

7.4 The Modern Chola: Indigeneity, Gender, and Global Fashion in Bolivia

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Scholars have written extensively about gender as a socially constructed identity (Butler 2003; Joyce 2005). Joyce writes of the body as a scene of display, where gender and other identities are enacted and performed by agents who choose to adopt, modify, or subvert their societies' norms through bodily modification and dress. Clothing is one common way in which one's identity is created and enacted by individual agents, and gender identification within a person's cultural context is reflected through clothing choices. This chapter contributes to a more complex understanding of how clothing embodies gender, by exploring the related social axes of indigeneity, race and class in the globalized contexts of international tourism and high fashion by analyzing Peruvian women's pollera, Andean market women's ethnic dress, and high-end versions of these found on runways. These examples illustrate Butler's point that gender 'is an identity tenuously constituted in time' (2003: 97). The examples included in this chapter, taken from various cultural contexts and periods of Andean history, collectively suggest that ethnic and other social identities (e.g., Aymara, wealthy tourist, or global elite) intersect with the construction of gender in ways that are historically and culturally constituted.

Beautiful Indians

On a cold winter evening in July 2016, I stood on a sidewalk fronting the historic Plaza de Armas in Cuzco, Peru chatting with an indigenous Quechua *chola* (urban market vendor) selling candy, cigarettes and water. I asked Señora Josefina (a pseudonym) about the store across the street from her cart, which marketed high-end llama and alpaca scarves, shawls, and sweaters to the thousands of international tourists that visit Cuzco each year, usually as part of a Machu Picchu tour. This particular store featured a series of eye-catching and colorful posters depicting indigenous women wearing the clothing that identifies them as members of the indigenous Quechua

ethnicity (Figure 7.7). Photos of Quechua women wearing colorfully embroidered polleras (multi-layered skirts), lacy mantillas (shawls) over blouses, and ethnically diverse hat styles appear on postcards, prints, mugs, small figures and dolls, and countless advertisements luring tourists from abroad to the highland Andes. Indeed Josefina wore exactly the same set of garments that made her a living symbol of indigenous Peru: for the foreigners around her, she was both a symbol of the living Inka (via their Quechua descendants) and an exotic 'other' with whom they could buy a bit of cross-cultural interaction.

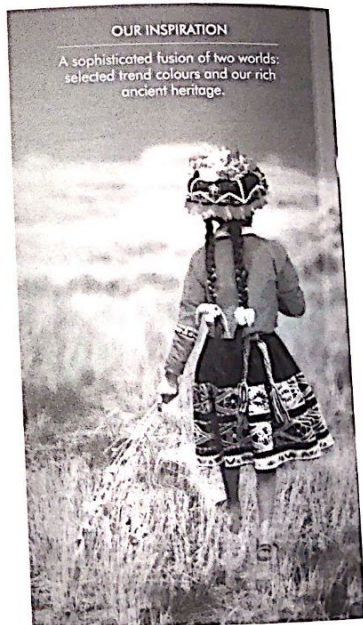


Figure 7.7 Poster advertising Quechua indigenous heritage in Cuzco boutique that sells alpaca clothing to tourists (left). Aymara chola in Oruro, Bolivia open-air market (right).

As an anthropological archaeologist who has worked in the central and southern Andes for two decades, the contrast between a *chola* making a living by selling small sweets on the street, and the sanitized and professionally produced advertisements in the adjacent storefront, was quite striking. Highland Andean indigenous peoples have had a long and complex history in nations such as Peru since conquest and incorporation by the Inka Empire (ca. AD 1425–1533) then under the Spanish as part of the construction of a far flung colonial empire. Since achieving independence from Spain in the 1820s, Latin America has struggled to build coherent nation-states that integrate people of vastly different linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. For centuries, indigenous peoples in the Americas were lumped together as *indios* (Indians), a term dating back to Christopher Columbus' mistaken conclusion that the inhabitants of Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic), were actually part of India. *Indio* is a derogatory term in the Andes associated with dirtiness, stupidity, and laziness (Van Vleet 2005: 109). Although the Bolivian state, for example, has not used the term since the 1952 national reforms, replacing *indios* with *campesinos* (peasants), there persists an ideological and institutional separation between the "modern nation" and the "indian nation" (Van Vleet 2005: 111).

The last century has seen a boom in domestic and international tourism that has been especially influential in Peru, where a series of civilizations culminating in the Inka left magnificent archaeological sites, now exploited by a well-developed tourism infrastructure throughout much of the highlands and Pacific coast, as well as the Amazonian lowlands to the east. Many indigenous communities have found ways to take part in the economic opportunities offered by tourism, from street vendors to owners of tour agencies. But for Quechua women in particular, they sometimes serve as both agents and subjects of international tourism – some dress in brightly colored versions of indigenous clothing and, together with a lamb or llama, offer to take photos with tourists for a small fee. Others dress *de pollera* (in the clothing described above) in order to attract customers because they know that foreigners have come to expect 'real Indians' to dress accordingly.

The irony lies in the contradiction between the 'real Indian' selling candy from a sidewalk stall and the counterpart depicted in the boutique's advertisements. Both are *de pollera* but a closer look reveals the deceptive

nature of the latter. As Van Vleet (2005:111) writes, 'hands and feet as well as clothing and shoes, are signifiers of class and race as well as gender.' Josefina's wind-chapped cheeks, hands and dirty fingernails, as well as calloused feet clad in rubber sandals, belie her poverty. The indigenous women in the store's advertisements, in contrast, have pale complexions, smooth skin, and well-cared for, white smiles (when their faces are visible at all). They, and the alpacas also featured in the posters, were posed in beautiful mountain locations or clean rooms in cottage-industry or factory spinning and weaving facilities, empty of people and trash alike. These were the sanitized, idealized, and romantic locales that make for the ideal photographic memento, free of obvious signs of poverty, racism, and pollution, all social problems that fall disproportionately on indigenous communities' shoulders.

During our conversation, I asked Señora Josefina about how she felt about the use of indigenous Quechua women as exotic symbols of Peru's past. She replied that it made her happy that her country thought Quechua women like her were beautiful, and it helped bring many tourists to places like Cuzco to visit the sites once inhabited by her Inkan ancestors (she made the direct genealogical connection). She added that the tourist who bought bottled drinks, candy, and cigarettes from her helped her to cover the compulsory costs associated with sending her children to a public school in Peru, including uniforms and school supplies. But when I pointed to the posters in the windows of the high-end boutique in front of us selling expensive versions of clothing more suited to Americans' and Europeans' urban tastes, her response shifted. Señora Josefina indicated that these fashionable re-imaginings of indigenous women's clothes were unimportant ('A nosotras no nos importan'). The women in those advertisements were not *runa* (a Quechua term of self-identification as indigenous or, literally, real person), she insisted, because their skin, hands, and teeth were those of white women. For this Cuzqueña *chola*, she felt greater cultural affiliation with the Inka of 500 years ago than the women in the advertisements.

Cholas as Racial and Gendered Citizens

The term 'cholas' describes vendors in a wide range of circumstances, from the poorest unlicensed *ambulantes* walking the streets with their small wares, to wealthier women with permanent stalls in open-air markets, and even those successful enough to inhabit an urban storefront. Although many wear familiar Western dress

(straight skirts or sweatpants, t-shirts or blouses, and low pumps or canvas slip-on sneakers), dressing *de pollera* imparts a colorful atmosphere to Andean cities. In Cuenca, Ecuador, *cholas* wear white straw hats and huge felt skirts in brilliant shades of orange and pink. Cuzqueña *cholas* wear tall white hats, big skirts, and flashing earrings, while Bolivians recognize a *chola paceña* (from La Paz) by the little bowler hat that sits rakishly atop her head' (Weismantel 2001: xxv).

But *cholas* are far from universally treasured. The label describes a racial category between Indian and white; *cholas* are considered racially inferior by elites, vulnerable to sexual harassment and even rape, and associated with racial connotations of dirtiness, laziness, promiscuity and stupidity. First, precisely because they inhabit urban markets and sidewalks, *cholas* are Indians out of their place (rural indigenous villages and towns). Indeed the widespread linguistic replacement of *indio* with *campesinos* cemented this association of indigenous peoples with rural peasants. Secondly, precisely because they are businesswomen working outside the home, they fall far short of the Colonial social ideal of *marianismo*. *Marianismo* is an imposed Spanish Colonial ideal stemming from the Catholic Virgin Mary, 'with all the accompanying expectations of motherhood and protection of feminine honor' (Bigenho 2005: 65–66). Chaste, self-sacrificing mothers do not profit by selling vegetables, unaccompanied by husbands, in a public city market.

Weismantel (2001: xxvii) writes, 'With its power to slander, the word *chola* is not a careless pleasantry, as local men pretend; nor is it just a colorful phrase when used by poets, or a value-free ethnic category when employed by social scientists.' The label *chola* redirects attention from women's economic activities (as market vendors) onto their bodies, and this in turn shapes the state's position toward them. Politicians who promise to 'clean up the markets' rarely do so through infrastructural improvements to modernize these areas where most city residents buy food and other household sundries. Instead, the ever-present trash, half-starved dogs, rotting food scraps, and petty crime are thought to emanate directly from the 'dirty Indians who work there, rather than from systematic neglect of these critical centers of everyday commerce' (2001: xxvii). To return to Señora Josefina in Cuzco's Plaza de Armas, her dirty hands and feet are thought to result from her innate unwholesomeness, rather than from the absence of facilities where she

might use the restroom, wash up, or seek shelter from the biting cold highland winds. The women depicted in the boutique's posters, on the other hand, suffer no such indignities. They are photographed outside their homes and without their children, but in their 'proper place' (the open countryside). Their morality is communicated effectively through clean hands, faces and clothing. They, unlike Josefina, can represent the nation and symbolize national pride in Peru's glorious Prehispanic past.

Dressing the Part

Unlike the wearer's gender or race, clothing is something that can be put on and taken off. Fashion is, in this sense, performative (Van Vleet 2005: 119). Two brief examples illustrate how indigenous Andean women themselves make use of the performative nature of the *pollera*. Marisa is a teenager who buys *polleras* for the week-long celebration of Carnavál in Bolivia that takes place each February, even though she wears pants on a daily basis. She is one of thousands of *cholas* in Bolivia, teenage girls who migrate for work or school to the cities, who return to their families' villages for this iconic national holiday. Although new *polleras* can cost \$60 to \$80 each, Marisa will try to purchase or borrow a new one for each of the seven days of dancing, along with the eyelet blouses, lace slips, bowler hats, shawls and slip-on shoes that are necessary elements of a complete *runa pacha* (Quechua for human or Indian dress) outfit. Van Vleet (2005: 116–119) argues that conspicuous consumption demonstrate Marisa's belonging to the modern Bolivian nation through the consumption and display of commodities. Along with speaking Spanish, getting more education, and living in an urban environment with electricity, running water, and cement floors, new *pollera* outfits communicate one's material success. The consumption of clothing, she asserts, is one way that Sullkata (Marisa's indigenous community) youths 'experience the possibilities and constraints of their own "belongingness" in Bolivia at the turn of the 21st century' (2005: 108). As a young woman, Marisa grew up seeing images of idealized *cholas* everywhere, those symbols of national motherhood, chastity, a glorious Inkan past, and nationally treasured beauty. Although she may not experience the reverence afforded idealized *cholas* in postcards and tourist brochures, she enjoys the relationships that come from sometimes dressing *de pollera* and sometimes in secondhand Western clothing (2005: 118). Both are performative practices that allow her to mimic either a successful Bolivian indigenous woman,

or a modern, middle-class, educated and thoroughly Westernized urban teenager.

Zorn (2005: 115–116) argues, moreover, that dressing *de pollera* is critical to the maintenance of ethnic identity. Her work with the Sakaka *ayllu* (indigenous community) of northern Potosí, Bolivia indicates that the nearly 21,000 Sakaka who wear distinctive daily dress that is both handmade and hand embroidered do so to consciously mark 'a division between clothed indigenous humans, or *runa*, and naked foreign outsiders, *q'ara*. (This interpretation coincides with but reverses ethnocentrism between Indians and non-Indians.)' The term *q'ara* translates as 'peeled', as in a bare animal hide; those not dressed in *runa pacha* are, by definition, not indigenous and, in this sense, not fully human. Zorn continues, 'To dress is to be: *de pollera* (Indian or *cholita*) versus *de vestido* (*mestiza* [mixed-blood] or white)' (2005: 118). Displaying and reinforcing one's belongingness in an indigenous community in the highland Andes is to continue a millennia-old tradition in the region that values expertly handwoven and decorated textiles as the highest art form. Indeed, *chola* dress is among the most expensive in the Andes. Dressing *de pollera* is thus an investment of time and scarce resources, and a statement about the value of being *runa*.

A second example comes from Bigenho's research on single female folklore singers in La Paz in the 1940s. *Peñas* are folklore shows popular with both urban Bolivians and tourists, where the audience is treated to a variety of traditional ethnic music and dances. In the 1940s, it was socially acceptable for single women to perform only in specified contexts (*peñas* and programs broadcast on Radio Illimani, the national radio station), and their careers were commonly cut short by marriage and children. The subjects of Bigenho's work called themselves 'pioneers', a concept tied to both rural landscapes and being agents that helped to transform something marginalized and despised (indigenous music and bodies) into something today treasured by urban *mestizo*-creoles (people of mixed indigenous and Spanish blood, as many Andeans conceive of their national identities) (Bigenho 2005: 66). For the *peña* singers themselves, their *pollera* costumes symbolized material success. However in the 1940s, 'this form of dress represented the indigeneity they were bringing into the service of a *mestizo*-creole nationalist culture' (2005: 73). Older women might return to the stage wearing ponchos, an item of clothing strongly associated with men on horseback, and so scandalous for

an unmarried young woman to wear (2005: 73). Together with their use of the indigenous languages of Quechua and Aymara in their performances, these *mestiza* (mixed-blood and urban) singers identified strongly with the Indian costumes, music, and the landscapes about which they sang in 'a multisensorial portrayal of indigeneity.' The picture of mixed-blood urban young women performing (rural) indigeneity in shows meant to evoke nationalist pride in their *mestizo*-creole audiences is a fascinating one. Bigenho is right that these singers' stories 'signal the incredible degree to which indigeneity has become the lens through which many *mestizo*-creoles feel themselves to be Bolivian' (2005: 75).

In both of these examples, we see a performative process of donning a specific set of clothing in order to foster national pride and unity around a socially constructed idea about Bolivia's indigenous heritage. Whether in *peñas* or to dance in Carnavál, indigenous and *mestiza* women alike read the *pollera* in distinct ways: as signs of material success, and as conscious attempts to evoke feelings of pride in Bolivia's prehistoric past and its rich cultural tapestry today. But both folklore shows and Carnavál represent tightly controlled contexts for performing indigeneity, ones that are in many ways far removed from the daily struggles of *cholas* like Señora Josefina selling candy in Cuzco.

International Fashion

The cultural appropriation of indigenous clothing and art in modern designers' collections is nothing new, but the examples in this section offer an important contrast in the ways that indigeneity impact and are impacted by that appropriation. The first example comes from designer Prabal Gurung. Inspired by the Mustang region of Nepal where he comes from, Gurung's fall 2014 collection used deep oranges and reds to deliberately evoke the saffron-hued robes of Buddhist monks (see slideshow at mobile.nytimes.com/slideshow/2015/09/13/t-magazine/prabal-gurung-spring-summer-2016/s/13t-mag-scenepabal-slide-U5VU.html?_r=0&refer=). Cashmere wraps, high-necked and long-sleeved gowns, and flowing chiffon skirts marry Nepalese cultural inferences with thoroughly modern garment forms for elite First World customers (jugglistyle.com/fashion/prabal-gurungs-nepal-inspired-fall-2014-collection-is-beautiful/). This designer has had his work worn by the likes of Michelle Obama and Kate Middleton, but only first showed it in the Indian subcontinent in 2016 because, in his words:

'[India] wasn't ready for anyone's clothes. Let's be honest. India as a market is extremely price conscious...the market for high-end luxury designers is only really starting to take off now. As a result, patrons too are evolving. They're no longer seeking validation by the brands they're carrying. It's no longer about loud logos, but rather, a more muted, understated display of luxury' (elle.in/fashion/news/prabal-gurung-talks-to-us-before-his-first-trunk-show-in-india/).

Prabal Gurung's cultural inspirations give way to the expectations of an international luxury fashion market, in which everything from the settings (e.g., Mumbai's Le Mill, New York's Fashion Week) to the models (none of whom appear to be Nepalese peasants or Buddhist monks) fit the socially-constructed expectations of a global elite.

Elite consumers in the Andes travel to those same meccas of fashion, but trunk shows of less-pricey versions are starting to appear in Latin American capitals as well. Eliana Paco Paredes is a Bolivian designer of indigenous Aymara descent whose collection was recently featured at both Bolivia's Fashion Week and New York's Fashion Week. Unlike Gurung, Paco Paredes' outfits retain traditional garment forms, including *polleras*, derby or *bolero* hats, *mantilla* shawls, and blouses (Figure 7.8). But the materials, colors, and embroidered designs on the skirts and shawls are less traditional. For example, fitted blouses and skirts are of a single shade, while lace and jewels may adorn the blouse's neckline and shawl. Thus the combination of garments and their basic forms are wholly indigenous. An article published by Agencia EFE (www.efe.com/efe/english/life/the-elegance-of-bolivian-cholitas-reaches-big-apple/50000263-2940765) notes La Paz's municipal 2013 law recognizing the *chola* as 'an intangible cultural heritage,' and the Aymara woman as 'the most comprehensive personification of the Indian-mestizo amalgam, which since colonial times has maintained indestructible components of identity and individuality.' Paco Paredes has sold her designs to indigenous women in her La Paz store Diseños Esmeralda for many years, but her inclusion in New York's Fashion Week introduced the *chola* to new international audiences. It remains to be seen whether her designs' strict adherence to form is maintained for a non-Bolivian audience, or whether those indigenous and nationally-treasured cultural references become more subtle, as they are in Prabal Gurung's designs. The contrast between the two collections – one

employing color and drape lifted from a region of Nepal, and the representing high-end but more literal borrowings from indigenous Bolivia – serve as two ends of a continuum of indigenous cultural influences in high fashion collections. Paco Paredes' indigenous Aymara heritage, and the national pride expressed in the Bolivian media over her participation in New York's Fashion Week, will likely counteract pressure to experiment too freely with the *pollera*/*mantilla*/*bolero* combination or garment forms in the same ways that Gurung does.

Gurung and Paco Paredes are two designers whose participation in the high-end fashion industry reflect a peculiar brand of global modernity. Slade's (2009: 12) examination of Japanese modernity and fashion theory illuminates the relationship between sartorial borrowing from the past in a thoroughly modern form of conspicuous consumption. He characterizes this borrowing from the past as 'a type of exoticism, replacing the appeal of the geographically far away with that of the temporally far away. Resurrecting old forms and investing them with fresh significance and value as emblems of a past whose worth and moment has been newly clarified and

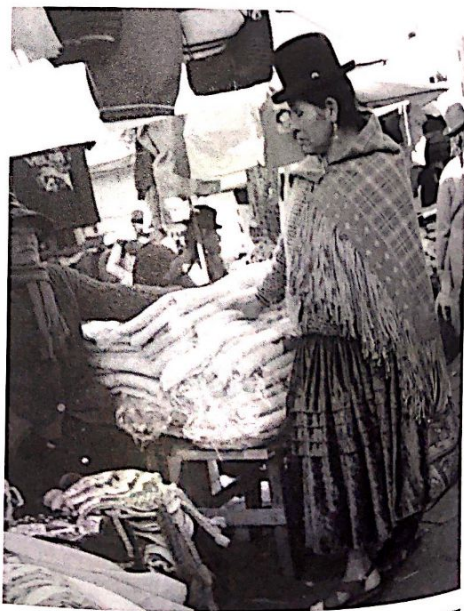


Figure 7.8 Eliana Paco Paredes, a Bolivian Aymara designer, brings "cholita fashion" to an international community (Bolivia Fashion Week 2016, photos by Andrés Herbas).

acknowledged is an essential, though mainly reactionary, facet of fashion.' Much of the Japanese civil war period predating the Restoration was, Slade writes, 'a violent manifestation of the difficulty of accepting a new means of identity-framing' (13), one based on time (modern versus feudal Japan) rather than region. This closely parallels the inherent conflict in the sartorial presentation of *de pollera* at New York's Fashion Week or, to a lesser extent, baby alpaca shawls as modernized *mantillas*. Eliana Paco Paredes, more than her counterparts in Cuzco's high-end tourist boutiques, offers some cultural context (albeit superficially and sanitized) for her collection.

Framed as 'an astonishing debauchery of efforts to produce a minimum of garments' (Slade 2009: 11), fashion's ability to take consumption to new heights of effort and expense signify both the luxurious excesses of a global elite and the extent to which modernity highlights continual efforts to remake the past and/or present into something new and exciting. Efforts to counteract the need for continual reinvention, sometimes spearheaded by the very states whose capitalist economic structures made vast wealth inequalities possible, are almost inevitable. In pedagogical manuals for rural and urban Bolivian girls' schools in the 1920s and 1930s, the state saw the fashion industry as epitomizing 'the negative side of modernity because it appealed to women's "irrational" nature to consume voraciously' (Stephenson 1999: 6). Bolivian girls were instead encouraged to focus on personal hygiene as a way to instill patriarchal values based on bodily and household management. Similarly, the *bunad* is a closely controlled festive folk costume that symbolizes rural Norwegian identity (Hylland Eriksen 2012: 258). Although it was invented by nationalist activist Hulda Garborg in 1905 just after Norway gained independence from Sweden, the *bunad*'s specific decorative reference to the wearer's particular regional origins or place of residence is 'an important, traditionalist symbol of modern Norwegianness.' The Bunad and Folk Costume Council and strong public opinion limit the wearer to particular *bunad* styles associated with her place of birth, childhood or current residence. In doing so through a folk costume however, the *bunad* 'confirms Norwegian identity as an essentially rural one, where personal integrity is connected to roots and rural origins' (Hylland Eriksen 2012: 258).

Both the formal Bunad and Folk Costume Council and the Bolivian pedagogical manuals emphasizing social restrictions on sartorial experimentation by women are

examples of the social construction of gendered norms. Both also illustrate a pushback against the playfulness inherent in the vast choices available to wealthy elite women. Although it would be highly unlikely that elite Norwegian and Bolivian women would choose expensive *bunads* or *polleras* for everyday wear, their wealth allows them to purchase clothing with playful references to other cultures that are simultaneously divorced from the violent, racist histories experienced by the 'real' women in those cultures. The clothing choices available to Gurung's and Paco Paredes' clients represents, in this sense, the essence of modernity.

Moreover, it is unsurprising that the targets of Norway's and Bolivia's social and state-supported control over dress should be women. Van Vleet (2005: 113) explains that because of indigenous Bolivian men's seasonal migration to the cities or eastern lowlands (as seasonal agricultural laborers), men have greater access to commodities, including cash, and so are considered 'more advanced' than their wives. Women, because of their more limited mobility, are thus considered more indigenous, and so it is women who are both the subjects of romanticized depictions of the Andean countryside and the subjects of campaigns to control their clothing choices. Like the Norwegian *bunad*, dressing *de pollera* is a statement of ethnicity and adherence to tradition for urban *cholas* and rural indigenous women. They wear *polleras* as 'a visible symbol of resistance that exemplifies the many struggles lived out each day for indigenous and *chola* women who deliberately refuse to be "refashioned"' (Stephenson 1999: 5). For a wealthy New Yorker or Parisian consumer, in contrast, costly versions of these garments are potentially exciting additions to one's wardrobe that signal one's global modernity. Elements of indigenous clothing from Bolivia, Norway and elsewhere can thus be recycled and reimagined in the continually shifting world of international fashion.

Discussion

How does such refashioning impact indigenous women themselves? Standing outside the Cuzco boutique advertising a romantic Peruvian countryside but selling alpaca wraps and straight skirts, Señora Josefina dismissed it as unimportant to her sense of identity. This is probably because the shop's wares bear little resemblance to real *cholas'* outfits, instead more closely resembling Prabal Gurung's saffron-hued gowns and wraps. On the other hand, Eliana Paco Paredes's collections, like Norwegian

bunads, aim to celebrate and preserve distinctive local cultural traditions. Even when marketed to an international audience, they maintain local guidelines of garment construction, decorations and combinations of clothing items. Local celebrations of Bolivian and Norwegian cultural heritage do shape outsiders' ideas about 'authentic' cultural traditions, but there seems to be little demand to take home a *bunad* or *pollera* for everyday wear.

The *pollera* does, however, offer indigenous women a strong political and economic statement. Despite its association with Indians, Andean women wear them as 'a visible symbol of resistance' to real daily struggles for upward mobility and respect (Stephenson 1999: 5). Dressing *de pollera* also offers savvy vendors a tool to attract potential customers. Increasing numbers of young *cholas* who achieve upward mobility through a university education choose to dress *de pollera* in the markets because these have long been the domain of indigenous women. Thus the *chola* outfit becomes a statement of ethnic identification that may simultaneously serve the women's entrepreneurial strategies in building successful small business (Scarborough 2010). Even in contexts in which wearing a bulky layered skirt might hinder their movements, *cholas* choose to dress *de pollera* instead of *de vestido*. Tourists in Bolivia's capital are invited to attend Cholita Wrestling matches in the vast black market of El Alto, the Aymara capital city perched on the cliff overlooking La Paz. Modeled after the U.S.'s World Wrestling Foundation and Mexico's *lucha libre* ('free fight'), Cholita Wrestling features Aymara women in *polleras* wrestling each other and their male counterparts clad in spandex wrestling costumes and face masks (www.lapazlife.com/places/cholita-wrestling-in-la-paz). Clearly the *pollera* is fundamental to Andean indigeneity and women's ethnic identities.

Perhaps this is why it would take more than the availability of cheaper Western-style straight skirts and dresses to lure *cholas* away from the *pollera*. The *pollera* may retain strong associations with motherhood and colonial social ideals of *marianismo*, but real *cholas* also associate it with business opportunities and cultural pride. The latter is supported by national media's celebration of the *chola* as a cultural treasure, whether depicted on postcards or fashion shows. Although the bulky layered skirts and otherwise unfashionable *bolero* hats generally do not appeal to the globalized elites of the fashion

industry, there is little sign that Andean consumers prone to dress *de pollera* will switch to the slimming straight skirts of Westernized elites. Similarly, lacy *mantilla* shawls only seem to appeal to tourists when transformed into a cashmere or alpaca wrap.

The widespread availability of these garments in both high-end boutiques and in city markets may offer *cholas* a chance to modernize their images. But even when given the choice to dress *de vestido* in straight skirts and Western tops, indigenous Andean women often choose the more costly *pollera* outfit as a political statement or to dress the part in the indigenous-dominated world of Latin American markets. Participating as business women, as an internationally-featured fashion designer, or even as a professional wrestler, these thoroughly modern women use *polleras* to help redefine the modern *chola*. Their choices support academic arguments that clothing is one way that agency is embodied within specific cultural and historical contexts, and that ethnicity, race, class and gender are performed by social agents through their bodies and dress. *Señora* Josefina was correct: expensive alpaca wraps marketed to tourists using photos of *cholas* in *polleras* do not seem to matter much to women like her. Rather, whatever independence, status and power she may achieve within her community stem from her success as a business woman with a stall in the prestigious Plaza de Armas, not from her ability to choose to dress *de vestido*. In fact, choosing to dress *de pollera* reinforces the modern *chola's* educational and business successes, and thus her femininity.

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