therefore before the European conquest started. There are three main periods in which America received a great amount of people looking for a new life. The first stage takes place before the discovery of America, as the historian Mario Hernández Sánchez Barba highlights in his work *Historia de Estados Unidos de América: De la República Al poder presidencial*; the second one happens during the colonial period; and the last one could be placed from the end of the colonization to nowadays.

1.1. Migration before the colonial period

The earliest known inhabitants of America were those who, after the colonization, would be known as Native Americans or American Indians. However, those would not be the only people receiving that denomination. As Mario Hernández claims in the work previously mentioned, among all the theories on the populating of North America, the one that prevails claims that during the last Ice Age there was a great wave of immigrants who arrived to America from Siberia and the Chinese coast. Geological studies have revealed that during that Ice Age the sea level suffered a drastic reduction and, as a consequence, a land bridge was created through the Bering Strait that allowed Asiatic people to migrate to the neighboring continent, America (39). The causes of that migration are unknown, but one possible reason could be the need to find a new land to start a new life, since this is the basic cause of most migrations.

This Asiatic immigration could be considered as the origin of the history of immigration previously mentioned. As can be seen, from the very beginning America

presented a mixed population composed by American and Asiatic people that were developing several societies coexisting in the same continent. In his book *Historia de América*, Professor Carlos Malamud provides some information about American society before the European conquest. According to him, the majority of academics have stated that the number of inhabitants in America before the conquest oscillates between 60 and 80 million (16). Malamud also claims that, while European people shared a series of cultural, religious, ideological, historic and economic values, the degree of compartmentalisation in the American continent was very significant at the end of the 15th century. America had developed multiple and diverse societies which were distinguished by their different physical appearance, language, culture, traditions, beliefs and history. The different American cultures and empires used to live insulated from each other. For this reason, it was difficult to consider the New World as a united and structured entity before the European conquest. It was after that moment when America started to construct a common history (15-16).

1.2. Immigration during the colonial period

The origin of the colonial period takes place in 1492 with a very significant event in history: the discovery of America. This discovery was achieved by Spain, in particular by an Italian navigator known as Christopher Columbus, who provided his services to the Spanish monarchy. From that moment to the end of the 16th century, the American continent was colonized by Spanish settlers, and other European countries started to be interested in the New World (Hernández 48).

In the 17th century, there were three important colonizing countries which decided to extend their territories to the New World and to unconsciously contribute to the history of immigration of America: Holland, France and England. The colonization processes of these three countries are explored by Mario Hernández in his work *Historia de Estados Unidos de América: De la República Al poder presidencial*. According to this historian, at the beginning of the 17th century Holland settled in America, fundamentally in the territories of Brazil and North America. It was in North America where Dutch settlers created the city of New Amsterdam, which flourished

successfully. However, in 1664 England invaded and dominated New Amsterdam, turning the city into New York (50).

Regarding France, the colonizing efforts were directed to North America. Therefore French colonists settled in North America, resulting in armed conflict between the two colonial powers: France and England (Hernández 51). The French colonial system in America was motivated by the Jesuit and the Franciscan participation. France conquered several territories of North America, including Canada, Acadia and Terranova (Newfoundland). However, due to the colonial wars and the Seven Years War, France lost its power in America and Spain and England benefited (Hernández 53-54).

The presence of English colonies in America was very significant. English colonizers, Hernández claims, settled in America in two main phases. In the first one (1606-1637), the Thirteen Colonies were organized in three English colonies: Virginia and Maryland, taken by English settlers; New England, occupied by English Puritans and separatists; and the British West Indies.

One of the most significant migrations in that first period took place aboard the Mayflower in 1620. The Mayflower was a ship driven by a small group of English separatists who established themselves in New England coast, specifically in Plymouth. However, New England would be dominated by the puritan society of Massachusetts, which was the first organized society in that area (Hernández 67).

The second phase in the English colonization, as Hernández illustrates in his work, takes place at the end of the 17th century. In this period, England founded Carolina (1663), New York (1664), and Pennsylvania (1681), where a diversity of immigration also took place. An example could be the territory of Carolina, particularly the city of Charleston, which received a great amount of French, Scottish, German and Swiss population (68-74).

Finally, there was another great wave of immigrants "who arrived against their will" during the colonization period, as is claimed in an article from History.com titled *U.S. Immigration before 1965*. Those immigrants "were black slaves from West Africa" ("History.com" par. 5). According to the article, "congress outlawed the importation of

slaves to the United States as of 1808, but the practice continued until the U.S. Civil War” (par 5).

1.3. Immigration after the colonial period

After the colonial period, especially during the 19th and 20th centuries, immigration has also played an important role in the development of the United States. There are three significant waves of immigration.

Firstly, an important wave of immigration happened from 1815 to 1865 and was carried out by Irish people. "These Irish immigrants settled near their point of arrival in cities along the East Coast, [and] between 1820 and 1930, some 4.5 million Irish migrated to the United States" (“History.com” par. 6).

Then, "in the 19th century, the United States received some 5 million German immigrants" and "a significant number of Asian immigrants" (“History.com” par. 7). In this way, American society was receiving a mixture of cultures, languages, beliefs, and races.

Finally, "between 1880 and 1920, America received more than 20 million immigrants from Central, Eastern and Southern Europe." This great migration included a significant number of Italian people and Jews from Eastern Europe (“History.com” par. 12)

1.4. Implications

The different waves of immigration that the United States experimented throughout its history resulted in a mixture of races, nationalities and cultures that live under the same roof, as it mentioned at the beginning of this section. At the same time, there are some theories or conceptions that have developed as a way to account for the ethnic and cultural differences present in American society: Melting Pot, Multiculturalism, and the New Mestiza. These theories are studied and explained in detail in the following sections.

2. The Melting Pot.

2.1. What is the Melting Pot?

"Melting Pot" is an expression which defines one of the most traditional conceptions of American society. The Melting Pot notion defends the process of cultural homogenization, in which a heterogeneous society is consolidated as a single culture which fuses the different cultures forming it. At the same time, this notion is a symbolic description of the cultural mosaic resulting from the immigration and it justifies the cultural and ethnic diversity within the US (Aronowicz, par. 1-2).

During the 18th and 19th centuries many theories related with this notion were developed by thinkers, politicians, and writers. However, it was the British writer Israel Zangwill who first coined the term Melting Pot in his work *The Melting Pot: Drama in Four Acts* in 1909 (Levine, 107). The United States, Zangwill defends, are "the great Melting-Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and re-forming." The real American "will be the fusion of all races" (107). This theory will be put into practice and it will last until the mid-20th century, when American Multiculturalism flourishes. However, as this notion was made essential to the American conception of itself as a country, it continues to be present in some aspects of American currency. An example of these aspects is the inscription "E pluribus, unum" (out of many, one) which features still today on American dollar coins.

2.2. From the origins to the decline of the Melting Pot.

The first theories about the Melting Pot appear when American society starts to be conceived as a heterogeneous civilization which includes different races, cultures, languages, and beliefs. This heterogeneous society present in the United States is accurately described by the historian Alexis Tocqueville in a letter he writes to a friend during his travel to America in 1831. America, he claims, is "a society formed of all the nations of the world: English, French, German ... people having different languages, beliefs, opinions: in a word, a society without roots, without memories, without

prejudices, without routines, without common ideas, without a national character" (105). However, the notion of America as a melting pot does not defend heterogeneity, but homogeneity. Therefore, the description provided by Tocqueville is substituted by other ideas related to the concept of uniformity.

One of the main bases of the Melting Pot is the attempt to create a New America; a new nation characterized by a mixture of immigrants and natives which results in the New American. The new American is a person who "leaving behind all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds," as Crèvecoeur describes in *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782). In America, "individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men" (Crèvecoeur, par. 2). In this way, America "will construct a new race, a new religion, a new State, a new Literature" common to all those different nationalities (Emerson, 174).

The construction of this new American identity is based on a process known as Americanization, which could be defined as "the action of making a person or thing American in character or nationality" (Oxford Dictionary). In this case, the process of Americanization is applied to non-native people in order to create a new homogeneous civilization which substitutes the heterogeneous one. To achieve this objective, "the immigrants are Americanized, liberated, and fused into a mixed race" (Turner, par. 7).

Although the Melting Pot and the principles behind it seem to be feasible, there are some factors which stop their development. These factors take relevance mainly during the 19th and 20th centuries and they are related to racist attitudes, feelings of superiority among powerful nationalities, the imposition of Americanization for immigrants, and the impossibility of putting into practice a new range of ideas known as Anglo-conformity.

The issue of racism in this period is very significant. In fact, the Americanization process itself could be considered a racist attitude towards the immigrants, considering that in this process the native population, the "superior" race, undervalues immigrant people by forcing them to become American. Nevertheless, racism goes beyond the Americanization process, since there are some people who argue that many immigrants

should not even have the possibility of being Americanized. A good example of this argument is Benjamin Franklin, who defended "the exclusion of Blacks and Asians from the US because only white people," referring to Europeans, "must be part of America" (Levine, 108).

Regarding the feelings of superiority among powerful nationalities in America, they are clearly represented by a set of ideas called Anglo-conformity. These ideas are introduced by English settlers which defend that "England was the Mother Country whose culture and institutions would prevail" (Levine, 108). Following this, English culture would prevail in America, creating a feeling of superiority. In the process of Anglo-conformity, "the different languages and dialects, introduced by the settlers from different countries, are gradually giving place to the English" (Ramsay, 23). In this way, as a result of the English will, the traditional notion of Melting Pot is substituted by the modern idea of Anglo-conformity, in which immigrants are processed in order to be turned not into American, but into Anglo American citizens:

Anglo-Saxon Americans [...] do not want to be fused with other races, traditions and cultures. If they talk of the melting-pot they mean by it a process in which the differences of the immigrant races will be carried away like scum; leaving only pure ore of their own traits (Levine, 110).

Another influential factor for the decline of the Melting Pot, as was previously mentioned, is the imposition of the Americanization process to immigrants. It is possible to use the word "imposition" because not only common inhabitants were involved in the process, but also powerful people such as politicians or executive officers. For instance, the Secretary of State John Quincy Adams claimed that immigrants to the US must adjust to "the character, moral, political and physical, of this country [and] cast off the European skin never to resume it" (Levine, 112). Another example could be the Superintendent of schools in New York City, who also defended that extreme acceptance of the new culture, to the point of rejecting the real roots. According to him, Americanization is the "appreciation of the institutions of this country" and the "absolute forgetfulness of all obligations or connections with other countries because of descent or birth" (Levine, 112). This imposition of the Americanization is hard and almost impossible to accomplish, since non-native people

could easily accept and embrace the new culture but quite frequently refused to forget their previous life.

Finally, there is an impediment for the development of Anglo-conformity, which also contributes to the decline of the Melting Pot. This problem has to do with racial minorities whose physical characteristics and cultural beliefs will impede their complete integration in Anglo-American society. This issue is perfectly described by Lawrence W. Levine in his work *The Opening of the American Mind*:

Native Americans, Asian Americans, and African Americans could never conform to the physical-dimensions of Anglo-conformity, [and] Catholic, Jews, and Muslims could conform only by divesting themselves of a set of beliefs at the centre of their culture (112).

2.3. The Melting Pot in society

As explained previously, the Melting Pot model was based on the creation of a new American identity by carrying out the Americanization process. This idea was consolidated after the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865), when many "demands for the creation of a national culture emerged" (Immigration to the United States.org, par. 3). As a result, there were different sub-processes or programs which were applied to American society at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. These Americanization programs took place in the working and educational contexts especially.

A good example of those programs is the case of Ford Motor Company. Henry Ford, the founder of this company, created the Five Dollar Day program, which was aimed to those workers who "passed an inspection by the Ford Sociological investigators" (Firsht, par. 1). Many immigrant workers did not pass the examination, so that the entrepreneur also created "the Ford English School [in which immigrants were instructed] in the English language and American values" (Firsht, par. 1). In this way, "Henry Ford ... turned out Americans in the same way he mass-produced cars" (Firsht, par. 1).

As may be seen in the example above, in many cases Americanization programs were aimed to help non-native people integrate into American society. However, at the

same time they were used as a way of imposing American culture, and therefore, as a way of rejecting the foreign cultures. For this reason, among others which are less relevant, it could be said that the Melting Pot model was not possible in America society because of its effort at Americanizing everyone who arrived to that country. In other words, the society of the United States did not want to create a new American through the fusion of all the races living together; on the contrary, it wanted to impose its cultural values and to transform immigrant people into American citizens.

3. American Multiculturalism

3.1. What is multiculturalism?

"Multiculturalism" is generally defined as "the presence of, or support for the presence of, several distinct cultural or ethnic groups within a society" (Oxford Dictionary). Taking this concept into account, it could be argued that American society is multicultural in the sense that, throughout history, a great number of non-native people from different origins has coexisted in North America, giving place to a mixture of cultures, races, beliefs, and languages. In fact, Multiculturalism is also defined as an American doctrine which questions the cultural hegemony present in the dominant white groups with respect to the racial minorities (Oxford Dictionary).

As opposed to the Melting Pot, which supports the homogenization of American society as a method for the construction of the American identity, American multiculturalism defends the heterogeneity as a fundamental characteristic of that identity: "American identity and culture were the result not of the imposition of the English culture on all other groups but of the interaction of the various ethnic and racial groups with one another" (Levine, 112-113). Therefore, while the Melting Pot model defends that "members of minority groups [must] assimilate into the dominant culture, the multicultural ideal defends that members of minority groups can maintain their distinctive collective identities and practices" and integrate into society (Song, par. 1).

Some of the first theories about the multicultural conception of America were developed at the beginning of the 20th century, when the Melting Pot model started to decline. However, this new conception flourished and was applied in society around the 1960s and still persists nowadays.

3.2. From the origins of American multiculturalism to the present

The first reflections on multicultural ideas appeared as a reaction against the Melting Pot model, which was much criticized at the beginning of the 20th century by some American writers, philosophers, historians and sociologists. Many of those

professionals started to question the viability of the Melting Pot ideals and the social practices involved in them, proposing a multicultural model for American society.

The first serious approach to the possibility of creating a multicultural society dates back to 1915, when a Jewish-American philosopher, Horace Kallen, introduced the concept of "cultural pluralism", which broke with previous ideals. According to him, facing the impossibility for immigrants to forget their roots and their connections with their countries, the Melting Pot ideals cannot be accepted anymore (Levine, 113). As a result of this consideration, Kallen introduces the concept of social "harmony", referring to Multiculturalism, against the one of "unison", which is connected with the Melting Pot. A unison society would imply the imposition of the English tradition in the US, which violates "American's own traditions and fundamental principles", while a harmonious one would signify a "democratic commonwealth of peoples", a "democracy of nationalities", a "multiplicity in a unity, an orchestration of mankind" (Levine, 114).

The failure of the Melting Pot was also defended by the writer Randolph Bourne, whose main argument was the impossibility for non-native people to forget their roots. He supported this observation by focusing on two facts: on the one hand, European immigrants showed deep feelings about their home-lands during the war in Europe; and, on the other, many American immigrants maintained the cultural traditions of their home-lands even when they had been Americanized (Levine, 114). As a consequence of that criticism, the writer gave some arguments defending American multiculturalism against the Anglo-conformity process, which was part of the Melting Pot ideals as well. According to him, Americans "needed the new peoples... to save us from our own stagnation"; on the contrary, English immigrants, seen as assimilated Americans, have "blinded Americans to the fact that their own traditions and their culture were the product of the variegated groups of that composed America" (Levine, 115). He also considered that the future of America would be the creation of a multicultural society where the different ethnic groups could live together peacefully:

The future of America is the creation of a "trans-national state of many races and peoples, [...] a novel international nation, the first the world has seen". The truest integration would emanate not from the melting pot, but from fostering the feeling that "all who are here may have hand in the destiny of America" (Levine, 115-116).

Another good example of the people who defended the American multiculturalism as a medium for integration and social harmony was W.E.B. Du Bois. He was an African-American sociologist who denied both the Africanization of America and the Americanization of Africa, since both cultures, which were very different among them, had too much to teach each other (Levine, 116). He believed in the idea of being a Negro and an American at the same time. He spoke not of "melting" but of being "a co-worker in the kingdom of culture" where the African-American people could use "his best powers and his latent genius, which the US desperately needed it if was to fulfil its destiny" (Levine, 117). Therefore, considering his words, the multicultural conception of American society would be based on the equality among cultural groups, since all of them have something to offer to the New America.

All those samples of the first reflections on American multiculturalism are previous to the flourishing of the multicultural model, which takes place in America around the 1960s, as previously mentioned. Nevertheless, they clearly illustrate what this new conception is about and how it originated. From this origin until nowadays, American multiculturalism has been developed and defended, as Lawrence W. Levine claimed in 1996:

Diversity, pluralism, multiculturalism have been present throughout our history and have acted not merely as the germs of friction and division but as the lines of continuity, the sources for the creation of an indigenous culture, and the roots of a distinctive American identity (119).

3.3. Multiculturalism in American society

Multiculturalism looks for total equality in the sense that "people of all races, religions and cultures should be equal in the eyes of the law" (Williams, par. 3). For this reason, the American Constitution includes some manifestations of this multicultural principle, such as federalism, religious freedom, or free speech and economic liberty.

Federalism is a political doctrine present in "a group of states with a central government but independence in internal affairs" (Oxford Dictionary). This doctrine allows the different states of America to maintain their cultures and "their own legal

regimes, which reflect differing cultural values" (Volokh, par. 5). Considering this, it could be said that this political doctrine is a multicultural manifestation in America, since it enables the possibility of constructing a harmonious and egalitarian society based on respect; and this is what Multiculturalism defends.

Regarding religious freedom, it is true that it may not be a clear characteristic of a multicultural system, but in the case of the United States it helps the development of that system. The importance of religious freedom in America is due to the presence of a multiplicity of religious beliefs, views and traditions, which could not peacefully coexist without the existence of this law that "has always included religious tolerance – the willingness to let religious groups live free of deliberate persecution" (Volokh, par 7).

Finally, free speech and economic liberty is also an important characteristic that a multicultural system should present. For this reason, American constitution includes "the Free Speech Clause, coupled with the protection for private property and freedom of movement and action" (Volokh, par. 9). Thanks to this clause, immigrants can retain their cultures, languages, traditions, and beliefs without suffering repercussions, promoting, in this way, the rise of American multiculturalism.

Multicultural principles and manifestations seem to be ideal, in the sense that all of them are based on tolerance, equality, respect, and harmony. However, it is important to consider that nowadays there are several issues complicating the growth of those values. One of those aspects is the attempt to introduce English as the official language (LMG, par 6), which is a problem because other cultural groups refuse the idea of speaking a language different from their own. Another important issue is the tension resulting from the fact that "the White Anglo- Saxon Protestants don't want to give up its cultural dominance" (LMG, par. 6), so that the equality principle, which is one of the most significant features of Multiculturalism, is affected.

These examples reveal the probable decline of the multicultural system in the near future; so that it should be considered the possibility that American society was conceived from a different point of view. This new point of view or theory on American society was already proposed by the writer Gloria Anzaldúa and is known as the New

Mestiza. This new perception will be explained in detail throughout the following section.

4. The New Mestiza

4.1. The birth of a new consciousness

The idea of miscegenation as a new social consciousness was originally proposed by the Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos in his work *La Raza Cósmica*, published in 1995. This new notion, in the same way as the Melting Pot and the multicultural model, emerged as a reflection on American cultural diversity. It could be briefly defined as “the interbreeding of people considered to be of different racial types” (Oxford Dictionary). Considering this definition, what the Mexican philosopher envisages in his work is “a cosmic race, a fifth race embracing the four major races of the world” (Anzaldúa, 99). In other words, he defends the possibility of a mixture of related races which gives rise to a synthesis of all the races in the world.

Opposite to ... the policy of racial purity that white America practices, his theory is one of inclusivity. At the confluence of two or more generic streams, this mixture of races, rather than resulting in an inferior being, provides hybrid progeny, a mutable, more malleable species with a rich gene pool (Anzaldúa, 99).

On the surface, Vasconcelos’ theory may seem to share some aspects with the Melting Pot model, in the sense that their purpose is creating a new race by mixing different ethnic groups. Nevertheless, while the Melting Pot defends the fusion of all races through a process of assimilation or Americanization, which implies the rejection of the cultural features of each race, miscegenation theory stands for the possibility of maintaining the cultural aspects of each ethnic group even when they are mixed into a specific race.

Moreover, miscegenation theory may also present some similarities with American multiculturalism in terms of peaceful coexistence among cultures. However, while multiculturalism defends a kind of coexistence in which each ethnic group preserves its own cultural features; miscegenation implies that these features could coexist in a unique race, eliminating their defining and exclusive mission.

The miscegenation theory proposed by Vasconcelos is followed by Gloria Anzaldúa in her book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987). In this work, Anzaldúa focuses on what she calls the “New Mestiza”. Considering that the New

Mestiza is the third theory on American society being explored in this work, the following lines will include a detailed exploration of Anzaldúa's work.

4.2. The "New Mestiza"

Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza is a text in which Anzaldúa, a feminist and Chicano writer, uses poems, essays and autobiographical passages to justify the necessity and the existence of the New Mestiza. Throughout the work, she mixes different languages, especially English and Spanish, in order to illustrate and to express that she is proud of the multiple identities and languages that coexist in her own person. This multiplicity is present in those individuals who belong to the frontier between two or more countries or cultures, to the Borderlands. The celebration of this cultural multiplicity is one of the main bases of the New Mestiza's consciousness: from the "racial, ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollinization, an 'alien' consciousness is presently in the marking – a new *mestiza* consciousness, *una conciencia de mujer*. It is a consciousness of the Borderlands" (Anzaldúa, 99).

The concept of the New Mestiza that she proposes is applied to the general world, but it is based on her own experience. For this reason, considering that she was a feminist activist, she applies the term "mestiza" instead of using "mestizo". Moreover, she illustrates the cultural diversity that characterizes the New Mestiza through autobiographical poems, like the following one:

Una lucha de fronteras / A Struggle of Borders

Because I, a *mestiza*,
Continually walk out of one culture
And into another,
Because I am in all cultures at the same time,
Alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro,
Me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio.
Estoy norteadada por todas las voces que me hablan
Simultáneamente.

Anzaldúa also provides some ideas which define the concept "New Mestiza". "[L]a *mestiza*", as the writer claims, "is a product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another" (100). This definition is also supplemented with the following statement: "Being tricultural, monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual, speaking a patois, and in a state of perpetual transition, the *mestiza* faces the dilemma of the mixed breed" (Anzaldúa, 100). Another significant feature of the *mestiza* is the internal struggle she faces: "Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures, and their values systems, *la mestiza* undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, and an inner war" (Anzaldúa, 100).

For the creation of the New Mestiza consciousness, it is fundamental to accomplish an issue to which Anzaldúa gives high importance: the destruction of frontiers, both physical and ideological. Geographical or physical frontiers are the ones that delimit and exclude, creating, at the same time, an ideological delimitation and exclusion among cultures and their population. "The borders and walls that are supposed to keep the undesirable ideas out", Anzaldúa states, "are entrenched habits and patterns of behavior; these habits and patterns are the enemy within" (101). As a consequence of these frontiers, there are many different cultures, ideologies, beliefs, and thoughts in the world which many times cause sexual and racial problems. This is another important argument supported by the writer: "The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts" (102).

In the light of this situation, the mission of the *mestiza* consists on "moving away from set patterns and goals toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes" (Anzaldúa, 101). Considering this, it could be said that the New Mestiza makes use of a political, social and feminist consciousness to fight against those frontiers which define society and which the different cultures have embraced to delimit their differences. This is a new consciousness that fights against sexism and racism by destroying sexual binary systems, racial differences and discriminatory definitions. The application of these ideas could result in the emergence of a new culture in the future: a *mestiza* culture. "The future will belong to the *mestiza*. Because

the future depends on the breaking down of paradigms, it depends on the straddling of two or more cultures" (Anzaldúa, 102).

Finally, Anzaldúa introduces a very significant poem in her work. It is a poem by Gina Valdés which perfectly illustrates the idea she proposes. This poem provides a conception of the frontier as something discriminatory, at the same time that it defends the existence of a "bridge" as the solution for the frontier problems; a "bridge" that could be equated to the role of the New Mestiza.

Somos una gente
Hay tantísimas fronteras
Que dividen a la gente,
Pero por cada frontera
Existe también un puente.

4.3. Social implications

The New Mestiza hermeneutics would be the perfect philosophy for a country which presented a significant variety of ethnic groups, as is the reality of the United States. Nevertheless, in the case of this new ideal model, it is not possible to talk about actual implications in American society because of two main reasons. On the one hand, as mentioned before, the New Mestiza consciousness is only an ideal model which is followed by very few people, since the majority of the population belongs to a single culture, except for those who live on the "borderlands". On the other hand, the application of Anzaldúa's philosophy in American society is very complicated because, although there are no physical frontiers between cultures, the ideological ones are pervasive.

Despite the difficulty that the implementation of the New Mestiza consciousness implies, it would be interesting to contemplate the possible consequences it could have in American society. Most of these consequences would be very constructive and they might help in the construction of a more pacific world characterized by one single

culture, the *mestiza* culture. This new culture, containing a mixture of different cultural values, would be based on the respect for other ethnic groups, since, as previously mentioned, the New Mestiza celebrates cultural multiplicity. Considering the fact that the *mestiza* consciousness celebrates cultural diversity instead of rejecting it, one of the most significant consequences might be the end of the racial discriminations that usually take place in the United States.

Taking all this into account, it would be really interesting to consider the New Mestiza hermeneutics as a way to maintain and celebrate the cultural differences present in the social diversity of America in order to create a society characterized by freedom and respect.

Conclusion

As may be seen throughout this study, American social diversity has generated the development of some theories which defended different social models or systems. The main theories developed throughout American history have been the Melting Pot, American Multiculturalism, and the New Mestiza. The Melting Pot ideals appeared in the 18th and 19th centuries and lasted until the mid-20th century. After the decline of the Melting Pot model, multicultural principles were introduced in the United States and they flourished during the last years of the 20th century and are still visible nowadays. Despite the fact that the multicultural consciousness is still present, it has shown some limitations, and this is the reason why another theory, the New Mestiza, was proposed in the last years of the 20th century and is considered the most modern.

The change from one social theory to another has arisen as a reaction to improve or substitute the previous social model. In the case of the philosophy defending the Melting Pot model, it emerged as an attempt to transform the heterogeneous American society into a homogeneous social system. The failure of this model was marked by the imposition of Americanization for immigrants, which included racist attitudes and feelings of superiority among nationalities, and by the impossibility of putting into practice the range of ideas known as Anglo-conformity. After this decline, the social theory defending the multicultural model was applied in the United States in order to substitute the previous ideals. However, although Multiculturalism was considered and it is still considered a feasible model, some examples of its social manifestations in America have shown a possible failure in the near future. This failure would take place due to the attempt to introduce English as the official language, which implies a cultural imposition; and due to the tension caused by the White Anglo-Saxon Protestants' rejection of giving up their cultural dominance, which affects the equality principle defended by Multiculturalism. As multicultural ideals do not seem to be perfectly viable, the New Mestiza consciousness was proposed. This new philosophy, which is very different from the previous one, somehow complements it, since both of them share some principles, such as respect and equality among cultures. Unlike the Melting Pot and the Multicultural models, the New Mestiza consciousness has not been applied

in society, so that it has not had the opportunity to fail or succeed and, therefore, no other theory has been developed for the moment.

This work also illustrates the ways in which the three theories differ. Firstly, the differences between Melting Pot and Multiculturalism might be summarized in the fact that, while the Melting Pot defends the creation of a homogeneous society, Multiculturalism aims for the development of a heterogeneous country. Secondly, the Melting Pot differs from the New Mestiza theory in the sense that the Melting Pot stands for the fusion of all races through a process which implies the rejection of the cultural features of each race, while the New Mestiza consciousness defends the possibility of maintaining the cultural aspects of each ethnic group even when they are mixed into a specific race. Finally, although they share some principles, Multiculturalism and the New Mestiza are also different. On the one hand, Multiculturalism implies a kind of coexistence in which each ethnic group preserves its own cultural features. On the other hand, the New Mestiza suggests that these features could coexist in a unique race, eliminating their defining and exclusive mission. Nevertheless, despite these dissimilarities, the three theories have a common characteristic, which is their origin. All of them originated as an attempt to understand and account for the social diversity present in the United States, a society that at the beginning of the 21st century continues to pose a significant challenge for its unparalleled mixture of races, ethnicities and cultures.

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Annexes

Population of the United States by Race and Hispanic/Latino Origin, Census 2000 and 2010

Race and Hispanic/Latino origin	Census 2010, population	Percent of population	Census 2000, population	Percent of population
Total Population	308,745,538	100.0%	281,421,906	100.0%
Single race				
White	196,817,552	63.7	211,460,626	75.1
Black or African American	37,685,848	12.2	34,658,190	12.3
American Indian and Alaska Native	2,247,098	.7	2,475,956	0.9
Asian	14,465,124	4.7	10,242,998	3.6
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	481,576	0.15	398,835	0.1
Two or more races	5,966,481	1.9	6,826,228	2.4
Some other race	604,265	.2	15,359,073	5.5
Hispanic or Latino	50,477,594	16.3	35,305,818	12.5

<https://www.infoplease.com/us/race-population/population-united-states-race-and-hispaniclatino-origin-census-2000-and-2010>