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In the summer of 2010, I embarked on a journey to the Southern Andes of Peru. The first part of my trip led me to Cusco, Peru where I enrolled in an intensive Quechua language course for a month. I engaged in a learning experience inside and outside the classroom. I also lived in what is referred to as the peasant house. Because I lived with peasants who migrated from their communities, I practiced my Quechua on a daily basis and learned more about the experiences of the rural communities in the Andes.

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## ETHNOGRAPHIC WEAVING IN THE SOUTHERN ANDES OF PERU

The staff and visitors of the peasant house shared their stories, traditions, and even took me to visit some of their communities. In my first month, I was already traveling miles through the Andes. Before, I expected to be sitting in a



classroom four hours a day or more learning in a classroom not traveling, exploring, and dancing the night away with peasants. However, no matter how much I practiced my Quechua and met people from the Andes, I could never have grasped what lay ahead of my journey. The next two months I lived in an indigenous community in the Andes.

When I arrived to the community, after a long ride up through a dirt road in a market truck, I was speechless. The community seemed untouched. Women used decorations, skirts, and hats that were unique to this community. And no, this is not just to impress foreigners; it is what they use every day. It almost appeared out of a romantic story of the Andes. However, as I began to live there, my image of this community and the reality of peoples' lives became much more complex.

In the morning, I awoke to the sound of children running out looking for firewood. There no one eats until someone lights the fire. You forget the gas and the stove; and you remember the history of fire. Children look for

firewood and eucalyptus leaves at 5 in the morning. The leaves are used to burn but also as a natural fragrance. Can you imagine how beautiful it was to wake up to this every morning? But I learned that even if pure beauty and pure actions do not contaminate, inevitably we live in a world in which the action of one affects the other. We are united in this global system and more because we all live in one world together. The community where I lived this summer was mostly dependent on agriculture for their survival. The general purpose of the research study that I conducted this summer was to look at the reality of Andean life. I decided to investigate more about economic survival and less through the single focus lens of culture survival. It was this summer that I discovered how the lives of Peru's Andean communities is changing due to climatic factors. These communities that seem so untouched by the outside world, almost immutable, are not excluded from the impact of climate change. Beyond seeing the decisions of individuals as a reflection of their culture, I



decided to focus my studies in the force that economic survival has in the decisions of households and the community. These decisions are relevant to issues such as land use, education, forms of income, health, and more. This is a force that is becoming more pressing because climate change is putting their livelihoods at risk. These changes directly affect the people of the community because their lives are directly influenced by changes in the ecosystem. They also heavily depend on animals and land for economic opportunities that open sources of income for them.

So what happens when they can no longer develop or sustain their natural resources? The consequence is that they suffer

from a lack of natural resources. What happens when there are also no resources or training to adapt to this new reality created by climate change? The next option for many is to migrate elsewhere. Forced migration is



the most urgent problem facing many rural communities. But what happens when there are resources to adapt to this new reality? Why are people still living in poverty? And why are some people still migrating? Those questions are the questions that I was driven to explore in the Southern Andes of Peru.

I have brought back those questions to my classrooms where we discuss issues of international development and its influences in communities. The study I conducted in this area has allowed me to gain more understanding of the complexities of international development. In Peru, I was trying to find the root of migration and how to alleviate the force, and in doing this, I discovered the intricacies of international development. Even now, this is a topic that I pursue with a strong curiosity and plan to continue to study after graduation.

