

CREATIVE COMMODIFICATION OF HANDICRAFTS, THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN THE EXPORT MARKET AND THE INDIGENOUS WEAVER: COMPARISONS OF LATIN AMERICAN WEAVING COMMUNITIES

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Introduction

The number of tourists visiting Latin America has increased dramatically over the past thirty years. In order to take advantage of tourists' desire for "ethnic goods," weaving communities in the Andes, Central America and Mexico are dedicating themselves to weaving because the sale of textiles to tourists provides them with the opportunity for income and quality of life improvements. While many weavers associated with cooperatives and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been able to increase their incomes significantly, the exploitation of other groups continues as merchants and buyers refuse to pay fair prices. Fortunately, as the numbers of NGOs, community aid grants and loans increase, fewer exploitative relationships operate within the weaving market. These monies also promise to help improve marketing and production techniques, advancing sales and quality.

While there are now increasing monies to assist indigenous weaving communities, there continue to be dramatic changes in the structure of the indigenous weaving market. The increasing tourist market has resulted in several significant changes, including: 1) a shift in the type of production, 2) increased capital flow, and 3) an increased sense of identity within the indigenous communities. These effects can be measured by the types of weavings created in indigenous weaving communities and the development of two styles of weavings: a personal textile and a commodified textile.

The development of these weaving styles has evolved from the changes that have occurred in Latin American society. Prior to the development of a cash economy, weavers worked on a barter contract, producing textiles for themselves and others in their community (Franquemont 1997). However, with the development of the tourist industry, weavers have designed specific techniques to increase production and sales. The sale of textiles to consumers began with the entrance of the middleman into indigenous communities in the 1960s and 1970s. Middlemen started entering isolated communities with the

objective of buying traditional textiles from indigenous weavers to sell in tourist markets. As the market for textiles in Latin America grew, the cultural identity of many indigenous groups suffered as their interactions with middlemen increased and became more manipulative. However, the violent civil wars of the 1970s and 1980s delayed the imminent tourist trade until after these conflicts ended in the 1980s and 1990s. During this turbulent time period, NGOs were viewed as subversive, and were not able to operate. However, in recent years NGO and cooperative activity in Latin America has increased particularly due to greater financial support from groups such as the Inter American Foundation (Schevill 1999; Branfman 1987). Thus, the tourist market in Latin America after starting from very exploitative relationships with middlemen during the 1960s and 1970s is now characterized by more supportive relationships fostered by NGOs and weaving cooperatives designed and created to provide aid and assistance to indigenous weaving communities.

The following comparisons of NGOs and weaving cooperatives in the Andes, Central America and Mexico will examine how several communities have succeeded in preserving their cultural identity while still profiting from the tourist and export markets. These specific case studies also indicate how indigenous communities are responding in similar manners across cultures and borders; comparisons indicate that the weaving communities in Central America and Mexico are responding to Western pressures in the same manner as Andean weavers. The evolution of textile markets demonstrates an innate desire among indigenous weavers to generate economic gains while still maintaining a sense of cultural identity. As the encounter between the indigenous groups and the West intensifies, the NGOs and cooperatives working with indigenous communities have been successful in assisting them to create two different styles of weavings: one for the textile market and one for personal use.

Cloth as Identity

In order to understand why indigenous communities are creating two styles of weavings, it is essential to understand why weaving is important to indigenous culture. As Andrea Heckman, an anthropologist who studied with a Quechua weaving community in the Andes, stated, "Cloth is the equivalent of the canvas or the blank page through which Quechuas [and other indigenous people], like painters and writers elsewhere, creatively express who they are and what they believe to those who understand them" (Heckman 2003: 107). It is through cloth and textile designs that indigenous people express their identity with an ethnic or local group and represent their beliefs. Many weavers do not

know how to read or write; they instead use textiles to represent their history, identity and belief systems. Weavings are also used to pass on ancestral information about aspects of indigenous life, including cosmological beliefs and agricultural methods (Heckman 2003: 6, 15). Although the meanings of woven patterns have changed over the years, textiles continue to communicate cultural metaphors, myths and beliefs (Heckman 2003: 36).

While woven textiles are not worn on a daily basis as they were in the past, indigenous peoples throughout Latin America continue to wear them during rituals and festivals to celebrate their relationship with nature, animals, and the environment (Heckman 2003: 21, 112). During festivals, cloth demonstrates a community's resistance to modern encroachments upon indigenous values as they continue to wear *traje* regardless of discrimination and prejudice (Heckman 1997: 161). Thus, it is through cloth and woven textiles that indigenous peoples continue to express membership within their social group as society identifies individuals through the clothes that are worn (Ackerman 1996: 233, 254; Femenias 1996; Meisch 1996).

Middlemen

The importance of identity and woven cloth was foreign to many of the middlemen who began entering indigenous weaving communities in the 1960s and 1970s. Prior to this time weavers did not sell their weavings to people outside of their communities, but instead only exchanged textiles among friends and family members as textiles remained sacred to the indigenous peoples (Franquemont 1997). Prior to the 1960s and 1970s there was little infrastructure or roads that would have allowed indigenous weavers to travel long distances or have middlemen come to their villages to buy textiles. However, with the development of a cash economy, indigenous life changed. This change is indicated by the following quote from a Jalq'a weaver, "Our ancestors wove only to make their own clothing, not to earn money. Each year they probably produced a single *axsu* [type of indigenous weaving], in an exceptional year, two. Last year I made four. Our needs are different now, we need cash to get by" (Healy 2001: 281). Thus, it is evident that the development of a cash economy for the sale of textiles was foreign to indigenous weavers. However, they needed to increase their economic income and one of the only options for selling one's wares in craft markets was the development of a relationship with a middleman because they lived in geographically isolated areas and often spoke only indigenous languages, making it difficult for them to communicate with outsiders. A middleman, in the context of the textile market, is defined as a person who buys goods from producers and

sells them to retailers or consumers; through this relationship, the middleman makes a profit by serving as an intermediary between the producer and the consumer (Adapted from Oxford Reference Online). The middlemen's relationships with indigenous weavers were often extremely manipulative and degenerated the textile tradition in many indigenous communities as there was not sufficient time to weave for community needs; they instead dedicated themselves to weaving only for consumer purchase as they entered the cash economy. Middlemen also caused the modes of textile production to change as it was necessary to adapt techniques to meet the increasing consumer demand for textiles.

Thus, the discussion of the role of the middleman in association with indigenous weaving communities is important to examine because of its lasting influence on indigenous societies. The middleman position arose when tourists began visiting indigenous societies. This new tourist market began taking shape during the 1960s and 1970s and created a demand in external markets for indigenous goods. In its initial years, the market was defined by the sale of inexpensive items that allowed middlemen to sell their wares rapidly. Specifically in Guatemala, the majority of the shops were owned by *mestizos* who operated patron-client relationships, buying the weavings from indigenous weavers and then selling them directly to tourists at inflated costs. This was often an exploitative relationship because the weavers earned a very minimal profit, selling the textiles at or near the cost of the primary materials of yarn and dye. The majority of the people selling the weavings were not indigenous peoples because the middleman controlled the buying and selling of their textiles (Morris 1996: 407). Thus, the weavers made very small profits during this time and were often seriously exploited, contributing to the loss of their traditional techniques and styles.

When considering the loss of traditional styles and traditions, it is important to denote the distinction between a "tradition" and something "traditional." A tradition is a set of practices or a style that evolves and is passed on from one generation to the next (Adapted from Oxford Reference Online). On the other hand, something "traditional" is static or unchanging and is often associated with resistance to change in contrast to the modern and urbanized world. The word traditional is often used in a negative connotation (Adapted from Oxford Reference Online), but in the context of textiles it can be used to distinguish between the weavings produced for consumer and personal use. For example, middlemen and tourists consider traditional textiles as those that are produced in indigenous communities using natural dyes, and ancient techniques and patterns. Thus, the middlemen desire the weavings of the indigenous societies to

remain traditional in the sense that the designs and techniques are unchanged. The tourist and export market prefer a static style that is associated with the traditions of the past instead of a reflection of contemporary culture.

However, the traditions of most indigenous societies are continuously changing as they adapt to their surroundings. In the case of the Sakaka of Bolivia, they developed a new cultural tradition that diverges from the traditional styles middlemen are seeking. On the other hand, the Jalq'a of Bolivia are reverting to traditional textile styles in an effort to find a market for their weavings. These two communities indicate distinct methods to adapt to the increasing Western pressures on indigenous weaving communities, in one case specifically rejecting weaving styles desired for purchase while in the other specifically reverting to earlier styles desired for purchase.

The Sakaka of Bolivia have stopped weaving traditional textiles because they were exploited by tourists, collectors and middlemen. The Sakaka were unaware of the value of their weavings; thus, middlemen traded them objects worth only a fraction of the textiles' value. The exploitation of their traditional weavings caused the community to reject the idea of selling a Westernized version of their cultural identity because they did not want to cater to the desires of tourists and exporters. They have instead created a style of textile that is "unsaleable" or not marketable because it is woven with synthetic yarns and modern icons that tourists do not view as traditional or desirable (Zorn 1990: 241-2). By rejecting Western desires, the Sakaka are creating a new cultural tradition, and diverging from traditional styles.

Most tourists or exporters desire to buy textiles produced with natural colors, fibers and designs that reflect what they consider the traditional culture of the group. Therefore, Zorn suggests that the Sakaka's development of a new weaving style that tourists do not buy, is a form of resistance against the commercialization of their ethnic group's traditional weavings (1990: 248). The rejection of traditional styles in exchange for icons of motorcycles and other contemporary symbols represents a need to maintain a sense of indigenous identity that is not exploited by the encounter between the export market and the traditional weaving societies (Zorn 1990: 246). Zorn's research supports the idea of resistance against commodification because she indicates that tourists considered their new textiles ugly and inferior because today the Sakaka are weaving with acrylic yarns and modern images (1990: 249). Instead of producing textiles for the market, the Sakaka are ignoring market pressures and diverging from traditional styles, allowing them to create a new cultural tradition and prevent the commodification of their weavings and customs.

This resistance was formed in response to the middlemen who consistently bought and sold their textiles below reasonable prices.

While the Sakaka have been able to manipulate the systematic desire for their textiles through the rejection of traditional styles and the development of a new tradition, other groups are attempting to restore the traditions of the past as they want to increase their economic income. In this context, there is only opportunity in the market to preserve the traditions that are desirable to the tourist and export market. The Jalq'a, a Bolivian indigenous group, have been successful in selling their textiles because they are traditional in both style and design. However, they too formed exploitative relationships with middlemen who tricked Jalq'a weavers into selling their finest textiles because, like the Sakaka, they were unaware of the value (Healy 2001). After ten to fifteen years of selling their textiles to middlemen, the Jalq'a began adopting the patterns and styles of neighboring communities that were much less dramatic and interesting in terms of form and color. One reason for this change was frustration with the middlemen who were selling their cultural identity. Their original style of weavings was marked by designs of exotic animals or subtle color changes that were indicative of their community (Healy 2001: 271). However, the middlemen's constant pressure for increased production eroded their preservation of personal traditions, causing them to create a new style of textile that was produced specifically for the tourist market in order to adapt to the tourists' desires.

Therefore, middlemen have had a profound impact on the development of the commercialization of textiles for sale. Both the Sakaka and Jalq'a of Bolivia adapted their textile production in response to the demands of the middlemen and the development of a cash market for textile sale. While the Sakaka rejected the tourists' demands for a traditional textile, the Jalq'a were willing to adapt their style to create a successful traditional textile that increased the middlemen's successes. Unfortunately, little of the profits returned to the village as the middlemen took advantage of indigenous societies, but the Jalq'a had few other options as cash was necessary for their survival in the market economy.

Tourism and the Export Market

As textiles sales grew with the influx of tourists, there was an expansion of sales into an export market. Indigenous weavings began to be considered "ethnic commodities," a good that is sold within the market and is produced by "ethnic peoples" (Burtner 1993: 10). The commodification of their textiles

led to increasing numbers of production strategies such as hybridization, simplification, and standardization of designs and styles to augment their sales and economic growth. While these changes encouraged textile production and the wearing of traditional clothes, they also supported cutting corners and producing lower quality pieces to sell to tourists because many tourists desire to purchase inexpensive items, not taking into account the time required for producing each piece (Healy and Zorn 1983: 7). Two common strategies to cope with increasing demands of the weaving market are hybridization and standardization. Hybridization is the combination of different weaving styles to produce a new fashion that is not identifiable to any one community (Adapted from Oxford Reference Online). This strategy enables weavers to differentiate between the weaving created for personal versus consumer use. Standardization is a second technique that contemporary weavers are using as they enter the cash economy. In this context, standardization should be understood as the imposition of uniformity on weavings so that they may be used worldwide, assuming that the behavior of all consumers is similar and that the market requires the same features and buys for the same reasons. Finally, standardization decreases the cost of production, increasing the final profit of the weavers (Adapted from Oxford Reference Online).

Another strategy developed to cope with time constraints is the simplification of designs. In order to simplify the designs, the weavers are choosing to weave supplementary warp designs that are one-sided. This style takes about half the amount of time required to weave complimentary warp designs, which are two-sided and much more detailed. Thus, by choosing to weave simpler designs, the weavers are able to produce more in a shorter amount of time. Tourists are often ignorant about the amount of time or difficulty required to produce a textile; so, weavers are able to simplify styles and use the least expensive raw material available without tourists knowing the difference (Morris 1996: 407; C. Franquemont 1982: 2). While in the past the consumer refused to pay fair prices, exploiting the producer, the indigenous producers are now developing methods to equalize these relationships through the commodification of their textiles.

NGO and Cooperative Assistance to Indigenous Weavers

While the simplification of designs and creation of hybrid and standardized textiles are three strategies that assist indigenous weavers as they enter the textile market, the development of NGOs and weaving cooperatives are other strategies that are often combined with the manipulation of textile production to increase income and quality of life in indigenous weaving communities.

As contemporary NGOs and cooperatives assist weaving communities to enter the cash market, they continue to struggle to ensure that they create a space with which the community is able to identify and trust. Many community members remain wary of the exploitative relationships they have experienced in the past with middlemen (Berkeley and Haddox 1997). This can be problematic because many indigenous weavers do not know how to read or write; thus, they are unable to fulfill some of the duties required of the leaders of an organization. However, as there are increasing numbers of workshops and classes offered by NGOs and cooperatives, indigenous peoples are gaining more of the practical skills needed to assist in the operation of the organization (Healy 2001). The relationships involving NGOs and cooperatives allow the weavers to make direct decisions whereas their previous interactions with middlemen were exploitative. The relationship with the middleman also prevented them from selling directly to the consumer, but the development of NGOs and cooperatives during the recent decades has made this a more viable strategy for increasing profits as they are able to sell their products at higher prices when they are selling directly to the consumers.

NGOs and cooperatives first began appearing in Latin America during the civil wars of the 1970s and 1980s in an attempt to assist the struggling communities with social and economic development. However, many of the military governments that were active during this time, including the Guatemalan government, believed these groups to be subversive, thus they were not allowed to continue their work until later in the 1980s and 1990s (Branfman 1987; Schevill 1996).

In order to understand how NGOs and cooperatives were able to provide assistance to indigenous weaving communities, it is first important to define the differences between the two types of groups. The United Nations defines a non-governmental organization (NGO) as any international organization which is not established by a governmental entity or international agreement. It is often used to refer to various cause groups concerned with issues such as the environment, poverty, women's rights, racism, sexual minorities, and Third World debt (Adapted from Oxford Reference Online). When discussing these groups it is important to keep in mind the 'insider-outsider' distinction, which is often associated with NGOs and cooperatives as NGOs are frequently considered to be "outsiders" because the leaders are generally foreigners; on the other hand, cooperatives tend to be formed from within the communities.

Whereas an NGO is an international organization, a cooperative is defined as an organization founded to provide mutual assistance in economic enterprises for the benefit of their members. Their purpose is to ensure fair working and trading conditions rather than the maximization of profit, which is in contrast to capitalist enterprises (Adapted from Oxford Reference Online). Thus, cooperatives are particularly appealing in areas undergoing rapid social and economic change where there are low wages and job insecurity. The indigenous weaving communities in Latin America are experiencing all of these problems as a result of violence, terrorism and middlemen entering their communities. Thus, both NGOs and cooperatives provide opportunities for social and economic advancement to indigenous weavers. These groups must be taken on a case by case basis because there are well and poorly managed forms of both; thus, it is difficult to determine whether one or the other will be more successful in a particular situation.

NGOs and cooperatives in Latin America have realized the potential for profit, as well as the need for financial assistance within indigenous weaving communities. They are aware that it requires careful planning to achieve a balance between the social and economic aspects of a weaving community's textiles as they are crucial to the weaver's cultural identity (Healy 2001; Leon 1997; Schevill 1999). As a result, NGOs and cooperatives recognize the need to provide economic gains for the community members participating in the project while also assuring a sense of stability and assistance in the preservation of indigenous community's cultural values. In many cases they have successfully assisted communities develop strategies designed to preserve their textile traditions such as standardization and commodification.

The case of Antropólogos del Surandino (ASUR) demonstrates how a successful NGO can create a balance of stability and economic prosperity. Two Chilean anthropologists dedicated to cultural preservation, Gabriel Martínez and Verónica Cereceda, visited the Jalq'a, an isolated group of people living in the highlands of Bolivia. After several trips to the community, they formed an NGO to assist in the revitalization of the Jalq'a weaving tradition because middlemen had caused serious damage to the practice through intense buying and selling of Jalq'a weavings. The anthropologists found that middlemen who visited the Jalq'a community bought or traded for textiles at extremely low prices and then sold the weavings for much higher prices in La Paz, Bolivia and other tourist centers, giving few of the profits to the indigenous weavers (Healy 1992: 25, Healy 2001: 271). Through their investigation, Martínez and Cereceda discovered that the Jalq'a people were extremely marginalized within Bolivian society, having a high infant mortality

rate and yearly family income of only \$260 per year (Healy 2001: 271). The dire impoverishment of the community made the Jalq'a eager for increased monetary compensation for the sale of their textiles, so they entered into relationships with middlemen and began selling or trading their weavings to generate income and enter the cash economy. However, after several years of selling their wares, Jalq'a cultural values began to disintegrate as the community's cultural structure was unraveling because prior to the middleman's entrance into their society, they relied upon a barter system and never sold or traded their textiles outside of the community. Thus, although they were successful in selling their weavings to supplement their income, they realized they were selling their cultural identity to Western consumers. While selling their products, they retained none of their traditional values or rituals associated with textile production in the community because the techniques became commodified through increased production. The marketplace demands generated a type of "cultural amnesia" as the weavers forgot their skills and knowledge of the weaving process because of the volume of production, leading to its destruction. Many of the weavers forgot how to weave traditional designs because they began standardizing, simplifying, and merging designs (Healy 2001: 273; Healy 1992: 28, 32). While the Jalq'a experienced years of manipulative and destructive relationships with middlemen, ASUR assisted them in reestablishing a design repertoire through the collection of photographs documenting the traditional colors and styles (Healy 2001: 271). The Jalq'a were eager to exploit consumer desires for their textiles through the redevelopment of their traditional styles because of their need for economic assistance in a failing economy. They continued to weave particular styles for personal use, but ASUR assisted them in developing traditional styles to sell to the tourist market (Healy 2001).

The case of the Jalq'a demonstrates how years of exploitation and participation in patron-client relationships can disrupt cultural identities. The middlemen unrelentingly bought and sold Jalq'a textiles until their identification with their weavings disappeared. The entrance of ASUR provided them with an opportunity to increase profits and enabled them to differentiate between the weavings for consumer and personal use (Healy 1992: 31). Prior to ASUR's assistance, the connection with textiles and identity was weakened when the Jalq'a formed relationships with middlemen, but the creation of ASUR enabled them to preserve their textiles traditions as they developed a commodified form of their textiles for sale.

Not only has ASUR assisted the Jalq'a in establishing a commodified textile, but they have published books and set up museum exhibits to increase public

knowledge of their indigenous heritage (Healy 2001: 270-285). ASUR continues to work towards the goal of giving the Jalq'a people complete autonomy in the production and sale of their textiles, but it is a slow process as many Jalq'a do not read or write, making it difficult for them to run a business or interact with non-Spanish speaking tourists. Each year more and more Jalq'a are entering the office as managers in an attempt to give complete control to them in the future. Not only are they increasing their skills, but the economic prosperity of the Jalq'a community has risen significantly as weavers make three to four times their previous salaries (Healy 2001: 280-5). This enables them to purchase clothes, health care and other luxuries that they were previously denied. As a result, ASUR has been able to revitalize Jalq'a weaving traditions and reduce the exploitative patron-client relationships that were so prevalent during the 1980s and 1990s.

A second example of the importance of NGO cooperation with indigenous communities involves another group of communities in Bolivia in the Santa Cruz region. Bolivians and tourists considered the handicrafts of the Santa Cruz region inferior to those found in other highland regions of Bolivia (Healy 2001: 293). As a result, the Santa Cruz handicrafts seriously declined because there was no appreciation or market for their sale because the weavings of the Santa Cruz region were considered less prestigious; this is in stark contrast to the situation of the Jalq'a people whose weavings were highly desirable because the Jalq'a region was famous for its traditional weavings.

Because Santa Cruz handicrafts were unappreciated, Ada Sotomayer de Vaca and Lorgio Vaca, two entrepreneurs, decided to form an organization, Centro de Investigación de Diseño Artesanal y Comercialización Cooperativa (CIDACC) to revitalize the diverse crafts of the region and create a market for their sale. Another goal was to enable the artisans to compete with middlemen who were previously controlling and exploiting the economy. The Vacas began visiting the communities and establishing contacts, gaining the weavers' trust. In order to ensure that the communities played important roles in the operation of the organization, community coordinators were appointed to monitor textile production. This ensured the artisans that the prices were fair since all costs were assigned in the community. There were also incentive awards given to artisans who created high quality products, making the weavers proud of their pieces (Healy 2001: 297). They considered high quality textiles to be those that were woven using natural dyes, traditional techniques and superior materials, thus enabling the weavers to sell them at higher prices. These strategies enabled CIDACC to compete with middlemen because they increased cultural pride, income and stability within the communities. CIDACC was also able to provide training for the artisans in order to develop

new skills such as accounting and finance education, as well as improving their weaving techniques through the use of traditional dyes (Healy 2001: 305). As a result, increasing economic income and social mobility have improved the quality of life as the Santa Cruz weavers now have the ability to pay for health care, food and clothes; these improvements have also fostered cultural awareness for the region's declining indigenous culture (Healy 2001: 294, 297). As Ada Sotomayer de Vaca said, "We want to demonstrate to [our customers] that in remote villages, talented producers of indigenous origin remain hidden and ignored" (Healy 2001: 307). Thus, through the Vacas' dedication and encouragement of fair pricing, the indigenous communities in the Santa Cruz region have been able to preserve their cultural traditions and practices by using export markets.

These two Bolivian NGOs indicate how foreign projects can have a positive impact on indigenous cultures that were previously exploited by middlemen and other outside influences. Thus, they are unique in their concern for the culture and traditional values of Bolivian indigenous society. In numerous isolated communities, middlemen take advantage of the lack of NGO and cooperative support, exploiting the indigenous societies because they are unable to defend themselves with the increasing dependency upon currency instead of a barter economy. As indigenous communities become increasingly dependent upon the cash economy, they must involve themselves in the buying and selling of their products. As a result, government programs have often taken advantage of these groups, designing plans to benefit the government and not the indigenous communities. One example of this exploitation is the Guatemalan government's "integration" of indigenous communities into national society to preserve them as a "natural resource for tourism, the nation's largest industry" (Burtner 1993: 10; Wasserstrom 1985: 2). As Burtner points out, the Guatemalan government's emphasis on tourism served only the needs and economic gains of the government, taking all of the profits from the community, merely using them as a source of revenue (1993: 10). However, as NGOs and cooperatives become more common, government exploitation will decline as indigenous communities find increasing opportunities for fair and beneficial methods to profit through the sale of their weavings via support from weaving cooperatives and NGOs.

While NGOs and cooperatives are extremely important in supporting the survival of cultural traditions, they are often lacking in funding. One organization that has been crucial to the financial support of many organizations throughout Latin America is the Inter American Foundation (IAF). The IAF has been able to fund numerous projects throughout the region since its in-

ception in 1969 and has functioned as a key resource for many organizations. It enables marginalized people to use their skills and resources in a more effective manner. Instead of promoting modernization or technological change, the communities are provided with the monies to improve their standard of living through the purchase of equipment, establishment of seminars or workshops, and development of other programs that will assist the community as a whole (Wasserstrom 1985: 1, 12). Two examples of IAF funding include the NGOs formed to revitalize the weavings in the Jalq'a and Santa Cruz regions of Bolivia. The IAF funded both Bolivian NGOs because it was noted that they had a concern for community involvement and the goal of cultural survival (Healy 2001). Thus, the IAF is crucial for the future success of indigenous cooperatives and NGOs in the region who are working towards vital causes.

Organizational Hierarchy

While funding and community support are very important to the success of the organization, the organizational hierarchy is another key component to the development of these agencies. One important strategy of NGOs is to actively include the indigenous community in the structure and direction of their organization. This strategy provides NGOs with greater respect in the communities and diminishes the fear of exploitation, allowing these groups to maintain a greater sense of cultural identity. NGOs and cooperatives both use an organizational structure that promotes bottom-up leadership in which the people of the community plan their own projects and seek financial and technical support themselves (Stiles 1997: 2). This allows the indigenous groups to separate themselves from the bureaucracy of government and foreign run agencies who often have different goals for the organization. Whereas a foreign investor may be looking to create a store in the capital city to sell the wares, the indigenous community is focused on providing the basic needs for their family. The contrasting goals of indigenous groups and foreign investors cause the bottom-up approach to be more successful since it allows the community to dictate the goals. While NGOs are often foreign-run, the groups studied here always elected a local leader to ensure bottom-up leadership. On the other hand, the top-down approach excludes the local population from the planning and develops the project from above the community hierarchy. These projects are usually failures (Stiles 1997: 1; Tidwell 1997), because they often do not consider the needs or resources of the local community. They are instead directed by bureaucratic agencies located in a different country or city without knowledge of the situation in the community with which they are working.

It is evident that community leadership is crucial to the success of local projects; the weaving cooperative on Isla Taquile in Lake Titicaca is a representative example of this. The Peace Corps set the foundation for the development of a weaving cooperative on the island in 1968, facilitating the growth of their economy from one of the poorest lakeside communities to one of the most prosperous (Healy 2001: 268). One of the reasons for their success was that the inhabitants of the island were able to control all aspects of commerce from food and housing to the sale of their weavings and transportation. This allowed them to monopolize the market and make sales without the use of middlemen, providing them with greater profits (Healy and Zorn 1983: 4-6).

Another group that successfully maintained local leadership is *Sna Jolobil*, a weaving cooperative, in Chiapas, Mexico that was able to reject top-down leadership and retain control within the community. They originally formed with government assistance but later gained independence after earning sufficient capital to function without the government's help (Morris 1996: 37). One of their initial directives was to refuse any support from outside sources that would give financial control to outsiders; while they continued to accept monetary assistance from NGOs and foreign donors, they prevented foreigners from gaining control of their organization through the election of indigenous leadership, thus maintaining the association's leadership within the community (Morris 1996: 404). This strategy enabled the weavers to have an important role in decisions affecting the organization. They were originally faced with discrimination as there was little public knowledge of Chiapas textiles. However, because the weavers were directly involved in marketing and promoting their textiles, *Sna Jolobil* was able to publish several books on Chiapas weaving patterns, as well as create a museum exhibit to increase recognition of Chiapas textiles (Morris 1996: 415). These strategies helped reduce the problem of regionalism that is related to Mayan textiles, as many Westerners only associate certain areas of Mexico and Guatemala as being famous for their textile production. Their marketing strategies and independence also allowed them to create their own textile styles as they were given the freedom to invent "new" patterns that were not woven before (Morris 1996: 418). This freedom is one strategy that these Mayan weavers are using to separate the personal from the commodified textile. Not only do the weavers have the independence to define their styles, but they have also retained their autonomy through bottom-up leadership. As a result, in situations where there is a commitment to provide the community with an integral role in the organizational hierarchy, the weavers play important roles in the production and sale of goods without the question of foreign biases or bureaucracies af-

fecting the sales.

This focus on bottom-up leadership has ensured the success of numerous organizations throughout the region as indicated by the examples from Isla Taquile and Sna Jolobil of Chiapas. Another organizational system used to ensure the success and growth of an NGO or cooperative is the Grassroots Development Framework (GDF). IAF developed GDF, which designed to establish project objectives, measure the results and impacts of the project, informing decisions, challenges and achievements to assist both the donor and grantee. The GDF examines the three levels of the impact of grassroots development which include 1) individuals or families, 2) organizations, and 3) finally communities or societies. There are two categories for each level: 1) tangible and 2) intangible developments, which range from standard of living to community norms and organizational culture. Each of these categories must be examined to ensure that the organization is properly addressing the needs of the community, organization and individual. At times one may lose sight of the individual when looking towards a larger goal for the community at large, thus the GDF ensures that there is a system to confirm that all levels of the organization are functioning properly.

Some important categories that are considered are basic needs, attitudes, and values (Grassroots Development Framework 1-3). These classifications are important to the success of the project because they maintain culture and contentment through the assurance that basic needs will be met and values preserved. These ideas are crucial for the survival of a community organization because each structural component needs to be successful in order for it to work effectively and productively toward its ultimate goals. Groups taking advantage of the GDF to ensure the organization's stability are producing the framework needed for long-term success as they consider the needs of both the individual and the community.

Weaving Strategies

It is evident that the influence of the tourist and export market is becoming increasingly important as indigenous weavers make production decisions regarding the form and style of their weavings. Hybridization is one method through which indigenous communities are preserving their traditional cultural values in an effort to tailor their products towards the desires of the consumer. When producing hybrid textiles, the weavers are combining designs and forms from several communities to create textiles specifically for the tourist and export markets. As Stephens discusses, this interac-

tion enables the indigenous weavers to capitalize on consumer desires as well as retain indigenous identity through cloth by altering certain components of the textiles. They continued to use the same techniques, but adapted the colors and designs in the textiles produced for tourists to be more aesthetically appealing and traditional (1996: 383). Within the discussion of tourists it is important to consider that not all tourists have the same purchasing desires. As Leon defines, there are two types of tourists: those who prefer textiles as "art," which are woven with vegetal dyes and in traditional settings, as opposed to tourists who have the expectation that crafts are inexpensive souvenir articles (1997: 1). The distinction between the types of tourists creates a need for several different markets as some weavers cater towards the needs of "elite" tourists that are searching for artistic pieces, versus those who prefer inexpensive machine made pieces. While the inexpensive pieces often do not reflect the reality of the weaving tradition, they represent the commodification of "ethnic art" and the indigenous weavers' distinction between personal and tourist production. These strategies are increasingly common as the encounter between the tourist and the export market continues to influence the production methods of indigenous weavers.

Most weavers working with the export market are geared towards mass-produced weavings that require producing large standardized orders (Burtner 1993: 14). In the past, weavers involved in this type of production were marginalized through patron-client relationships that paid extremely low prices for finished products. However, with increasing numbers of NGOs and cooperatives in the contemporary market, weavers are gaining more opportunities to work with organizations that provide them with increasing equitable economic opportunities. These organizations also provide them with more time to weave personal textiles, whereas in the past this was not an option.

Another strategy weavers have developed in response to the changing needs of consumers is the distinction between the textile produced for sale and the textile produced for personal use. As Walter Morris, an anthropologist studying Chiapas weavers said, "We tend to view natural dyes as an integral part of the weaver's tradition, while in fact most Chiapas weavers have always purchased the brightest possible yarns for brocading their huipiles" (Morris 1996: 414). This observation indicates that the naturally dyed textiles being sold in the markets are a commodification of the traditional textiles, created for and used by tourists while the indigenous people prefer the most brilliant colors for personal use.

As indigenous weavers make the distinction between commodified weavings and personal textiles, it is evident that there is a division between the manner

of use between personal and consumer weavings. The textiles created for tourist use are designed to appeal to the consumer through their traditional style. In order to achieve a sense of traditionalism, weavers are using natural dyes, traditional patterns and styles when producing weavings for sale. On the other hand, when creating weavings for personal use, they emphasize color and design. To indigenous weavers it is most important to use bright colors so that the designs of one's shawls and *ponchos* can be seen from long distances. Therefore, indigenous weavers choose synthetic yarn for its bright colors and low cost, but not efficiency when weaving for personal use. It is evident that, weavers throughout Latin America are making choices based on their personal aesthetics and a changing set of traditions that evolve over time (Heckman 1999: 189). While they continue to use fine workmanship in the pieces that they wear and create for themselves, they often send cheaper, less time consuming items to the markets because the average tourist does not recognize the amount of time and knowledge required to produce a difficult piece. Textiles rarely sell for much more than thirty dollars (Heckman 1999: 191; E. Franquemont 1997). This distinction indicates how the encounter between the tourist market and indigenous societies has created a separate style of textile, distinct from the original form and design, which is in response to the needs and desires of the tourist and export markets. These creative solutions are most commonly addressed by the community as a whole through the support of NGOs and cooperatives as they attempt to find viable solutions to entice the tourists to buy their high quality weavings. Another reason for the creation of two styles of textiles is a means to preserve their indigenous identity and prevent the encounter between the indigenous and western cultures from destroying their values and belief systems.

Hybridization

The strategy of producing a consumer and personal use textile involves one of several production techniques, including hybridization, in order to create a new style that is distinct from their community's traditions. Hybridization enables weavers to distance themselves from the weavings created and differentiate between the weaving created for personal versus consumer use.

One community that has been very successful in the creation of a hybrid textile is San Juan La Laguna Sololá, a highland community in Guatemala. Burtner discusses how the women of this Guatemalan community created a hybrid *huipil* that "no pertenece a ningún pueblo" (belongs to no town). It was instead created for, bought, and worn by international tourists (1993:

17-8). The women weavers in this particular community made a clear distinction between weavings produced for personal use versus those produced for tourist and export use. The creation of a hybrid *huipil* enabled them to prevent the commodification of their weaving culture and traditions. They were instead able to create something that had no cultural significance to any of the weavers, but was instead a mixture of designs and styles from communities in the area. This strategy suited both the tourist and the weaver because tourists felt that they were purchasing something that was traditional in style, technique and pattern, while the weavers were able to prevent their ethnic traditions from being sold in the tourist and export market.

While the creation of the hybrid textile without identity was successful in increasing economic gains and preserving cultural identity, weavers in the San Juan La Laguna Sololá community are faced with the dilemma of dependency upon the tourist and export markets for continued income (Burtner 1993). Without continued buying and selling, the weaving economy will crash because it has no other form of support.

External influences reinforce the commodification of traditional weaving styles as indigenous weavers attempt to find a balance between Western desires and their traditional models, often maintaining some of their own traditions out of the market's view. One such strategy is the development of a hybrid textile to prevent the disintegration of cultural and institutional values through the preservation of certain styles and traditions within the community and not commodified for sale. As a result, it is important that these indigenous communities preserve a portion of their traditional life concealed from view in order to prevent the commodification of their entire cultural system.

Standardization

A second technique weavers are using to differentiate between the styles created for sale and those for personal use is increasing standardization of the form and design of their textiles. Standardization should be understood as the imposition of uniformity on weavings so that they may be used and sold throughout the world; thus, the market requires the same features on all textiles produced, decreasing the cost of production and increasing the final profit of the weavers (Adapted from Oxford Reference Online).

While this strategy distinguishes the consumer textile from the personal textile, it also allows indigenous weavers to complete large homogeneous orders. When selling to the export market it is necessary that they use the same col-

ors, designs, and thread quality to produce identical textiles for sale in stores in both the United States and Europe (Burtner 1993: 42). This standardization increasingly commodifies the interaction among production, purchase and export of traditional textiles. The weavers are no longer using the customary techniques for production when they standardize the colors and designs. One aspect that makes textiles unique is that each one is different and indicates the skill of the weaver and her ability to develop a textile through the combination of designs and colors. When the weaver is no longer able to invent each textile through her own ideas about color and space, they are no longer reflections of their ethnic or cultural identity. As a result, while these weavers are able to maintain a sense of cultural identity through the separation of textiles produced for exchange and personal use, in the future it will be important to reconsider the advertisement of standardized pieces as "ethnic art." In reality they have little connection with the weaver's true ideas about the form and color of weaving because the majority of the standardized pieces are largely influenced by the buyers and not the weavers or leaders of the organizations that support them. According to Burtner, as weavers continue to rely on the export market for their main source of economic support, they will continue to lose their control over how they themselves are represented since the tourist and export markets are beginning to dictate their production of traditional textiles (1993: 44-45). Thus, it is important that indigenous weavers continue to create two different styles of textiles to allow them to create a bifurcate identity, dividing their textiles into two forms.

Marketing Strategies

The use of standardization and hybridization are both methods employed to market indigenous weavings on a global scale. These techniques are defined as marketing strategies, which are defined as the action or business of promoting and selling products or services (Adapted from Oxford Reference Online) Other marketing techniques are noted as the development of museums and exhibits as a means to educate the public about the amount of time and skill required to produce a high quality textile. Many tourists have no conception of the process involved in production from the shearing of the wool, spinning and dyeing of the yarn, and finally weaving. As Ada Sotomayer de Vaca, the director of CIDACC said, "We are trying to educate our customers about their lives and the work of indigenous peasant women within the region and nation. We want to demonstrate to them that in remote villages, talented producers of indigenous origin remain hidden and ignored. Another goal is to make our customers understand fair pricing and the declining access to raw material that some artisan communities face" (Healy 2001: 307). She touches on sev-

eral important aspects of the marketing of textiles since it is not only important to have the consumers understand the pricing, but also to increase visibility of the unique indigenous traditions that they are attempting to preserve.

As discussed, another marketing strategy that several groups have adopted is the “remolding” of local crafts into goods made for an outside market (Morris 1996: 410). This strategy involves both standardizing the designs and colors of the textiles, and hybridizing them to create a new style of textiles particularly for the tourist. This strategy allows indigenous people to retain a portion of their culture while also profiting from the tourist trade. In essence, via this method they are able to limit the commodification of their culture through the selective sale of their weavings. If they decided to sell all of their weavings through the export market or tourist trade they would be unable to identify a particular weaving as unique to their village because it would no longer retain its personal significance within the community, but would instead be a commercialized item. As a result, the decision among certain groups to maintain specific pieces for exclusive use in the homes is a means to preserve their indigenous identity and prevent the encounter between the indigenous and western cultures from completely destroying their values and belief systems.

Profits

Marketing is a crucial component to successful profit-making. One of the fundamental reasons that indigenous weavers are increasingly selling their textiles in the export and tourist markets is the desire for an improved economic and social status. Many Latin American countries are experiencing economic hardships because repercussions from years of civil wars and failing neoliberal economic plans, which favor free-market capitalism (Schevill 1999). Unfortunately, until recently, NGOs were seen as subversive by certain governments and were unable to initiate successful programs.

Many of the problems began during the 1980's when much of Latin America experienced severe inflation and unemployment as the debt crisis ensued; several countries, including Guatemala, also underwent brutal civil wars, causing widespread terror and contributing to the desperate economic situation of many (Schevill 1999: 176; Branfman 1987). Throughout this period, external aid sources attempted numerous times to assist the countries in need through grants and other sources. In certain cases this funding was readily accepted, but in Guatemala, the military government was fearful of the emergence of a literate, economically independent, rural indigenous majority. As a result, they viewed foreign aid as threatening and subversive, resulting in the destruction and elimination of any attempt to let NGOs operate in their country

during this period (Annis 1988: 23). It was not until 1986 with the election of a civilian government that international development organizations were permitted to enter the country and begin working. However, NGOs continued to be cautious as they were afraid of being labeled radical; thus, they began assisting entrepreneurs instead of the more important social improvement of communities, changing the focus of their plans (Burtner 1993: 24). Latin America's tumultuous economies have caused people to look for non-traditional means of making money as there are few job opportunities. Prior to the entrance of the cash economy, indigenous communities relied upon barter and trade. However, this is no longer possible as it is necessary to use money when purchasing food, clothing and other material goods.

The sale of handicrafts and weavings has become an important component of the indigenous economies because it is an effective method of earning extra income to support one's family in the cash economy. Not only does it provide supplemental income, but it provides women with more freedom. In the case of the weavers working with Colibri and Maya Traditions, two Guatemalan NGOs, many of the women weaving were widowed during the Guatemalan civil war (Schevill 1999: 177-8); thus, they were searching for a means to support their families both economically and socially. With the growth of the NGOs and cooperatives, weavers are earning increasingly higher wages. Working for these types of organizations they often earn three or four times what middlemen paid them in the past and are now able to send their children to better schools, which will allow them economic and social mobility in the future (Burtner 1993: 59; Farmelo 1995: 38). However, these new-found opportunities also lead to concern that there will be no weavers to replace the elders as they gain better opportunities in the professional field. As weavers increase their earnings, they are also gaining more respect in the community as men are no longer the dominant source of income in the society. Thus, income from the sale of traditional textiles is both a successful and problematic means to combat the changing social roles of Latin American society. Because there is a need to enter the cash economy, indigenous weavers are choosing to establish relationships with NGOs and cooperatives in an attempt to support their families.

Conclusion

As indigenous weaving in Latin America becomes increasingly commodified, many question the future of traditional weaving and the weaving tradition. It is debatable whether or not the creative strategies that indigenous weavers are using, such as hybridization and standardization of their textiles will be sufficient for the continuation of the weaving tradition in the future.

While the indigenous weavers have been able to create two different styles of weavings, one commodified for the tourist and one reserved for personal use, the encounter between indigenous cultures and the West is putting growing pressures on indigenous communities to produce increasing numbers of traditional weavings. Thus, the role of the NGO and the weaving cooperative becomes crucial to the success of the indigenous weavers as they require assistance in marketing and producing sufficient quantities of the Westernized version of their textiles. NGOs and weaving cooperatives are also supporting their goal to maintain a tradition of personal use textiles that are not commodified for sale, and assist the community as their environment faces modification. These organizations also assist them in increasing profits as weavers are able to eliminate the intermediary and sell directly to the consumer, increasing their profits.

The comparisons of NGOs and weaving cooperatives in Mexico, Central American and the Andes indicate that there is an evident systematic correspondence across cultures and borders as indigenous groups throughout Latin America have developed similar strategies for coping with the commodification of their traditional textiles and indigenous culture. For now, NGOs and weaving cooperatives are ensuring economic benefits for weaving communities in Latin America. However, as traditions evolve with changing societies, it is debatable whether or not NGOs will continue to emphasize the production of traditional textiles for sale as the desire for economic profit continues; on the other hand, weaving cooperatives may provide a balance for indigenous weaving communities as they emphasize the needs of the society. In reality these traditional textiles are not conventional because they are a Westernized version of the static traditions of indigenous cultures. The demand for traditional textiles redefines the traditions of indigenous weaving communities because it prevents them from progressing as society changes and modernizes. No society remains static, thus it is important to realize that the creation of traditional textiles are not reflective of the changing indigenous societies that are creating them. In the future it will be important to continue conducting research on these societies to determine how they are reacting to the continued influence of the tourist and export market. Increasing social mobility and education makes the perpetuation of the weaving tradition slim, but if there continues to be a market for the sale of textiles, their production may continue.

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