The future of indigenous values: cultural relativism in the face of economic development

D. Groenfeldt *

Independent Consultant, Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA

Abstract

The outlook for the persistence of indigenous cultural values looks dim, based on historical trends, but recent revitalization efforts point to a more complicated future than a steady decline of diversity. The most powerful obstacle to the viability of indigenous values is the promotion of Western-style economic development initiatives that seldom acknowledge the legitimacy of values outside the materialist-rational paradigm. The evolution of more socially and environmentally oriented 'progressive' development policies renders Western values even more beguiling. A future in which indigenous values can survive and perhaps thrive will depend on pro-active efforts among indigenous groups to define their own development futures reflecting their own cultural values.
© 2003 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction: the value of indigenous values

Can indigenous cultural values survive into the future? It is popularly assumed that Western culture will eventually overwhelm all the primitive, traditional societies in the world, as well as all other major cultural competitors such as the Islamic, Hindu, and Confucian traditions. The Victorians considered the hegemony of Western thought to be a natural outcome of social evolution; our Western culture (science, philosophy, as well as values) is taking over the world because it is better [4]. Anthropological views, which of course derive from our Victorian ancestors, have been mixed. White [30] saw the growing dominance of the West not as a moral issue, but as an expression of the law of technical evolution with the demise of indigenous values following naturally from the diffusion of superior technology.

* Contact address: 66 Two Trails Road, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 87505, USA; Tel.: 505-992-0309.
  E-mail address: dgroenfeldt@aol.com (D. Groenfeldt).

Mead [17] saw this trend as unfortunate (because of the loss of cultural diversity) but also inevitable, with the anthropological responsibility one of smoothing the transition for the formerly isolated indigenous societies (her point of reference being Pacific Island societies). Many contemporary commentators, including a few anthropologists [9] overtly welcome the demise of traditional value systems which prevent individuals from living the full and fulfilling lives that, in their view, only our Western ethos makes possible.

My focus in this paper is less to *forecast* the future of indigenous values, than to suggest what responses we might take to influence that future—to create a world that has room for other ways of seeing, thinking, and 'valuing'. Some anthropologists seek to salvage the knowledge and customs of primitive societies before they disappear, through a process of urgent ethnography, much as some biologists are urgently collecting the germ plasm of endangered plant species. This approach would preserve information *about* indigenous values, but not the values themselves. Values are expressed by individuals living within a social group having a shared culture (see subsequently for more on values) and depend on a cultural 'habitat'—a social group—for their preservation. The preservation of values depends on the preservation of cultural identity within which indigenous values can be maintained. But why should we be concerned with maintaining cultural values that may even be at odds with our own (mostly Western) concepts? The answer to this depends on how seriously we believe in the desirability of multiculturalism. If we truly believe that our own Western cultural system is the only legitimate way of making sense of the world, then we have no reason to protect competing value systems; however, if we acknowledge an inherent validity in other ways of knowing (as anthropologists used to do under the banner of cultural relativity) then we have both a reason and an obligation to support the health and continuation of other value systems.

At first glance, the long-term outlook for native cultures is not promising. Current trends appear to preclude the viability of truly different cultural systems persisting in the face of our globalizing and increasingly economically oriented world. Historical trends are perhaps even more daunting. What has happened to the cultural diversity of, say, the 19th century, much less the 15th century? But straight-line projections are often misleading, and in considering the possibilities of a culturally diverse future, I believe such projections are likely to be wrong. The trend of economic and informatic globalization, for example, is unleashing a new interest in cultural distinctiveness and opening new opportunities for marginalized indigenous groups to establish direct marketing as well as political connections with the distant outside world. By jumping beyond the 'near' outside world of the locally dominant and culturally prejudiced mainstream society, indigenous groups are finding new sources of political, economic, and cultural support.

Indigenous cultures are experiencing two beneficial trends necessary, though not in themselves sufficient, for the survival of their values: (1) indigenous self-identity is, with many exceptions, being revitalized and empowered from within, and (2) the concept of cultural diversity is gaining new acceptance from mainstream societies. But even as the long-term future of indigenous *identity* appears more secure, the survival of the core cultural *values* underlying that identity is more problematic. Will

some essence of the cultural core, the stuff that underlies truly distinctive ways of making sense of the world, survive into the future? Or will the future bring only a superficial cultural diversity of language and dress and ceremonies whose meaning has been diluted into purely performance art?

2. What are 'indigenous cultural values'?

All three of these terms—indigenous, culture, and values—have generated controversy about their precise meanings as well as their salience to real life. Since we need to use these terms to carry on a discourse about our topic, some working definitions are outlined here.

2.1. Indigenous

Although accepted parlance in UN documents, the term, 'indigenous' rankles many when it is used outside the context of the Americas, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific whose indigenous populations are indisputable. For want of a better term, however, I am also using the term to refer to minority cultural groups in Europe, Asia, and Africa that have a historic relationship to a particular territory and a marginalized relationship to the nation-state. With a bit of definitional tolerance it is not too difficult to distinguish such indigenous groups whose cultures have maintained their distinctiveness while nation states were created around them. The Dyak, for example, who for centuries have occupied the same valleys in East Kalimantan, Indonesia, are indigenous by my definition, while the Bhasa-speaking majority of Java constitutes part of a non-indigenous national society, though composed of individuals who probably identify with one or possibly more indigenous cultural groups among the diverse constituent communities of Indonesia. These mainstream 'Indonesians' have the option, which they employ as they see fit, to identify with their local indigenous home, or homes (in which case they would be 'indigenous' by my definition), or to identify with their nation state (in which case they would be 'Indonesians'), or perhaps to identify with a pan-Asiatic community (Asians), or an age cohort (the youth of the world), etc. There is a strong element of context relativity in the concept of indigenous, just as there is in the concept of my 'home' locality, which depending on my context I may claim as my country, my state of birth, my state of current residence, my neighborhood of birth/residence, etc.

2.2. Values

The term, 'values' as used here refers to the guiding principles of a social group. This sense is nicely captured by Russo [21] in describing the Kluckhohnian concept of 'value orientations' as "guiding principles or premises—the 'pre-dispositions of belief'—that direct how we organize and integrate our life experience." A useful analogy is the way an aesthetic style provides the artist with a set of symbols to work with, or to reference against, but does not prescribe the outcome of the artistic

project. But values go further than stylistics in that they are substantive; they are not only tools for thinking; values actually shape the substance of thoughts and feelings, not deterministically, but through mediating between collective institutions and individual behavior [1]. We need to specify the level of collective institution we are talking about before considering particular values. For example, we can speak of values common to pan-Hindu India or the values of agrarian communities of northern Rajasthan, or the values of a particular caste group within these communities. There will be a great deal of overlap, but some distinct attributes of local values as well.

2.3. Culture

As used here, culture refers to the system of values, beliefs, and ideas that social groups make use of in experiencing the world in mutually meaningful ways. For purposes of our discussion it is this cognitive conception of culture that helps us consider the future of indigenous values. There is an important controversy within anthropology about the 'hardness' of the culture concept and the nature of cultural boundaries. If culture is taken as a soft and permeable cluster of easily changed traits that individuals choose or decline to follow depending on their options, then the future of such cultures would have quite different prospects than would be the case if culture is seen as more deterministic in filtering the individual's perceptions of experience [22]. The future implications of a 'soft' concept of culture is that indigenous individuals would be relatively easily impressed with the Western lifestyle and, under the motivations of status-seeking from the dominant culture, would almost inevitably adopt Western values. In a culture model that is somewhat 'hard', its individual members would be buffered from the direct effects of the Western lifestyle since it would be experienced through the filter of their own indigenous value system. My argument presented here, that indigenous cultural values could in some sense be sustained into the indefinite future, rests on this latter view of a fairly resilient 'culture' with some real substance that shapes the way life is experienced by the individuals sharing that culture.

2.4. Levels of indigenous value: culture, values, and worldview

In considering the future of indigenous values, we are talking about change: how values change, why they change, and what are the implications on the 'culture' that the values are part of. Here the transcendent concept of 'worldview' is useful. Values at a behavioral level are constantly changing over time, and even seasonally. We behave differently, and even have substantially changed outlooks, in the days before a major festival, or after the monsoon finally starts, or when the drought drags on for many months. In India the traditional 'joint family' living arrangement is becoming less popular, not only in urban but even in rural communities. This changed living pattern has many implications for how decisions are handled within and between households. Does this change the overall worldview of Indian society? Not in itself, usually, but the multiplier effects of such changes can and do lead to bigger cultural

changes that may eventually be reflected in worldview: The authority of the family is atomized into nuclear units; the focus of self interest shifts to the immediate nuclear group, and the worldview of a socially embedded world shifts a bit.

Values, traditions, customs, beliefs all contribute to cultural distinctiveness. As Radcliffe Brown pointed out in 1922, those traditions simultaneously create and maintain that distinctiveness [20]. This much is non-controversial even within the discipline of anthropology. Where the debate heats up is in assessing the power of the individual in selecting his or her cultural future. How much psychological or cultural freedom is there? To what extent is the mind programmed by culture? When the joint family is forsaken for a nuclear family because of other over-riding (usually economic) forces, what happens to the maintenance of the distinctive culture, or that cultural worldview? In the absence of some countervailing influence, such as cultural revitalization or awareness raising, the cultural worldview will indeed change. But with a deliberate, self-conscious or community-conscious decision to maintain those values, we could have a very interesting culturally diverse future.

Take the case of the Cherokee Indian medicine woman who lives in a solidly middle-class suburban community near Washington, DC, has worked off and on in administrative jobs with the US Air Force, and has a growing clientele of mostly White Anglo patients with various physical and mental ailments. She heals by invoking spirit forces from the Cherokee pantheon and serving as a medium for their healing powers, as she was taught by her grandmother. Her religious worldview is highly traditional, while her social and material cultural context is basically that of mainstream America. This was a very deliberate choosing from the cultural assemblage at her disposal. Is it an example of native values thriving or of mainstream values predominating? The answer depends on where we, as observers, place value: Are we concerned with material culture things or with beliefs, and if the latter, then which beliefs? The ideology of American democracy or the worldview of Native American spirituality? Let me come clean with my own answer to this question: For me, the so-called 'big questions' about the nature of the universe and the meaning of life have a greater significance than the 'trappings', whether material or ideological, of culture. We can gloss these big questions as 'worldview' and reframe our question in two parts: First and most importantly (to my sense of priority), 'What is the future of indigenous worldviews?' and secondly, 'What is the future of the more mundane values, customs, and traditions that together comprise the visible face of indigenous cultures?'

My answers to these two questions—my predictions—are qualitatively different. In brief, I see a reasonable likelihood that indigenous worldviews can be maintained, while I suggest that the day-to-day lives of indigenous people will be radically transformed. These two predictions are linked in that some elements of the day-to-day, notably ceremonies, rituals, and most importantly, language, would probably have to be maintained for the worldview to be sustained in any recognizable form. The example of the Cherokee medicine woman is perhaps a model for the future I have in mind: her ancestors would not recognize her lifestyle, but they presumably would recognize the ceremonies and understand the chants that she performs as part of the healing process.

The sustainability of indigenous values that I suggest is possible, and even (going out on a limb), likely, would unfold as a function of the revitalization of indigenous identity on one hand, and a loosening of the strict rational-materialist paradigm of the dominant global society on the other hand. Let me turn now to a discussion of this paradigm—in the guise of international development ideologies—before returning, in the concluding section of this paper, to a consideration of indigenous identity and internal mechanisms by which indigenous values and worldviews might persist for our great-grandchildren to debate.

3. The western paradigm of progress: ideologies of international development assistance

The Western concept of 'progress' [19] once rooted in religion and now trans-planted to the more nourishing soil of rational science, has become the global stan-dard by which any society and any belief is now judged. Well-intentioned appeals issuing from within this paradigm for 'multiculturalism' are, in my view, not invi-tations for true relativism but rather for a 21st century version of the 'melting pot': Diversity of customs and traditions and even ethnicity can be enriching to the overall mainstream society. Even indigenous values can be accommodated in small doses. But indigenous worldviews? They are acceptable as themes within art forms—litera-ture and dance—but mainstream society has not been willing, and I would suggest has not been able, to accept competing worldviews as serious descriptions of how life can be experienced.

The dominance of Western culture, and with it, the Western paradigm of progress, is seen by many commentators as leading inevitably to 'the end of culture'. All societies of the world will eventually be brought into our version of reality because, "The economic and military superiority of Western civilization is grounded…on a superior ethic… Once Western culture has been fully assimilated, it becomes world culture; and the future of world culture lies with the world, not with Europe or North America" [10]. Will this be the fate of indigenous values? Are we about to experience the 'end of (other) values?'

The Western paradigm is crystallized in policies of international development assistance where Western society, through cultural agents such as the World Bank, self-consciously sets about to help the rest of the world to 'develop'. The develop-ment process as it is practiced cannot be understood without acknowledging the fundamental concept of progress on which it is based. This concept has changed little since its 19th century Victorian articulation, although the methodologies for achieving it have evolved dramatically. Instead of the West's earlier attempts at cultural domination through force, the current approach of development seeks to win the hearts and minds of 'beneficiaries' through carefully designed assistance pro-grams.

While international development assistance comes in many guises ranging from multilateral development agencies to grassroots NGOs, it is not difficult to discern a dominant cultural paradigm underlying the development process. Debates within

the professional circle of development agents revolve around the relative priority to give to raw economic growth vs. 'social sector' improvements in health and education. Even within a single agency such as the World Bank, there are lively internal debates among the liberal economists arguing for open markets, environmentalists advocating strict controls, and social scientists who focus on democratic institutions and equitable distribution of benefits. But these debates—which become even livelier when NGOs join the discussion each espousing a unique ideological niche—are bounded by a larger culturally monolithic 'box' within which this lively discourse takes place, and outside of which ideas and debate are few and far between. The term, culture has even been captured within development discourse to refer not to an all-encompassing set of ideas and beliefs (which might challenge Western concepts of rationality), but to a mere sub-topic within the category of 'social capital'. Even this emasculated version of culture is seen as important in obstructing or advancing economic development. 'Culture Matters' is the title of Harrison and Huntington's recent book with the subtitle, 'How values shape human progress' [11]. The book gives recommendations about how to transform traditional cultures— through policies and capacity building—to facilitate progress, defined as "movement toward economic and material well-being, social economic equity, and political democracy".

The resurgence of popular interest in culture as an explanatory variable in 'shaping human progress' poses a new and insidious threat to indigenous cultural values. With so much interest in how cultural values operate to affect progress, but with no accompanying debate about the nature of progress itself, the development profession is setting the stage for yet another chapter in a long-running culture war with indigenous peoples. As in past chapters (e.g. 19th century American policies towards the native Indians) this saga features self-assured advocates of Western 'progress' fighting against traditional cultures which they have ascribed to a status of both culturally and materially deficient. While Western cultural hegemony represents a front-line threat to indigenous values, the flagrant brandishing of western values as 'the only' values may also serve notice to indigenous peoples that their cultural way of life is still under attack.

4. How indigenous cultural values might survive

For indigenous cultural values to be maintained in any identifiable form into the indefinite future, the self-assured smugness of Western development would need to change *and* indigenous groups would need to assert their own identities in new and more effective ways. There is reason to expect that these processes could indeed occur, and that other factors might also operate in a synergistic manner. In this section I outline four trends that appear to offer an opening for indigenous cultural values to survive into the future: (1) mainstream development concepts of local participation and community-driven agendas are leading to a greater willingness to accommodate indigenous worldviews; (2) spiritually-minded 'New Age' proponents within mainstream society serve as allies in legitimizing indigenous cosmologies and

worldviews; (3) emerging international legal standards accord increasingly strong land and cultural rights to indigenous groups; and (4) finally, a trend related to all of the above, but a factor in its own right, the sense of indigenous identity is gaining power among many groups, for a variety of internal and external reasons.

4.1. Local participation in development

Stakeholder participation in managing natural resources, as well as schools and health clinics has become an accepted part of rural development programs. While the management transfer from government agencies to local communities is largely circumscribed within sectoral arenas (e.g. managing an irrigation system, forest, school, etc.), the logic of community participation is gradually being extended from management to development planning and broader community empowerment. Where indigenous communities are invited to formulate their own plans, based on local priorities, there is room for expressing indigenous cultural values [7,26]. Incorporating indigenous technical knowledge (e.g. local practices for controlling insect pests in rice production, or traditional management arrangements for operating irrigation canals) into development interventions is also emerging as an accepted approach that tries to blend the best of local practices with new technologies from outside [29]. The Western legitimization of indigenous technologies, however, is not normally accompanied by a corresponding legitimization of the values and beliefs accompanying those technologies. That would be too far 'outside the box' for most Western development experts. An interesting attempt to do just this is the recent Dutch-funded COMPAS program that explores the links between technical and spiritual dimensions of indigenous agricultural practices [12].

4.2. New age spirituality and indigenous values

Explicit embracing of indigenous spiritual practices and values is an emerging trend not only among New Age spiritual 'seekers', but also within the environmental movement where there is an interest in reforming Western ethics about resource conservation. Native American healers and spiritual guides have been met with suspicion and even hostility from some tribal governments citing concern about the commodification of spiritual knowledge [31]. Yet New Age Indian spiritualists serve as ambassadors of cosmologies radically at odds with the Western view of progress, and provide an outreach function to a socially powerful market of largely middle and upper class spiritual seekers. When Robert Redford narrates a film depicting the sacred legacy of Chaco Canyon, New Mexico with cuts of contemporary Pueblo Indian spokespersons, there is a very strong message that an icon of mainstream society is legitimizing the explicitly spiritual worldview of the Pueblo Indians [24]. The importance of indigenous spirituality as a basis for sustainable environmental policies is also expressed in the very mainstream effort for UN ratification of an 'earth charter', a process led in part by two ex-presidents, Mikael Gorbechov and Nelson Mandella [8].

4.3. Indigenous rights to land and water resources

International recognition of customary law, and particularly land and water rights is emerging as a cornerstone of indigenous peoples' efforts to safeguard their way of life [23]. Security of tenure is critical to the social and economic viability of indigenous cultural groups; it is also fundamental to maintaining and continuing to create the distinctive cultural worldview of the society which is often, and perhaps always, intimately connected to particular localities and landscapes [2]. Legal disputes about control over land and water resources are highly charged with larger cultural, political, and economic issues of self-determination and human rights. From the perspective of indigenous values, such disputes serve the dual purpose of claiming (and sometimes obtaining) practical rights to resources, while strengthening the cultural identity of the claimants and thereby enhancing their negotiating position for subsequent rounds of resource/sovereignty disputes [15]. Current trends suggest an overall advance in the process of reclaiming indigenous access to land and water rights, and even (e.g. in Canada) to limited sovereignty. While court rulings alone cannot protect indigenous people from being forcibly dispossessed, there is an increasing global visibility of indigenous rights through the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations, and other international fora where indigenous issues are raised [18]. It has become accepted practice, for example, to include 'indigenous peoples' as an interest group that needs to be represented in discussions of global water, forestry, or biodiversity. An illustration is the recently concluded World Commission on Dams established with World Bank and other mainstream support to explore the environmental, economic, and social controversies surrounding construction of high dams. The Commission, which consulted extensively with representatives of indigenous groups, issued a recommendation surprising to its institutional backers, that indigenous people have an inherent right to remain in their ancestral territories even if it means vetoing construction of a dam [33]. The twin forces of increasing global support and gradually declining power of nation states (as some regulatory powers are ceded to global institutions) points to the likelihood of continued legal empowerment of indigenous populations.

4.4. Indigenous identity

Along with territory, identity is essential to the maintenance of cultural values; indeed, the concept of the 'sacred landscape' merges the territorial with the spiritual into a seamless sense of identity that is echoed in many indigenous statements about their view of the natural environment. Individuals may perceive their identity as 'indigenous' in many levels and stages. The growing awareness of common interests and experience among indigenous communities world-wide has led to an emerging global community of fourth world peoples. This 'high-level' sense of identity is expressed socio-politically (e.g. through attending international conferences or communicating by email) and experienced as a fundamentally shared worldview that distinguishes aboriginal people, as a group, from the Eurocentric mainstream worldview [13]. At the same time, indigenous identity is derived from the tribe or local

community through the usual mechanisms of cultural forces (language, socialization, etc). The salience of local identity is highly variable among different indigenous groups, and among different individuals who may be going through a process of situating their own identity vis-à-vis their indigenous community and mainstream society. In my view, the most promising avenue for leveraging indigenous identity as a mechanism for supporting indigenous values lies not in attempts to directly block Eurocentric influences, but rather to subvert and reform them, often making use of the Eurocentric legal system (as discussed above) or conventions of discourse (e.g. professional meetings and academic journals such as this one). In the words of Marie Battiste, introducing a collection of papers by indigenous scholars and activists, this reformist agenda is aimed at a blending of knowledge, "…to find ways of healing and rebuilding our nations, peoples, communities, and selves by restoring indigenous ecologies, consciousnesses, and languages and by creating bridges between Indigenous and Eurocentric knowledge" [3].

5. Indigenous views of progress

Unlike the situation of 50 years ago when Mead articulated the development challenge in 'Cultural Patterns and Technical Change' [18], the loss of indigenous cultural values no longer seems quite so inevitable. Even within the current development paradigm there is growing room for cultural maneuver. Current trends within the development profession and within mainstream society as a whole suggest that the future of indigenous cultural values will be a highly negotiated process, both internally and with the outside world. Examples from Bhutan, the Maori (New Zealand), and the Menominee (USA) serve to illustrate the forms these negotiations might take.

5.1. Gross national happiness in Bhutan

A national conference held in Bhutan in 1999 considered how traditional Buddhist values could be incorporated into a Bhutanese vision of development aimed not at economic wealth but 'gross national happiness' [5]. In the words of the keynote speaker, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Government, "Bhutan's vision of development stresses non-quantifiable goals such as spiritual well being and gross national happiness…The four major goals are economic self-reliance, environmental preservation cultural promotion and good governance…The cost of maintaining culture and environment often makes development projects more expensive in the short run but pays in the long term". The national scope of this search for an indigenously directed alternative development path appears to be unique in contemporary development policy.

5.2. A Maori development vision

The current pro-active approach of some Maori tribes to determine their own development path emerged at least in part through the efforts of an academic (Dr

Whatarangi Winiata) and several tribal leaders who initiated a process of vision creation in 1975 [16]. A small confederation of tribes and sub-tribes embarked on the process, conducting over 100 meetings in the first 10 years, involving both Maori and *Pakeha* (European) decision-makers in deliberations about the direction and values for their development. The difference between reactive and pro-active development is critical to establishing a uniquely Maori path: "Maori are sick of justifying and explaining our needs and aspirations to *Pakeha*. Maori themselves are now taking the initiative for transforming their own lives" [14]. The process is one which embraces academic research and even post-modern socio-cultural theorizing but within the control of the Maori themselves whose interest is to serve Maori cultural values. The focus includes educational reforms and revitalization of the Maori language, as well as a Maorization of social science research [25]. Research is critical because the goal is not merely to record current or past social data, but to actively explore issues of merging Maori principles (values) into a socially and economically evolved future.

5.3. Menominee culture and ecology

Unlike the vast majority of American Indian tribes, the Menominee were successful in holding on to a substantial portion of their native territory in northeastern Wisconsin. The fact that nearly all of their 100,000 ha reservation is still forested, and healthily so, is testimony to clever political negotiating, good forest management, and a commitment to indigenous cultural values. Today the Menominee lands contain the only significant concentration of old-growth tree stands in the formerly forested region of the upper mid-Western states. The Menominee 'model' is based on a spiritual relationship with the forest and a twinned identity with both tribe and forest. The values of today emerged in reaction to the economic and assimilative forces of the European (French) and American societies around them. How have the Menominee been so successful that today they receive several thousand international visitors each year interested in their approach to forestry? Davis [6] suggests many reasons, including: (1) the gradual loss of their forest land made them aware of the value of what was left (the current 100,000 ha reservation); (2) an explicit worldview that links the health of the Menominee social community to the health of the forest; (3) a highly spiritual orientation and vibrant ceremonial life that transcends religious affiliation (whether Christian or Nativistic); (4) strong sense of inter-generational equity and honoring both ancestors and future generations; (5) strong value on democracy and consensual decision-making; and (6) willingness to use modern silvicultural science integrated with native values.

6. Conclusions: cultural visioning

The cases of indigenous cultural success in safeguarding distinctive core values against the rising tide of Westernization are exceptional—perhaps proving the 'rule' that, if current trends continue, indigenous values will not survive very far into the

future. *Ceteris paribus*, the worldviews of native peoples will continue to be over-whelmed under the force of Western science and the peculiar cultural arrogance that has been our inheritance. Indeed, the relationship between the addictive materialism of Western society and the role of indigenous groups as victims, fits the classic psychological model of co-dependence. It has become a self-fulfilling expectation by indigenous groups that their own interests will have to yield to the culturally abusive power of the Western juggernaut, and each hegemonic success by the West reinforces the status quo. Is there a cultural '12-step' program that can help indigen-ous societies recapture their cultural lives?

A critical common element in the three examples cited above is a strong self-awareness of cultural distinctiveness and a shared sense that the indigenous com-munity wants to maintain a distinctive way of life. Cultural identity, like charity, begins at home. In the words of Battiste [3]: "…Aboriginal consciousness cannot be maintained without first challenging the assumptions of modern society". How does this happen? In Bhutan as with the Menominee, the political leaders are seeking to define a culturally grounded development path. Among the Maori, while the cur-rent leadership is promoting Maori cultural independence, an important stimulus was the visioning process begun some 25 years ago. A sense of cultural identity can be taught, and cultural goals (vision) can be created through a deliberate process, as the Maori case illustrates. It is this type of approach that offers hope, and perhaps the only hope, for the survival of indigenous cultural values.

Recent work on visioning exercises in rural settings, both indigenous and other-wise [27,28], points to the potential for systematically outlining cultural goals as an initial and critical step in reclaiming a cultural identity, and in charting a culturally grounded development path. Visioning can stimulate an awareness of cultural values that the society wishes to maintain, and provides a forum for garnering internal consensus on cultural goals. This first step of awareness raising about cultural values may well be the hinge on which turns the future of culturally distinct approaches to living.

A future with indigenous values would, I believe, enrich both indigenous and mainstream societies. Believing in its desirability does not directly enhance the odds of value survival, but, as with the visioning process, clarifying what is considered desirable is a necessary step to planning effective action. Faced with a scenario of living in a 'flatland' of pure materialism [32] let us hope that indigenous societies will place new value on their old values and help all of us escape the fate of our own cultural success.

References

[1] F. Barth, Are values real? The enigma of naturalism in the anthropological imputation of values, in: M. Hechter, L. Nadel, R. Michod (Eds.), The Origin of Values, Aldine, New York, 1993.

[2] K. Basso, Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1995.

[3] M. Battiste (Ed.), Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision, University of British Colombia Press, Vancouver, 2000.

[4] P. Bowler, The Invention of Progress: the Victorians and the Past, Basil Blackwell, Cambridge, MA, 1990.

[5] Centre for Bhutan Studies. Gross national happiness: Discussion Papers, Centre for Bhutan Studies, Thimphu,1999.

[6] T. Davis, Sustaining the Forest, the People, and the Spirit, SUNY Press, Albany, 2000.

[7] T. Downing, C. Garcia-Downing, Plan B: what is going to happen to my people?, Cultural Survival Quarterly 25 (2) (2001) 8–15.

[8] Earth Charter website. Available from http://www.earthcharter.org.

[9] R. Edgerton, Sick Societies: Challenging the Myth of Primitive Harmony, Free Press, New York, 1992.

[10] E. Gans, The End of Culture: Toward a Generative Anthropology, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985.

[11] L. Harrison, S. Huntington (Eds.), Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress, Basic Books, New York, 2000.

[12] B. Haverkort, W. Hiemstra, Food for Thought: Ancient Visions and New Experiments of Rural People, Zed Books, London, 1999.

[13] J.Y. Henderson, in: *Ayukpachi*: Empowering Aboriginal Thought, 2000, pp. 248–278.

[14] G. Hingangaroa Smith, Protecting and respecting indigenous knowledge, in: Protecting and Respecting Indigenous Knowledge, 2000, pp. 209–224.

[15] R. Howitt (Ed.), Resources, Nations and Indigenous Peoples: Case Studies from Australasia, Melanesia and Southeast Asia, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1996.

[16] T. Loomis, Indigenous populations and sustainable development: building on indigenous approaches to holistic development, World Development 28 (5) (2000) 893–910.

[17] M. Mead (Ed.), Cultural Patterns and Technical Change, Mentor Books, New York, 1955.

[18] A. Muehlebach, "Making place" at the United Nations: indigenous cultural politics at the UN working group on indigenous populations, Cultural Anthropology 16 (3) (2001) 415–448.

[19] R. Nisbet, History of the Idea of Progress, Basic Books, New York, 1980.

[20] A.R. Radcliffe Brown, The Andaman Islanders, Free Press, New York, 1964.

[21] K. Russo, Finding the Middle Ground: Insights and Applications of the Value Orientations Method, Intercultural Press, Yormouth, Maine, 2000.

[22] M. Sahlins, Culture and Practical Reason, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1976.

[23] L. Sheleff, The Future of Tradition: Customary Law, Common Law, and Legal Pluralism, Frank Cass, London, 2000.

[24] A. Sofaer, The Mystery of Chaco Canyon, (video), Bullfrog Films, Oley, PA, 2001.

[25] L. Tuhiwai Te Rina Smith, in: Karupapa Maori Research, 2000, pp. 225–247.

[26] S. Van Ausdal, Development and discourse among the Maya of Southern Belize, Development and Change 32 (2000) 577–606.

[27] E. Wallenberg, D. Edmunds, L. Buck (Eds.), Scenarios as a Tool for Adaptive Forest Management, Center for International Forestry Research, Bogor, Indonesia, 2000.

[28] N. Walzer, Community Strategic Visioning Programs, Praeger, Westport, CT, 1996.

[29] D.M. Warren, L.J. Slikkerveer, D. Brokensha (Eds.), The Cultural Dimension of Development: Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Intermediate Technology Publications, London, 1995.

[30] L. White, The Evolution of Culture: The Development of Civilization to the Fall of Rome, McGraw Hill, New York, 1959.

[31] L.A. Whitt, Cultural imperialism and the marketing of native America, in: C. Duane (Ed.), Contemporary Native American Cultural Issues, Altamira Press, Walnut Creek, CA, 1999, pp. 169–192.

[32] K. Wilbur, The Eye of the Spirit, Shambhala Publications, Boston, 1997.

[33] World Commission on Dams, Dams and Development, Earthscan, London, 2000.