Models of diversity in the Americas: Avenues for dialogue and cross-pollination

Ana Solano-Campos
In the last decades, scholars in Canada and Europe have engaged in widespread debates about the distinctive features of multiculturalism (MC) and interculturalism (IC). All along, discussions about these distinctions have also been ongoing in Latin America, but are not as widely documented in the Anglophone and Francophone literature. In this chapter, I argue that looking at intercultural and multicultural orientations to diversity outside of North American and European contexts can both enrich and problematise conversations about MC and IC. First, I provide an overview of scholarly debates about MC and IC in the Americas, with occasional references to the European context. Next, I explore Latin American discussions on intercultural and multicultural orientations to diversity, drawing connections and comparisons to the debates in Europe and Canada. Finally, I interrogate normative trends that largely prescribe and dichotomise models of diversity in all three settings – advocating for a contextual approach that locates diversity paradigms along a diversity spectrum and identifying current and potential avenues for dialogue and cross-pollination.

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2 Although Latin American countries share a history of colonial rule and indigenous legacies, they have developed along different temporalidades [temporalities] (Ansaldi 2001; Hopenhayn 2002), where a common history is expressed in quite distinctive ways or singularidades [singularities]. It is not within the scope of this chapter to provide a comprehensive account of how intercultural and multicultural approaches to diversity have developed in all of the countries in the Latin American context, but to provide a broad overview of intercultural and multicultural scholarly thought across the region.
The Multicultural-Intercultural Dichotomy

Contemporary debates about diversity in European and North American countries take place in the context of a discursive shift from multiculturalism to interculturalism. Banting and Kymlicka (2012) explain,

In much of the western world, and particularly in Europe, there is a widespread perception that multiculturalism has ‘failed’ and that governments who once embraced a multicultural approach to diversity are turning away, adopting a strong emphasis on civic integration (3).

Although there is a documented ‘retreat from the use of the term “multiculturalism” in political discourse’ in Europe and Canada (Barrett 2013: 22; Kymlicka 2012), research from the Multiculturalism Policy Index (Banting and Kymlicka 2012) – which monitored the evolution of multiculturalism in 21 Western democracies – indicates that ‘the larger picture in Europe is one of stability and expansion of multicultural policies in the first decade of the 21st century’ (18).

In Latin America, where intercultural orientations to diversity have dominated, there has been a shift toward both multiculturalist rhetoric and policies. However, across the continent, normative approaches that prescribe and dichotomise interculturalism and multiculturalism have led these debates: Scholars have positioned multicultural and intercultural orientations to diversity in opposition to – and competition with – each other. In the following sections I contextualise the nature and evolution of these debates.

**Multiculturalism in the Americas.** In the United States and Canada, scholars have both interrogated and advocated the merits of multiculturalism to best address the needs of immigrant and ethnocultural groups in each country. Multiculturalism is often presented as ‘a
particular kind of policy approach that may be used for the management of culturally diverse societies’ (Barrett 2013: 16). Scholars have identified and proposed various theories of multiculturalism – among them cultural studies (Hall & du Gay 2003), postcolonial (Bhabha 2002), liberal (Kymlicka 2006; Levy 2003), and communitarian (Taylor 1993) – each communicating different perspectives on the status of collective vs. individual rights of ethnocultural and immigrant groups (Arriarán Cuéllar and Hernández Alvidrez 2010). Scholars have also highlighted that multiculturalism is highly influenced by the particular context in which it is implemented. For Meer and Modood (2012) ‘the idea of multiculturalism might be said to have a “chameleonic” quality’ (Meer and Modood 2012: 179). Similarly, Barrett (2013) argues that multiculturalism varies ‘across countries’ and also ‘within countries over time’ (Barrett 2013: 19).

United States multiculturalism is often linked to the Civil Rights Movement and to the struggle of African-Americans for equality in the 1960s and 1970s (Banks 1994; Sleeter 1996; Gay 2010). It is also associated with a ‘modern’ strand of education – multicultural education – that attends to issues of oppression, resistance, social justice, and cultural democracy in school policy and curriculum (Meer and Modood 2012). In reference to the United States context, May and Sleeter (2010) argue that a new form of multiculturalism, ‘critical multiculturalism’, ‘has emerged over the last decade as a direct challenge to liberal or benevolent forms of multicultural education’. They contend that ‘by integrating and advancing various critical theoretical threads such as anti-racist education, critical race theory, and critical pedagogy, critical multiculturalism has offered a fuller analysis of oppression and institutionalization of unequal power relations in education.’

In Canada, the emergence of multiculturalism has been linked to various historical events, among them: the arrival of older immigrants of non-British origin during the 20th century who ‘dethroned’ the traditional Canadian ‘anglo-normative understanding’ (Taylor
the influx of immigrants from developing countries during the 1960s and 1970s (Joshee, 2004); and ‘the rise of a nationalist and secessionist movement in French-Speaking Quebec’ (Meer and Modood 2012:180). Unlike the United States, multiculturalism in the Canadian context is understood as a public policy (Castles 2004: 25). Canada was one of the first countries in the Americas to enforce multiculturalism at the legislative level with the creation of the Official Languages Act in 1969, the Policy of Multiculturalism in 1971, and the Multiculturalist Act in 1988. For Taylor ‘multiculturalism became a marker of the new Canadian political identity, and Canadians… [spread] the word internationally about their own success and its status as paradigm and model for everyone’ (2012: 417). Over time, Canadian multiculturalism has stressed different aspects of diversity; evolving from a focus on plurality and citizenship in the 50s and 60s, an emphasis on identity, social justice, and education in the 70s and 80s, and from the 90s on, highlighting social cohesion and peace education (Joshee 2004).

During the late 1960s, in the midst of increased immigration flows, the Canadian province of Quebec – where over 70 per cent of people are descendants from francophone settlers – demanded the rights to preserve their French culture and language. As Ghosh recounts, some Québécois perceived multiculturalist policies as ‘an imposition by English Canada…’ (2011: 7) and tried to retain their sovereignty by introducing French language legislation and a policy of interculturalism in 1977. Ghosh explains that:

While Canadian multiculturalism is built on the assumption of not pointing to a dominant culture, interculturalism in Quebec is based on the understanding of the predominance of francophone culture: to build and integrate other cultural communities into a common public culture based on the French language, while respecting diversity (2011:7).
Taylor (2012) argues that interculturalism, with its emphasis on integration rather than on the recognition of difference, was most appropriate for the Quebec context because Quebeckers have to “ensure that that integration [of immigrants] takes place in French rather than English.” (2012: 417).

In reference to the Canadian context, scholars have put forth hard and soft claims for interculturalism’s distinctiveness (Levey 2012), with the former encompassing definitions of the two paradigms as fundamentally different (Bouchard 2011) whereas the latter see the distinctiveness between the two paradigms as a matter of emphasis (Taylor 2012). For example, Taylor (2012) argues that both multiculturalism and interculturalism are ‘subspecies’ (413) from a common trunk and that their main difference ‘concerns rather the story that we tell about where we are coming from and where we are going’ (Taylor 2012: 413).

Other scholars, such as Maxwell, Waddington, McDonough, Cormier, and Schwimmer (2012) highlight the similarities while at the same time positively comparing interculturalism to multiculturalism. Maxwell et al. (2012) argue that interculturalism addresses multiculturalism’s limitations. For example, they contend that interculturalism and multiculturalism are ‘conceptual cousins’ (2012: 431) because both promote integration, increase intercultural awareness, embrace cultural diversity as a characteristic and asset, reject assimilationist and racist tendencies, and encourage political participation of ethnic groups.

Yet, using the metaphors of ‘the mosaic’ and ‘the story’ to refer to multiculturalism and interculturalism, respectively, they claim that whereas multiculturalism ‘capitalizes on the promotion and valorization of cultural diversity as a political end in itself’ (Maxwell et al. 2012: 432), interculturalism ‘regards the integration of new citizens as part of a dynamic,
open-ended process of transforming a common societal culture through dialogue, mutual understanding, and intercultural contact' (Maxwell et al. 2012: 432). For Maxwell et al. Canadian interculturalism ‘focuses on identifying and implementing means by which to encourage cultural and religious groups to enter into a national dialogue’ (2012: 432). They state that interculturalism has three important elements that differentiate it from multiculturalism: an emphasis in dialogue to build a common culture, an establishment of sociological asymmetry in which newcomers and citizens take different roles for integration and acceptance of each other, and the creation of a moral, legal, civic contract for immigrants.

On the other hand, Meer and Modood contend that interculturalism is not an ‘updated version’ (2012: 177) of multiculturalism and critique positive comparisons of interculturalism to multiculturalism, particularly in regards to what they identified as the main four claims in those comparisons: 1) interculturalism’s emphasis on dialogue; 2) its focus on the group rather than the individual; 3) its commitment to social cohesion; and 4) its critique of illiberal cultural practices. Meer and Moddod (2012) maintain that these characteristics, which are often attributed to interculturalism, are also present in multiculturalism, and that in fact, ‘multiculturalism presently surpasses interculturalism as a political orientation’ (Meer and Moddod 2012: 192). The nature of this discussion becomes more complex when we ask, as does Dussel, ‘what happens when these multiculturalism discourses, predominantly performed by North American and other Anglo-Saxon scholars, are restaged in different national settings, which have their own ways of dealing with difference within the nation-states?’ (2001: 96).

The Latin American Debates
Across Latin America, interculturalidad has been – arguably – the predominant diversity paradigm. Latin American academic debates have questioned the merits of multiculturalism in contrast to those of interculturalidad. Scholars have focused on whether multiculturalism fits Latin America’s history of colonialism and racial hybridity (Maldonado Ledezma 2011, Tubino 2002, Walsh 2001, Williamson 2004) – which interculturalidad presumably does – and examined multiculturalism’s perceived neoliberal underpinnings (Hale 2006, Warren 2013). Whereas in Europe and Anglophone/Francophone America there has been a rhetorical departure from multiculturalism, in many Latin American countries multiculturalist discourses are on the rise (Arriarán Cuéllar and Hernández Alvidrez 2010, Wieviorka 2014).

Latin American scholars define interculturalidad as a prescriptive rather than as a descriptive term, a political democratic project with various social dimensions (Mendoza 2011, Dietz 2009 2012, Lopez 1997). A common theme in most definitions of interculturalidad is its focus on creating ‘dialogic equitable relations among members of different cultural universes’ (Godenzzi Alegre 1996: 15). Yet, there is not one simple or agreed-upon definition of interculturalidad among scholars, particularly because interculturalidad in the Latin American context is conceived as a eutopia or work in progress (Godenzzi Alegre 1996, Walsh 2001, Gómez and Hernández 2010).

**The reign of interculturalidad.** One of the main arguments in favor of interculturalidad is that it encapsulates the cultural clash and racial miscegenation that ensued upon the conquest and colonisation of the region. Comprising several geographical, ethnic, linguistic, and epistemological clusters, Latin America was already a diverse setting before the arrival of the Europeans. Mesoamerican and Andean peoples, the former, inhabitants of the region that spread from Mexico to Costa Rica (Carrasco and Sessions 1998), and the latter, residents of today’s Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile (McEwan
were not monolithic groups. Historians Carrasco and Sessions explain, ‘Mesoamerica was a diverse space and time... There were several hundred ethnic groups among the natives of Mesoamerica who spoke many different languages’ (1998: 25). This statement can be expanded to the Andean world as well.

The cultural and linguistic diversity also extended to indigenous epistemologies. Aikman (1996) makes clear that in the past as well as today, ‘there is no single coherent body of indigenous knowledge. Indigenous peoples do not comprise one homogenous epistemological and ontological alternative to the Western educational paradigm encountered in schools. On the contrary, they present a diverse panorama of philosophies and world views’ (Indigenous Conceptions of Education and Intercultural Education section, para. 7).

With the conquest, the diversity of the region grew in new complex ways, incorporating Eurocentric hierarchies and power dynamics that were enforced by the Spanish, Portuguese, French, Dutch, and British colonisers.

In addition to reflecting the indigenous and colonial legacy of the region, interculturalidad aligns with the political discourses of *mestizaje*, transculturation, and *indigenismo*; discourses that perpetuate ideas of racial hybridity. Now a contested concept, mestizaje, the idea of racial mixing or miscegenation (Wade 2005), was championed by political leaders such as Jose Martí (1891) and José Vasconcelos (1925) as a narrative of racial unity and cooperation, becoming a marker of national identity for many people in Latin American countries. Immortalised in art and literature, the narrative of mestizaje led political, economic, and social conventions across the region. A narrative that Miller (2004:15) posits ‘could be enlisted in the development of a regional identity that both recognized internal differences and unified Latin America in its distinction from Europe and the United States’. Related to the concept of mestizaje is the political ideology of indigenismo, ‘an effort by
Europeans or their American-born descendants (criollos) to represent an indigenous “other” (Marentes, 2013).

Later on Ortiz (1940) introduced the concept of ‘transculturation’ as a multidirectional process of cultural transfer, in opposition to the unidirectional idea of ‘acculturation’. Transculturation, he described, was ‘the complex process of adjustment and re-creation – cultural, literary, linguistic, and personal – that allow for new, vital, and viable configurations to arise out of the clash of cultures and the violence of colonial and neocolonial appropriations’ (2). The concept of ‘transculturation’ was initially used in reference to Cuban society. It was later expanded by Rama (1982) to the Latin American reality, and has been further developed and debated by other scholars (Trigo 1996, García Canclini 2004).

Interculturalidad is also said to problematise political discourses about the indigenous subaltern. Interculturalidad’s origins are found at the center of movements of agency and resistance surrounding – and emerging – in indigenous communities, particularly in Mexico and the Andean region (Aikman 1996, Hamel 2008, López, 2009, Gómez and Hernández 2010).

Since the 1970s, indigenous movements in Latin American countries, predominantly those countries with larger indigenous populations like Mexico, Ecuador, Bolivia, Guatemala, Venezuela, and Peru, established the cornerstone for educational policies and practices that promoted the linguistic and cultural identities of indigenous groups. At the core of indigenous movements – in addition to political participation and territorial rights – lies a statement about the role of language identity and linguistic practices as crucial expressions of citizenship. Such is the case of Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Colombia, where indigenous
languages have gained legitimate, and in some cases, co-official or official status along with Spanish.

The dialogic and linguistic dimension of interculturalidad is strongly present in education policy and practice – initially via *Educación Indígena Bilingüe* [Indigenous Bilingual Education], then through *Educación Bilingüe Bicultural* [Bicultural Bilingual Education], and later on through *Educación Intercultural Bilingüe* [Intercultural Bilingual Education] (López, 2009). Hornberger (2000) states that ‘the earliest use of the term “intercultural” in Latin America may have been in Venezuela’s 1979 bilingual intercultural education policy’ and ‘in a [1980] meeting of indigenists in Mexico’ (178) – around the same time that increasing attention from organisations like the United Nations granted greater regional and international recognition to interculturalism. However, Aman (2014) argues that “when adopted by the government, interculturalidad came merely to signify bilingual education, and the decolonial dimension, which was profoundly emphasized by the indigenous movements in their articulations of the concept, was effectively erased.” (p. 13).


Latin American scholars, particularly supporters of interculturalidad, have frequently critiqued North American and European discourses of multiculturalism (Tubino, 2002;
Discourses of interculturalidad have been often intertwined with dominant European intercultural discourses; specifically because of the influence of organisations like the UNESCO. However, the differences between Canadian, European, and Latin American intercultural paradigms have rarely been debated (Aman, 2014).

Conceptually, interculturalidad shares many characteristics with Canadian and European interculturalism: An emphasis on dialogue, relationship building, conflict resolution, universal values, and democracy. This is in part, because “gran parte de la filosofía de nuestro continente se ha desarrollado y se desarrolla aun en estrecho dialogo con la filosofía europea” “a great part of our continent’s philosophy has been developed and continues to develop in close dialogue with European philosophy” [author’s translation] (Fornet-Betancourt 2004: 28). In addition, there has been constant influence from international organisations in the Latin American region that promote intercultural agendas.

However, interculturalidad is different from Quebecan IC and European interculturality in two important ways. First, Latin American interculturalidad emerged not as a response to post-immigrant social formations but to colonial and post-colonial dynamics. Secondly, although interculturalidad might traditionally be associated with modernity, it can also “be theorized as an act of resistance to the vestiges of colonialism, with the purpose of delinking from the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality” (Aman, 2014, p. 8). For Aman (2014), unlike interculturalidad, European interculturality “continues to be written in the imperial languages, as UNESCO reiterates the imperative to embrace their concept of universally shared values.” (p. 23).

**Interculturalising multiculturalism.** Many Latin American scholars seem to align with European and North American trends to positively compare interculturalism to multiculturalism. However, their impetus is not new and does not necessarily come from
European discourses about failed multiculturalism. Instead, rejection of the multiculturalist rhetoric can be considered an anti-neocolonial or anti-neoliberal narrative.

Some Latin American scholars see multiculturalism as lacking an integrative element to breach differences among various cultural groups (López 1997, Cunningham 2001, Walsh 2001, Tubino 2001 2002, García Canclini 2004). For instance, they contrast multiculturalism with interculturalidad as focusing on recognition rather than dialogue, as encouraging affirmative action rather than transformative action, as creating parallel societies rather than integrated societies, as promoting tolerance but not convivencia. In fact, Tubino (2002) has spoken to the need to ‘interculturalize multiculturalism’ (2002: 63). These scholars seem to actively distance themselves from the discourse of multiculturalism because it is often perceived as an imposition from the North America canon. For example, Maldonado Ledezma (2011:60) warns that ‘to apply [multicultural] postulates to other multicultural contexts implies significant challenges and theoretical deficiencies that arise from borrowing approaches originated in contexts foreign to our realities; thus, their uncritical application becomes inadequate’ [author’s translation].

Maldonado Ledezma adds that interculturalidad is ‘a proposal that seeks to overcome the obvious differences of a theoretical standpoint – multiculturalism – created in western social contexts different to ours, with extremely different histories, and particular challenges that need to be addressed, that are profoundly divergent from indigenous concerns in Latin America’ [author’s translation] (2011: 63). In addition, Walsh (2001) sustains that interculturalidad reflects the Latin American experience of mestizaje as ‘part of the reality and of the cultural resistance’ in the region (6), something that multiculturalist theories do not include. Williamson (2004) points out that even if ‘multiculturalism is understood as a framework that allows for a better study of reality, it cannot be used [in Latin American] as a political statement’ (p. 18).
However, Viaña, Tapia, and Walsh (2010) have pointed out that interculturalidad ‘fue asumiendo un sentido socioestatal de burocratización’, ‘has taken on a burocratising socio-statal sense’ [author’s translation] (81), making it ‘parte del aparato de control y de la política educativa estatal’ ‘part of the control apparatus and of the state educational policy’ [author’s translation] (81). Critics of interculturalidad argue that it ‘lacks a political project or vision’ [my translation] (Arriarán Cuéllar and Hernández Alvidrez 2010: 100), which multiculturalism is presumed to possess. Not only that, Arriarán Cuéllar and Hernández Alvidrez claim that ‘contrary to what is commonly stated, we are witnessing a transition from the intercultural paradigm to multiculturalism…’ [my translation] (2010: 87).

**The multicultural turn in Latin America.** Although multiculturalism is commonly associated as a Western European and North American political discourse (Dussel 2001, Wieviorka 2014), the last two decades have brought about an increased interest in and influence of multiculturalism in Latin America (Arriarán Cuéllar and Hernández Alvidrez, 2010, Wieviorka, 2014). Wade (2006) studied the multicultural policies that have taken place in Latin America in the last 20 years and looked at various arguments to explain this shift. He found that – since the early 90s – international organisations like the World Bank and the United Nations have shown an ‘increased interest in the social inclusion of marginalised groups in general and of indigenous and afro-Latin populations in particular’ [author’s translation] (69). This has prompted intra-national and international pressure (Van Cott 2000) to align with democratic and human rights principles policed by those organisations (Wade 2006). Other arguments that might explain the shift toward multiculturalist policies are state interests to ‘use difference as a new form of government’ (my translation) (Wade 2006: 69 as in Gros 1997) – in contrast to seemingly problematic development programs – and, in lesser degree, ‘the political mobilization of indigenous and black social movements’ across the region (Wade 2006: 70).
Overall, scholars perceive multiculturalist policies in Latin America as either challenging the assimilationist rhetoric of mestizaje (Hopenhayn 2002, Wade 2013) or as perpetuating seemingly undesirable neoliberal discourses (Hale 2006, Warren 2013). Whereas the political and social discourses of mestizaje and transcultuation embedded in interculturalidad are at the core of the national identity of Latin American masses, some scholars argue that these discourses have perpetuated the invisibilisation and denial of the indigenous and African ‘other’ (Hopenhayn, 2002), and – in countries like Brazil – the myth of a racial democracy (Freyre 2003). For Hopenhayn (2002: III, para. 1–4), the rhetoric of mestizaje,

Has been the assimilation (and acculturation) of indigenous and afro-Latin groups into the culture of the conquerors and colonizers—and later on, of republicans and modernists. Mestizaje can be understood as mediation, but also as subordination and renunciation; as a historical representation of the encounter, and as a dominant strategy in the absorption of the dominated… Mestizaje has served as a symbolic lever to institute a national ‘ethos’ as the ideology of the nation-state. [author’s translation].

In a way, interculturalidad has not been successful in addressing racial and religious exclusion, something that multiculturalism is presumed to do in the form of anti-racism and affirmative action policies. In that regard, it can be argued that interculturalidad in the Latin American context has been colourblind and colourmute to some extent – a byproduct of the complexity of racial hybridity and colonial structures and of the challenges that come with trying to identify racial boundaries and label racial identities within that context.

Thus, scholars studying Latin American multiculturalism describe it as ‘challenging ideologies of mestizaje or mestiçagem as the core identity of the nation’ (Wade 2013: 212)
and argue that ‘the adoption of multicultural discourses entails recognition of the damaging
effects of the assimilationist policies that accompanied mestizaje discourses’ (Richards 2010,
65). For Arriarán Cuéllar and Hernández Alvidrez (2010:100),

The limitations of interculturalidad become increasingly evident as the insufficiency
of the neoliberal democratic state come to the surface, a state only willing to
recognise all members of its society under the condition that they remain static in their
inequality [my translation].

Arriarán Cuéllar and Hernández Alvidrez (2010:88) explain that Latin American – and more
specifically Mexican – multiculturalism has kept its distance from Eurocentric foci in order to
stay grounded in the reality of Latin American countries. They point out,

Mexican multicultural thought in recent years is composed of four trends that are
different from multiculturalism in the United States, Canada, and Europe: 1) the
liberal multiculturalism of Fernando Salmerón (1993) y Leon Olive (1995); 2) Luis
Villoro’s (1998) communitarian multiculturalism; 3) the analogic pluralist
multiculturalism of Mauricio Beuchot (1999); and 4) the baroque multiculturalism of
translation).

However, Latin America’s ‘new’ (Horton 2006) multiculturalism has been widely
critiqued – often described negatively in the scholarly literature as a state-led and state
multiculturalism, and it is perceived as a top-down policy tool for state-remaking influenced
by international organisations and globalising forces. In a study on the Mapache nation in
Chile and Argentina, Warren (2013:243) explains that ‘the state is engaged in what some
have called “neoliberal multiculturalism”: visibly supporting indigenous activities that fit
with state visions of the nation while criminalising others by applying anti-terrorist laws to indigenous activism’. In Bolivia and Guatemala, scholars talk about the idea of *indio permitido* [authorised indian] (Hale 2006, McNeish 2008), a phrase originally borrowed from sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui by Hale (2006), which refers to ‘how governments are using cultural rights to divide and domesticate indigenous movements’ (17).

In Brazil, policies of affirmative action and university quotas established by the government to facilitate access of Afro-Brazilians to higher education programs have been highly critiqued by scholars and met with logistical challenges that reveal the complexity of racial self-identification. As Loveman (2014: xii) states, ‘Latin American national myths long celebrated the idea that distinctive peoples were formed through the mixture of races and thus a dissolution of racial differences’. Official ethnoracial classification was a common practice in post-colonial Latin America, but it was abandoned during the mid-twentieth century harvesting an official colourblindness (Loveman 2014). The practice has recently re-emerged following ‘shifts in international criteria for how to be a modern nation and promote national development’ progress’ (Loveman 2014:209). Genomic research (Wade 2013) is part of this social trend. However, the Brazilian experience is a testament to the difficulties of addressing the gaps seemingly left by interculturalidad with multicultural policies.

Although multiculturalism in Latin America is currently associated with prescriptive, neoliberal, and state-led management of difference, grassroots multicultural movements like *Quilombismo* also exist. Quilombos were originally military communities in Africa; however, during the seventeenth century, the word ‘quilombo’ became associated with the community of Palmares in Brazil – a community of runaway enslaved people. Artist and scholar Abdias do Nascimento (1990) has studied extensively the history of quilombos and their significance to challenge dominant constructions of race in Latin America. Nascimento (1990: 182) notes that quilombos, which were common in Suriname, México, Venezuela, Cuba, Colombia,
Jamaica and the United States, allowed African enslaved people ‘to recover their liberty and human dignity through escape from captivity, organizing viable free societies in Brazilian territory’. He explains that ‘Quilombismo, an anti-imperialist struggle, identifies itself with Pan-Africanism and sustains a radical solidarity with all peoples of the world who struggle against exploitation, oppression, and poverty, as well as with all inequalities motivated by race, colour, religion, or ideology’ (185).

Contextualising Models of Diversity

The debate on the distinctions and merits of multiculturalism and interculturalism is ongoing and evolving. In the United States scholars have interrogated various iterations of multiculturalism. In the Canadian context, scholars have debated the characteristics of each model (Bouchard 2011, Levey 2012), some positively comparing interculturalism to multiculturalism (Taylor 2012, Maxwell et al. 2012) and some advocating to various degrees for a multiculturalist approach (Meer and Modood 2012, Kymlicka 2012, Wievorka 2012). In Latin America, discussions about multiculturalism and interculturalidad are taking place amidst increasing multicultural rhetoric and policies. However, in all settings most scholars seem to perpetuate normative and dichotomous understandings of these diversity models. Definite statements about the superiority of one model over another or about their incompatibility defeat the purpose that those models of diversity aim to address.

‘Multiculturalism [and I argue interculturalism are] read differently in different contexts, according to particular histories and traditions’ (Dussel 2001: 96). For Barrett (2013) ‘multiculturalism has taken so many different forms across countries and over time that it is vital to know which form of multiculturalism is being used in the comparison with interculturalism before the accuracy of any conclusions about the relationship between the
two can be assessed’ (Barrett 2013: 21). The same is true of intercultural orientations to diversity.

Likewise, Mendoza (2011) argues that interculturalidad, interculturalism, and multiculturalism each have ‘distinctive connotations and meanings for its participating actors…Their differences have to do with the emphasis they place on relationships and dialogue, and with the prescriptive or descriptive/analytical character of the realities in which they are embedded’ [my translation] (p. 314). ‘In that sense,’ she continues, ‘the proposals for transformation and/or improvement of relationships, for attending to and recognising difference and diversity depend on those realities’ [my translation] (2011: 316). I agree with Mendoza (2011) that conversations about models of diversity in the Americas need to take place within ‘the realities in which they are embedded’ (2011: 316), as social processes responding to particular social realities.

Levey (2012) points out that the political claims for the distinctiveness between multiculturalism and interculturalism are a response for the semantic limitations that both terms have to describe and prescribe ways to address diversity in modern societies. A potential avenue to expand semantic reach would include exploring a multicultural-intercultural continuum, or diversity spectrum, rather than a multicultural-intercultural dichotomy. Bouchard’s (2011) work can be useful in contextualising the diversity spectrum of different countries. He presents three levels of analysis, each nesting the next: paradigms, models, and societal structure (443). Bouchard (2011) notes that a nation can adhere to one or more paradigms and ‘that a paradigm can accommodate more than one model—and sometimes very different models’ (444).

Other avenues would involve investigating the circulation of ideas about diversity through continental cross-pollinations and ‘multicultural policy web[s]’ (Joshee and Johnson
Joshee and Johnson (2007) have already pointed out the existence of an ‘ongoing dialogue about diversity policies in Canada and the United States’ (6) which has involved teaching, professional development, and scholarship. For Joshee and Johnson (2007),

[C]onsidering policy in the context of a web of interrelated, ongoing policies (Oquist 2000) provides a powerful metaphor for thinking about and mapping multicultural education policies…[T]his web has rings that represent the different levels at which policy is formally located, and cross-cutting threads that, while connected, are not necessarily harmonious. The points at which the threads cross the rings represent discrete policy texts, each of which is the result of historical struggles. Significantly, the web draws our attention to the open spaces between the threads. In these spaces individuals have some freedom to act in ways that support, extend, or undermine stated policy objectives and to introduce new ideas that may influence the policy discourse. The web metaphor acknowledges that the policy process is complex and involves actors from both within and outside the state (6).

Less well-known are the webs of cross-pollination between Anglo-American or Francophone countries and Spanish or Portuguese America. However, this does not mean they are non-existent, but mainly not easily accessible (McLaren, 1998).

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I highlighted how debates about MC and IC have developed differently in Latin America, than they have in Canada and Europe. I pointed out that Latin American interculturalidad presents important differences from interculturalism and multiculturalism in North America and Europe. Specifically, interculturalidad did not emerge as a response to post-immigrant social formations but to colonial and post-colonial dynamics, for which multiculturalism is perceived as inadequate. However – although contested –
multicultural discourses in Latin America are rising, both as tools for the remaking of the state and as alternatives to the perceived assimilationist rhetoric of mestizaje.

After an examination of contemporary debates on the distinctions between MC and IC in Europe and the Americas, I interrogated current tendencies to perpetuate normative and dichotomous understandings of diversity models rather than contextual and complementary perspectives. Instead, I proposed increasing current engagement in cross-continental and multilingual collaborations and examining the intersections of national trajectories, global processes, and circulation of ideas from a comparative perspective. As conversations expand to include areas of the world like Latin America, Africa, and Asia, scholars should keep in mind that the study of MC and IC should not be done in English only (Macedo and Bartolomé 1999, Wieviorka 2014), nor should it be conducted in academic, disciplinary, or geo-political bubbles.
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