

THE THREE PARADIGMS OF *MESTIZAJE*:
REALIZING DEMOCRACY IN A TRANSNATIONAL
WORLD OF CROSSING BORDERS

“LOS TRES PARADIGMAS DEL MESTIZAJE: CÓMO
HACER DEMOCRACIA EN UN MUNDO TRANSNA-
CIONAL DE FRONTERAS PERMEABLES”

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RESUMEN

El mestizaje, una herencia latinoamericana centrada en la mutua transformación tanto de europeos como de indígenas americanos, ha tenido dos paradigmas interpretativos predominantes. Al sur de la frontera mejicana, tanto las élites dirigentes como los académicos han usado con frecuencia el mestizaje para justificar la mezcla de población europea, indígena, africana y de otro origen que sin embargo tiene una ascendencia cultural europea. Al contrario, en la herencia chicana (mejicano-americana) al norte de la frontera entre México y Estados Unidos, la conquista del suroeste americano por parte de colonos predominantemente anglos (europeo-americanos) -“nosotros no cruzamos la frontera, la frontera nos cruzó“-lleva a los académicos mejicano-americanos a definir el mestizaje como resistencia y como un modo de buscar autonomía.

Este artículo explora esta división conceptual y sugiere por qué ambos paradigmas estarían incompletos. Nada ganamos envileciendo a uno u otro lado en tales intercambios. Dado que el mestizaje se supone que trata de la mezcla de las culturas indígena y europea ¿es posible imaginar una mezcla que no favorezca a una de las culturas que la forman? Este artículo ofrece un tercer paradigma de mestizaje. A través del trabajo de Jorge Gracia, Virgil Elizondo y Jacques Audinet, el mestizaje se redefine como la búsqueda de la realización de intersecciones laterales e igualitarias entre gentes y culturas diversas en la plataforma transnacional. Este estudio será relevante para los trabajadores sociales, no solo de los estados unidos, sino también en cualquier lugar del mundo desarrollado en que se trate de dar servicio a inmigrantes de países en desarrollo en la era pos-colonial.

ABSTRACT

Mestizaje, a Latin American heritage focusing on the mutual transformation of the European and indigenous peoples in the Americas has had two predominant interpretative paradigms. South of the U.S.-Mexico border, both ruling elites and scholars have frequently used *mestizaje* to justify a mixing of European, indigenous, African, and other peoples that nevertheless have the European culture ascendant. Conversely, in the Chicano (Mexican-American) heritage north of the U.S.-Mexico border, the conquest of the U.S. Southwest

by predominantly Anglo (European-American) settlers - “we didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us” - leads Mexican-American scholars to render *mestizaje* as resistance and as a way of seeking agency. .

This article explores this conceptual divide and suggest why both paradigms should be found wanting. We gain little by vilifying one side or the other exclusively in such exchanges. Given that *mestizaje* is supposed to be about a mixing of indigenous and European cultures, is it possible to envision a mixing that does not privilege any of the contributing cultures? This article offers a third *integration* paradigm of *mestizaje*. Drawing upon the work of Jorge Gracia, Virgil Elizondo, and Jacques Audinet, *mestizaje* is recast as the pursuit of realizing lateral, egalitarian intersections between diverse peoples and cultures on the transnational stage. This study will be relevant to social workers, not just in the United States, but also to those anywhere in the developed world wrestling with how to service migrants from the developing world in the post-colonial era.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Mestizaje, Frontera con México, Población indígena, Multiculturalismo, Democracia mestiza, Mestizaje e Identidad..

KEYWORDS: Mestizaje, Mexican border, Indigenous people, Multiculturalism, Mestizo democracy, Mestizaje and Identity

Mestizaje, traditionally has referred to the biological and cultural mixing of the European and indigenous (aboriginal) peoples in the Americas, initiated by the Spanish conquistadors. In *Mestizo Democracy* (2002), I suggested that *mestizaje* offered an alternative to the two poles of the debate over multiculturalism – assimilation and separatism. Assimilation, seeks to amalgamate diverse cultures into a universal, uniform model. By contrast, separatism strives to preserve the integrity of cultural traditions, contends that cultural traditions are incommensurable to each other, and argues that appeals to universal norms are simply one culture superimposing its tradition over another. Instead, I argued that a *mestizo* democracy entails that cultures can intersect and mutually transform each other in ways that ultimately seek to overcome the conqueror-conquered dynamic. In so doing, I contended that our public life will be much richer than one in which “one size fits all” or one that is an agonal contest between tribal enclaves.¹

However, as one examines further scholarly treatments of *mestizaje* in Latino and Latin American studies, one realizes that an uplifting-resistance divide analogous to the above assimilation-resistance divide emerges. Within the Latin American world south of the U.S.-Mexico border, both ruling elites and scholars have used *mestizaje* to justify a mixing of European, indigenous, African, and other peoples that nevertheless has the European culture ascendant. Conversely, in the Chicano (Mexican-American) heritage north of the U.S.-Mexico border, *mestizaje* has largely been articulated in terms of the Native American experience of being a conquered people and thus *mestizaje* is articulated as a way of seeking agency through resistance.

In this paper, I will explore why both articulations of *mestizaje* should be found wanting. Contrary to those who simply write off *mestizaje* as a clever form of European assimilation in Latin America, the experiences and writings of Chicano activists and scholars suggest that *mestizaje* can be a powerful way of manifesting resistance to structures of domination.

¹ Toward this end, I have principally relied on the exegesis of *mestizaje* in U.S. Latino theology. Strikingly, this theological exegesis of *mestizaje*, largely is not addressed in nontheological scholarly articulations of *mestizaje*.

But conversely, what potential does the Chicano articulation of *mestizaje* manifest, not just for showing resistance, but also for pursuing a much more inclusive, democratic politics not just for the United States, but also across the Americas? Can one envision a lateral mixing of indigenous and European cultures that does not privilege either heritage?² Toward this end, I will outline a third paradigm of *mestizaje* that while acknowledging the historic derivation of the notion in Latin America, conceptually recasts *mestizaje* as the project of realizing lateral, egalitarian intersections between cultures, not just between the European-American and U.S. Latino heritages, but between diverse peoples in many locales across the globe.

The first two sections of my presentation will review the uplifting and resistance renderings or interpretations of *mestizaje*, largely through respectively the analyses of Marilyn Grace Miller and Rafael Pérez-Torres. Some might argue that relying so heavily on these two works potentially precludes other interpretations of the Latin American and Chicano rendering of *mestizaje*. However, both works are exhaustive literature reviews of the subject and therefore I contend are quite reliable syntheses of these opposite paradigms. The third section will then critically evaluate both paradigms and suggest that in the end, both are representative of “either-or” as opposed to “and-both” thinking. The fourth section will then move beyond the uplifting-resistance divide by presenting a lateral *mestizaje* through the work of Jacques Audinet, Virgil Elizondo, and Jorge Gracia, as well as my own work. The fifth section will suggest the implications of a lateral *mestizaje* for public policy and social work in a growing transnational world. The sixth and final section will conclude with the relevance of a lateral *mestizaje* for democratic engagement of the multicultural challenges of a post 9-11 world.

THE UPLIFTING PARADIGM

In the uplifting rendering of *mestizaje*, the descendents of the Spanish conquistadors are presented as cleansing and elevating both the indigenous and African populations in Latin America. This could be called also the purification paradigm. Although, the mixing of races is embraced more in Latin America than in English-dominated regions of North America, the European heritage is still portrayed as ascendant.

As captured by Marilyn Grace Miller is her text, *Rise and Fall of the Cosmic Race* (2004), *mestizaje* has been projected as the uplifting of the indigenous and African populations through their encounter with the Europeans in Latin America. Although, supposedly places like the *Plaza de las Tres Culturas* in Mexico City symbolize the intersections of cultures in a mutual fashion, actually they turn “attention . . . from the everyday experiences of nonwhite and nonurban communities that did not share the values and goals of the mestizo majority” (Miller 2004, p. 4). Moreover, on a conceptual level, Miller pinpoints a gap ensues between the official ideology that celebrates nonwhite contributions and actual “pejorative” use of “categories such as ‘indio’ and ‘negro’” (Miller, 2004, p. 4). Indeed, Latin America is famous for its cataloging or racial combinations and thus acknowledges different combinations of cultures as opposed to the historical strict boundaries separating

² *Mestizaje* in Latin American also includes the contributions of Africans brought to the Americas as slaves. Contemporary articulations of *mestizaje* in the United States also acknowledge the contributions of Asians and other cultures to this dynamic mixing.

races in the United States. Nevertheless, the European heritage is still given a privileged rank in this hierarchy.

The works and talks of Simon Bolivar and José Martí, in Miller's account, capture the modern articulation of *mestizaje* in Latin America. On the one hand, Bolivar praises the mixture of races in Latin America as representing a difference that justifies independence from Spain:

We must keep in mind that our people are neither European nor North American; rather they are a mixture of African and the Americans who originated in Europe....The greater portion of the native Indians has been annihilated; Spaniards have mixed with Americans and Africans, and Africans with Indians and Spaniards (Miller, 2004, p. 9).³

On the other hand, as Miller makes quite evident, Bolivar emphasizes: 1) the passivity and inferiority of the indigenous population, 2) Blacks are essentially slaves, and 3) Whites have "intellectual qualities" which are essential for dealing with "the moral situation and material circumstances in South America" (Miller, 2004, p. 10-11).

If Bolivar accents *mestizaje* to distinguish Latin America from Spain, José Martí, as Miller notes, develops *mestizaje* as a bulwark against "the United States' expansionist designs on Cuba, Puerto Rico, large chunks of Central America, and other regions" (Miller, 2004, p. 12). Martí explicitly praises racial mixing to counter the discourse on racial superiority in the United States.⁴ Unfortunately, Martí's project too easily gets manipulated by the subsequent projects of others stressing "union, assimilation, harmony, synthesis, and cooperation" (Miller, 2004, p. 14) which in turn will become the basis for aesthetic nationalisms in Latin America in the twentieth century (Burke, 2002, p. 62). Finally, according to Miller, 19th and 20th century accounts of *mestizaje* in Latin America use the heterogeneity of the Greco-Roman heritage – the "Latin" in Latin America – to distinguish Latin Americans from both the nationalisms of Europe and the assimilationism of the United States (Miller 2004, p. 15).

The most problematic Latin American narrative regarding *mestizaje* remains José Vasconcelos' text, *La Raza Cósmica* (1925). Vasconcelos argues there are three key periods of history – the martial, the political, and the aesthetic through which humanity shifts respectfully from tribal conflict to rule-bound conduct to finally a rationality ordered by beauty, joy, and love. This final phase synthesizes the four principal races – African, Asian, European, and indigenous – into *la raza cósmica*.

Vasconcelos addresses six concerns (Burke, 2002). First, he seeks to counter the growing preponderance of positivist thinking in European and U.S. American philosophy with the artistic synthesis of opposites of the aesthetic rationality, stemming from the Iberian tradition. Second, his spiritual orientation oriented by beauty, joy, and love offers an alternative to the growing economic imperialism of the United States in Latin America.

³ Although Miller contends that this passage suggests that Bolivar "dismisses the notion of purity as well" (2004, 9), purity in this context refers to being a pure-blooded African, American (indigenous), or European. Her overall exegesis of Bolivar communicates he subscribes to purification as I am employing the terms – the superior contribution of European culture in *mestizaje*.

⁴ King (2005) especially shows how the Progressive movement in the United States was very inscribed with the notion that European superiority could be scientifically proven.

Third, Vasconcelos seeks to articulate a Mendelian rendering of race relations, accenting diversity and hybridity, in contrast to Social Darwinist accounts of race relations. Fourth, Vasconcelos aims to counter the petty nationalisms that emerge in Latin America independence movements for they pit the people of Latin America against each other and make them much more vulnerable to neocolonial economic domination. Fifth, counter to the materialism of the global economy, Vasconcelos projects a transnational spiritual reconciliation of diverse cultures and perspectives. Sixth, Vasconcelos' critique of both economic imperialism and Social Darwinism appeals to groups such as Chicanos that are caught between cultures and are economically marginalized.

On the other hand, Vasconcelos' narrative also fits into the Latin American uplifting rendering of *mestizaje*.

The lower types of the species will be absorbed by the superior type... Inferior races, upon being educated, would become less prolific, and the better specimens would go on ascending a scale of ethnic improvement, whose maximum type is not precisely the White, but that the new race to which the White himself will have to aspire with the object of conquering the synthesis. The Indian, by grafting onto the related race, would take the jump of millions of years that separate Atlantis from our times... (Vasconcelos, 1925/1997, p. 32).

As both Alan Knight and Miller amplify, Vasconcelos' lingering European hegemony has three flaws: 1) it projects an epistemology onto presumably inferior peoples, 2) the *mestizaje* that ensues is quite rationally planned, with an eye to "retaining the positive and discarding the negative," and 3) his framework perpetuates "racist assumptions of Western European thought" in "postrevolutionary Mexico" (Miller, 2004, p. 35-36). In turn, as Miller points out, as much as Vasconcelos' projects *la raza cósmica*, the city he cites as exemplary is Buenos Aires – a locale hardly prototypical of *mestizaje* (Miller, 2004, p. 32-33). Moreover, years later, as Miller reminds us, Vasconcelos rejects *la raza cósmica* claiming that such cultural mixing might very well produce "a decadence which now would no longer be of merely national but of worldwide proportions" (Miller, 2004, p. 41).

In conclusion, although much more acknowledgement and celebration of cultural mixing and transformation ensues in Latin America than in English North America, the intellectual and political leaders largely manipulate it to distinguish Latin America from both the United States and European nation-states, not to realize an egalitarian economic and cultural interchange between African, indigenous, and other peoples of the Americas. Hence, the uplifting rendering of *mestizaje* proves to be just a more subtle form of acculturation to European norms, not a genuine democratic engagement between diverse cultures.

THE RESISTANCE PARADIGM

If *mestizaje* is rendered by Latin Americans such as Bolívar and Vasconcelos so that the European (and especially Spanish) contribution predominates the mixture, in Chicano studies, the accent shifts to the experience of being a conquered people, analogous to the plight of the indigenous peoples of the Americas: "If then, *mestizaje* in Mexico represents a flight from the Indian, we might think of Chicana *mestizaje* as a race *toward* the Indian" (Pérez-Torres, 2006, p. 16). As Pérez-Torres accents, the vision of the Chicano movement has been shaped in the crucible of the conquest endured by indigenous peoples.

A preeminent example of such *indigenismo* is Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* (1999), which seeks to both retrieve a pre-Columbian spirituality and recast it in a feminist fashion – what she describes as “the *Coatlicue* state” (p. 63). Specifically, she argues the male dominated Aztecs separated Mesoamerica fertility figurines into Tonantzin as the Good Mother and Coatlicue as the Serpent goddess. The Spanish in turn “recast this dichotomy into Guadalupe/Virgin María, the pure virgin, and Coatlicue, the *puta* or whore” (Burke, 2002, p. 76). Anzaldúa strives to reunite both sides of the Mesoamerican fertility perspective, one that is a “fusion of opposites” (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 69).

Not unlike Vasconcelos, Anzaldúa's articulation of “crossing borders” is aesthetic. However, whereas Vasconcelos sought to counter the materialistic, positivistic, and racist character of his age with an aesthetic rationality largely drawn from the Iberian tradition, Anzaldúa effects her critique of the dominant cultures – male Aztec, Spanish *conquistador*, and then U.S. Anglo – from this captivating recasting of indigeneous spirituality that she describes as “the *Coatlicue* state” (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 63). As much as her narrative in *Borderlands* is a critique of both male and European (both Spanish or Anglo-Saxon) domination, she puts for an inclusive consciousness focused on “contradictions, ambiguity, and the combination of opposites” (Burke, 2002, p. 77). Although she uncritically connects Vasconcelos' *la raza cósmica* to her own vision, as Pérez-Torres accents “Anzaldúa's text amplifies the sense of possibility within Chicano discourse... and it provides a vision – mediated, incomplete, fractured – of the disrupted terrain that is Chicana/o *mestizaje*.” (2006, p. 29)

Pérez-Torres in his own work, *Mestizaje* (2006), argues that the nineteenth century *de facto* segregation and legal marginalization of Mexican-Americans as Indians by the dominant Anglo population, provides the basis for resistance and pursuit of agency by the Chicano movement in the twentieth century:

Identification with the Indian gave birth to a Chicano/a critical subaltern identity in solidarity with other indigenous groups throughout the Americas. That the same logic used to disempower those same populations a century later is one of the ironic legacies inherited by the mestizo body and its role in the ever-changing strategies for effecting political viability (p. 9).

Mestizaje as a counter-culture to colonial hegemonies, he continues, is “a volatile, contested, contestatory, and endlessly innovative dynamic” (Pérez-Torres, 2006, p. 33).

Therefore, the Chicano articulation of *mestizaje* is not just an empirical acknowledgement of racial or cultural mixing nor is it just a chic multiculturalism. Instead, it entails a relentless questioning of disparities in power relationships, especially those encribed with racial categories. Pérez-Torres reminds us vividly that one cannot grasp the Chicano experience of subordination without understanding the depth to which race is inscribed in this politics.

In turn, the engulfing consumerism of the global economy has emerged as the new paradigm of dominance – an insight anticipated by the counter-materialist aspect of Vasconcelos' vision. Pérez-Torres contends the dynamic, unsettled character of Chicano *mestizaje* provides a “critical realism” that can contest global capitalism (2006, p. 44).

Specifically, he draws upon Mignolo's notion of “bilanguaging” as a “crack” between “local histories and global designs” that leads to a “breakdown in global processes” (Pérez-Torres, 2006, p. 46).

Therefore, as opposed to a facile multiculturalism in which all cultures are equal, Pérez-Torres argues for a “resistant understanding of multiculturalism” (2006, p. 39) which entails “contentious and sometimes violent social transformation” (2006, p. 46). Ultimately, he contends this contentious rendering of *mestizaje* “opens up a critical realm where the doubling dynamics of locality and globality, resistance and affirmation, belonging and alienation as central components of identity can be most plainly seen” (Pérez-Torres, 2006, p. 48). Counter to the purification motif, the Chicano rendering of *mestizaje*, seeks to reverse the “erasure” of the indigenous and provide a concrete, critical resistance to globalization.

THE UPLIFTING AND RESISTANCE PARADIGMS AS “EITHER-OR” NOT “AND-BOTH” THINKING

Although *mestizaje* supposedly is an integration of cultures that does not culminate in assimilation, seemingly south of the U.S.-Mexican border proponents privilege the European heritage and north of the border accent the indigenous heritage. Undoubtedly, *mestizaje* as uplifting is a hangover of the Eurocentric colonialism and neocolonialism and should be rejected. A genuine *mestizaje* is not a covert assimilation to European norms. The democratic pursuit of multicultural relations entails that social hierarchy on the basis of ethnicity, language or race need to be abolished. In this regard, the resistance articulation of *mestizaje* does compensate for the shortcomings of the purification legacy by stressing the politics of conquest perpetrated by the European colonizations of the New World.

On the other hand, resistance accounts, such as that of Pérez-Torres, seemingly reduce *mestizaje* to being just a struggle against longstanding domination. If Vasconcelos’ *la raza cósmica* supposedly civilizes non-European identities, in Pérez-Torres’ noteworthy critical project, the conquering culture seemingly lacks the capacity for bilanguaging that the resistant population has. Consequently, no mutual cross-fertilization can ensue.

In turn, the elements of non-Latino and non-indigenous cultures that also comprise Chicano culture and differentiate it from a solely indigenous perspective are not captured in Pérez-Torres’ analysis. In this regard, the resistance articulation of *mestizaje* would benefit from W.E.B. DuBois’ articulation of the “double bind” of African-American identity: he argues one cannot reduce this identity to either just the African heritage, or American experience post-passage, because the agonal entanglement of these components constitutes this identity (Du Bois, 2004, pp. 329-34).

Finally, although Pérez -Torres emphasizes that “mestizo identity in a U.S. context promises and denies a sense of citizenship, enfranchisement, and belonging” (2006, p. 12), it is not clear how *mestizaje* as resistance transforms the structures that marginalize Chicano and indigenous peoples to realize equal access to political, economic, and social decision-making structures. If the uplifting approach indeed erases the Indian, the resistance approach in turn reifies the oppressor.

In *Mestizo Democracy*, I distinguished the ethos of a “border mentality” from that of a “frontier mentality.” The latter makes an absolute distinction between the civilized and the barbarians and consequently the barbarians either have to assimilate into the norms of the civilized or be annihilated as the civilized expand their hegemony over territory and normative systems. A border mentality, by contrast, is open to the mixing and matching of multiple cultures; cultural identities are always in transformation through the influence of

other cultures. Whereas the frontier mentality projects intersecting cultures as an “either-or,” the border mentality projects this nexus as an “and-both.”

Although the frontier mentality has been conventionally referenced as the Anglo-Saxon expansion over what is now the continental United States and the border mentality as exemplified by Latin American *mestizaje* (Burke 2002, pp. 85-86), as we have seen, *mestizaje* as rendered in both the purification and resistance motifs manifests elements of the frontier mentality. The emphasis on purifying people of color through European culture in authors such as Vasconcelos is clearly a subtle form of the frontier mentality. However, to the degree that the oppressor is objectified in the resistance motif and the marginalized sustain their creativity by rejecting the dominant culture, one gets a reversal of the frontier mentality. Just as the terms of mixing are defined by the dominant European culture in the uplifting or purification motif, the terms of mixing are defined by the marginalized indigenous or Chicano culture in the resistance motif. In either account, “either-or” thinking prevails over “both-and.”

THE LATERAL PARADIGM

If *mestizaje* is to move beyond being either a subtle form of assimilation (purification) or conversely a not-too-subtle form of a postmodern particularism resisting totalizing narratives (resistance), then we need to examine how multiple heritages mutually transform each other, even if, as in many instances, their original encounter ensued through the politics of conquest. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in particular, projects a *lateral* conception of truth that suggests it is possible to have interchanges between diverse cultures that can foster a world civilization that is neither uniform nor anarchic in character (Merleau Ponty, 1960/1964, pp. 120, 124, & 139). We are not condemned to having truth superimposed in a hegemonic fashion, nor do parochial cultural experiences inherently preclude the pursuit of truth between cultures.

Consonant with Merleau-Ponty’s vision, the deliberations of Jacques Audinet, Virgil Elizondo, and Jorge Gracia, in my judgment, suggest a *lateral* rendering of *mestizaje*. Gracia, in *Hispanic/Latino Identity* (2000) seeks within the Latin American context to articulate *mestizaje* as an open-ended lateral engagement between European, Latino, and other cultures. Elizondo, in *The Future is Mestizo* (1988), in turn, more explicitly focuses on the mutual intersection between Latino and other cultures in the United States as a basis for a “new mosaic of the human race” (p. 102). If Gracia is adept at rendering a cultural mixing that does not culminate in assimilation, amalgamation, or homogenization, Elizondo, without vilifying any of the contributing cultures, depicts how this *nuevo mestizaje* is unfolding in the U.S. Southwest. In turn, Jacques Audinet in *The Human Face of Globalization* (1999/2004) discusses *mestizaje* as a dynamic intersection between diverse cultures without any necessary reference to Latin America and articulates *mestizaje* the most in terms of democratic political theory. If Gracia’s interpretation is the most ensconced in a Latin America context, Audinet’s is the most transnational in outlook. Given Audinet’s, Elizondo’s, and Gracia’s respective reflections, as well as my own ruminations in *Mestizo Democracy*, I submit that a lateral *mestizaje* - that projects an egalitarian mixing of cultures that moves beyond the purification-resistance divide - has eight key characteristics.

First, a lateral *mestizaje* is open-ended, as opposed to accenting one heritage or another: “This conception of who we are is open and pluralistic, allowing the coexistence of other, multiple, and variegated identities” (Gracia, 2000, p. 87). Not only do features of the intersecting combining persist in the mix, but that the result is not necessarily the same in each person or place: “It can be a principle of union without implying the kind of homogenization which obliterates the contributions made by different ethnic and racial elements” (Gracia, 2000, p. 109). Furthermore, the unpredictability of *mestizaje* entails “a constant changing reality whose unity can be found only in the continuity provided by historical relations” (Gracia, 2000, p. 120).

Second, a lateral *mestizaje* emphasizes that differentiation and universalization are integral, not antithetical to each other: “in the future we will begin to witness a world culture that will be at once universal and particular” (Elizondo, 1988, p. 95). Consequently, we need to be wary of schemes that either purify cultures to an undifferentiated whole or remain stuck in resistance to dominant cultures masquerading as universals.

Third, a lateral *mestizaje* breaks down the hard-line separation between being this culture or that culture. Cultures are not possessions to be preserved from each other, but forever remain in dynamic relationship to each other. As opposed to the purity of sheer universalization or parochial tribes, Gracia beckons us to welcome “racial, ethnic, and cultural promiscuity” (Gracia, 2000, p. 121). As Audinet contends, *mestizaje* demolishes symbolic dichotomies such as the “pure v. unpure” or the “spirit v. body” that have perpetuated hierarchies and relationship of subordination (2004, pp. 199-25). He particularly chastises the focus on utilitarian efficiency in New England Puritanism that culminates in a “radical segregation” based on the presumed utility of group based on “skin color” and other such group markers (Audinet, 2004, pp. 121).⁵

Fourth, a lateral *mestizaje* moves beyond its historic origins in the intersection of principally Spanish and indigenous peoples in Latin America to the challenges of the growing encounter between diverse cultures, especially between former colonized and colonizers in the developed world. Like the Chicano articulation of resistance, Elizondo focuses on the intersection of the Anglo Saxon, Mexican, and the indigenous cultures in the U.S. Southwest, but unlike the resistance motif, does not reduce the Anglo-Saxon contribution just to conquest and renders the outcome of this mixture as hopeful:

The old Nordic cultures of Europe, which formed the cultural base of the U.S. A. are meeting and merging with the Latin mestizo cultures of the old Iberian world, which mesticized with the native nations of the Americas. In the borderlands between the U.S.A. and Mexico, peoples who have never really met before are today meeting one another, intermingling, and becoming a new and united people. Differences are not being destroyed, but they are being transcended and celebrated as we usher in the beginning of the new race of humanity. (Elizondo, 1988, p. 111)

Audinet in turn, depicts *mestizaje* as the growing dynamic confluence and transformation between diverse cultures throughout the world, and especially in France:

⁵ This is important counter-point to scholars such as Samuel Huntington, who in *Who are We?* (2004) ties U.S. core political values to this Puritan heritage.

Mestizo. The word is gradually finding its way into places and situations where previously it was unknown. It no longer solely concerns other people, elsewhere, on islands; now it concerns us here.... People are beginning to talk about mestizaje in connection with ideas, groups, or lifestyles (Audinet 2004, p. 1).

Therefore, mestizaje moves beyond its original biological casting in Latin America to become an ethos of embracing cultural mixing between all types of culture and especially between cultures that have previously endured a dominator v. dominated relationship.

Fifth, a lateral *mestizaje*, reminiscent of arguments by both Vasconcelos and Pérez-Torres, constitutes a powerful counter-point to the materialism and consumerism of the global economy. Especially Elizondo is confident of the capacity of diverse people not just to resist such deleterious economic outcomes, but to project an alternative form of universality that does not reduce human relations to being an exchange of commodities (Elizondo, 1988, pp. 93 & 97).⁶

Sixth, a lateral *mestizaje* is intrinsically tied to the realization of democracy. Audinet especially emphasizes democracy as the ethical and legal basis for facilitating diverse cultural interaction. The rise of both modernity and democracy, in his analysis, makes possible a mixing of cultures that does not subordinate one culture to another. The rule of democratic law and its insistence of human rights, he continues, projects a concept of citizenship that enables each person to transcend tribal identities (Audinet, 2004, pp. 89, 94, & 98). Whereas tribal identities are exclusionary of other cultures, democracy enables the encounter between those who are different on an equal basis. Building upon Charles Taylor's contention that it is on the basis of recognizing difference that a genuine dialogue can ensue, Audinet contends democratic interchange provides a fertile basis for inexhaustible novel combinations of identities (Audinet, 2004, pp. 99 & 147).

Seventh, a lateral *mestizaje* engages the violence, discrimination, and marginalization endured historically by both indigenous and African peoples at the hand of *los conquistadors* as offering a basis for "transforming recognition, of universality, and of new identities" (Audinet, 2004, p. 140). This legacy of violence legacy of *mestizaje*, both in the conquest of Latin America, and the subsequent colonization of the U.S. Southwest, precisely makes this heritage a vital resource for empowering previously marginalized outcasts in the politics of colonialism and neocolonialism. In other words, one has to work through the legacy of such conflicts in order to realize egalitarian intersections between diverse cultures.

Eighth, ultimately, contrary to those such as Huntington who see only "clashes between civilizations" (1996) on the horizon, a lateral *mestizaje* projects that multicultural interchange pursued as a democratic interchange with "the other" offers a constructive engagement of the many agonal tensions that vex communities from the transnational to the local level. Elizondo elicits a "radical universalizing" through "opening up to," not annihilating "others" (1988, pp. 108-09). Moreover, as Audinet accents, we need to engage geography, not as the study of particular *places* that distinguish us from one another, but rather as the *spaces* in which diverse cultures can intersect and transform each other (2004, pp. 18-19 & 52-53).

⁶ Elizondo's and Audinet's claims that a lateral *mestizaje* poses an alternative to the global economy also challenges Victor David Hansen's in *Mexifornia* (2003) contention that even if Latino immigrants to the United States are not assimilated to longstanding U.S. cultural values, they will be assimilated through consumerism.

Ultimately, a lateral *mestizaje* entails neither a uniform dominant culture purifying subjugated particular cultures nor particular cultures resisting the pursuit of a lateral truth enabling cultural cross-fertilization. Instead, it works through the conqueror-conquered dynamic to project the basis on which cultures can mutually transform each other on an equal basis.

CRITICAL CONCERNS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL POLICY

As attractive as a lateral *mestizaje* is when compared to the uplifting and resistance alternatives, especially in Audinet's and Elizondo's renderings it has an idyllic cast that would have more grit if it would engage the following constructive criticisms. Does a lateral *mestizaje* actually pose a credible *universal* alternative to the global economy or to the capacity of dominant cultures to extend their hegemony? Audinet and Elizondo need to provide specific illustrations. In turn, how accurate is their contention that the engagement between others is on an equal basis and not just a seductive form of purification? Despite Elizondo's rosy prognosis, U.S. Latinos remain marginalized in terms of both education and wealth. In turn, the almost romantic evocation of *mestizaje* in France by Audinet seemingly has not resolved the cultural conflicts manifested in urban rioting in its Islamic neighborhoods. Growing tensions, across Europe between natives and immigrants, especially from the Islamic world, thus, suggest a democratic cultural mixing still has some distance to travel.

A deeper criticism of a lateral *mestizaje* would be whether in fact democracy in leading to the dynamic intersection and transformation of cultures that Audinet projects or in fact has the extension of democracy beyond the Eurocentric sphere actually led to the unification of tribalism with democracy? Specifically, Michael Mann (2005) contends that the rise of genocide in the past century is actually tied to the fact that democracy has merged with, not transformed tribalism in many parts of the world. Therefore, the type of democracy consonant with a lateral *mestizaje* has to be further elaborated: not a majority rule that has no respect for marginalized groups, but one whose terms and conditions 1) enable all cultural groups participate as equals in the political, social, and economic forums and 2) project an ethos of mutual interchange and transformation.

Although there is not enough space in this essay to develop elaborate answers to these criticisms, I do want to suggest some concrete practices that in my judgment facilitate a lateral *mestizaje*. These illustrations certainly do not preclude others and in fact I hope they provoke others to think about programs and policies that enable a democratic ethos of "crossing borders."

First, a lot of debate has ensued in the United States over bilingual education programs. Nativists insist that they constitute a threat to the nation's identity by reinforcing a language minority whereas some advocates of bilingual education insist on the necessity of sustaining the language of a people in order to sustain their culture. From an "and-both" disposition, we should be focusing instead on developing dual language programs. In dual language, everyone, regardless of their racial and cultural background, becomes fluent in two languages – for instance Spanish and English in the U.S. Southwest. The languages in the program would vary according to the circumstances of the region. In Europe potentially, Arabic and Turkish, in addition to the traditional array of European languages would be in the mix. In any case, the ethos of a lateral *mestizaje* entails we oppose any forced imposition of one language on a community, as in the case of "English-only" initiatives in the United States.

Second, over the past two decades, in the U.S., affirmative action programs that give preference to historically discriminated minorities have similarly provoked controversy. From the standpoint of a lateral *mestizaje*, such initiatives need to be reconceptualized as an attempt to ensure 1) that there is genuine equality of opportunity for each person regardless of their background and 2) that ensuring such opportunity, enables the overall community to grow through the mutual confluence of contributions of diverse cultures. Such initiatives enable us to do an ethical inventory of our educational, employment, and public policy practices. Are we indeed enabling equal access to these networks or are we in fact purifying who gets to participate in them? If the answer is the latter, then no one should be surprised when a counter-culture of resistance ensues.

Third, and most importantly, in providing programs and services to immigrants we need to shift from seeing them as moving from a country of exile to a host country to understanding, that in a global economy, they have loyalties to multiple locales. As opposed to being immigrants (unidirectional), they are migrants (bidirectional or multidirectional). The longstanding migrations back and forth between villages in Mexico and Central America and cities in the United States are illustrative of the fact that people who have multiple national loyalties and increasingly dual citizenship. In turn, the mutual challenges to European nation-states posed by both the transnational European Union and separatist movements within European countries constitute a different take on what citizenship means in a fluid world. Rather than having loyalty to a transnational unit *or* a nation state *or* a regional subnational entity, one can have and probably will have loyalties to all three – again a “both-and,” not an “either-or.” In this regard, Europe in the twenty-first century is manifesting a postmodern version of the Holy Roman Empire in which persons have multiple crisscrossing identities as opposed to tightly scripted univocal ones (Axtmann, 2003). Charting the parameters of a transnational citizenship is crucial for social work informed by inclusive democratic practices, for otherwise it will be defined by transnational corporations and institutions that have no political accountability.

These gleanings on language programs, equity programs, and transnational conceptions of citizenship are initial forays into the ethics and politics of a lateral *mestizaje*. Essentially, if we are to realize the democratic type of interchange that Audinet envisions, then we need to examine whether our prevailing political, social, and economic practices encourage the mixing and matching of multiple identities and if they do not, then we need to transform them to realize a mutual interchange between diverse equals.

CONCLUSION

I have reviewed three different paradigms of *mestizaje*. The first paradigm, derived from Latin American figures of the past two centuries stresses European uplifting of the indigenous and other peoples. The second paradigm, derived from Chicano studies, aligns *mestizaje* with the plight and resistance of indigenous peoples. In turn, the third paradigm of *mestizaje* emphasizes a more genuine “both-and” mutual confluence and transformation between cultures.

Especially in the wake of 9-11, when the differences between cultures and creeds threaten to render the world apart, it is pivotal that we cultivate discourses that build bridges, not walls between cultures and civilizations. The composition of cultures and civilizations is a complicated affair, as Edward Said points out, in which multiple and varied

traditions continually intersect (2002, pp. 368-70). Therefore, it is imperative to articulate an ethical and political vision that moves beyond the conflict intrinsic to “us v. them” rendering of clashes between civilizations. Otherwise, he continues, “... we are going to end up superficially and stridently banging the drum for “our” culture in opposition to all others” (Said, 2002, p. 375).

Unlike those who would contend that *mestizaje*, due to its controversial exegesis of racial and cultural mixing derived from the conquest of the Americas, should be left behind in twenty-first century discussions of hybridity and transculturation, I maintain *mestizaje* remains a very powerful discourse for engaging in the type of discourse Said emphasizes. Precisely because the discourse on *mestizaje* is forged in the crucible of conquest, both in the original encounter between the Spanish conquistadors and the indigenous peoples in 1492 and then the subsequent subjugations of Latino peoples in the 1846-48 U.S.-Mexico War and the 1898 Spanish-American War, it is invaluable for projecting both the possibilities and limits of cultural mixing.

Therefore, the heritage of *mestizaje* especially has vital relevance for whether genuine democratic relations can be achieved between the developing and the developed world. Indeed, a lateral *mestizaje* needs to engage further on what terms former conquerors and conquered can mutually transform each other on equal terms. On the other hand, if *mestizaje* is just rendered, as in the resistance motif, as a set of practices that contests dominant cultures, we too easily concede the characterization of cultural politics to realists like Huntington who contend strife and conflict are intrinsic to human plurality.

In many respects, moving *mestizaje* beyond the uplifting-resistance divide returns us to the issues raised by Barolomé de las Casas (1552/1992a, 1552/1992b) in the first decades following the Spanish Conquest regarding on what terms genuine dialogue can ensue between distinct cultural perspectives – in his case, between civilizations that previously were literally worlds apart. We gain little by vilifying one side or the other exclusively in such exchanges, despite the politics of conquest that all-too-often sets the terms of such interchanges. Yes, we need to move beyond Eurocentrism and neo-colonialism, but how do we do so in a way that continues the promising sides of the Enlightenment project and extirpates the deleterious ones? Be it European, indigenous or other cultural legacies, what are the strengths and drawbacks of each and how do we draw upon these respective strengths to fashion *democratic* practices that cultivate mutual enrichment and growth between diverse cultures? A lateral *mestizaje*, thus, remains a vital contributor to ongoing discourses on how to realize democracy and human rights in a post-Eurocentric world.

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