

THE INTERCONNECTED COMMUNITY:
LESSONS FROM THE ANDES ON ECOLOGICAL
REGENERATION AND INTERCULTURALISM

By:

Tessa Hicks

Presented to the Graduate Faculty of Claremont
Graduate University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Cultural Studies Program within the Arts and
Humanities Department

I certify that I have read this document and approve it
as adequate in scope and quality for the degree of
Master of Arts.

Faculty Advisor: Lourdes Arguelles

Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My own spiritual, emotional and intellectual inspiration and expansion, in both this paper and my life's journey in general, is due largely to the following scholars /activists/ mentors: Jorge Ishizawa, Grimaldo Rengifo Vasquez, Lourdes Arguelles, and Robin D.G. Kelley. I am extremely grateful for the insights, challenges, and loving support that I have received from each of them.

I also thank my family, my friends, my lovers (past and present), my colleagues, my classmates and my samba sisters for nurturing me in the glorious cradle of community. I am indebted to each of them, but most especially to Dennis, Hala and John for their companionship on the road of these difficult topics; they never failed to remind me of my power to root down and rise up in each moment of the journey.

Tremendous gratitude is due to the beautiful people who opened their homes and hearts to me in Peru and offered me a new lens through which to see the world. Finally, with great humility, I offer thanks to Pachamama and the many ecological, cosmological and intercultural mysteries that continually keep me wide-eyed and curious. Axé!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ii

CHAPTER I..... 5

Introduction: Exploring the Andes of Peru

Methods to the madness: Introducing inquiry and story-telling

Questioning “established truths” of my culture

CHAPTER II..... 14

An introduction to Andean cosmology and PRATEC’s efforts to
preserve it

A personal leap into another way of seeing, being and knowing

Interconnectedness between earth, community and cosmology

Mutual Nurturance

The Role of Education

Decolonization

Cultural Affirmation

Interculturalism

CHAPTER III..... 47

Introduction: Looking at the big picture, looking in the mirror:

Nurturing interconnectedness back home

“Mestiza consciousness” serving as a road-map for the cross-

pollination of Interculturalism

Identity- Empathy- Action

Individualism under the microscope

Interculturalism in a multicultural setting

Pachamama (Mother Earth): The reality of her wounds and options

for her healing

Fight the power or Affirm our power?

Individualism, Over-consumerism and Imperialism: Loving

ourselves out of our bad habits

Embedding ourselves in community as a resistance to capitalism or

means of re-inventing it

The relative nature of Progress and Poverty

CHAPTER IV..... 80

Tensions

Conclusion

WORKS CITED..... 91

Chapter I.

Introduction: Exploring the Andes of Peru

[...]community and ecologically centered cultures represent the majority of the world's population. Because they are not oriented toward creating new technologies and monetizing their knowledge and relationships, they are less visible than the promoters of Western development highlighted by the media and Western educational systems. Thus, the efforts [...] are directed toward strengthening local traditions of knowledge that are being threatened by the spread of Western-based monoculture. The promotion of universals, whether in the form of representing critical reflection as the only valid approach to knowledge, the Western ideal of the autonomous individual, or the economic assumptions underlying the World Trade organization, represents an effort to sustain a tradition of exploitation that current changes in the Earth's ecosystems are forcing us to abandon. The environment will also force us to recognize that the future lies with the revitalization of local knowledge and cultures that are as diverse as ecosystems. And it will force us to acknowledge that the industrial model of progress and the deep cultural assumptions it is based on [...] is the reactionary position today. (Bowers 5)

The lifestyles and cosmologies of indigenous¹ communities of the Amazon and Andes of Peru hold many lessons for Judeo-Christian-based, industrial, capitalist communities of the U.S. They teach the importance of sustaining traditional agricultural practices that maintain the planet's richest biodiversity and culturally affirming and mutually nurturing intercultural relations. Yet, affirming Andean traditions of interconnectedness, interculturalism and regeneration is often a lost practice in

¹ My colleagues in Peru opt not to use the term "indigenous" primarily because the folks they work with who are labeled as such do not usually use it and instead simply refer to themselves as "campesinos" (peasants). Given that these are the people whose lives my colleagues aim to support and affirm, they use the terms that are most organic to the community described. Additionally, the term "indigenous" is often embedded with political meaning in the international agenda and has been used in correlation with the Indigenista movement of many Latin American communities, which was not a part of my inquiry or connected to the folks I joined in Peru. Other terms used by my colleagues in Peru and other authors I cite are: peasants, grass-roots, local or native. The journey of finding, using and creating terms that adequately and sensitively describe the essence of that which we speak about is itself not a static endeavor. I consider my work as another means for exploring how best to do this and thus make use of all terms available.

modernity. Affirming traditions that highlight equality and nurturance between human and non-human beings and the wealth found in indigenous knowledge and collective living is not easy in many modern, industrial capitalist societies that emphasize over-consumerism, individualism and a system of unequal institutional and interpersonal power dynamics. In order to understand and embrace these indigenous traditions, we need to move beyond such binaries as “poverty” and “progress”, uproot dualistic thinking and interrogate western concepts of modernity, such as: culture, education, diversity, equality and success.

With our lives literally fenced off from both our neighbors and the natural world, we have very little access to the cycles of mutual nurturance on which regeneration and collective living thrive. We are in a crisis in modern, western, capitalist communities of extreme ecological devastation, self-serving imperialism, inter-group tensions that can result in self-segregation, victimization, scapegoating, and discrimination against marginalized communities and finally, a capitalist system that perpetuates inequalities and power struggles. Thus, it is crucial that we explore how we might un-tangle ourselves from these societal ills by respectfully observing models of cultural affirmation, regeneration and interconnected collectivity that many Peruvian indigenous communities still retain as common practice. By turning to models of de-colonization², interculturalism and cultural affirmation that exist in various indigenous communities and grass-roots agencies in the Andes and Amazon of Peru, we may find ways to nurture and integrate these practices into western communities. In this paper, I explore both relevant norms of

² While “de-colonization’ in the Andes will be explored later in this paper, it should generally be understood as so:” Decolonization simply consists in the decision and corresponding action of recovering here in the Andes, fully and right now, the culture that is our own and which guarantees us healthy, creative, diligent and joyful life. [...] to decolonize is to affirm our Andean culture and to reject the imperialist pretention of homogenizing peoples, overwhelming one’s own culture.” (Fernandez, 230-2)

my own U.S., modern, industrial capitalist culture, and the lessons I gained from the Andean cosmologies in order to address our precarious state of inter-group relations, over-consumerism and environmental devastation.

Methods to the madness: Introducing inquiry and story-telling

The bulk of my inquiry consists of stories and notes from my participation in various cultural affirmation and intercultural programs, reflections on my understanding of the particular organizations and indigenous communities I visited and words from the mouths of campesinos and grass-roots organizers that I met³. My writing is grounded in an auto-ethnographic, narrative research approach to inquiry. This approach is informed by traditional qualitative research methods currently in use in the field of Cultural Studies, as well as the transdisciplinary tradition of my academic grounding. This narrative is used to explore my inquiry within many communities in Peru and the U.S., as one who is personally invested in the process of exchange in intercultural relations.

As someone not born into the indigenous culture that I speak about in this paper, I am unable and unwilling to speak *for* this community in any way. My interpretation of the values, customs, traditions and knowledge of the native communities I have studied and visited are based solely on a short period of exposure to them and therefore surely contain gaps, oversights, and misinterpretations. In writing about the manner in which these native communities of Peru have been “otherized” and marginalized, I attempt to avoid further objectifying them in this paper. Negotiating this type of respectful studying,

³ While I don't pretend to assume that my short time in the Andes, the words of the folks I quote and the work of the organizations I visited represent “established truths” about either “indigenous” or “western” ways of life and of knowing, I am happy to offer these as examples of some perspectives that might further the crucial dialogue on the subjects of this paper.

researching and writing is difficult but necessary in order to do justice to the intention of honoring the traditions about which I write instead of furthering an “us and them” duality. Addressing this tension in the role of the qualitative researcher, Michelle Fine reminds us:

Self and Other are knottily entangled. This relationship, as lived between researchers and informants, is typically obscured in social science text, protecting privilege, securing distance, and laminating the contradictions. Despite denials, qualitative researchers are always implicated at the hyphen. When we opt, as has been the tradition, simply to write *about* those who have been Othered, we deny the hyphen. Slipping into a contradictory discourse of individualism, personalogic theorizing, and decontextualization, we inscribe the Other, strain to white out Self, and refuse to engage the contradictions that litter out text. (Denizen and Lincoln 72)

Heeding these words of caution, I attempt to include myself and the contradictions of my own perspective and life experience, alongside that which I am studying. This journey requires tremendous self-reflection and honesty, as well as a consistent recognition of the fluid and often-times contradictory nature of both cultures and research/analysis. This is challenging to maintain in all moments, and I only hope that this paper reflects a solid step in this life-long aim that I hold as a writer, researcher, academic and activist.

To aid in this endeavor, I have chosen to write this paper using personal narrative and story-telling as much as possible. As an active bridge-builder between academia and activism, I have intentionally chosen to mirror the writings I appreciate most; those which integrate poetry, story-telling and simple analysis instead of the theory-heavy jargon which tends to inundate many academic research publications and can result in valuable information being less accessible to both academic and non-academic audiences.

Notes and stories from my travels are not reflective of quantitative research data, but instead lean more towards the art of story-telling because I carry tremendous respect

for this timeless medium that has been used to translate lessons, histories and messages from elders to youngsters, villagers to travelers, grass-roots revolutionaries to their compadres. It has been a revolutionary act, in and of itself, for my own family. My mother's stories dispelled myths of gender stereotypes and human sexuality and became banned books in the volatile political climate of the 1970's⁴; my grandparent's writing and acting careers were forced underground when they were blacklisted because of their own attempts at radical community building in the paranoid era of McCarthyism. Telling stories which affirm community-building and social empowerment are the lifelines in which I find my foundation to write this paper; lifelines which are cradled in the good company of many activists, academics and elders from various traditions, past and present.

Questioning “established truths” of my western culture

I will begin this inquiry with that which is closest to home, by critically examining some of the staple values and practices in my culture that either support or negate interconnectedness⁵. This process of self-reflection is inspired by models of deep reflection called “de-professionalization” and “de-colonization” that were introduced to me in Peru (concepts that will be more thoroughly explored later in this paper.)

⁴ The two books that my mother, wrote which were subsequently banned, are: Waxman, Stephanie. What is a girl? What is a boy? Culver City: Peace Press. 1976 and Waxman, Stephanie. Growing up, feeling good. Los Angeles: Panjandrum: 1979.

⁵ Interconnectedness is a concept and practice that will be explored throughout this paper but should be understood from the beginning as an inherent, communal interdependency that nurtures positive functioning for individual parts and the sum of these parts, without a clear delineation between the individual and collective entities. This web can be applied within and between various entities, such as: communities, cultures, values, ideas, disciplines, and human and non-human beings.

It is pertinent to recognize from the start that these reflections on my culture are based on my interpretation of customs, values and norms in which I have participated and witnessed as a citizen of the United States, specifically in the city of Los Angeles. Although my culture can be labeled as a western, Judeo-Christian-based, capitalist, modern, industrial society, no culture can be easily pinned into a well-defined, boundaried, or fixed category. Culture is a fluid expression of ever-changing communities and the political, economic, historical, psychological and cosmological sources that ground every culture are varied, innumerable, and anything but static. From its inception, “Western” culture specifically has mirrored, and more often than not, stolen, cultural traits and practices from many non-Western civilizations and indigenous communities, thus problematizing any concept of a “purely Western” norm. And then, of course, it must be said that notions of “Western” culture derive from an ethnocentric concept of the world which has affected concepts of political geography in our common understanding of what constitutes “west”. Finally, the values that I most concentrate on in this cultural analysis and reflection are probably more a repercussion of the specific developments of capitalism and modernity in my contemporary “Western” society. *That said*, please indulge me in referring to values that I feel are often times reflective of maybe not all cultures located in modern capitalist societies of the West, but certainly the modern, industrial capitalist society in which I live. (This indulgence continues in that, throughout this paper I attempt to simplify my language and end up contributing to the generalization of the many unique histories and nuances of my culture by referring to it as simply “western” culture, with the assumption that the reader understands the contradictions and complexities that exist within this word.)

I was raised in a culture that fosters a worldview that is ethno-, anglo-, and anthro-centric and yet the foundations of this epistemology were never blatantly disclosed to me as I grew up. Instead, I was told that what I read in my textbooks were “established truths”; what I was told about norms and values in regards to how to view, treat, and understand others and understand the workings of the world were “established truths”. No one explained that I was being raised in a Western, modern, industrial, capitalist, Judeo-Christian-based society that created these “truths” and that these “truths” were just one way of interpreting the world. One truth that was reinforced to me daily was that people in positions of power (within education, government, entertainment and corporations) look like me and that my white face was the norm, while in reality, this norm was simply a result of my country’s deeply embedded institutional and interpersonal racial superiority complex. I was told that I would be smart if I respected my formal educational system by learning how to read, write and think through rote memorization, and was never informed that entire civilizations took root (and found “success”) on the basis of oral tradition and indigenous knowledge. I was told that math and science were “established truths” rather than understanding that cosmology and spirituality might also offer “valid” answers to my questions of how the universe worked. I was taught that we determine the weather by reading the forecast listed at the bottom of the front page of the Los Angeles Times, not by observing the cycles of the winds, the movement of the tides, the scent of the air, or participating in a conversation with the earth. I was told that if you felt sick you should go to the doctor and take an anti-biotic, not that you could actively prevent and treat illness through the medicinal herbs in your garden. I was taught that the United States of America was created on the notion of the

“self-made man” and that the individual could pull *himself* up by the bootstraps, not that the “self-made man” was a myth built on an uneven playing field and that interdependence on your neighbor can actually be a strength, called collective living. I was not told to value dreams, myths, dances, arts or messages from my ancestors as gateways for understanding the world; these things were hardly discussed or given much validity in school or professional environments. I was told that I was lucky to be born into a democracy and that people (like my grandparents) who question if our democracy practices what it preaches and dare instead to dream of radical social change, are “un-American.”

This biased education was no fault of my family, for they tried their best to raise me to critically analyze information I received; to take moonbaths in the desert in order to feel the rhythms of the earth; to create community to find autonomy and finally to use my unique voice to manifest my own truths. I came from a non-conventional family and community of hippies and artists, bohemians and travelers, revolutionary writers, documentary-film makers and social workers. Socialism, Marxism, revolution, free love and radical consciousness were words that floated around my community of Venice and I was under the impression that this was the norm. Babysitting co-ops were our invention of modern day collective living. (Each family took on one night a week to be home and host any of the co-op’s kids whose parents wanted to go out that night; I learned to grow comfortable in sleeping anywhere, trusting other adults besides my parents, establishing a number of extended siblings, and learning what ‘it takes a village to raise a child’ really means.)

Perhaps I was not the product of a typical “Western, modern, industrial, capitalist, Judeo-Christian-based society”, yet I was still a victim of its powerful propaganda. Saturated in these messages and norms, while simultaneously cradled in the alternative lifestyles and political practices of my community, my upbringing (and present-day life) straddle the interstitial space between hegemonic and oppositional cultures. Challenging and expanding the boundaries of hegemonic culture, uprooting the dualistic nature of western “established truths” and exploring the complex contradictions that exist in this interstitial space have motivated my exploration into interculturalism and the epistemologies and ontologies of indigenous knowledge.

Apparently, I am not alone in these realizations and the desires to search out non-western, non-dominant ways of knowing. The following excerpt mirrors the experience I had as it discusses indigenous knowledge as a subjugated knowledge in Western educational systems:

[...subjugated knowledge contests dominant cultural views of reality, as it informs individuals from the white, middle/upper class mainstream that there are different ways of viewing the world. Indeed, individuals from such backgrounds begin to realize that their textbooks and curriculum have discarded data produced by indigenous peoples. The white dominate cultural power blocs that dominate Western societies at the end of the twentieth century seem oblivious to the need to listen to marginalized people and take their knowledge seriously. Western power wielders are not good at listening to information that does not seem to contribute to hegemony, their ability to win the consent of the subjugated to their governance... In mainstream pedagogies we are taught to believe that the knowledge we consider official and valid has been produced in a neutral, noble, and altruistic manner. Such a view dismisses the cultural and power-related dimensions of knowledge production. Knowledge of any form will always confront other knowledge forms. When this happens a power struggle ensues; the decisions made in struggles between, for example, indigenous as opposed to Eurocentric views of colonialism, exert dramatic but often unseen consequences in schools and the political domain. (Semali and Kincheloe 32-4)

As stated above, I feel ‘tricked’ by the (perhaps unwitting, but nevertheless dominant) dismissal of indigenous knowledge in my “western” education and the promotion instead of a knowledge base grounded unilaterally in “rational,” scientific and anthro-centric teachings. Because it was not offered to me through school, media outlets, or professional settings, I soon came to learn that I would need to search out different cultural perspectives that offered non-western and non-capitalistic based ancient wisdom traditions as platforms for viewing, understanding and engaging in the world. This quest felt familiar as it echoed the manner in which my parents and community tried to incorporate alternative and oppositional ways of being, seeing and knowing within the hegemonic culture in which we lived. Much of this paper is a reflection of the perspectives and lessons I gained by virtue of exploring ideas, actions and beliefs from artists, activists, academics and peasants whose thoughts are not traditionally published, preached or given priority in mainstream American culture.

Learning new ways of seeing and being in the world has helped me to realize that while many “established truths” of western culture that I was taught growing up were *learned unconsciously*, I am given the chance now to decipher which of these I wish to *unlearn consciously* and simultaneously open my mind to the lessons that lie in other communities and wisdom traditions. To that end, we now turn to an exploration of other ways of seeing, living and connecting in ecological and intercultural relationships that exist in various parts of the world, focusing specifically on the lessons I learned in my time with Quechua, Lamista and Ayamara natives of Peru and the organizations I visited that support them.

Chapter II.

An introduction to Andean cosmology and PRATEC's efforts to preserve it

Our community is not something in itself; it is not an institution, it is not something given or established. Our community is our way collectively to accommodate ourselves among ourselves, according to what is fitting to each moment of the continuous conversation which we sustain with the circumstances of life in order to continue living and generating. This is our form of life. Our community is not simply a human environment, rather it is all of us who live together in a locality: humans, plants, animals, rivers, mountains, stars, moon, sun. (Fernandez, 2001, 128)

In a recent eye-opening and paradigm-shifting journey in Peru, my intellect and spirit began to understand the depth of influence of Western cultural constructs in my life as I saw practices of “collective living”, “interculturalism” and “de-colonization” come to life. I spent six weeks in the summer of 2004 moving within various rural, native communities of campesinos and affiliated grass-roots organizers throughout the Peruvian Andes and the Amazon. The organizations I joined were PRATEC and its sister agencies, Urphichallay, CEPROSI, Waman Wasi, Suma Yapu, and Chuymaru in the areas of Huaraz/ Maracara, San Martin/ Lamas, Cusco/ Huito, and Puno/ Jali. While the villages I visited are located near some larger towns and cities, they are mostly rural communities of respectively Quechua, Lamista and Ayamara native peoples who are deeply engaged in a relationship with the earth and their agricultural practices. The majority are considered to be living under the poverty line by national standards and speak mostly native languages (other than, and sometimes in addition to, Spanish). While this is only a brief summary of the demographics of Andeans⁶, cultural traits and

⁶ Since all but one of my visits took place with Andean communities, and in many cases, the Andean cosmology is similar to that of natives who live in the Amazon and other rural areas, please forgive my generalized use of the term “Andean” when offering my commentary on these indigenous cultures.

customs of these communities will be explored at length throughout this paper as I describe the cultural affirmation and intercultural programs I participated in.

The models of cultural empowerment that I observed in Peru are particularly “radical” in that they do not wish to revolt against oppressors, but instead find empowerment in the revaluing of their native culture; they don’t wish to make grand political strides with the academic rigor of think tanks and strategic planning, but rather look to communal support in the effort to simply maintain their culture’s inherent integration of and mutual nurturing between the spirit, psyche, soul, earth, divine, animal and human being. The stress is not given to fighting against systems of oppression, but rather to nurturing a revitalization of their repeatedly marginalized indigenous culture, allowing their own empowerment to negate oppression without reverting to a struggle based in a dualistic “oppressor/oppressed” paradigm. While existing outside of this paradigm, their very customs and lifestyles themselves are powerful means of opposing a westernization that is pushed on them in many facets of civic, professional and personal life. As scholar/ activist Robin D.G. Kelley puts it, “Just because they say they are not interested in protest doesn’t mean that their culture isn’t formed in resistance. Their very struggle to preserve their ideas and spiritual practices against attempts on the part of the state and landowners to reduce them to just peasants renders their culture a threat.”⁷

While being an oppositional threat to others is not their intent, the commitment of Andean peasants and their associated grass-roots organizers in affirming traditional agricultural, cultural and cosmological customs is an unapologetic action taking place in various communities throughout the country. I was fortunate to observe and participate in

⁷ Kelley, Robin D.G. Personal email communication. 4 Dec 2004.

this action through various concrete programs, such as: “Afirmacion Cultural” (Cultural Affirmation) and “Interculturalismo” (Interculturalism) which works to decolonize the mind, revalue the indigenous culture, and strike a balance between western and indigenous influences in the classroom; and “Ninez y Biodiversidad” (Children and Biodiversity) and “Conservacion In Situ” (In Situ Conservation) to support and reinvigorate native agricultural practices with campesinos in the community. To this end, grass-roots organizations partner with indigenous farm workers, mothers, fathers, abuelos, and community leaders to enter into classrooms and re-teach the children the traditions of their culture (customs that are quickly dying out due to the tremendous “westernization” of schools and communities). These programs of cultural affirmation not only preserve the tremendously rich traditions for socio-cultural purposes but inherently ensure that this culture’s agricultural practices, which propel the threatened existence of biodiversity, will not die away under western influenced, market economy-based, mono-crop practices.

These programs are facilitated in various communities with a network of grass-roots organizations that are associated with the Peruvian non-profit called PRATEC (“Proyectos Andino de Tecnologias Campesinas”, Andean Project of Peasant Technologies). PRATEC works directly in communities and also offers support through funding, materials, and trainings to local grass-roots organizations so these programs can reach far and wide throughout Peru with community members, schools and children who request them. PRATEC maintains relations with international financiers and distributes resources to these local grass-roots organizations, which they (and I) lovingly refer to as NACA. (Which roughly translates to “Nuclei of Andean Cultural Affirmation”) As it is

with all relationships within the Andean culture, much emphasis is laid on nurturing a familial relationship between the members of PRATEC, the community members involved in programs and the grass roots organizers within the various NACAs. Most of my time in Peru was spent visiting the generous and welcoming staff of various NACAs and joining them on programs in the different indigenous communities in which they worked and lived.

Staff members from PRATEC and the individual NACAs have published a selection of articles and books on the need to preserve indigenous practices against continual attempts of western-based development and land reform. In fact, PRATEC was born out of a few Peruvians' own frustration with their current cultural landscape- the "peasantization" of most of Peru due to the governments failed plans of agrarian reform in the late sixties. Essentially this included attempts to eradicate traditional agricultural practices that strengthen biodiversity and collective living in exchange for the mono-crop farming production techniques which not only obliterate the soil for long term use, but emphasize capitalist gains beneficial more for the U.S. than the natives of Peru. The economic, political and social crisis that ensued after this attempt at modernization of Peru left its inhabitants with little choice but to find another way, or rather return to their own ways that had been cast aside. The framework that PRATEC works under is one that suggests that the keys for development of the land are found precisely in the traditional and holistic practices of the Andean peasantry and that Western notions of development, agriculture, government, business and education are not only foreign intruders but often times ones that fail where indigenous methods flourish. With this understanding (and the

forced reality of having few options to oppose western hegemonic culture and maintain crucial indigenous practices) PRATEC was born.

The realization was not simply that development had failed, but that development consisted of a package of practices, ideas, epistemologies and ontologies that came from the modern West and were profoundly alien to the native peasantry. Extensive travels throughout the country convinced these early PRATEC members that native agriculture and culture were not only appropriate to that environment but alive and vibrant- despite the efforts of development, education and a long-term history of attempts to extirpate the native culture- and embodied a totally different mode of being in the world, of being a person, of relating to others both human and non-human, and of notions of time and space and of nature. (Apffel-Marglin 3)

Thus began the work of PRATEC to support Andean peasants in the maintenance, revitalization and affirmation of their indigenous practices. This support for empowerment is crucial amidst the colonizing effects, psychologically and otherwise, that have taken precedence in the country's schools and universities through the unilateral teaching of Western ideologies, pedagogies, and epistemologies (which usually manage to marginalize those of the native culture). PRATEC and the NACAS have assisted in the cultural resurgence and affirmation of local Andeans through workshops, the donation of materials, small amounts of funding, and publications on these issues, as well as the ability to get accreditation for courses that teach Andean peasants and rural development professionals to reclaim and affirm their indigenous agricultural practices.

PRATEC and its sister agencies work both with young people and farmers who have never left their villages and those Andean peasants who have left and been trained in Western notions of development and modernization only to return to their villages. Their return was inspired by the recognition that the "westernized" school-based lessons they received were not organic to the agriculture, politics, spirituality and community

understanding of the Andes and that their ancient wisdom traditions had already given them all they needed. This point was one I had read about in PRATEC's publications, which was reiterated again and again by different staff members in PRATEC and the various NACAs I visited.

The importance of these programs in affirming native traditions in the daily life of campesinos was made apparent every time I visited a different indigenous community. Speaking about the local NACA I was visiting, a non-profit referred to as CEPROSI, one father said: "We need to use music, conversation, to teach. CEPROSI is doing good work of cultural affirmation and if we continue thus for some ten years more, we are going to have our strong traditions again, as in the times of the Incas, and everyone in Peru will benefit."⁸

A personal leap into another way of seeing, being and knowing

Before plunging further into the programs of PRATEC and the NACAs, it is important to lay the groundwork of my ethnographic journey. To be sure, I would not call this typical "research" for I did not venture to Peru with the intention of conducting "research"; I had no methodology, little experience in research and no pre-determined, academic objectives for my time in Peru. I went because I was drawn to learn more about and engage in the cosmology of the people of the Andes, and to see in action the unique approach to community empowerment and interculturalism that I read about in PRATEC's publications. It was due only to my professor's personal friendship with the founders of PRATEC that I was invited to visit them for the summer. (It turns out that I

⁸ This was said during a community meeting in Pitumarca, Huito, Peru. 29 June 2004. My translation.

was the first intern, much less Westerner, that they had ever invited to partake directly with them in their work in the field.) With a backpack, camera and no agenda in hand, I was the most untraditional and unprepared academic one could imagine. Undoubtedly to the chagrin of my university (which miraculously agreed to give me credit for whatever “scholarly analysis” I could derive from my mysterious six week journey) my uncalculated framework for this trip was a conscious decision on my part. This is partly because I intuitively knew that I simply wanted to engage with these people and that “research,” “objectives,” and even “ethnographic study” are not always concepts that inherently infer processes of mutual nurturance, interconnectedness and present-based thinking in which Andean culture is based. And yet, despite all of this, I am and will always be a product of my western, capitalist culture and cannot deny the variety of notions and assumptions that I have as a result, which may not be congruent with the very cosmology and ontology I was so eager to learn more about. In fact, prior to my departure, I was made aware of the fact that my automatic assumptions about my role in Peru necessitated a crucial shift in my understanding of my “work” there. This is due in large part to the candid conversation I had by email with the director of PRATEC, Jorge Ishizawa, as I was gearing up to go. In attempting to formulate an understanding of what my six weeks there would look like, I wrote: “I am happy to do whatever I can to help you guys in your programs and in the various communities where you do work. Can you explain to me a little of what I am going to do exactly and what these six weeks with you might look like?” To which Jorge responded:

I want to clear things up in respect to the theme of the help you can lend to the organizations you will be visiting (and to us in PRATEC). I think that we need to forget about thinking in these terms. We are going to build a friendship and since we talk much about mutual learning, the truth is that

we are learning from our community friends. Simply put, we are going to build a friendship, here and there, and we will do what life indicates in each moment. In true friendship, as I understand it, there are no interests [agendas]. The first few days we will make a plan and the necessary coordinations with our friends [the NACAs]. Don't you that's a good idea? I think that the initial idea that you are coming here to support the programs of PRATEC is not correct. We are learning together, you see?⁹

This was to be the extent of my “agenda” for the six weeks. The first week that I arrived we spent a lot of time together talking about the programs, the role of PRATEC, the role of western influence in the Andes, the means of revitalizing culture, and mutually supporting community empowerment. We did decide on a travel plan for me to visit the different NACAs during the first week of my arrival, and each thing did fall into place as we developed a friendship and dialogue for understanding how we could mutually learn from each other. But this conversation before my journey began had two important lessons that would drastically change the perception of my role, and thus my entire experience in Peru. Instead of thinking about how I would be able “to help”, I had to understand how my participation would be located in an exchange of mutual support. The concept that I was coming “to help” is a trap that many helpers in the world, often self-named “service providers” fall into; many well-intentioned, middle-class, formally-educated folks like myself *choose* to do “service” in areas that they perceive are in need in some way. This can unintentionally further a dynamic that keeps the recipients of this service in the role of being “needy” of rescue/ help and the provider of this help “unable to perceive the impact of the corruption that occurs when the oppressed are transformed into the objects of service as clients, beneficiaries, and customers. [...] They produce the opposite of what they pretend to create. Instead of liberation, they add to the lives of

⁹ Ishizawa, Jorge: Personal email, 19 February 2004. My translation.

oppressed clients more chains and more dependency on the pedagogy and curricula of the mediator.” (Esteva, Stuchul and Prakash 19)

Without diving into all of various theories about the danger of considering one’s role in a community as service provider, Jorge made clear this concept in our short conversation about my coming “to help.” Once deeply involved in the daily work of PRATEC and the NACAs, I increasingly understood that their work is never intended to “fix” situations in the lives of the Andean campesinos (or even change them). Their role was rather one of support for traditions that already existed in these communities. My role in joining was to witness and participate in the reciprocal relationship of support they experienced through their various programs and, even if only for a brief period, have the opportunity to participate in the way of life in the Andes and engage in mutual support and learning with Andean community members and the staff of the NACAs and PRATEC. This is a far cry from the common service methodology many non-profit’s utilize of administering a “needs assessment” and then entering a community to “fix” problems and “help” those in need¹⁰. A slightly more enlightened concept of how to truly be of service is explored from a Buddhist perspective:

Serving requires me to know that my humanity is more powerful than my expertise. That what is most professional is not always what best serves and strengthens the wholeness of others. Fixing and helping create distance between people... I cannot serve at a distance. I can only serve that to which I am profoundly connected, that which I am willing to touch. Fixing and helping are strategies to repair life. I serve life not because it is broken but because it is holy. (Robinson 114)

¹⁰ This concept of the creation of the ‘needy man’ that has a deficiency or need that only professional service can satisfy is further discussed in Esteva, Gustavo, Stuchul, Dana L. and Prakash, Madhu Suri. “From a Pedagogy for Liberation to Liberation from Pedagogy”, Rethinking Freire: Globalization and the Environmental Crisis, eds. Bowers, C.A. and Apffel-Marglin, Frederique. (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005) 13-30.

The Andean cosmology discussed here not only holds mutual respect and nurturance as the sacred reciprocal relationship that exists between all things, but it also holds a sacred respect for staying in the present moment and not objectifying our future existence. It is simply incongruent with this culture's ontology to pull oneself out of the present moment, into something separate from the current state, and create distant objectives which we believe we should and may achieve. Aside from not participating in the notion of departing from one's present state, I found that the Andean culture also views this mentality as a little ridiculous- that humans believe they can have control to indicate what will or should occur in the future. Therefore, aside from helping me grasp the complexity behind the idea of coming to the Andes "to help," this initial conversation with Jorge also helped me to cultivate confidence in "not knowing" what I was going to see, experience, and discover. This trust in knowing that "life will indicate" what is needed after time and effort has been put forth to establish an authentic friendship and mutual respect where truths can unfold, highlighted the fact that desires to have a fixed plan, with certain objectives and an expectation of progress were not universal ideals. Seeing that my values of progress and a desire to objectify an ideal future state in attempts to plan out the path that lies ahead reflected just one way of seeing and being in the world; one that is invariably an effect of my western upbringing. Learning this opened my eyes and changed my mentality as to how my time and my role during this trip would look; an significant shift that effected my entire experience in Peru.

Interconnectedness between earth, community and cosmology in the Andes

While I can't list all characteristics of the diverse indigenous cultures of Peru, or even of the ones I have studied and visited, I would like to share some examples of how

interconnectedness is played out in order to offer a deeper cultural understanding of these communities. In the farming villages I visited, the lives of the people are completely consumed by, devoted to and integrated with the earth; the agricultural focus of their community moves beyond the focus of “business” and into all facets of their lives. Contrary to Western approaches to agriculture and civil ceremony, the Andeans incorporate all forms of life (plants, animals, celestial beings and deities) into decision-making processes and actions. In fact, there is no separation between these entities and human life; all are considered part of one family and relationships are tangible forces in all facets of interaction and community growth. This is not a symbolic idea, rather it is evident even in the language used to describe family; “ayllu,” is a term that refers to the family of humans, (including nuclear and extended family in the same breath), as well as the animals, farm, water and deities. Furthermore, this family functions by virtue of “mutual nurturance”- an ever-present dance, conversation and reciprocity between all living entities. Mutual nurturance and respect are key values in Andean culture, and as is their tradition, values are not abstract concepts but realistic practices in daily life. All of these concepts and practices put together embody the meaning of interconnectedness and the sense of interdependency which form the building blocks of these communities.

I witnessed an example of this at a nine school/community collective day-long meeting that took place on a Saturday with hundreds of parents, students, teachers, principals, and the grass-roots organization, CEPROSI, that I was visiting. Nine different communities from around the mountainous region above Cusco had planned for months to come together on this day and discuss “Affirmacion Cultural” and what all sectors of the school and community populations could do to help the school integrate local

traditions and knowledge. To begin the day the principal of the hosting school and the “autoridades de la comunidad” (community-appointed authorities), which included two young boys, did a ritual to ask blessing to the Apus (the mountains) and to Pachamama (mother earth) for a day of nurturing and loving conversation. They invited the teachers and principal from the other eight communities, the employees of CEPROSI, and me to participate in the ritual (which included offering coco leaves and a drop of wine to the earth with words of gratitude). I felt the strong impact of laying a collective, spiritual intention for the day’s “work” that lay ahead. This authentic show of respect for the earth, and the desire to create a mutually nurturing arena for us to all (humans and nature) to engage in that day felt very different than a typical religious service. There was no forced, concrete idea of God or religion introduced, but rather this was seen an important way to begin this cross-community cultural exchange in direct connection with a shared cosmological relationship. Beginning this meeting by emphasizing the importance of setting this type of interconnected intention in ritual revealed the Andean notion that connections with the nature, spirits and cosmology is crucial for birthing a discussion about creating a united and kind community.

Aside from being touched in a personal/ spiritual sense, I was also moved by this because, in my experience living in the U.S., many tend to separate existence/ experience into distinct categories of “the spiritual,” “the academic,” “the professional,” and “the personal,” causing fragmentation and compartmentalization of the ways in which we see ourselves and engage in the world. Thus, it is not typically seen as acceptable to speak of our spiritual or cosmological connections to the earth or each other inside a “work” context (even in a “community-building” context). Therefore, seeing the importance and

role that this ritual had in initiating this day's work diverse schools and community members was very eye-opening for me in that it validated the concept (and action) of incorporating interconnected compassion and cosmological/ spirited connection in activist-community work. Perhaps these respected practices are precisely the type of empowering values and convictions that leftist activists are accused of missing and desperately need in order to gain momentum and interconnectedness within their own movements.¹¹ While this idea sparks an entirely different branch of discussion that will be further examined later, I mention it here merely to point out the powerful and uniting effect that practices of mutual nurturance and spiritual intention can bring to community building.

Mutual Nurturance

The intent of this multi-community workshop, as I understood it, was the desire to engage in dialogue about how to support exchange between schools and the community and, in so doing, to affirm cultural traditions through mutual nurturance. To further explore the idea of mutual nurturance -- the interconnected value and practice that is so integral to the culture of the Andean people-- I will use their own words in describing the multi-faceted definition of nurturance:

[...] in Andean life “uyarikuy” (to know how to listen), “riqsikuyniyuq” (to be grateful, a person who knows his/her own), “manchakuyniyuq” (modest), “rimakuykuq” (kind), “allin sunqu” (good hearted), “allin runa” (good person), “llakipayakuq” (a person who accompanies you in your distress), are phrases which refer to the qualities of people who know how to nurture and let themselves be nurtured by the “runas” (humans), the “sallqa” (nature), and the deities. (Machaca 58-59)

¹¹ For an interesting perspective on this topic, see Schimike, David. “Heaven Can’t Wait”. Utne Reader: March-April 2005.

As this quote indicates, nurturance is a multi-faceted characteristic and practice of the Andean people that substantiates support for, and general functioning of, personal, civic and cosmological relationships. As I've alluded to previously, practices of mutual nurturance are the crucial methods that maintain not only cultural traditions but also native agricultural practices. As these lands claim some of the richest biodiversity on the planet, the Andean people feel the reciprocity of caring for and giving back to the earth is of utmost importance. There is little homogeneity to the crops, nor does the climate follow a consistent pattern; the climate and land are both tremendously diverse and this instructs the lifestyles of those who mend and inhabit the land. The howl of the wolf, the phase of the moon, the conversation with the earth that takes place in rituals with the coco plant and within farmer's dreams are all major factors that determine when, where and how crops will be planted and harvested.

As a result of these indigenous farming practices, it should be noted that "measured by the number of distinct ecosystems present on average by unit surface, the Andes possess the highest ecological diversity in the world." (Apffel-Marglin 24) This type of biodiversity is not only a very powerful and necessary staple in the success of human and non-human evolution, but one that flourishes primarily because of the loving relationship of mutual nurturance that the Andean people practice. An example of this deeply affectionate and integrated relationship with the earth is shared by two young men that I spoke with in the nine school/community workshop.

I spoke (with the aid of a Quechua translator) with the two boys that were "the authorities of the community," Lunar Carrdenia Mass (14 years old) and Savior Arquia

Ccallo (11 years old) and asked them just to talk to me a little bit about their lives. One thing that they told me in our brief conversation was:

In the morning, the sun comes and when it is high, we go to the school. At night, the moon comes and our parents teach us how to respect and to greet the sun and the moon. We always look to the moon to know when we should sow our crops. The howl of the wolf tells us when, as well. Our parents always tell us, 'Look at to the "Tata Inti" (father sun) and to the "Quilla Mama" (mother moon)!' We are always learning how to walk with the rituals- making rituals for the "Apus" (mountain) with the leaves of coco to ask blessings for the seed, for its path.¹²

Again, we see how cultivating the earth, a cosmologically-driven activity and relationship within the Andean culture, is of extreme importance when discussing one's life. Weaving interconnectedness through relationships between human, non-humans, agricultural work, and ritual is a staple in the daily life in these communities.

Another staple embedded within the important work of agricultural is respect for, and nurturing of, the earth's regeneration. Regeneration essentially means to form or become formed again; to return something back to a revitalized state. It can be used to describe technological, biological and spiritual renewals - and everything in between-- but it's use in this paper is directed mostly within the agricultural context in Andean culture, as summed up here by Grimaldo Rengifo Vasquez:

We use the notion of regeneration as the re-creative and cyclical renewal of the different forms of life and to differentiate it from the notion of production in which man becomes independent from the cycles of nature and creates his own productive cycles within a historical sense of life. In the Andean "Pacha" [earth] everything is regenerated, everything comes back, everything returns to the rhythms and cadences of nature... it is the emergence of new forms of life already contained in the existing ones, a making visible which results from the united participation of the communities of the "runas" [humans], of the sallqa [nature] and of the huacas [deities].(Vasquez 1)

¹² Lunar Carrdenia Mass and Savior Arquia Ccallo. Personal conversation, 29 June 2004. My translation.

Tremendous honor is given by Andean farmers to this natural process of the earth to heal/renew/ regenerate herself, her plants, soil, nutrients, etc. This key practice which nurtures the earth's intrinsic methods for producing and renewing biodiverse crops will be discussed later in contrast to the modernist agricultural framework which instead implements human-dominated, mono-crop simplification methods because of their short-term financial rewards. In the Andes, regeneration is carried out under the assumption of mutual nurturance, synchronicity, and interdependency of each life form to each other because this is the most natural and respectful method for ensuring productivity and sustainability of the earth, human and non-human beings.

Relationship to education

Asking the following questions will help avoid framing educational reforms in ways that continue the process of subjugating indigenous cultures to the requirements of a Western-style (and environmentally destructive) global economy: What are the ways in which different cultures pass on and renew their understanding of moral reciprocity within their communities and between humans and the other forms of life in their bioregions? What traditions enable communities to keep market-oriented activities in balance with other aspects of community life and not, as is the current situation in Western cultures, in a state of continual expansion? What are the ways in which a collective awareness of the sacred is renewed over generations? What aspects of Western ways of knowing can be adapted to local use without fostering new dependencies? [...] The answers to these questions, and the ways they are translated into educational reforms, must come from within the local culture.(Bowers 9)

Due to the tremendous influence of Western culture in the Andes, it is understandable that PRATEC and the NACAs concentrate their efforts in assisting local communities to preserve their traditions, so that neither the social customs of the culture nor the vital native agricultural customs which promote regeneration and biodiversity are lost. Towards this end, programs of Cultural Affirmation are brought into schools in

attempts to undo years of colonization that have eliminated traditional knowledge and the valuing of native practices in the educational system. These programs aim to de-colonize the minds of the teachers who may inadvertently perpetuate the lies that say native traditions are useless, old, ignorant, and superstitious. De-colonizing the mind of marginalized indigenous communities can involve a total negation of the educational system as it is because, as Estevea, Stuchul and Prakash would argue, education is that which colonizes and oppresses minds to begin with.

Education creates the most oppressive of the class divisions now in existence today, separating people into two groups: “the knowledge capitalists” and the “destitute.” In this new class structure, more value is attributed to those consuming more knowledge. And because society invests in them for the creation of “human capital,” the means of production are reserved for them. The few receive all kinds of privileges, whereas the uncredentialed majority suffers all kinds of discriminations and disqualification. (21)

Capitalism’s need to rationalize knowledge produced the outlines of modern education. As is taught early on “knowledge is power”, yet it seems that most Western notions of power lie in the power to separate oneself from nature and thus dominate it, while the Andean focus is on acquiring understanding to further mutual nurturing. While the Andean people do not reject the education brought into their communities, and recognize it as a bridge to better connect them with the modern world, more often than not the ‘knowledge’ being transmitted in these schools (and the manner in which it is transmitted) is reflective of their cultural understandings and teachings of “knowledge”. This is best summarized below:

Knowledge and judgment- attitudes peculiar to the culture of the modern West, but which nonetheless claim universal applicability- constitute what is lived here as cultural colonization and constitute official education a

world-wide scale. Schools and universities are institutions that are physically located in the Andes, but fulfill, nevertheless, the function of fashioning our youth with colonizing interests... Education is one of the means that the colonizing powers employ to create, within our own people, allies interested in westernization and modernization through imitating the imperialist countries, which are held up as the only way out of the misery into which colonization plunged us in the first place. (Fernandez and Ishizawa 5)

While PRATEC and the NACAs recognize the challenges brought on through education's history (and current practices) of marginalizing ancient wisdom traditions and indigenous knowledge by teaching western/rational-scientific based knowledge as the superior knowledge, they still opt for programs that promote both Western and indigenous knowledge in a process of "Interculturalism." They do this because they exist primarily to support what Andean communities want and believe is best for their culture, and a co-existence of both cultures valued and taught in their local educational system is the desire reiterated time and again by Andean campesinos. Andean villagers recognize the importance of what modern science and technology have to offer them in the world today, thus an interconnected model incorporates both ways of knowing which make sense for their existence. A professor I met in the nine school/community workshop confirmed this notion when he told me he thought education should look like a parallel of what the two cultures have to offer- modern, western education and Andean knowledge offering wisdom to students, side by side. This sentiment was echoed by teachers and parents throughout all my travels. This is further explained by PRATEC's president Grimaldo Rengifo Vasquez when discussing the Andean culture: "They are not a community marginating themselves from anything. They try everything: radio, television,

computers, and Internet. But all that does not change nor alienate the attributes of the song... These cultures go on dancing in tune with agricultural, ritual and natural cycles.”

Since so much emphasis exists already in valuing and spreading western-based education and cultural practices, PRATEC and the NACAs focus their energy on helping schools look to their own communities and strengthen the representation of indigenous traditions in the daily curriculum to create a balance between the two cultures. This is done primarily through programs that fall under the auspices of cultural affirmation, which begins first with a process of “de-colonization.”

De-colonization

A mental exercise in de-colonization is needed in order to (re-)value the worth of indigenous knowledge. Workshops with teachers address this crucial shift because it is typical in the majority of Peruvian classrooms to reinforce the western culture and practices in all aspects of education and reiterate messages of the “dominant” culture by marginalizing indigenous knowledge as backward and superstitious. I imagine that this is not solely an issue in Peruvian native communities of the Andes, but extends to a brainwashing and marginalizing experience of indigenous people throughout the world. Substantiating this assumption is a quote from Decolonizing Methodologies: “The reach of imperialism into ‘our heads’ challenges those who belong to colonized communities to understand how this occurred, partly because we perceive a need to decolonize our minds, to recover ourselves, to claim a space in which to develop a sense of authentic humanity” (Smith 24). This issue is what prompted the local grass roots agencies I observed to offer workshops that explore “de-colonizacion” for the teachers of their

indigenous village. The need to emphasize the colonizing effects on the mind and heart is necessary in order to unravel and reverse its influence and re-integrate the valued practices of these indigenous traditions into the classroom. It is shocking but true that aside from the fact that in these communities 100% of the student population is indigenous and the national educational board mandates that schools provide 1/3 of the curriculum around indigenous culture and customs, this mandate is rarely carried out in practice. Principals and teachers are the ones who usually make the decision as to what to include in their curriculum and can push to have a third of it representative of indigenous knowledge, should they value this. Therefore, the philosophy of PRATEC and the NACAs is to concentrate these programs of decolonization for the teachers and principals; explained by the president of PRATEC as follows: “[...] the task of decolonization is situated in the domain of knowledge, that is, in the minds of the teachers and all those who have spent many years in the educational system. The challenge resides in clarifying the nature of the mental colonization perpetuated by schools and universities, and beginning the decolonization task by unlearning the metaphysical principles on which rational knowledge is based.” (Vasquez, 2005, 46)

The process of de-colonization requires a recognition of the oppression that occurred when these indigenous communities were first colonized over 500 years ago, and continues to the present moment in many instances of psychological and social marginalization. Yet, in efforts to undo the tremendous effects of colonization, these communities do not succumb to the dualistic, “oppressor-oppressed” paradigm which only further traps them in the victimization of colonization. PRATEC’s programs attempt to “de-colonize” the mind through practices that deny oppressive forces simply

by affirming and revaluing the native culture. This fosters empowerment that does not create further cultural dichotomies (like the compartmentalizing trend that became popular within affinity groups of identity-based political movements in the U.S. in the sixties.) Models of cultural affirmation and interculturalism do not highlight further fragmentation but rather look at collective wounds and strategies for coalition building based on a strong belief in interconnectedness. This concept is further developed by Esteva, Stuchul and Prakash as they critically examine the shortfalls of Paulo Freire's pedagogy when implemented in indigenous, colonized communities:

In response to colonization, Dion-Buffalo and Mohawk recently suggested that colonized people have three choices: (a) to become good subjects, accepting the premises of the modern West without much question, (b) to become bad subjects, always resisting the parameters of the colonizing world, or (c) to become nonsubjects, acting and thinking in ways far removed from those of the modern West (quoted in Esteva and Prakash, 1998, p.45). The assumption of Freire is that his oppressed are trapped within the dominate ideology, that they have been dehumanized by the system, that they are its subjects [...] Freire's presuppositions trap him within the ideology of his oppressor. He becomes a bad subject, though not embracing his oppression, not loving his chains or even loving power. Although bad, he remains a subject. By reducing his definition of himself, of his own being, to the terms of the oppressor, even for the sake of resisting or opposing him, he cannot become a nonsubject. (Esteva, Stuchul, and Prakash 25)

What I gather from my understanding of the native culture, the Andean community does not wish to define itself in the eye of its Western beholder; the indigenous framework for understanding does not fit neatly into a paradigm where it is seen as a subject that will conform with, rebel against, or negate completely the paradigm in which the West has created a relationship to it. This would then make Andeans "nonsubjects" according to the description offered above, but this paradigm of oppression is itself incongruent with the Andean culture's ontology, thus still availing these communities to that which the

Western culture has to offer, so as to nurture all that it comes into contact with. The Andean community does not care to squash completely what Western education can teach them, nor create an “us vs. them” dichotomy in the process of decolonizing the mind from the effects of marginalization. This might seem like a fine line but reflects the crucial value of this culture of “mutual nurturance” which makes the exchange of Interculturalism a necessity in the coexistence of western and indigenous knowledge in the lives of these campesinos. This concept is elaborated by PRATEC’s president in the following passage:

As is well known, the school is in the Andean villages to impose a mode of relating to the world based on scientific and technological knowledge. It is not there to propitiate a dialogue of knowledges nor to promote native knowledge. The community knows this very well recognizes the role of the school as a bridge to better connect with the modern official world. For this reason, the peasant community has never asked for reforms toward a cognitive plurality in the school environment. The community wants the school to teach modern science and technology independently of the method as long as the educational task is carried out with proficiency. [...] These activities must be appreciated as a mode of nurturing diversity. Nurturance does not imply forgetting, canceling, or annulling one of the cognitive traditions- the scientific and technical. Nor does it propose that Andean knowledge is the only valid approach. Rather, nurturance accepts the pluralistic cultural environment of the community- making the school ampler, more varied, and open toward the heterogeneous and plural. (Vasquez, 2005, 42-43)

This perspective was a crucial linchpin for me in understanding why PRATEC and its associates do not create programs that attempt to resist oppression by changing the behaviors and actions of their “oppressors” (be they government policies or discriminating actions of other Peruvians.) My own history in inter-group relations in the United States has conditioned me to expect to see a fight against the “oppressor,” a fight which is born within the paradigm of understanding created within that oppression. Yet,

all the programs I read about within PRATEC and witnessed with the various NACAS concentrated their efforts instead in affirming and sustaining the indigenous ways of seeing the world, cosmology, and practices for cultural and ecological survival. When I asked the director of the non-profit, CEPROSI, why anti-bias education and diversity training programs weren't formulated for non-indigenous communities who are frequently responsible for marginalizing and discriminating against these communities, I was told that they just didn't really see the point in trying to change other peoples attitudes or actions and felt it more important to concentrate on empowering their own community instead. This affirmation, they told me, will result in a feeling of confidence in their own culture that won't permit anyone to discriminate against them or make them feel less than. They discussed with me that the process of colonization is very deep and has had strong psychological effects for more than 500 years, convincing these peasants to believe the lies that their culture is backward and unworthy. Thus the results of the Cultural Affirmation program are not immediate; they involve patient and intimate processes of working not only with the school to become more welcoming and validating of the native culture in the classroom, but also with supporting the native families themselves to believe in the value and re-affirm their own customs, culture, and cosmology. They told me that after three years of intensive support they've offered to the communities in regards to re-valuing native traditions and re-integrating them into the educational system, they have seen a significant change whereby Andeans have become more proud of their native culture.

The mental process of decolonization and the active reaffirmation of native cultural practices can be sought through a variety of ways. While many other movements

in Latin America have done this through intensive political campaigning, PRATEC rather emphasizes grass-roots level empowerment directly with the communities in question. Thus, decolonization and revaluing of native traditions is nurtured through programs of Cultural Affirmation and Interculturalism; to dissect these with real-life examples, I will now share descriptions of some programs that I witnessed and participated in, in various villages throughout the Andes and the Amazon.

Cultural Affirmation

Workshops in Andean schools and communities on cultural affirmation exist to support the revaluing of native traditions and affirming of Andean culture through programs of dance, music, artisan, language, sewing, and ceramics that are integrated as part of the school curriculum. These programs encourage teachers to give importance to the local epistemologies; ways of seeing which are often exactly the contrary of what students are being taught in the standard, western educational models of scientific logic. An example from a day in the life of this program is reflected in my notes from the *Afirmacion Cultural* workshops in the San Martin province of the high jungle of the Amazon, in PRATEC's sister agency, a NACA called "Waman Wasi":

The staff from Waman Wasi, alongside the teachers from the classroom and some parents from the community, hold a variety of 'classes' in the main house and in the patios outside. I stop for a moment to join a ceramic class where young girls sit on the floor and carve bowls out of mud clay using small, smooth, round rocks (a traditional artistry technique they try to teach me, which I quickly find is much harder than it looks for my fingers that prove to be more nimble with a computer keyboard than the smooth stones and fragile mud clay.) I then roam inside the big house where a young man and his teacher sprawl out on the floor, deeply engrossed in their basket-weaving workshops on one side of the room while traditional dances are taught on the other in a flurry of spinning skirts and simple foot work. In the corridor near the kitchen where the

staff is preparing traditional food for lunch, Waman Wasi co-director, Doña Ida, holds a sewing seminars where young girls learn how to sew (by hand) the traditional garb of their particular village, (a practice I have seen modeled in practically every village I have visited, which usually takes place after partaking in dying the llama wool with herbs from their farms). My wandering ends with taking a seat beside young men down in the garden who are participating in a music workshop where they learn old, tradition rhythms and songs on flutes, drums and other nature-made instruments.

I saw similar workshops facilitated and greatly enjoyed by youngsters in a number of other native communities. In schools where the children are too young to participate in these activities (early childhood schools), teachers instead paint the walls of their classrooms with murals depicting traditional indigenous practices so that the children are surrounded by visual representations of this re-valuing of their customs.

Another manner that “Afirmacion Cultural” was spread was through programs of “Ninez y Biodiversidad” (Children and Biodiversity) which offered young people the chance to learn the types of plants and methods of planting them that are used in traditional agricultural practices in their communities. I engaged in an example of this program where the parents become the teachers and the teachers join the students as learners of these great traditions in a tour of a different family’s home and farm each week. 11,000 feet high into the Andes, in a town called Viccos, I was invited to join this type of program which was sponsored by the NACA, Urphichallay, that I was visiting. To best describe the program and the intense relationship to the earth I witnessed in the Andean culture, I would like to return to my story-telling voice and share a poetic narrative that I produced in attempts to capture the magic of that day:

Earth

The man has it in him and speaks to me not just *about* it,

But *from* it.

Earth is not just under his fingernails and in his sweat,

But it is in his soul; it is his family; it is his foundation.

It is not symbolic or abstract or representational.

It is real and he converses with it as he does with his wife because they are both

his Family

And he nurtures them both as they nurture him.

And together they; the man, his wife, the children, the earth, the animals, the wind

Take me through the organic farm and point out the various

mysterious green stalks beneath my feet that are healing herbs.

“This one”, he says excitedly, “this is for when you have a stomachache.”

“And this one”, he points out, “this one is for when your body has too much heat inside.”

“This one”, he says, bringing another pungent smelling stalk to my nose, “this one you put in your ear and it sucks out the water trapped inside.”

“Oh, and this one,” he says, looking into my eyes, “this one is for protection.”

And as he speaks, his children bend close to the earth to learn the ways of their father, the earth, the plants.

And the younger children return from *el campo* with the animals, which are always under their care because that is their role

and no, this isn't considered child labor, this is a piece of the whole
where all are connected and each rides a part in the cycle.

The cycle and the conversation are deep and nurturing, observed and respected by all,
To such a degree that my western eyes have rarely seen...

But today I see and in that sight I am given a small glimpse of this man's life.

How each day he starts out his

“work” on the farm by carefully unfolding his colorful, sacred pouch to pull forth
his coco leaves, which he eats to open his mind-

no, not like college kids think you open your mind when you use and abuse it to burn
holes in your nose-

but as it is eaten in this ritualistic context of

united farmers chewing it each morning together to initiate their conversation with the
earth;

a conversation so unknown to us that we can only look at it from a far and call it

“indigenous cosmology”

in hopes that by placing his life into a finely defined box we will grasp a small
sense of what it means to have earth inside of you.

Earth in you like this man has it in him

So much so that earth speaks to him in his

Dreams

And tells him exactly where he needs to go each day at

“work”

in order to properly tend to the land that is dry or the potato that is sick

so that he can nurture the land towards its cultivation of 120 varieties of potato that grow on his farm.

120 varieties.

Did you even know that there was more than two?

Ralph's and Albertson's ain't got nothing on him and their

Market-economy-driven-mono-agri-cultural-insistence

Falls on deaf ears because he is in

Conversation

with what we call "biodiversity" and he calls

Life

A mutually respectful and nurturing conversation

with what we call "earth" and he calls his

Family.

Interculturalism

Teachers are encouraged to join the NACAs in conducting cultural affirmation workshops and seminars because many of them were raised in indigenous communities and can recall these customs even after years of living in the city and attending Western-based educational programs in universities. The teachers themselves are also invited to go through workshops to illuminate and explore the differences between Western and indigenous culture in order to learn mechanisms to value and nurture both cultures/perspectives in their lesson plans in a process of "interculturalism."

As alluded to before, modern, Western culture permeates every facet of Peruvian life, from development, to agriculture to the market economy, to the educational system, to societal norms and values. Western culture's beliefs in individualism, materialism and a divine domination over man and nature is inherently dissonant from the Peruvian indigenous culture, which values mutual nurturance and collective living as well as a relationship of equality and respect between the planets, divine forces/spirits, earth, animals, and humans. Yet, the communities I visited and the NACAs I worked with stressed a model of "Interculturalismo," which begs us to think outside the box to envision these two seemingly disparate cultures respectively co-existing, integrating when possible, and encouraging community members to use, adapt and rely on each culture in an integrated practice. This is not to be confused with concepts of "Multiculturalism" which promotes diversity but in reality often keeps cultural groups separate and ghettoized, merely side by side in a what is seen to be a valuable "salad bowl" (only a small step ahead of the "melting pot"). Interculturalismo can best be understood in an example from one of the Andean communities I visited: a teacher, indigenous herself but educated in a Western-based educational system and instructed to teach this system to her 100% indigenous classroom, attempted for the third day in a row to teach a basic geometry lesson (the definition and concept of a polygram). Her students, unaccustomed in their culture to think from this specific, mathematical perspective, could not seize the abstract concept of a polygram until at last she picked up one of their belts, a traditional belt that everyone hand-sews and wears, which is full of bright colors and shapes which reflect their natural environment. Pointing to one of the perfectly geometric shapes, she was finally able to explain (and have the students understand) what a

polygram was, using this concrete example from their cultural experience. Suddenly Interculturalism was alive and well in the classroom.

The empowerment derived from programs of cultural affirmation and decolonization allow for a fruitful exchange of interculturalism to take place in a variety of ways. For example, this cultural affirmation has helped to nurture relationships with mestizos (“mixed” raced people) from the city, allowing the self-segregated groups of mestizos and campesinos to get to know one another and break through any ignorance and stereotypes each holds about the other. Many mestizos have only recently departed from rural life in order to integrate themselves professionally and culturally outside of indigenous norms and into those of the city. Often times their stereotypes about campesinos are reflective of an inner struggle to distance themselves from that which is close to home and incongruent with modern, city lifestyles. In order to recognize what each group can learn from the other, as well as encourage re-valuing of native traditions and customs (in the minds of both mestizos and campesinos), the NACA called CEPROSI, recently coordinated the following program promoting “Interculturalismo”: A group of parents and students (mestizos) from the city came to visit for a day with parents and students (native Andeans) of a mountainous village above Cusco. Many of the people from the city had preconceived notions that the native campesinos were “stupid” and “backward.” After spending an entire day participating with them in activities and observing the actions of the native students in contrast to their own children, the parents could not believe the levels of intelligence, ingenuity, creativity, and autonomy that the Andean children displayed in the way they navigated the land, conversations and decision-making. By the end of the day, they exclaimed in disbelief, “we had no idea that

these children were so capable and intelligent! They know how to think and to find their way in the world very well; our children only know how to watch television and eat!”¹³

Similar to the lessons learned by the mestizo parents shared in the previous story, sometimes the tools for creating a community with highly functioning, caring and respectful participants lies in recognizing and integrating indigenous ways of knowing, seeing, and being into “mainstream” culture. By reflecting on the native epistemologies and ontologies shared thus far, we can begin to consider what specific traditions we can highlight and integrate into western culture to enhance interconnectedness within schools, communities, cultural groups, the environment and our own identities. This is well-illustrated here:

For educators, a subset of the general question, ‘What should we conserve in order to ensure a sustainable future?’ includes the following: What aspects of intergenerational knowledge contribute to morally just communities, and to empowering its members with the skills that enable them to be less dependent on consumerism? What traditions within the culturally diverse communities contribute to more cooperation and sharing, and how can schools help revitalize these traditions? How can schools help students become more knowledgeable about the mentors in the community, and enter into mentoring relationships that develop the interests and talents of the students? How can schools pass on the genuine achievements of modern culture while at the same time helping students to recognize the importance of elder knowledge? How can students be helped to recognize that critical reflection makes its greatest contribution when it is used to renew intergenerational traditions that strengthen moral reciprocity and connectedness within the community- and that critical reflection that leads to radical changes should be focused on specific forms of injustice? (Bowers 168)

Using Chet Bower’s insightful line of questioning as a springboard for this discussion, the following section bridges the conversation thus far on aspects of indigenous knowledge that western culture (and the earth) will greatly benefit from when fully

¹³ Pardo, Elena. Personal conversation, 29 June 2004. My translation.

recognized and put into practice. By critically examining and unraveling the attention given to over-consumerism, individualism and environmental practices that do not sustain biodiversity, I will address what aspects of western culture might need to be examined to truly integrate interconnectedness in ecological and intercultural terms.

Chapter III.

Introduction: Looking at the big picture, looking in the mirror:

Nurturing interconnectedness back home

The writer's life is much like that of a sphinx moth, which appears out of the darkness to hover suddenly above a fresh opened blossom, coming under the spell of its pungent perfume. The moth lingers before the illuminated flower for a moment, then dips into the ephemeral world hidden within the floral tube, where it draws energy from the flower's nectars and perhaps dreams from its alkaloids. Another moment passes and the moth is nowhere to be seen. It is loading up with the pollen, which it will transport from flower to flower, enabling something potentially far more lasting to occur- cross-fertilization and regeneration. (Nabhan 3)

Like a moth absorbing and dispersing the various perfumes of intellectual alkaloids, I liken this exploration to a cross-pollinating journey between diverse traditions, cultures and disciplines. By ingesting and regenerating the richly distinct "pollen" that I find in both ancient wisdom traditions and academic publications, in environmental issues and socio-cultural ones, in the Andes and in my community in the West, I am better able to create a holistic understanding of inquiries that do not fit neatly into just one compartmentalized box of understanding.

The moth's role in promoting re-generation exemplifies a dynamic that is a echoed in countless other intercultural and ecological relationships which are crucial to

our collective survival. Scientist and poet Gary Nabhan explains that through the process of cross-pollination, moths both feed their individual hunger and act as a crucial bridge in sustaining other flowers and animals in the deeply webbed connectivity of the universe. Like the moth, we humans have a responsibility to contribute to the interconnected web in ecological terms, as well as by cross-pollinating traditions from different cultural group's epistemologies and ontologies, in order to sustain all of our futures.

Aside from assessing the necessity of interconnectedness in the environment, we can apply cross-pollination to the bridging of academic disciplines, as well as our planet's seemingly fragmented cultures and communities. In an age of globalization it might seem that a platform for inter-community and trans-national cross-pollinating is available, literally at our fingertips, and yet consumer-driven, individualistic models for success often mask the importance of adhering to collective needs over individual ones; preserving cultural and ecological traditions over notions of progress and development. I do not wish to further a dualistic examination that results in idealizing one way of being in the world or one culture's values and customs over another, but instead suggest that a close look at pinnacle norms and practices of Andean and Western cultures can give us concrete ideas for intercultural exchange. Because I am most familiar with my own, western culture, I feel comfortable making an examination that allows room for serious critique as well as opens doors for genuine learning to take place with all that indigenous knowledge and cosmology has to offer.

Integrating practices of conservation and interconnectedness into typical, urban communities of the West requires a return to values and practices that are not unknown but have merely been left behind in the race towards bigger, "better", and more

technologically-advanced societies which value financial capital above social capital. Yet, even a growing number of consumer-hungry big businesses and fractions of western governments are realizing that they too need to pay attention to practices of ecological preservation should they wish to sustain their money-making tactics that rely so heavily on the output of the earth's resources¹⁴.

The challenge I'd like to address is how my community in the United States, which undeniably represents many ideals typical of western, modern, capitalist society, can integrate indigenous cosmology and knowledge into its value system in an intercultural fashion; one that does not perpetuate cultural appropriation and commodification in the process. Specifically, I am interested in how this knowledge and interconnected perspective can offer citizens of the West new ways to look at identity, oppression, cultural affirmation, inter-group relations, consumerism and ecological conservation. Let me begin this cross-pollinating integration by introducing the concept of "mestiza consciousness," which will enable us to compare and contrast aspects of these two cultures through a process of interculturalism, without furthering a dichotomy between the two.

**“Mestiza consciousness” serving as a road-map for the cross-pollination of
Interculturalism**

Using the strategy of cross-pollination to take Andean lessons of interconnectedness back home to communities that may have “forgotten” the importance of this relationship-building necessitates first a shift in mindset to adapt to straddling

¹⁴ For an example of this, see California's Governor's push for a “California Hydrogen Highway” through his website: <http://hydrogenhighway.ca.gov/>.

interculturalism in a holistic manner. This harkens back to learning how to find peace in the interstitial space between cultures, which I spoke of in the beginning of this paper in terms of my own experience being raised between and among hegemonic and oppositional/ alternative cultures. I propose that this straddling and cross-pollinating of cultures can be done by becoming intimately familiar with the space of the “mestiza consciousness.” This shift in thinking is described by the creator of this concept, Gloria Anzaldua, as such: “La mestiza constantly has to shift our habitual formations; from convergent thinking, analytical reason that tends to use rationality to move toward a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking, characterized by movement away from set patterns and goals and toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes” (Anzaldua 101). This emphasis relates to notions of cross-pollination in that, from this perspective, cultures can be bridged rather than pushed farther apart, as they often are within dualistic thinking.

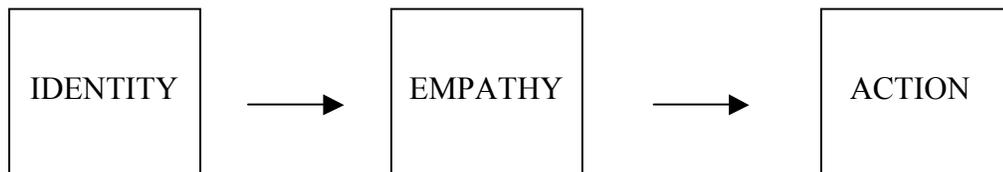
The integration of indigenous practices will inevitably look differently when applied to models in western culture due to the shift in context and stark contrast between the values, social structure, and daily life in western communities and indigenous communities. Generally speaking, typical western values and lifestyles do not usually reflect that of an indigenous belief that the earth and the cosmos, the plants and the animals, a sense of spirit and the divine, are all integrated into daily interactions and relationships and are appreciated through ritual and unspoken practices throughout the day. Therefore, we must look for a re-defined way of incorporating guiding principles of this knowledge in ways that make sense in a western context. This may be difficult or uncomfortable, as is any un navigated and undefined middle space that attempts to bridge

two seemingly disparate worlds. This may be more easily achieved by shifting into a “mestiza consciousness” that promotes fluidity in the middle space instead of dualism. Gloria Anzaldua describes that “the work of mestiza consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended... A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence, of war” (Anzaldua 102).

Aside from the concrete practices learned in the Andes of Interculturalism and mutual nurturance that we can weave into western contexts, we need to provide a mental and spiritual space in our daily western world for stepping outside of the box and envisioning new (and reaffirming old) ways of seeing, being and knowing. This asks not only students, but also teachers, parents and community members to think critically about the information we receive and generate about “established truths” of our society, but to move beyond these familiar paradigms into considering other ways of treating each other and the earth. This requires a mental, spiritual and emotional shift so that we can find a sense of comfort and home in the homelessness that sometimes encapsulates the space of cross-pollinating and bridging distinct cultures and epistemologies. It also requires critical reflection on our own lifestyles and actions that support or negate interconnectedness in western communities; a reflection which will be further explored in the following section.

Identity- Empathy- Action

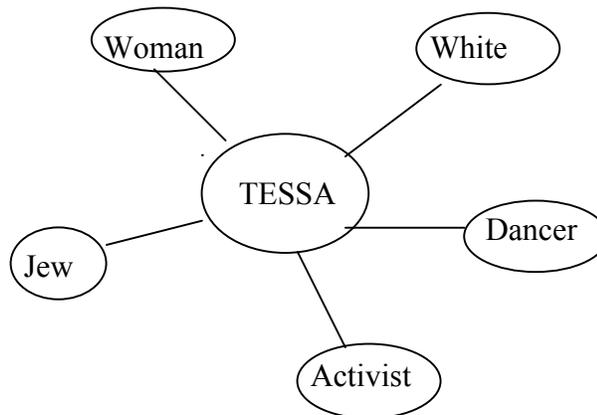
Exploring interconnectedness in action can be done in a variety of paradigms but since the focus of my time in Peru (and my work in the States) revolves around programs of cultural affirmation, interculturalism and the ways in which students and teachers seek empowerment and community-building amidst marginalizing conditions, I will make concrete comparisons about ways in which these topics are addressed in a Western context. To that end, I'd like to introduce a "western" methodology for addressing inter-group relations and anti-bias education and a correlating activity about identity that I feel do not necessarily integrate interconnectedness, as I saw it occur in Peru. The following is a methodology for anti-bias educational programs that the Anti-Defamation League's A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE Institute uses nationwide in their teacher and student trainings (based loosely on the "know-act-care" theory of multiculturalist James Banks)¹⁵:



This methodology follows the belief that our IDENTITY consists of the various cultural groups that we as individuals belong to, and that our identity is the manner by which we view the world. In order to approach inter-group relations, the idea is that first we must become familiar with ourselves and our own individual identity. The following is one example of an interactive activity used to help individuals examine what cultural groups

¹⁵ Hamrick, Johnathan M. "Banks addresses multiculturalism and social justice at 2004 Creekmore Symposium". Center Piece 20 May 2004. 3-4.

constitute their own identities, created by the anti-bias training program, A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute of the Anti-Defamation League.¹⁶ In this activity, participants are asked to use a diagram called “the Identity Molecule” to break down their identities into five major cultural groups¹⁷ that they belong to. In the center of their molecule they are asked to write their name and in the five sub-groups they are asked to identify different aspects of their identity and identity groups they belong to that they believe strongly effect how they walk through this world. For example, here is how my Identity Molecule might look:



Participants are asked specifically to name aspects of their identity that are affiliated with cultural groups they belong to, more so than qualities and characteristics of their personality. After completing their “ID Molecule,” they are then asked to identify which of the sub-groups is their “primary identifier,” in other words, which aspect of their identity is most important to them, and which most affects their life and the lens with

¹⁶ Bettman, Ellen Hofheimer. Trainers Manual for A CLASSROOM OF DIFFERENCE: An International Anti-Bias Education and Diversity Program of the Anti-Defamation League. New York: ADL A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE Institute, 2003.

¹⁷ Cultural grouping is used to loosely refer to various groups; whether it be the culture of your ethnicity or that of your gender, the culture of your age group or that of your race; the culture of your socio-economic class or that of your specific profession; the culture of your religion or that of your family; it is meant to distinguish these identity traits beyond personality descriptors and even hobbies to the point of communities one belongs to as a result of identifying with ingrained aspect of their lives and personhood.

which they see the world. Then they are asked to share their ID Molecule with another person and share about one time they were proud and one time they were embarrassed to be a part of this group they've said is their primary identifier. The group is then asked to re-convene and lists of possible cultural groups are named off (such as: race, class, age, profession, sexual orientation, etc) and people are asked to stand if they included them in their ID molecule; this is done as a way for people to see who in the room has similar and different identifiers and also how it feels to stand with a group or stand alone, based on your identity traits.

The ADL methodology continues, after a thorough examination of the various cultural groups one belongs to (and an investigation as to how being a part of these groups affects both one's view of the world and the way the world views them), with the next step of looking outside the self. In discussions with others about the cultural groups they belong to as part of their identity, it is hoped that an understanding can be reached about both similarities and differences that individuals hold and, further, that a level of EMPATHY will be reached on the basis of this understanding. If an individual has been discriminated against for one aspect of their identity, it is then supposed that they might feel empathy for another in the regard that this other has felt discrimination in. Even if the reasons behind the respective discrimination are different, it is hoped that by sharing personal stories of the identity groups each belongs to, there will be bridges of understanding built, based on an attempt to feel what it'd be like in another's shoes. It is hoped that one will care about him/herself and others and thus want to create a better world. This hopefully then leads an individual to a desire to engage in ACTION; that is,

to act as an ally on behalf of another should bias or discrimination arise based on the cultural groups they belong to.

Individualism under the microscope

As seen through the above description, this methodology allows individuals to interactively engage in a process of self-identity, building empathy on the collective sharing of various cultural roots, resulting hopefully in the will to act out in defense of others in the face of discrimination. I bring this up to reveal a sharp contrast to how the indigenous groups I worked with in Peru address identity. The model described above reveals how our culture sometimes over-emphasizes individual identity in trying to figure out who we are. From an indigenous, holistic¹⁸ approach this very activity only further fragments aspects of our identity in the process of putting ourselves back into the very confines we wish to break free of! This perpetuates the cycle of peoples being put in boxes, given labels and assumed to fall under generalized stereotypes about the groups they belong to because of assumed identity traits. This prison of compartmentalizing ourselves is well-described as follows: “What we are suffering from is an absolute despot duality that says we are able to be only one or the other. It claims that human nature is limited and cannot evolve into something better.” (Anzaluda, 41) In forming pride and unity within disparate cultural groups that are oppressed in and building empathy with others who have also faced oppression because of their cultural groupings, we are continuing a divisive cycle of fragmenting our whole selves into many parts, our whole community into many sub-groups, and not necessarily mending the divides we cry over.

¹⁸ A holistic approach can be understood by use of John Dewey’s theory on holism, which proposes that ‘more can be understood or learned through an analysis of the organism as a whole entity rather than an analysis of its constituent parts’ (Bothamley, 176)

We say, “I am this” and inherently negate the ability to be other things simultaneously. A typical holistic approach, which is much more common to many indigenous traditions, does not spend so much time dissecting one’s identity into various sub-sections (typical of an abstract, individualist model), but rather looks concretely at the individual, part of a greater whole in the family and community. As PRATEC’s director said to me, after I explained to him the identity-empathy-action methodology and “identity molecule” activity:

You Americans have this drama with identity. What *am* I? What *are* you? You don’t see that simply in the act of saying “I am...” you suddenly become that one thing and exclude yourself from all the other things that you are. You end up creating a dualism within yourself and creating a subject-object relationship within your own identity so that you are excluding some parts of yourself from other parts of yourself. No wonder you build empathy with others- you are building empathy over excluding yourself from yourself and from each other! {laughter} Why can’t you just forget this whole methodology and move straight to ACTION?¹⁹

The process of breaking down identity in order to build empathy and inspire people to take action on behalf of others facing marginalization is not congruent with the holistic approach to the self and the community that is inherent in Andean cosmology. This is further explained accordingly:

The notion of individuality or the possibility of a person being considered separate from his or her group and natural context is inconsistent with the Andean worldview. The abstraction and decontextualization so characteristic of modernist science is out of place in a system of knowledge production that is grounded on the cohesiveness of the human, natural, and spiritual world. The individual is connected to the group, the group to nature, and nature to the domain of the spiritual... Human consciousness and the social life of the community are viewed as inseparable in most indigenous societies. In contrast modernist science often reduces consciousness to physiological neuroprocesses, not understanding that the separation and isolation of the parts of a whole

¹⁹ Ishizawa, Jorge. Personal conversation. July 9, 2004; My translation.

undermine our ability to make sense of social, physical and human phenomena. (Semali and Kincheloe 41-2)

Both the Peruvian practices of cultural affirmation and the western models of the Identity Molecule are practices that implore participants to reflect on and affirm their own culture, or cultures. Perhaps self-reflection is an inherent, human instinct for understanding ourselves and the world around us. Great thinkers, philosophers, religious figures, artists and cultural leaders across cultures and generations have used this as a springboard for their insight, work, growth, relationship-building and even status-seeking. Yet, the methods employed in the two models here approach this self-reflection from slight but significantly different angles. The Peruvian model does not ask the participant to negotiate the “what am I?” question. It does not ask the participant to reflect on oneself alone and try to break down the self into distinct categories or traits. In fact, the ‘self’ is rarely addressed under a microscope or in a vacuum, and instead is traded in for a cultural reflection of the community because the self is not larger or even specifically defined as separate from the community. The collective experience is the centerpiece in each situation; the pair is always emphasized over the individual, for in this union the balance of female and male energies is realized. The pair can be found in every aspect of life; for example, there is always a male and female divine energy in nature that can be seen in the naming of mountains, rivers, lakes, star patterns, etc. This shared existence is not just a reality in relationships with the earth, but one that finds itself in all aspect of family, business and cultural life, as shown by the following quote: “It may be said that the runa (human) experiences the feeling of living intimately in community, in pair. The couple is more than the sum of two units, pair is what links,

joins, the web which joins and connects the life of those who live in pair. In the couple the emphasis is on the moving web of life and not in each point and knot by itself.” (Vasquez, 2001, 5.) The collective experience (whether it be in the pair, in the “nuclear” family or in the community- being the family of human members, animal members, spirits, rocks, stars, etc) is the springboard for understanding and viewing the world. A sense of self and identity as such is not specified. Therefore, any exercise that requires a break down in the categories of self negates a sense of community that surpasses this notion of “self-identity”.

The desire to understand the self and to partake in an exercise that breaks the self down into different groups in order to reach that understanding is a western-based value and way of functioning in the world that is deeply embedded in individualism. This not only permeates our strategies for understanding the world and the subsequent process of breaking down “self-identity,” but it also leaks into the ways in which we operate in the world and create expectations in our work, education, and inter-personal relations. For example, I was astonished one day to see in the small town of Viccos, Peru, a random assortment of women and men, housewives and campesinos, abuelos and children, working side by side in the small community’s main dirt road. Together they were building the city’s sewer system. At their side sat the community’s one school, and within its walls, more community members stood together hammering together a new building. They did this simply because it needed to be done, no local government commission was sending in workers from elsewhere to do this and it was obvious that the community was growing and these buildings and sewer would benefit the entire community. This collective mindset being put into action in this selfless way is not often something I see

taking place all too often in the individual-oriented basis of western society. The holistic approach that indigenous knowledge offers is timely to foster a sense of community in our increasingly diverse communities, where a growing number of multi-ethnic populations defy simple categorization and will benefit from tackling social problems as autonomous communities, not self-centered individuals.

Interculturalism in a multicultural setting

Pursuing cross-pollination to create connections between indigenous knowledge and western culture may require a re-defining of priorities and values and a fluidity for mediating between sometimes contradictory forces. There is no prescribed way to do this but I believe the bridge-building can be made easier by a recognition of the way the different contexts affect the ability to carry out the same traditions in different settings. For example Interculturalism in indigenous communities in the Andes really concentrates on balancing and mutually respecting and nurturing western and indigenous culture side by side. Obviously in the deeply multicultural setting of the United States, we are juggling an interculturalism that looks to balance, integrate and mutually respect various cultures at once. Conducting programs that bring in traditional arts and crafts of the local culture into the classroom would be nearly impossible in, for example, a typical, diverse public school in Los Angeles that hosts over a dozen distinct cultures/ethnicities in one classroom. (In my own graduating class of Venice High School there were over 80 different languages spoken by the student population, reflecting a wide range of diverse cultures in one setting). Yet, it is not totally impossible.

Americans are increasingly voicing desires to bridge our segregated communities and recognizing that sticking to affinity groups perpetuates this process of “otherizing”²⁰, which only serves to emphasize differences. While a recognition of our differences is necessary in admitting social inequalities and marginalized treatment that individuals face based on their difference, it cannot be the beginning and ending point of conversations about inter-group relations. Robin D.G. Kelley offers the concept of “anti-racist identification”²¹ which does not evade the reality of racism, but allows us to move beyond the confines of racial identity to a radical sense of selves and communities that is larger and more holistic than this narrow identifier. Applying an indigenous cosmological approach to identity and inter-cultural relations would mean approaching the topics from a holistic perspective. It would mean doing a workshop on interculturalism that does not ask participants to emphasize a dissection of their own identity as something separate and apart from others, nor an activity that asks them to divide themselves into various subsections of the self. It would rather ask them to recognize their unique qualities and experiences in life and share their stories (to build cultural affirmation) but also look to points of cohesive collective experience that has given them both autonomy and empowerment in an interdependent rather than individualistic stance. We must move to this because ‘the racial categories that purport to designate any of us are too rigid and oversimplified to fit anyone accurately.’ (qtd. in Alsultany 109) If we wish to defy the categorizations that are put upon us based on our identities then we need to stop adhering to them ourselves while we administer a process of addressing intercultural relations.

²⁰ For an elaborate exploration into the process of “othering” read: Alsutany, Evelyn. “Los Intersticios: Recasting Moving Selves”. This Bridge we call home Ed. Gloria Anzaldua and Keating. New York: Routledge, 2002. 80-110.

²¹ Kelley, Robin D.G. Personal email communication. October, 2004

Further, if we stop dissecting our identities and start celebrating our whole selves and our collective existence we can build radical coalitions for social change based on love and compassion from a holistic approach. (Or even the other way around! Perhaps our engagement in radical social movements based on love and compassion will give birth to holistic identities and interconnected communities.)

An important step in integrating interculturalism and cultural affirmation into Western classrooms is willingness on the part of teachers to extend the educating role to students, especially those who not part of the dominant culture, thus allowing different values, customs, and subjugated knowledge a valued place in the curriculum. Inviting students (and their parents) to become the teachers in the classroom and share their traditions (that may very well not be represented in mainstream textbooks and educational standards) can start a genuine process of interculturalism. This does not translate to a watered down process of celebrating non-dominant cultural “heroes and holidays” at different points in the school calendar, as is common practice in meager attempts to honor “diversity”, (as in non-white cultures) in many multicultural education initiatives, but rather must be an on-going, integrated practice within the year-long curriculum and school culture.

Another concrete measure for integrating Andean lessons of interconnectedness in western classrooms might involve encouraging students to work collectively so as to decrease individualistic tendencies of competition. Studies show that classrooms which encourage interconnected programs of collective, cooperative learning foster positive self esteem, a sense of empowered community and improved intercultural relations.²²

²² I learned a wonderful strategy for promoting collective work instead of individual competition in the classroom from my UC Santa Crzu Social Psychology Professor, Dr. Elliot Aaronson. Dr. Aaronson’s

Finally, a real move towards integrating indigenous cosmologies and knowledge in western classrooms would be to increase a genuine relationship of equality and respect with the earth. This needs to be done in concrete environmentalist actions that are good for the earth (i.e.,: recycling, seeking alternative forms of energy, using toxic-free cleaning tools, not supporting transnational corporations whose business activities contribute to destructive practices in the environment, etc.). This can also be done through basic teaching about our co-existence with the earth and the mutually respectful relationship we can have with mother earth, one that should be reflective of the type of loving respect we promote children should have with their human mothers. In fact, it will be easier to teach young people how to establish empathy, break down divisive social barriers that divide people and develop an understanding of socio-cultural interconnectedness by mirroring a relationship with the earth based upon compassionate interdependence.

By relinquishing a victimized perspective in exchange for an empowered one, by re-defining how we address identity and community-building from this non-dualistic perspective, and involving a renewed appreciation for our interconnected relationships (with each other and the earth), I believe we can apply a tangible integration of indigenous cosmology into western practices of interculturalism. Continuing with the discussion of the earth, I now bring the conversation of how and why integrating lessons from the Andes in the modern, industrial communities of the West is something we can't afford to ignore, financially and ecologically speaking.

invention of the “jigsaw classroom” promotes a “cooperative learning technique that reduces racial conflict among school children, promotes better learning, improves student motivation, and increases enjoyment of the learning experience.” (www.jigsaw.org)

Pachamama (Mother Earth): The reality of her wounds and options for her healing

Cultural Affirmation programs not only support the preservation of cultural traditions in the Andes, but in so doing, also preserve the indigenous agricultural practices that are crucial for multi-specie survival. These native practices of tending to the earth sustain the very biodiversity that simplified systems of high-modernist agriculture invariably destroy in their pursuit of higher financial yields in the immediate future, with no regard for the destruction of soil for further use in the future. Andean farmers (and PRATEC and the NACAs) are well aware of this phenomenon which is why they value the programs in schools that help support maintaining and nurturing their traditional cultural practices. Unfortunately, this important lesson is ultimately ignored in many industrial, capitalistic countries of the West. However, I am happy to report that recently I heard a report on National Public Radio that echoed my exact findings in the villages of the Andes about the dire state of worldwide environmental devastation and increasing loss of biodiverse ecosystems. A summary of the findings from the “Millennium Ecosystem Assessment” follows:

A landmark study released today reveals that approximately 60 percent of the ecosystem services that support life on Earth – such as fresh water, capture fisheries, air and water regulation, and the regulation of regional climate, natural hazards and pests – are being degraded or used unsustainably. Scientists warn that the harmful consequences of this degradation could grow significantly worse in the next 50 years.

‘Any progress achieved in addressing the goals of poverty and hunger eradication, improved health, and environmental protection is unlikely to be sustained if most of the ecosystem services on which humanity relies continue to be degraded,’ said the study, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) Synthesis Report, conducted by 1,300 experts from 95 countries. It specifically states that the ongoing degradation of ecosystem services is a road block to the Millennium

Development Goals agreed to by the world leaders at the United Nations in 2000.

[...]Ecosystem changes that have contributed substantial net gains in human well-being and economic development have been achieved at growing costs in the form of degradation of other services.[...] The people harmed by the degradation of the ecosystems are often not the people who benefit from the action leading to their degradation.(1)

This report is nothing new; in fact it's findings are based on a conglomeration of many past environmental reports from across the globe. Yet, the manner in which it is presented (in all media outlets worldwide) and the sponsors for its publication (the United Nations) means that perhaps the importance of its message may finally fall on the ears of those people with power to make business and political decisions that will not further this kind of environmental degradation. Although this understanding is already in place in the indigenous communities in the Andes, recognition and support from international business and political allies will hopefully halt (or at least slow down) incessantly destructive environmental practices that most capitalist, industrial nations continue in the name of quick profits.

The inordinate degradation of natural resources has been in effect since land became a commodity and industrial capitalism gained momentum, yet within the past fifty years the levels of over-consumption and over-use of natural resources have reached an all-time high. Why this has been ignored by modern, industrial nations (primarily in the West) lies in the desire for rapid economic growth, political expansion and a disregard for the serious needs and effects of ecological interconnectedness.

In Seeing like a state, James Scott continues this exploration as to how and why the juxtaposition between native and high-modernist agricultural practices has occurred, resulting in the subjugating “othering” of native knowledge:

[...] a certain understanding of science, modernity, and development has so successfully structured the dominant discourse that all other kinds of knowledge are regarded as backward, static traditions, as old wives' tales and superstitions. High modernism has needed this 'other', this dark twin, in order to rhetorically present itself as the antidote to backwardness. (qtd in Ferguson) The binary opposition also comes from a history of competition between the institutions and personnel that sprang up around these two forms of knowledge. Modern research institutions, agricultural experiment stations, sellers of fertilizer and machinery, high-modernist city planners, Third World developers, and World Bank officials have, to a considerable degree, made their successful institutional way in the world by the systematic denigration of the practical knowledge that we have called *mētis*. (332)

Yet, it is repeatedly proven that high-modernist agricultural methods (namely simplified, monocrop practices that have short-term, high financial revenue) fail in long-term financial and environmental sustainability and production. In contrast, again and again, native practices of tending to the earth result in rich biodiversity and a treatment of the land that nurtures regeneration and subsequently lifelong return of production. Unfortunately, in the immediate-gratification obsessed culture that western capitalists are embedded in, there exists a false sense of security that our current over-consumption and exhaustive use of resources will not incur human and financial loss in the near future. This way of thinking has been in capitalist societies for a very long time, thus this struggle of opposition is nothing new. James Scott elaborates on the specific ramifications, in regards to agricultural practices:

[...] it is the systematic, cyclopean shortsightedness of high-modernist agriculture that courts certain forms of failure. Its rigorous attention to productionist goals casts into relative obscurity all the outcomes lying outside the immediate relationship between farm inputs and yields. This means that both long-term outcomes (soil structure, water quality, land-tenure relations) and third-party effects, or what welfare economists call 'externalities', receive little attention until they begin to affect production. (264)

While James Scott, Tessa Hicks, PRATEC and millions of indigenous farmers worldwide can scream this argument from the mountaintops, (or rather confidently and humbly continue to affirm these practices without needing to scream it to anyone, as is more often the case in the Andes), perhaps the message will be heard at last as leaders of the world's nations recognize that their own financial demise looms if they don't listen. The Millennium Ecosystems Assessment may be the messenger that finally wakes up the masses. It is probably not that simple but at least their message is on target and echoes the sentiment of the countless others who claim that indigenous farming methods are the very practices that nurture the rapidly-decreasing biodiversity. In recognition of the "intrinsic value" of these traditional (agri)cultural practices, as well as the potential financial loss that will start effecting not just poor countries but rich, industrial nations, the Millennium Ecosystems Assessment cleverly highlights the following in its message to U.N. leaders:

Degradation of ecosystem services could be significantly slowed or reversed if the full economic value of the services were taken into account in decision-making. However, some ecosystem services, like agriculture, often 'compete' with the benefits of maintaining greater biological diversity, and many of the steps taken to increase the production require the simplification of natural systems. The level of biodiversity that survives on Earth will be determined not just by considerations of usefulness but also by ethical concerns like the intrinsic value of species. Wealthy populations are often buffered from the degradation of ecosystem services through institutions and financial resources. Nevertheless, physical or social impacts of ecosystem service degradation may cross boundaries. It worsens poverty in developing countries, which in turn can affect neighboring industrial countries by slowing regional economic growth and contributing to the outbreak of conflicts or to migration of refugees.(3)

In order to stop this record-breaking rate of environmental devastation, the strategy of decreasing habits of over-consumption is key. Better yet, teaching big business and

government that capitalism will benefit in the long run if we use our environmental resources better and that moderate consumerism of alternate types of energy will not only better respect the earth, but is also a tactic essentially in the interest of the future of sustained, human consumption!²³ Whether it be in driving electric or hydro- vehicles, maintaining solar-powered home and businesses, or refusing to reward, with our dollars, multi-national corporations that engage in environmental destruction for their own gain, we have the power as conscious collectives of individuals to support the earth through the use of alternative resources and lifestyles that resist environmental devastation. Some might argue that this is impossible and we need to do away with capitalism altogether to dismantle social inequalities and environmental devastation. While this holds merit, as of yet, I haven't been able to figure out an alternative to capitalism to suggest, and thus remain content to hold onto the hope that genuine restructuring within the current system is possible. Of course, as with all things that are viewed from an intercultural, non-dualistic lens, this doesn't have to be an either/or struggle, but a journey that is constantly in flux in order to entertain both notions of reform within the system and complete remodeling of the system itself.

Fight the power or Affirm our power?

Gandhi (1954) fought against poverty, but reveled in simplicity. He was convinced that 'the world has enough for everybody's need, but not enough for one person's greed' (p.52). Today, consumerism has not only legitimized greed but also multiplied needs. People of all classes are becoming victims of the grand delusion that a market-driven society is

²³ So as not to digress entirely into the subject of a growing trend of local governments and big business recognizing the benefit of environmental conservation, the author recognizes the importance of this topic and suggests readers extend the conversation in this direction by exploring, for example, California's involvement in alternative energy resources in the California Hydrogen Highway, <http://hydrogenhighway.ca.gov/>.

projecting with the active complicity of the media. The cake is getting bigger and more extravagant, even if many people are excluded from its taste or experience it only vicariously. Not only are democracies becoming plutocracies and social justice becoming a distant dream, we are also in danger of destroying our life-support systems by lethally damaging our environment and bleeding mother earth. The answer lies in developing paradigms of simple living as alternatives to unsustainable consumerism. (Siddhartha, 96)

As I know and understand western culture, from my lifelong experience of living in a cradle of its manifestation, it has gone beyond a rejection of earth-based cosmologies and collective living practices to a dependence on individualism-based and consumerism-driven population. I would go far as to say that the common culture of western, capitalist communities is over-consumerism itself, and that this is intentionally engrained by our society's most powerful individuals and corporations as building blocks for the success of any industrial, capitalist society. Like any culture, consumerism culture binds people with norms, values, customs and practices that guide the lives of communities and individuals. To embrace indigenous cultural values and practices in modern western societies, we must first look critically at what practices of over-consumerism and over-emphasis on individualism we may need to alter in order to negotiate compassionate and interconnected ecological and intercultural practices in the western world. Essentially, if we really want to support indigenous cultures we need to look at what we need to stop doing before we go out and try to add more things to our plate or leave the U.S. to "help" other countries develop like we have. Can we fight the imperialistic tendency to spread "the American dream" in a global fashion, as our current president, and countless American leaders before him, have promised is what the world wants of us? Considering that "20% of the world's people living in affluence consume 80% of the world's

resources” (Rasmussen 116), it seems obvious that most westerners are ignorant to the importance of global interconnectedness, ecological conservation and empathetic interculturalism and consumed instead with our selfish desires for over-consumption. This does not stop us from going to foreign lands (and native lands at home) and pressing our ways of living, learning and doing business in massive globalizing efforts. Derek Rasmussen elaborates on this as follows:

We believe that we are compassionate. We do not like to see suffering. The Buddha said: ‘Cease to do evil, learn to do good, that is the way of the enlightened ones.’ Well, it seems as if our habit is to rush into the ‘doing good’ part without doing the ‘ceasing’ part. I think that is because the ceasing part does not involve going out to three quarters of the world and being the ‘good guys’. The ‘ceasing’ part means staying home in the well-off quarter and going to the fancy addresses in Rosedale (Toronto), or Westmount (Montreal) – or their equivalent swanky neighborhoods in Chicago, New York, Boston, Seattle, Los Angeles- and addressing the men-in-suits behind iron fences who make the decisions that lead to bomb being dropped, forests being razed, rivers drained or peoples being monetized and ‘literatized’ thousands of miles away. (Rasmussen 119)

While I agree wholeheartedly with the need to try to stop those in power from making decisions that promote a domineering and oppressive influence of western culture and consumerism across the globe, I also don’t think that we can stop simply at “fight the power!” Fighting the injustices of the world is important, but so is crawling out from under the oppressive paradigm of always *fighting against* something- a paradigm that contributes to the “otherizing” of corporate powers in the same way that marginalized groups don’t wish to be otherized. I truly believe that the individual and collective actions of an interconnected community committed to creating peace will change the oppressive nature of globalization, war-mongering, and over-consumerism.

And, yet, with this understanding comes a contradictory truth. How can you maintain cultural affirmation in a system that wants to eradicate you because you are not leading to its financial success? By this I mean, even without wanting to adhere to the paradigm of oppressor vs. oppressed that I alluded to earlier, there must be a recognition of the reality of oppression and the very interconnected effect it will have on Andean villages if it is not addressed. That is, while not wanting to play the game of the “oppressors,” one must know the game and realize it’s impact even on the very desire to be excluded from it. Andean cultural affirmation cannot occur in a vacuum because if there are not some discussions on an institutional level with political and business leaders, this traditional way of life will be obliterated in the name of progress. To truly do justice to the concept of interconnectedness, a recognition must be in place that what people in positions of governmental and business power decide in regards to agricultural reforms, educational systems, market-economy infiltrations and general promotion of cultural values will directly affect rural, indigenous communities. Thus, to continue cultural affirmation there must be a lived practice of interculturalism that goes beyond the grass-roots level of small organizations like PRATEC doing a variety of programs here and there in rural areas, to a larger scale attempt to make sure there is a future for these communities within the paradigm of understanding that the dominant, capitalist culture negotiates. We cannot stop at solely working on inner peace in small pockets of the world and forget about the big picture of social change; we cannot solely concentrate on our own groups’ cultural affirmation and not address the very paradigm that allows for some groups to benefit from the marginalization of other oppressed groups to begin with.

This doesn't need, nor can it successfully be, an "either/or" situation. It must be a "yes, and..." balance between working with (not fighting against) the policies and practices of corporations and governments that we feel are oppressive, unjust or self-centered towards more mutually inclusive resolutions to community problems, *as well as* concentrating our energies on our own individual and community actions that promote positive relationships of harmony and peace. This is no new revelation, of course, but one we must continue to remind ourselves of, lest we keep putting the responsibility on others to "cease doing evil and start doing good". As we look at this, we see our power as interconnected communities to stop actions that, with enough concrete, collective energy will indeed have the power to shift the bigger picture of actions of our nation. As the old, Native-American, Hopi saying reminds us, "We are the ones we've been waiting for!"

Individualism, Over-consumerism and Imperialism: Loving ourselves out of our bad habits

Looking at ourselves to critically examine the habits that do not serve interconnectedness and affirm those that do is a crucial first step in our attempts to cease doing evil and begin doing good. This involves a look at the shared cultural values, norms and customs that derive from a deeply embedded dependence in the lifestyle and belief in a system of capitalism. The success of the U.S. globalization of over-consumerism and corporate take over lies in its citizens' daily alliance to a forwarding of this consumer culture and superiority complex of imperialism. In order for the U.S. to maintain its self-proclaimed status as a superpower empire, it is necessary for its citizens

to privilege worth based on financial measures, contributing to our economy well beyond necessity and into a level of hyper-consumerism and materialism that is reinforced at every level of government, media and even educational systems. The idea of commodifying everything in our lives, from our “free” time to our vocations, to the goods we enjoy and/or need in our daily lives is deeply engrained in our common culture. In order to reverse the trends of commodification and over-consumption, we need to first admit our addiction to them. Roszak offers us an honest and picture of this very addiction:

Few Laotians drive air-conditioned cars, read newspapers that transform tracts of forest into overflowing landfills, fly in jet aircraft, eat fast-food hamburgers, or own refrigerators, several TVs, a VCR, or piles of plastic junk. But millions upon millions of Americans do[...] We are the archetype of a gigantic, overpopulated, over consuming nation, one that many ill-informed decision-makers in poor nations would like to emulate. Unless we demonstrate by example that we understand the horrible mistakes made on our way to over development, and that we are intent on reversing them, we see little hope for the persistence of civilization.
(Roszak 37)

A key pattern of capitalistic culture is the move of consumerism from necessity to luxury (thus directly buying into the hopes and aims of a growth-based economy that relies on this consumerism.) The western feature of a market driven economy creates “culture” solely with the goal of improving consumerism. This inherently disregards the priceless need for promoting ecological and cultural interconnectedness because these practices do not translate as easily to immediate, financial gain. Community practices are not financially rewarding and are thus not what we see being “sold” to us as a sexy, helpful or desirable thing we need to cultivate in our lives.

[...]Consumer demand now accounts for two-thirds of all U.S. economic activity. We have reached this syndrome partly because Americans are

exposed to hundreds of advertisements each day, and from early age television and films have taught us to associate success with new and expensive items, as opposed to useful and practical items. It has taught us that products can replace healthy social contact with others. One conservative estimate has indicated that the average American uses 30 times the goods of an average third-world resident.(Vasquez, 2001, 22)

The capitalistic search for financial “progress” had led to the development and technological advancement that are the crux of modern industrialized nations. Economic individualism, private property, exclusive rights, and general expansionism are flagship institutions touted by Western society. Many advancements, in technology, land use, and profit-based agricultural practices have relied on the removal of man from nature and the inevitable quest to conquer nature in order to achieve optimal profits in a variety of sectors. As noted in the eco-psychology book entitled, My name is Chellis and I’m in recovery from Western Civilization: “The human relationship to the natural world was gradually changed from one of respect for and participation in its elliptical wholeness to one of detachment, management, control, and finally, domination.” (Glendinning 71.)

In the forwarding strides of capitalism, as seen in the Enclosure Act and the massive move to expropriate people from the land and into factories, a subsequent physical and psychological detachment from the land took place, making room for the ability to objectify and use the earth with increasing ease and carelessness. Within this “progress,” fences were created to separate ‘private property’ and subsequently private households, which inevitably moved to the creation of high rise apartments in the concrete jungles of industrialized cities today, where individuals have virtually no daily contact with the earth. Not only did this historical shift towards industrialization effect human being’s relationship with the land and cause irreversible and damaging effects on

the environment, but it also served as a mechanism to divide communities; we fenced ourselves away from not only the earth, but also from each other. The value of individualism is strengthened as the “community” becomes fragmented.

While the emphasis on individualism and a separation from one another in a communal sense is not the only correlation towards over-consumption, it is one contributing factor in this modern society. Of course, there are poor and rural communities that are still intrigued and involved with over-consumerism, but I do feel that one particular resistance to this trend can be sought through promoting value in non-material items, such as a collective interconnected sense of community, the resources of inter-generation knowledge, and a deepened connection to the earth which would more likely negate an ease in exploiting it. Instead what we see more of are modern “cures” for a lack of spiritual and personal satisfaction left in the dust of over-consumerism. The sense of ‘collective loneliness’ and emptiness based on personal and earth wounds can be numbed through the well-marketed relief found in alcohol and drug consumption, anti-depressant pharmaceutical drugs, internet surfing, television viewing and other mindless entertainment that give us a false sense of “Friends”.

Embedding ourselves in community as a resistance to capitalism or means of re-inventing it

Community, the collective, is not external, but is the basis of existence. By associating with others, the community itself is what links everyone and everything so that what matters is the collective harmony that is found in the life of the entire community and not each of the ‘forms in themselves’- and least of all in the mental capacity of the individual that is given a privileged status in the West. This capacity, in Andean life, is never all by

itself, but closely related, linked with the senses and all the living community that nests in each being. (Vasquez, 2005, 38)

Profound “cures” to the collective and individual sense of loss which often results from saturation in over-consumerism can be found through rooting down and embedding ourselves in community. Resistance to the current manifestation of over-consumerism is born in cultivating interdependence with others and enjoying the strength that is born in collectives that are is not measured in monetary value. The powerful building blocks for social change and empowerment called “love” and “compassion” are born in community, and do not contribute to consumerism or the value that materialism is our highest good. In fact they often defy this norm and in so doing, allow collectives to break the mold of individualism-based consumerism culture and renew old and create new values for people to grasp hold of to find their worth, their drive, and their belief system. It seems that embedding oneself in things that cannot be measured financially will threaten the capitalist system that necessitates everyone’s mutual dependency on and contribution to consumerism. Perhaps reinstating value put on intergenerational knowledge, collective interdependence and a relationship with the land will inherently pull us away from the very desire and need for over-consumerism. Historically speaking, building community is such a powerful weapon for social change that it is the first thing that slave-owners attempted to destroy in their effort to maintain power over their subordinates. And knowing this strength of community to give people support and a reason to stand up against injustice, community is precisely the thing that slaves worked to build both in slavery and immediately after, as a sign of their freedom. Slaves created community through personal family bonds of secret marriages (“jumping over the broom”) and

through song and dance. Not only did building community offer support and a will to survive, but messages for survival, revolt and perseverance often existed in communal practices (such as the rhythms carried in the hidden martial arts –guised as dance-practice of Capoeira). Upon liberation, some of the first things slaves did to claim their freedom was to root down in communities, to marry and build families, to find strength for survival in collectives.²⁴

This strength found in collectives is lost in capitalist-laden ethics of hard work, which emphasize individual success more so than collaborative work, as typified in age old sayings such as ‘pull yourself up by your bootstraps’ - find success on your own, beyond all odds. While individualism has succeeded in being a prominent aspect of our western culture, and a building block for capitalism, it is also in direct contrast with the innate desire and need for interdependency with others. We can see this need materialize in contemporary communities, for example, in observing the trend of the past decade of popularizing yoga as both physical conditioning and spiritual awakening. Even the rich of our cities are finding that material wealth is not entirely fulfilling and thus are searching, in hordes of newly-invented urban yogis, an ancient tradition of meditation and movement in order to find strength in community and spiritual happiness that is not available through consumerism²⁵.

Communities are being strengthened in a variety of ways, from gyms to yoga studios to the birth of internet communities that spring up in online dating, blogging, and chat rooms. Perhaps the values strengthened in tradition-based and spirituality-based

²⁴ The concept of romantic commitment and community-building reflecting an assertion of freedom, as modeled by slaves, was inspired by a Robin D.G. Kelley (personal email conversation. 18 Nov 2004.)

²⁵ An example of this can be seen in the upcoming film with Deepak Chopra called “Your money or your life”

communities will not lend to exploitation of resources, time and individualism for capitalist gains but, on the contrary, will return people to older traditions that negate materialism and destructive ego-, ethno- and andro-centric behavior.

The relative nature of Progress and Poverty

As I reach the end of this analysis, I think it is important to end with some questions about the “established truths” of our western culture that help breed the assumed values and norms that support over-consumerism and exploitation of natural resources. This can be executed through an unique reflection on the concepts of “progress” and “poverty”. Perhaps the following anecdote will open a window towards this line of questioning and out-of-the-box considerations.

I recently went to a conference where I was afforded the opportunity to talk to a funding agent from the internationally renowned Ford Foundation. In her presentation at the conference²⁶, this “Environment and Development” Program Director representing Ford’s work in Latin America mentioned that part of the foundation’s mission is to “eradicate poverty.” During her tenure there, this particular employee had helped move the agency to a crucial understanding of the importance of funding local, community organizations rather than foreign, service-driven organizations . Specifically, she had managed to change the course of the funding from only 20% going to grass-roots organizations inside the country in question and 80% going to outside agencies- usually non-profits or universities in the U.S.- to the exact opposite model. Now 80% of the

²⁶ Abriendo brecha, Haciendo Camino: Activist Scholarship. Conference. University of Texas, Austin. 24-26 February 2005 ;Conversation with Deborah Barry.

funds go directly to agencies within the communities where the poverty is hoped to be eradicated so they can use it in models of empowerment that they create. Yet, even with this victory of distributing funds for social change, she still faced another, deeper complexity in regards to her funding initiatives. How does one define what is poverty and who is to say when certain living styles and conditions will benefit from progress towards another standard of living? For example, the living conditions of the Andean farmers I visited would be considered impoverished by any U.S. standard. For example, they had no electricity, no in-house access to running water, very little money on hand, and lived in a one-room, dirt-floored houses to accommodate all family members. Yet, when I spoke with the Reyes family²⁷ during my tour of their small farm in the town of Viccos, I was told that they were “rich in plants but poor in cash.” When I asked what was more important, they answered: “Well, the plants!” In a conversation with the staff members of Urpichallay following this tour, I asked what these families needed money for and the response I received²⁸ was that the only need for money was to buy school supplies and to get medical surgeries. Aside from that, all necessary resources were provided through their farms, animals and the collective nature of their communities. If a family needed a particular surgery that their plants could not help with, they would hold “apoyados” (a term and activity they invented based off the verb “apoyar”- to support) which essentially is similar to later day “rent parties” in that the family in need of extra money for the surgery creates a big feast and sells plates of food to their friends and neighbors, who use a little bit of the little money they have to support this family. With the money raised, the community has, in a sense, enabled one member of their “family” to get the adequate care

²⁷ German Tagur Reyes Family, Personal conversation. 10 June 2004. My translation.

²⁸ Carina. Personal conversation. 10 June 2004. My translation.

they need, while continuing in a standard of living that does not necessitate this level of wealth on a regular basis.

I imagine that its not that these families are adverse to having money, but it is that the entrance of the market-economy and its values of over-consumerism are not congruent with their cosmological and agricultural practices. They could make more money in the short run by engaging in mono-crop agricultural production that foreign importers are hungry for, but this does not serve the land over time, nor does it adhere to the creation of the rich biodiversity that their native practices maintain and which promise regeneration that will sustain them and their communities in the future. Thus, the “eradication of poverty” that Ford espouses will not assist this community in maintaining their rich agricultural practices that are in fact supported by keeping their standards of living just as they are. When I confronted the Ford Foundation director with this question, she looked at me knowingly and admitted this was a very complex challenge for the reasons I’ve outlined above. She agreed that instead of introducing wealth and money-making possibilities to these communities in attempts to support them (by eradicating their poverty) the real support they need is nurturing and aiding these communities in doing exactly what they are already doing, through community-supportive practices. (One such is the “Ferias de Semillas”- a seed exchange festival where farming families from various villages come together and trade and barter their different seeds in order to mutually support the biodiversity in each of their farms.) This type of support does not eradicate the standards of living that western measures would easily label as impoverished, but instead supports the communities in staying as they are- a practice that is the only real option if there is hope for a future for their agricultural practices that

create biodiversity. With simple assistance in programs like the ones PRATEC and the NACAs offer communities (such as: Ferias de semillas, Afirmacion Cultural, In Situo Conservacion and Ninez y Biodiversidad), these communities will thrive, perhaps not flourish in the progressive nature of change that a western paradigm holds superior, but they will be able to continue, just as they are, culturally affirming the way of life that has nourished them thus far and make biodiversity possible. Herein lies the irony of Ford's seemingly well-intentioned desire to eradicate poverty, and the reality that such assistance may eradicate crucial farming and cultural traditions that are the crux of the Andean people. These are not easily solved issues, but ones that at least need to be discussed so that the terms "poverty" and "progress" are seen in the relative nature in which they exist, instead of the universal terms that we seem to have made them.

Chapter IV.

Tensions

Given the tremendous respect that I have for the native cosmology and way of life that I was party to in the Andes, there lies a high probability that my interpretation of said culture overlooks many of the contradictions and tensions that exist within. Yet, another reason for the absence of critique in my analysis is that I am following the lead of PRATEC, whose aim it is not to judge or attempt to change for the better the Andean culture, but to nurture it as is, to help support it in its own framework of existence. There is no sense of judging it and trying to forward it to a different place, one with a subjective degree of cultural improvement and a priority of progress. However, the problem with

this perspective is that it does not address the effects of changes in other cultures that have contaminated the Andean. Let me explain. When I asked the members of PRATEC how they could unconditionally support the Andean culture and nurture its inhabitants to re-affirm their cultural practices when in fact some of those cultural practices include domestic violence, alcoholism and homophobia, they explained that these attributes are in fact *not* intrinsic values of their culture. These are actions that are not true to the indigenous nature of their communities, but are actions that have resulted because from the influence of a complex mix of marginalization and negative, external influences. While this may be the case, I still believe that in existing in the present moment, we need to look at the unhealthy practices that are presently embedded in the culture because even if they are ones that were originally foreign to the ontology and ways of being that are most organic to these communities, they are now readily becoming integral shadows within the light of these traditions. Domestic violence in and of itself is incongruent with the type of mutually nurturing relationship and respectful balance of roles that are inherent to most Andean families, yet due to the changes in these roles and the various influences upon these communities, this violence has seeped into many Andean households and begs to be addressed. I imagine that PRATEC believes that by affirming the original traditions and values of this culture there will be a correlated move away from practices that are not staple values of the culture. I hope that this is true, but I also believe that the tensions that exist as a result of the western and/or capitalist influence (and whatever other influences that make their mark in this regard) need to be addressed specifically, bringing back Buddha's reminder that we need to cease doing evil before we start (or return to) doing good.

Aside from this issue, there are at least three other specific tensions that I see in regards to the many issues I've raised in this paper. First, tensions probably exist in regards to the fact that the market-economy that exists in cities nearby rural Andean communities promotes a seductive lure that undoubtedly challenges many folks, especially young folks in the communities, in finding satisfaction in a way of life that does not offer the attractive amenities that a modern, consumerist lifestyle can. This pull threatens to take away Andean youth from their villages, which will eventually lead to the dying out of the indigenous, rural communities and thus the native agricultural practices promoting biodiversity. Unless each culture makes a concerted effort to show the intrinsic value and important cultural and ecological necessities of supporting traditional collective communities, then it's a safe bet to assume that soon the money-making opportunities in cities will be what wins the attention of rural Andean youth. Although I did not personally witness this, I imagine there must exist some struggle in communities where some are desiring the preservation of a traditional way of life (which may very well mean maintaining what others would call impoverished living conditions) while others are eager to move into, or invite into their home communities, the market-economy and the lifestyles that come with it. These tensions and contrasting desires must be further explored for programs of Cultural Affirmation and Interculturalism to truly be successful.

A second tension that I see is when the concept of Cultural Affirmation is taken to the extreme and an exclusive sense of nationalism is born in the process of finding empowerment. Obviously, self-determination is directly correlated to the strength marginalized communities can find in affirming their culture, but it also can be carried to

an extreme that closes any conversation to a holistic appreciation of cultural relations in the larger community. The danger in this is that ideas of Interculturalism and interconnectedness are lost and in return a homogenous communities are created that promotes segregation through cultural empowerment.²⁹

Lastly, there exists a tension in the mere discussion of returning to cultural traditions, as this concept and practice has moved beyond the means of empowering marginalized communities to being another way of commodifying culture for capital gain. By this I mean that going “old school” or ethnic is a trendy way of “keeping it real.” I’m not indicating that the popularity in returning to one’s roots is a negative thing, but capitalizing on the empowering movement toward tradition is just another means of selling off culture. It is an ironic twist how a culture that is not aligned with capitalist notions of progress and instead reinvigorates traditions that promote earth and community-based (not necessarily wealth-generating) ways of life can be a threat, in their very existence, to capitalism, yet they are suddenly appreciated and given value when the system of capitalism realizes it can sell this “traditional” and “native” image to make a buck. Robin D.G. Kelley helped bring this perspective to my paper when he said this of native cultures:

[...] they are not a threat to other segments of capital, which is why Putamayo and all these New Age, third world romance industries flourish IN THE WEST, meaning in the U.S. and Europe among so-called Western people looking for some way to be different, to ‘go native’ or even to embrace some spiritual dimensions that seem libratory (and these industries are not new—going back to the late 19th century). This is what we mean by ‘uneven development,’ that there are fundamental contradictions in the way capitalism works and the way cultures live and

²⁹ For an example of this, see Trask, Haunani-Kay. “Self-determination for Pacific Island Women: The case of Hawai’i Sing, Whisper, Shout, Pray! Feminist Visions for a Just World. Eds, Alexander, M. Jacqui, Albrecht, Lisa, Day, Sharon and Megrest, Meg. Berkely: Edgework, 2003. (138-150)

breath. The very cultures that constitute a direct threat to one segment of capital can also be marketed and sold by another segment, and thus in another context be rendered harmless.³⁰

This thought was reiterated in an interview I read on marketing, which I ironically picked up on my flight home from the conference where I gave a presentation on the importance of re-affirming traditional practices and had the above discussion with the Ford representative. Flipping through the in-flight magazine of American Airlines I was intrigued by an interview with Sergio Zyman, author of “Renovate before you innovate: Why doing the new thing may not be the right thing”. Mr. Zyman was the “chief marketing officer for Coca-Cola during the ill-fated launch of New Coke, but rebounded to be named one of *Time* magazine’s top pitchmen of the 20th Century” and suddenly marks himself as my interesting bedfellow in this argument for looking back before looking ahead. The interview reads:

-Doesn’t ‘renovate’ sound a bit stodgy, like fixing up an old house?

-Everybody likes the sex appeal of innovation, but in renovating, you preserve something that has value while taking advantage of all the equity you’ve got in it. Before trying something radically new, maximize use of current assets.³¹

This section of the interview made me laugh out loud (and cry a little too) reflecting that even top level business men are seeing the significance in re-affirming traditional practices and preserving the value of what exists instead of always valuing progress towards something that is newer and thus allegedly better. While general public support (and even business-oriented support) is welcomed in the preserving of valuable traditions,

³⁰ Kelley, Robin D.G. Personal email conversation. 4 December 2004.

³¹ Tucker, Chris, “The Fixer-Upper,” American Way 15 February 2005: 19.

we must be cautious about the ways it is done which may result in capitalizing on a culture without recognizing the intrinsic, non-materialist value of it, as well.

Speaking of the risk of commodifying culture for personal gain, I hope I haven't contributed to any sense of appropriating the Andean culture in the discussion of important lessons that can be derived from it. To be cognizant of this potential tension, it is important to mention the power dynamic that cannot be ignored when interculturalism is sought between two entities that exist on different level playing fields. While an intellectual and spiritual shift in thinking (such as "mestiza consciousness") can indeed move us closer to uniting divided communities and supporting interconnected, collective consciousness, there are other historical, political and cultural dynamics involved, which demonstrate that this shift in thinking is only the first step in melting the divide. Within attempts at interculturalism we mustn't forget the very privilege that exists in a dominant culture "inviting" subjugated knowledge from a marginalized culture to participate in cultural cross-pollination. Investigating the effects of power dynamics is crucial, not only in this regard, but also in how we can relinquish our habit of fragmenting our identities and clinging to the security and power found in identity-based politics. Identities are constantly manipulated in order to side with aspects that will either afford us more power or feed into images of victimization that may also work to our advantage. A tension that exists involves interrogating the nuances of how power is manifested in the act of self-identity as well as the challenges that exist for those in positions of power to give up some of their elevated status in order to co-exist equally in the collective experience of an interconnected community.

Conclusion

This paper has aimed to make a small step in the grand direction of exploring the similarities and differences in the ways in which “Native Andean” and “U.S. capitalist/western” cultures, traditions and values regard individualism, community-building, consumerism, environmentalism and inter-group relations. In so doing, it is my hope that through the use of interculturalism, cross-pollination and mestiza consciousness I have offered a reflection of my western culture that approximates a non-dualistic view and creates room for integrating lessons from the Andes in a fluid and mutually respectful manner. The theme of interconnectedness is one that I hope to model in every aspect of my inquiry in order to reflect in this very paper the same kind of nurturing and richness I see interconnectedness play in Andes in ecological terms (biodiversity) and intercultural terms (cultural affirmation and respectful inter-group relations).

It is important to note that while my participation in the programs of these Peruvian, grass-roots organizations and in the cultural traditions of the indigenous communities felt different and new in some ways, I simultaneously knew that these practices, while diluted in traditional Western teachings, are actually practices I have imagined or practiced in the past, in my roots, in different lights and under different circumstances. This melts away the dualistic lens that would separate these two cultures as so very different and instead allows interconnectedness to emerge in the understanding of the practices of each. For me perhaps some of the indigenous practices I saw and participated in felt familiar because in some way these practices leaked into my upbringing that had me camping at 6 weeks old or were reflected in our inventive babysitting coop. While outside of most of my understanding of Western paradigms of

community living, I felt at home in “discovering” these “new” ways of interpreting the world and living in community as I realized that the pinnacle practices of interculturalism that I experienced in Peru are practices that lie just below the surface, pooled in the collective social amnesia of many of the radical Left communities that I have lived, studied and worked in over the years. Indigenous practices of communing, communicating and connecting with nature, engaging in mindful awareness of our interconnectedness with other human and non-human beings, and appreciating the empowerment and autonomy that develops in collective living are practices that not intrinsically foreign to westerners but have merely been culturally erased from our daily lives and replaced with an individualistic, consumerism-driven society that fences itself off from both nature and neighbors. I believe that these indigenous practices may not be as far away from typical capitalist, modern, western society as we think, but we must employ a radical movement of intercultural, cross-pollinating integrations of these seemingly disparate worlds. This involves a radical *re*-remembering that allows us to *re*-convene the *members* of our bodies, minds, psyches and souls with the *members* of our communities and animals and spirit worlds and the indigenous practices we seem to have forgotten. To engage in this *remembering* we have to take a look at where we are now and what distractions we can remove from our current lifestyles that will return us to the traditions that value community-building in ways that don’t succumb to massive, consumer driven development. I can only imagine that introducing a more communal way of life may very well be appreciated in the west (if only because the collaborative effort between individuals and the improved use of the earth’s resources could eventually produce profit in the business world!).

I hope this paper has served to not only to engage in said reflection, but also has succeeded in adequately describing the colorful threads that create the fabric of indigenous cosmology of the Andes and models of interculturalism and interconnectedness that have so much to teach us. By revealing the more dualistic and fragmenting tendencies of the identity-based methodologies of western anti-bias educational models, I hope I illustrated what can, in contrast, be learned, integrated and emphasized from the holistic, indigenous perspective regarding cultural affirmation. While the Andean culture does not have the choice of inviting Western culture into its communities with the help of groups like PRATEC, it can find the support it needs to preserve the indigenous practices that have sustained the vibrant culture and biodiversity in the region.

Yet, to actualize the goals of interconnectedness in intercultural and ecological terms we need to reflect on the tensions that exist within the very paradigm of activism that separates environmentalists as separate and apart from social justice/ human relations activists. The very discussion of the earth, how she has been violated, under appreciated, and marginalized and mutilated by humans, rarely takes place in workshops, conferences or publications on the subjects of marginalization, violence, inequality and injustice that make up social justice movements. Sometimes it will be addressed in the context of ecoracism, but that is usually only suggested as another tool that is used to cause harm and marginalize communities of color or impoverished communities (a tool of oppression such as the placement of toxic waste plants in lower class neighborhoods, etc.) Otherwise, I find that myself and my colleagues who work in social justice activism and academia find it completely normal to engage in lengthy discussions on injustices

committed in intra-human relationships but never suggest as a topic worthy of discussion how the earth has been objectified, marginalized and treated unjustly. We dismiss ecological relations as the concern of environmentalists while we concentrate on human relations. Even using the term “human relations” to connote social justice activism demonstrates how completely we ignore the subject of and relationship to the earth from conversations on inter-group relations. This may be the final frontier of social movements; the realization that our disrespect and violence towards the earth *is* a concern of interconnected movements to address injustice. We cannot discard it as a topic in our conversation as an entity, living and breathing, that is less deserving of being the focal point of discussions as to how to build healthy, peaceful, just, respectful and empowering instead of oppressive relationships in our world. For if we do this, we are contributing to a paradigm of oppression by acting as perpetrators of violence against a living and breathing part of our community- the land that loves and nurtures us. We are also missing out on the tremendous strength of interconnectedness that is born when we root down in communities, and cross-pollinate environmental and social entities into the same context of “community”! The cross-pollinating and interconnected relationship between movements is important amongst activists so that individual and collective actions have a stronger front for encouraging the respect and peace each movement is screaming for.

Finally, I believe that Andean practices of traditional collective-living and ecological re-generation are revolutionary acts in that they require us to shift our current paradigms of understanding of “progress” to include the concepts of social, cultural and environmental conservation. I believe that *progressive* activists need to look critically at some of the negative consequences that *progress* has had in regards to community-

building and consumer culture. While certainly many socio-political practices in our society will benefit from strategies for social change, I believe that progressive activists might reexamine how “conservation” - despite it’s shared linguistic root with the politically-wrought term “conservative” - can be seen as a radical, liberal tactic for sustaining traditions that contribute to successful human and non-human relations. Additionally, it is time to bring to the table the relative definitions of “poverty” and “progress” in the first place; a conversation that I scratched the surface of in this paper, but deserves much deeper and holistic analysis.

Obviously, a much longer conversation of these issues is needed, but the fact that this type of discussion is able to enter into current dialogues within academia, is an important step towards a genuine celebration of indigenous knowledge and alternative models for interculturalism. In the end, I hope this conversation leads to a global shift that allows us to cross-pollinate various traditions in urban communities of activists, artists and academics. I hope this melting away of compartmentalizing tendencies will eventually reconvene activists (from tree-hugging hippies to longshoremen unionists to sweat shop laborers to anti-capitalist/ anti-globalization protestors) to clarify the unifying trends in these “movement of movements”³² and find strength in our collectivity. To do this, we must agree upon a major shift in thinking from individualistic, identity-based politics typical of the west to a collective/ holistic-based approach typical of indigenous cosmology. The shift to a cross-pollinating and interconnecting mindset and practice may be a challenging and unfamiliar road for some activists and academics, but one that is crucial for a world that is becoming more and more interconnected everyday.

³² Naomi Klein uses this term in an essay which is now a part of (and the title of) the following book: Mertes, Tom Mertes, ed. A movement of movements: Is another world really possible? London: Verso, 2004.

WORKS CITED

- Alsutany, Evelyn. "Los Intersticios: Recasting Moving Selves". This Bridge we call home. Eds. Anzaldua, Gloria and Keating, Analouise. New York: Routledge, 2002. 80-110.
- Anzaldua, Gloria. Borderlands/ La Frontera. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999.
- Apffel-Marglin, Frederique, Introduction. The Spirit of Regeneration: Andean Culture Confronting Western Notions of Development. Ed. Apffel-Marglin, Frederique, London: Zed Books, 1998. 1-50.
- Bettman, Ellen Hofheimer. Trainers Manual for A CLASSROOM OF DIFFERENCE: An International Anti-Bias Education and Diversity Program of the Anti-Defamation League. New York: ADL A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE Institute, 2003.
- Bothamley, Jennifer. Dictionary of Theories. Canton: Visible Ink Press, 1993
- Bowers, C.A. Introduction. Rethinking Freire: Globalization and the Environmental Crisis. Eds, Bowers, C.A. and Apffel-Marglin, Frederique. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005. 1-12.

California Hydrogen Highway. Eds. Governor of the State of California, California Environmental Protection Agency, California Air Resources Board. 27 March 2005, <http://hydrogenhighway.ca.gov/>.

Denzin, Norman K. and Lincoln, Yvonna S., eds. Handbook of Qualitative Research. Thousand Oaks: Sage: 1994.

Esteva, Gustavo, Stuchul, Dana L. and Prakash, Madhu Suri. "From a Pedagogy for Liberation to Liberation from Pedagogy", Rethinking Freire: Globalization and the Environmental Crisis. Eds. Bowers, C.A. and Apffel-Marglin, Frederique. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005. (13-30)

Fernandez, Eduardo Grillo. "Development or Cultural Affirmation in the Andes?" The Spirit of Regeneration: Andean Culture Confronting Western Notions of Development. Ed. Apffel-Marglin, Frederique. London: Zed Books, 1998. 143-243.

Fernandez, Eduardo Grillo and Ishizawa, Jorge. "Loving World as it is, Western Abstraction and Andean Nurturance". Revision, Vol 18, No. 2, 1998.

Glendinning, Chellis. My name is Chellis and I'm in Recovery from Western Civilization. Boston: Shambhala, 1994.

Hamrick, Johnathan M. "Banks addresses multiculturalism and social justice at 2004 Creekmore Symposium". Center Piece 20 May 2004. 3-4.

Jigsaw Classroom .Ed. Elliot Aaronson and Social Psychology Network. 2005.

www.jigsaw.org

Machaca, M. "Nino, familia y comunidad en los Andes (Children, family and community in the Andes)". Culturas e infancias (Culture and Childhoods), ed. M. Brondi. Lima: Terre des Hommes Germany. 2001.

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. Eds, Caudwil web design. 30 March 2005.

<http://www.millenniumassessment.org>

Nabhan, Gary Paul. Cross-Pollinations: The Marriage of Science and Poetry. Canada: Milkweed, 2004.

Robinson, Phyllis. "Whose oppression is this? The cultivation of compassionate action in dissolving the dualistic barrier". Rethinking Freire: Globalization and the Environmental Crisis. Eds, Bowers, C.A. and Apffel-Marglin, Frederique. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005. 101- 114.

Rasmussen, Derek. "Cease to do evil, then learn to do good: A pedagogy for the oppressor". Rethinking Freire: Globalization and the Environmental Crisis. Eds,

Bowers, C.A. and Apffel-Marglin, Frederique. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005. 115-132.

Roszak, Theodore. The Voice of the Earth. Grand Rapid: Phanes Press, 2001.

Scott, James C. Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed. New Haven: Yale University Press: 1998.

Semali, Ladislaus M., and Kincheloe, Joe L. Introduction. What is Indigenous Knowledge: Voices from the Academy. Eds, Semali, Ladislaus M., and Kincheloe, Joe L. New York : Falmer Press, 1999. 3-57.

Siddhartha. "From conscientization to Interbeing: A personal journey". Rethinking Freire: Globalization and the Environmental Crisis. Eds, Bowers, C.A. and Apffel-Marglin, Frederique. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005. 83-100.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. Decolonizing Methodologies; Research and Indigenous Peoples. London: Zed Books, 2002.

Trask, Haunani-Kay. "Self-determination for Pacific Island Women: The case of Hawai'i". Sing, Whisper, Shout, Pray! Feminist Visions for a Just World. Eds, Alexander

M. Jacqui, Albrecht, Lisa, Day, Sharon and Megrest, Meg. Berkely: Edgework, 2003.
138-150

Tucker, Chris, "The Fixer-Upper," American Way 15 February 2005: 19.

Vasquez, Grimaldo Rengifo. "Change as Re-creation", Forests, Trees and People, 44
(April 2001): 21-25.

Vasquez, Grimaldo Rengifo. "Nurtance in the Andes". Rethinking Freire: Globalization
and the Environmental Crisis. Eds, Bowers, C.A. and Apffel-Marglin, Frederique.
Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005. 31-48.