
RESEARCH REPORTS AND NOTES

INDIGENA SELF-IDENTITY IN ECUADOR AND THE REJECTION OF MESTIZAJE*

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Abstract: Indigenous peoples of Ecuador have organized and mobilized over the past thirty years, partly to reshape their identities after centuries of domination. This research is a preliminary effort to explore the contemporary complexity of that identity. Best viewed as a quantitative case study, this analysis uses responses from seventy-six indigenous college students to a self-administered questionnaire. The authors found that indigenous students with greater "acculturation experiences" with mestizo culture were more strident in rejecting elements of that culture than were their colleagues who had had fewer encounters with mestizo elements of Ecuadorian society. While the tendency to identify oneself ethnically by rejecting the dominant culture represents only one dimension of ethnic identity (maintaining distinctiveness), the authors consider the findings important for future research on the dynamics of the process of ethnic identification.

In August 1996, the major daily newspaper in Quito, *El Comercio*, reported that at a Yamor festival in Otavalo, a woman was prohibited from competing in the contest for the queen of the fiesta because she was an in-

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dígena. According to the brief article, the festival committee justified its position by referring to a municipal ordinance banning participation in the pageant by indigenous women.¹ In Otavalo, a tourist town north of Quito, local indígenas are widely known as the most commercially successful indigenous group in Ecuador. The story in *El Comercio*, in contrast, highlights the ongoing efforts made over the centuries by *blancos* and *mestizos* to subordinate indigenous peoples and maintain hegemony over them. Hundreds of colonial rules and decrees circumscribed the permissible activities of indigenous folk,² a situation that continues today. Another example is the short-lived Ministerio de Asuntos Etnicos, which was created during the equally ephemeral presidential administration of Abdalá Bucaram despite opposition from the largest indigenous organization in Ecuador, the Confederación Nacional de Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE).

At stake here is the power to define what it means to be identified as indígena and the ability either to dominate the other group or to assert one's dignity and autonomy as a member of a proud ethnic group. Three key issues in this power struggle are who is an indígena, what is the process by which individuals come to see themselves as indígenas, and what attributes characterize a person as being indígena. This research note centers on data gathered from a group of largely indigenous university students who have been involved in this struggle and are in some respects products of it. What makes these university students worthy of study as a group is their enrollment in a university program oriented toward empowering and advancing not just the students but their communities, and ultimately all Ecuadorian indígenas. As a result, virtually all the students in this program (including the mestizos) are already committed to the indigenous cause. The objectives of our analysis are to explore a major dimension of ethnic identity among these university students and to offer a tentative explanation for the variation in strength of such identity.

ETHNIC IDENTITY: THE HISTORICAL STRUGGLE

All the decrees, laws, and ordinances regarding indigenous peoples over the centuries have had a single purpose: to control indigenous groups. Control requires assuming the power to name and define, that is, to determine what it means to be an indígena. Regardless of how the indigenous peoples of Ecuador and their descendants have perceived themselves, the colonial and modern state and its functionaries have insisted that the only relevant means of identifying indigenous peoples was external to them. In this manner, the power to recognize oneself and one's community was ex-

1. See *El Comercio*, 24 Aug. 1996 (Internet edition).

2. For examples of such laws and codes, see Rubio Orbe (1954).

propriated by the state and voided. The capacity to name and define other peoples and objects represents the ultimate exercise of power. To be called "un indio" meant that one was relegated to an immutable position at the bottom of social, cultural, economic, and political ladders. Such a label automatically placed a person under the supervision of blancos and mestizos, who defined their own identities.³

During the second half of the twentieth century, Ecuador's nationalist political elites, civilian and military, began to talk about the need to "develop" and "modernize" their country. Modernization analysts aggravated the political tensions inherent in the concept of ethnic identity by claiming that the fundamental obstacle preventing Ecuador from modernizing lay in the "backwardness" of its indigenous and nonwhite citizens. The solution offered by political and economic modernization was to erase gradually all that was indigenous and nonwhite.⁴ At the same time, indigenous peoples were accused of keeping the rest of Ecuadorian society from developing.⁵

About thirty years ago, the situation began to change as indígena resistance, latent but frequently manifested since colonial times, began to take specific and institutionalized shape. Beginning in the 1960s, indigenous peoples began to form organizations to defend their native cultures, lands, identities, and rights.⁶ Since that time, a virtual alphabet soup of political organizations has been created, many of which have opposed the so-called development policies of the Ecuadorian state and have reclaimed and redefined national identities separate from and often contradicting those of the dominant mestizo-blanco culture. Originating among the Shuar people of the upper Amazon Basin, the indigenous movement spread to the Sierra and even to the coast, culminating in 1986 in the first pan-Ecuadorian indigenous organization, the Confederación Nacional de Indígenas del Ecuador.

Significant efforts and demonstrable gains have been made in the name of indigenous peoples through the organizing and mobilizing activities of many indigenous organizations. These groups pushed successfully for an amendment in 1984 to Article 1 of Ecuador's political constitution,

3. On the history of Ecuador in this regard, see Cáceres (1992) and Tamba (1993).

4. For discussion of the *mestizo* modernization project in Ecuador, see Stutzman (1981) and other essays in Whitten (1981).

5. For interviews with contemporary mestizo and *blanco* politicians on "the Indian question," see Frank, Patino, and Rodríguez (1992).

6. For analyses and interpretations of this period, see Becker (1992, 1995), Salazar (1981), Meisch (1994), Zamosc (1994), and Guerrero (1993). For a claim that the origins of the contemporary Ecuadorian indigenous movement were much earlier than the 1960s, see Becker (1997). For discussions of the relations between indigenous organizations and the Ecuadorian state, see Ayala et al. (1992), Ibarra (1987), and Selverston (1994).

which now recognizes Quichua and other indigenous languages as part of the national culture. Indigenous organizations formally entered the arena of electoral politics by forming the Pachakutik-Nuevo País political movement, which resulted in the election of former CONAIE President Luis Macas and seven other candidates to the national legislature in the 1996 elections. After a National Constituent Assembly was formed in 1997 to revise the Ecuadorian constitution, Pachakutik delegates to the assembly pursued CONAIE's long-term goal of having the constitution recognize Ecuador as a pluricultural and multinational society. Although this goal was not realized, the 1998 constitution recognizes the Ecuadorian state as "pluricultural y multiétnico." In addition, Article 83 acknowledges indigenous peoples "que se autodefinen como nacionalidades de raíces ancestrales" as part of the Ecuadorian state.

A fundamental claim of the indigenous organizations is that they represent all indigenous peoples of Ecuador and speak for them. These groups also purport to redefine what it means to be an indígena and what it means to be a member of an indigenous nationality. Thus the indigenous organizations have taken the place of the state in ascribing appropriate identities, values, and actions to indigenous peoples, allegedly in the interests of these groups. Yet much current research and many statements by indígena activists project a homogeneous and categorical quality onto indigenous peoples, often resulting in the creation of new stereotypes that have replaced those formerly imposed by the dominant mestizo society.

The ongoing efforts of indigenous organizations to mobilize Ecuadorian indígenas by fostering ethnic identity and ethnic pride raise a number of questions. What does it mean to be an indígena? By what process do Ecuadorians come to identify themselves as indígenas? Is the degree and strength of ethnic identity constant among indigenous peoples, or does it vary significantly? How does ethnic identity correlate with political beliefs and attitudes?

ETHNIC IDENTITY: THE CONCEPT AND ITS SOURCES

Who are indígenas? Do they possess certain relatively immutable characteristics? What identifies a person as an indígena: speaking an indigenous language, or wearing a particular style of clothing, or living in a certain style of housing, or eating distinctive kinds of food, or holding distinct cultural and religious beliefs? Is one's ethnic identity something to be "found" at some point in pre-Columbian history, and can this identity simply be assumed as one's own? Or is ethnic identity something that can be created and re-created to suit oneself in a given political, economic, and social context? Is ethnic identity an end result of some kind of formative process, or is it the process itself?

Answers to these and related questions are anything but consensual

according to the academic literature and political activists.⁷ Speaking an indigenous language has often been used as a “marker” for indígenas.⁸ Two recent essays, however, have challenged the assertion that language is an appropriate and adequate marker of indigenous identity. Greg Urban used 1981 census data to contrast the situations in Paraguay and Peru. In Paraguay, 40 percent of the population spoke only Guaraní and 52 percent were bilingual in Guaraní and Spanish, yet only 1 percent of Paraguayans identified themselves as indígenas. In Peru, most sources have claimed that indigenous persons account for 35 to 40 percent of Peru’s population. But census data revealed that 73 percent of Peruvians spoke only Spanish, 16 percent were bilingual with Spanish and an indigenous language, and a mere 9 percent spoke only an indigenous language (Urban 1991, 307–30). Similarly, Jane Hill’s study of a population of Nahuatl speakers in the Malinche region of central Mexico revealed that these speakers of Nahuatl neither identified themselves as indígenas nor were identified as such by the Mexican state (Hill 1991, 72–94). Thomas Abercrombie’s research in the highlands of Bolivia showed that the sharing of a common linguistic code masked rather than displayed cultural differences between Hispanics and indígenas (Abercrombie 1991, 95–130).

In the 1950 census, the Ecuadorian government attempted to define who is an indígena according to three items: shoes, housing, and language (Clark 1998). Even analysts who have made use of such information have criticized it (Knapp 1991; Zamosc 1995). Luis Macas, the Saraguro indígena elected to the Ecuadorian Congress on the Pachakutik-Nuevo País ticket, has claimed that being an indígena does not refer simply to one’s genetic inheritance, style of housing, or language spoken. Macas asserted instead that being an indígena involves an inherent sense of belonging to and identifying with a historically defined group (Macas 1993). In essence, to be an indígena is really to become one through a process of self-identification.

While we agree with Macas regarding the importance of self-identification, we disagree with his claim that precolonial indigenous groups exist “out there” whose characteristics are defined, constant, and knowable in their original forms. For example, Abercrombie’s work on Bolivia has argued that post-encounter Christian symbols and rituals have become components of being indígena, while urban Hispanic Bolivians have appropriated partly imagined pre-Christian indigenous rituals at Carnival in order to identify themselves as Bolivians (Abercrombie 1991). In an ironic twist, Jean

7. For varying understandings of what it means to be an *indígena*, see Macas (1993), Mires (1992), Knapp (1991), Burgos (1970), Abercrombie (1991), D’Amico (1991), Hendricks (1991), Jackson (1991), Urban (1991), and Hill (1991).

8. This “marker” has recently been used as the only defining characteristic separating indigenous from nonindigenous Ecuadorians in a massive study on poverty funded by the World Bank (see Larrea 1996 et al.).

Jackson's (1991) study of the Tukanoan Indians of Colombia pointed out that twenty years ago, non-Indians were trying to convince Tukanoans of the wisdom of assimilation, yet today, many non-Indians are trying to get Tukanoans to reidentify themselves with markers specified by non-Indians. A spokesperson for the Catholic mission illustrated this point in speaking of a need "to reinforce Indian identity . . . , to pay attention to traditional language, clothing, rites, exchange of women" (Jackson 1991, 394). As Jackson concluded, definitions of who Tukanoans are "derive . . . extensively from their increasing interaction with non-Tukanoans" (1991, 397).⁹

These complex changes in concepts of ethnicity across the landscape of Latin America resonate with points made by Fredrik Barth in 1969 about boundaries and boundary-maintenance activities among ethnic groups. It is clear that the push for modernization and communication advances as well as the social and political movements of the past thirty years have altered boundaries. At individual and community levels, this combination of factors has redefined what it means to be an indígena. It is also evident that little agreement exists among scholars on what constitutes ethnic identity or accounts for the sources of such identity. In this research note, we will present analysis of data based on responses to a questionnaire completed by indigenous university students in Ecuador to try to locate key components of ethnic identity and sources of variation in degree of identity. The next section will describe in some detail the research setting in which the data were collected. The following sections elucidate our methodology, present the results, and discuss them.

THE STUDENT POPULATION AND THE QUESTIONNAIRE

According to Ecuadorian sources queried by the authors, not many indígenas make it to a university of any kind in Ecuador. Therefore a concentration of indigenous university students in a program in the Escuela de Educación y Cultura Andina in Guaranda presented a unique research opportunity. The Universidad Estatal de Bolívar is a small, poorly funded four-year institution founded in 1989. Located in Guaranda, the capital of the province of Bolívar, it attracts students of various ages, backgrounds, and interests from surrounding areas. Most are mestizos from poor or

9. The question of what it means to be a mestizo or a blanco in Ecuador or elsewhere in Latin America has not been systematically addressed by scholars, nor do we explore that question in this research note. As in the case of the classification indígena, blanco and mestizo are socially structured categories. Unlike the concept of indígena, blanco and mestizo appear transparent and contentless. To declare that one is a blanco or a mestizo is essentially to assert that one is not "un indio." Blanco and mestizo thus remain amorphous and residual categories, bereft of ethnicity and intended in common usage not so much to tell others who you are as who you are not. Moreover, the term *mestizo* is associated with the assimilationist movement in Ecuador, where to be mestizo is to be Ecuadorian, to identify with the nation-state.

working-class families seeking upward mobility. Although local politicians and university officials maintain that Bolívar and surrounding provinces like Tungurahua and Chimborazo contain large indigenous populations (estimated at 30 to 50 percent), administrators and faculty at the university estimate that 5 percent or less of their students are indígenas.

The Escuela de Educación y Cultura Andina (EECA), which is part of the Universidad Estatal de Bolívar, was created in 1992 as a result of a national program of bilingual education at the primary and secondary school levels in communities where most or all of the inhabitants are indígenas. The school offers a curriculum at the third- and fourth-year levels with courses in sociology, anthropology, history, politics, pedagogy, and language (Quichua). Almost all the students enroll to earn a *licenciado* in Bilingual Education and Community Development. Not surprisingly, the large majority of students at EECA are indígenas (as defined hereafter), most from the Sierra and a few from the Oriente region. About a third are mestizos who also plan on teaching in rural areas with recognized indígena communities.

In cooperation with the faculty of EECA, we developed a self-administered questionnaire for the students. It was presented to fourth-year students in February 1996 and to third-year students in April 1996, with participation being voluntary. A total of 114 students participated (another 25 were absent at the time of administration or chose not to respond). The questionnaire contained sections on personal and family history, current circumstances (marital status and employment), plans for the future, language use, community background, ethnic identity, opinions, values, and health-seeking behavior.

The EECA program is nontraditional in the sense that students do not attend daily classes over relatively long periods of time. Instead, they participate in intensive *talleres* (workshops) lasting a week to ten days. This kind of schedule resulted from the fact that most students live some distance from the university and work considerable hours every week in their own communities. Consequently, our access to the students was limited. This situation, combined with our broadly exploratory objectives, led us to opt for a self-administered questionnaire of modest length. While such a questionnaire has limitations in regard to depth of information, it allows for the efficient collection of useful data on a wide variety of topics in a short time. Also, the students at EECA were comfortable with the format because they were used to filling out forms and responding to written questions.

Description of Students

The EECA students exhibited similarities and differences in central characteristics. Table 1 summarizes descriptive statistics for twelve variables. The mean as well as the range in age reveals that most are older than

TABLE 1 *Summary Demographic and Attribute Statistics of Mestizo and Indigenous University Students in Ecuador, 1996*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Minimum Value</i>	<i>Maximum Value</i>
Age	30.56	4.73	21	43
Gender (Male = 1)	.67	.47	0	1
Ethnicity (Indígena = 1)	.67	.47	0	1
Marital status (Married = 1)	.63	.48	0	1
Number of children	1.69	1.67	0	7
Area (Rural = 1)	.74	.44	0	1
Father's occupation (Farmer = 1)	.69	.46	0	1
Mother's education	2.11	2.95	0	15
Religion (Catholic = 1)	.70	.46	0	1
Labor force status (Working = 1)	.86	.35	0	1
Primary language (Indigenous = 1)	.27	.45	0	1
Indigenous organization (Member = 1)	.73	.45	0	1

Note: N = 114, which includes both indígena and mestizo students.

the traditional college age, more than half over thirty. One-third of the students were women, and according to the faculty of EECA, the proportion of women students has been increasing. A central variable is ethnic self-identity, which was measured by responses to the question, "Yo me considero ser: Blanco . . . Mestizo . . . Indígena." Two-thirds of the 114 students (76) identified themselves as indígena, with the remaining third (38) choosing mestizo.¹⁰ While one-fourth of the indígena students were women, fully half of the mestizo students were women.

Given the relatively older ages of most of the students, it is not surprising that 63 percent were married. Yet most of the female students were not married. The average number of children was low because one-third of the students reported no children. Among the remainder, the average num-

10. Those students who identified themselves as indígenas were asked to specify a particular group. Of the 76 indígenas, 44 (57.9 percent) specified a group or locale in the Sierra region (such as Saraguro or Cañari or Quichua de Bolívar). Only 5 of the indígena students (6.6 percent) named an Oriente group rather than a locale (Shuar or Cofán). Of the remaining 27 (35.5 percent), 5 did not respond and 22 responded either Quichua or Quichua nationality.

ber of children was 2.5. Three-fourths of the students grew up in a rural area, and those who did not were living in small cities such as Guaranda. The rural bias is mostly accounted for by the self-identified indígena students, 88 percent of whom grew up in rural areas. The mestizo students, by contrast, were relative "city slickers," 53 percent of them reporting that their childhood years were spent in urban areas. We should also note that while most of the students originated from Bolívar or the surrounding provinces, fifteen of Ecuador's twenty-one provinces are represented by the students at EECA.

Two indicators of parental class, father's occupation and mother's education, revealed one area of homogeneity, especially among indígenas. Given the rural backgrounds of these students, it is not surprising that most of their fathers were farmers (80 percent for indígena students). Among mestizo EECA students, slightly more than half reported their father's occupation as farmer (*agricultor* or *agropecuario*). The low mean reported for years of mother's formal education reveals not only gender inequality (the mean is higher for fathers) but also the lack of educational opportunities in rural areas until recently. From this data and anecdotal comments by EECA faculty, it would be reasonable to conclude that the majority of the students and the overwhelming majority of indígena students came from poor families whose parents, particularly their mothers, have little or no formal education.

Religion traditionally has played a meaningful role in the lives of Ecuadorians. While Catholicism was the religious preference of those who dominated the peoples indigenous to what is now Ecuador, syncretic Catholicism has been embraced by the large majority of Ecuadorian indígenas. The EECA students were asked about their religious affiliation (see appendix 1 for statement and response categories). Approximately 70 percent said they considered themselves to be Catholic, a percentage that does not vary by ethnicity (see table 1). That is, a large majority of self-identified indígenas and self-identified mestizos considered themselves Catholic.

Another important attribute of these students is that almost all of them worked, on average slightly more than 30 hours per week. About 70 percent of those employed in 1996 had low-paying teaching jobs of some kind even without their licenciados, an indication of the shortage of teachers willing to work in rural areas for low wages. In response to a query about what language they speak most fluently, more than two-thirds of the EECA students answered Spanish. A clear majority of the self-identified indígenas responded in this manner, as did all the mestizo students. At least for EECA indígena students, the primary language failed to be an accurate marker of their claim to indigenous identity. Finally, almost three-fourths of EECA students belonged to an indigenous organization, usually the provincial arm of CONAIE. Among the indígena students, 90 percent were members, while 40 percent of the mestizo students reported belonging to

an indigenous organization. These high membership rates indicate the special nature of the students in this program.

DEFINITION OF VARIABLES AND HYPOTHESES

The focus of this research note is ethnic identity and its correlates among indígenas. Consequently, the following analysis uses only the responses of the 76 self-identified indígena students.

Rejection of Mestizaje

One objective of the effort at data collection was to measure the strength of indigenous identity among students who identified themselves as indígenas. Respondents were presented with sixteen statements, with responses ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Factor analysis and reliability tests determined that six of the sixteen items constituted an acceptably reliable scale of one dimension of ethnic identity. The six statements are presented in appendix 1. The first of the six items is the only one in the scale that was worded so that agreement represents stronger support of indígena distinctiveness ("Es importante que los jóvenes de mi propio grupo indígena aprendan sobre su historia y herencia."). For statements 2 through 6, disagreement receives higher scores on the scale. The fact that five of the six statements were phrased in such a way that disagreement represented stronger ethnic identification is significant. Given this particular group of indigenous students, it was not surprising to find little variance in responses to items that clearly indicate preference for other indígenas or support of indigenous organizations. But when the indígena students were presented with statements that included an endorsement of mainstream Ecuadorian culture or society, they displayed significant variation in their responses.

The most obvious example of this variation occurred in response to the fourth item: "El proceso de mestizaje debe ser alentado en Ecuador." Fully 25 percent (19 of 76) agreed with this statement, and another 18 percent (14 of 76) indicated no opinion, signifying disagreement among self-identified indígena students. Principal components analysis indicated one factor for these six items, and an acceptable reliability coefficient was obtained (standardized alpha = .684). The summated scale is viewed as measuring one dimension of ethnicity, an outward display of indígena distinctiveness from mainstream mestizo Ecuadorian society. This dimension of ethnic identity, which we call "the rejection of mestizaje scale," reveals that self-identified indígena students differ from one another as to how their identity as indígenas seemed to rely on their rejection of policies and positions favoring mestizo Ecuadorian culture or positions favoring cooperation with mainstream national political organizations (Item 6: "Las organi-

zaciones indígenas serían más efectivas si formaran una alianza con un partido político.”). It is possible that some indígena students viewed their “Indianness” as requiring them to spurn the dominant mestizo culture, while others embraced dimensions of mestizaje and asserted their indigenous identities. This interpretation guided us in choosing predictors and formulating hypotheses that try to account for variation in indígena students’ scores on the rejection of mestizaje scale.

Predictors and Hypotheses

In attempting to explain variance in scores on the rejection of mestizaje scale, we focused on factors representing family, community, and social influences antecedent to the development of attitudes reflected in the scale. Considering the types of students drawn to EECA and the nature of the measurement scale for our dependent variable, we expected that high scorers—those who evinced strong rejection of mainstream mestizo culture—were likely to be indígenas wanting to show others (indígenas and mestizos) how strongly they are committed to rejecting mestizo projects because they have much in common with mestizos. We do not mean to imply that those students expressing such militancy were disingenuous but that they were more sensitive to possible threats of acculturation. Indígena students who have been at what Barth called “the boundary separating identities” and who have tended to “cross” that boundary more frequently toward the mestizo side may well feel a need to reassert and reclaim their indigenous identities by strongly rejecting elements of mestizo culture of which they themselves have partaken. By contrast, indígena students less “exposed” to mestizo culture, either directly or vicariously, have less need to assert and proclaim their rejection of mestizaje as a key component of their self-professed indígena identities. We will explain our predictions further in the following list of variables chosen as predictors of variance among indígena students in their responses to the items constituting the rejection of mestizaje scale.

Mother’s education (Interval scale ranging from 0 to 15) / While father’s education is related to the scale, it does not correlate as strongly as mother’s education. Among these indígena students, a far greater percentage of mothers (over 60 percent) had no formal education whatsoever. Because formal education in Ecuador until recently meant mestizo education (as in the teaching of Ecuadorian mestizo nationalism and teaching only in Spanish), mothers with no formal education have probably been far less acculturated into mestizo life than have mothers with years of formal schooling. We hypothesized that this indirect indicator of family exposure to mainstream mestizo society would be a good predictor of variation in scores on the rejection of mestizaje scale. Specifically, we predicted

that the more formally educated the mother, the greater the likelihood that the indígena student would reject mainstream culture, producing a higher score on the scale.

Catholic (not Catholic = 0, Catholic = 1) / Approximately 70 percent of the indígena students indicated that they were Catholic. We hypothesized that they would be less likely to reject mainstream mestizo culture than would students who identified themselves with Protestantism or with a "traditional religion" or students who espoused no religious preference. That is, the Catholic indígena students of EECA would score lower than the non-Catholic students on the rejection of mestizaje scale.

Indígena friends (No = 0, Yes = 1) / This variable is based on the following question: "¿Cuando Vd. era adolescente (entre 13 y 18 años), la mayoría de sus amigos eran de su grupo étnico?" It was hypothesized that indigenous students who had interacted mostly with other indígenas as teenagers would feel less compelled to exhibit their distinctiveness and would therefore score lower on the scale than those who had mostly mestizo friends.

Primary language (Spanish = 0, Indigenous Language = 1) / Students were asked what language they spoke most fluently. Forty-five of the 76 indígenas (59 percent) indicated Spanish. Following the logic stated earlier, we predicted that indígena students who spoke Spanish most fluently would feel the need to reassert their indigenous identities by rejecting mestizo culture and society, thus scoring higher on the scale than students who spoke Quichua or another indigenous language most fluently.

Age finished high school (Interval scale ranging from 16 to 32) / The investigators knew before administering the questionnaire that many of the indigenous students were in their thirties and forties. The questionnaire data also indicated that many had graduated from high school relatively recently. This variable was created as an indicator of the degree to which students have participated in mestizo-controlled education. Those students who were relatively young when they finished high school likely participated continuously and became more enmeshed in that particular education and culture during their formative years. Now, as young adults, they were reasserting their indígena identity by rejecting the mestizaje influences to which they had been systematically exposed over an extended period. These students should score higher on the rejection of mestizaje scale.

Number of children (Interval scale ranging from 0 to 7) / The first and third items of the rejection of mestizaje scale relate directly to children.

Consequently, the respondents' family situations might affect their responses to the scale items. We reasoned that among the indigenous university students, responsibility for children would heighten their commitment to preserving indígena distinctiveness. Thus we predicted a direct relationship between the number of children a respondent had and his or her scores on the rejection of mestizaje scale.

Gender (Women = 0, Men = 1) / While the reasoning we employed did not lead to the hypothesis that this variable would help account for variation in scores on the rejection of mestizaje scale, we decided to include gender in our analysis on the following grounds. Indígena women are a double minority in Ecuador. They have encountered discrimination for their ethnicity from the majority mestizo culture but have also suffered prejudicial treatment from the machismo of that same culture simply because they are female. Therefore, we expected that the female students of EECA would score higher on the scale.

STATISTICAL PROCEDURES

The 76 indígena students were not a probability sample of some larger population of either Ecuadorian indígenas or university students. It is more appropriate to think of this analysis as a quantitative case study of a specific population. While we assert that our findings have important implications for future analyses of broader populations of indigenous peoples, the use of inferential statistical procedures (tests of significance) would be inappropriate.

The dependent variable, rejection of mestizaje, was measured on an interval scale (scores range from 9 to 30, the mean is 20.83 and the standard deviation is 4.10). It was therefore appropriate to use correlation coefficients and ordinary least squares regression to assess both the direction and degree of covariance between scale scores and the seven predictors defined above. Given that t-tests were inappropriate, coefficients were treated as parameters for this small population. The criterion for substantive significance of correlations and partial betas (net effects) is an absolute value of .10 or higher (the predictor accounts for at least 1 percent of the variance in the dependent variable). Readers should recall that the purpose of the analysis is not only to test hypotheses but to use the findings to draw out implications regarding factors that determine weak versus strong ethnic identities among indigenous groups in Ecuador.

RESULTS

The hypotheses were first tested at the bivariate level with correlation coefficients. Table 2 presents the twenty-eight unique correlations

TABLE 2 *Bivariate Correlation Coefficients among Seven Independent Variables and the Rejection of Mestizaje Scale for Indigenous University Students in Ecuador, 1996*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Rejection of mestizaje	1.000							
Gender	-.159 ^a	1.000						
Mother's education	.283	-.153	1.000					
Catholic	-.225	-.050	.010	1.000				
Indígena friends	-.254	.167	-.157	-.069	1.000			
Primary language	-.123	.232	.003	.022	.059	1.000		
Age at high school graduation	-.284	.151	-.205	.090	.060	-.118	1.000	
Number of children	.204	.146	.010	.151	-.046	.090	.230	1.000

Note: N = 76.

^a The correlation coefficients between the interval variables (such as the rejection of mestizaje scale) and dichotomous variables coded 0 and 1 (such as gender) are in essence eta, a measure of association for interval and dichotomous nominal variables.

among the eight variables. The correlations in the first column measure the relationship between the dependent variable (rejection of mestizaje) and each of the seven independent variables. The negative coefficient between gender and the dependent variable (-.159) indicates that indígena men scored lower on the scale than women, thus supporting our hypothesis. The .283 correlation between mother's education and the dependent variable is in the expected direction. Those indígena students who identified themselves as Catholic generally scored lower on the rejection of mestizaje scale, as did those who reported that most or all of their teenage friends were indígenas. The hypothesized negative association between the rejection of mestizaje scale and primary language (where indigenous language = 1) exists and exceeds the criterion for substantive significance, although barely. As predicted, indigenous students who graduated from high school at later ages scored lower on the scale. Finally, as hypothesized, the number of children had a direct effect on the rejection of mestizaje scale (the greater the number of children, the higher the score on the scale).

At the bivariate level, the two predictors with the largest impact on scale scores are mother's education and age at high school graduation, while the smallest effect is exhibited by primary language. The correlations among the seven predictors are generally small, if not trivial, thus obviating any concern with multicollinearity. Also at the bivariate level, all seven hypotheses are supported by the criterion of a correlation with an absolute value of .10 or higher.

We turn now to evaluating each independent variable's effect in a multivariate context, that is, the net effect. Multiple regression was the appropriate method, and the results of the model are shown in table 3. Also,

TABLE 3 Results of Ordinary Least Squares Regression of Rejection of Mestizaje Scale on Seven Predictors for Indigenous University Students in Ecuador, 1996

Predictor	<i>b</i> ^a	<i>B</i> ^b
Gender	-.755	-.080
Mother's education	.436	.180
Catholic	-2.331	-.263
Indígenas friends	-1.541	-.189
Primary language	-1.259	-.152
Age at high school graduation	-.297	-.293
Number of children	.795	.326

Note: *N* = 76; intercept = 28.825; *R*² = .339.

^a *b* represents the unstandardized regression coefficient.

^b *B* represents the standardized regression coefficient, which is the same as the partial correlation, bounded by -1 and +1. In the multivariate context, the absolute value provides a measure of the relative importance of the predictor.

the regression equation allows one to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the prediction model via *R*². Using the standardized regression coefficients (*B*), it is clear that the largest net effects on the rejection of mestizaje scale were exerted by three variables: number of children, age at high school graduation, and being Catholic. Compared with its bivariate correlation with the dependent variable, the partial correlation for mother's education is noticeably smaller, although still substantively significant. In the multiple regression model, the net effect of the gender contrast is reduced to a trivial level. The partial correlation between number of children and rejection of mestizaje in table 3 is actually larger than the bivariate correlation in table 2. This "suppressor effect" is due to the fact that the number of children is positively related to three other predictors (gender, age at high school graduation, and being Catholic), all of which had a negative effect on the dependent variable.

Six of the seven predictors exhibit net effects large enough to be considered substantively significant, and their signs are in the hypothesized directions. In general, the picture revealed by the regression equation is that those indígena students at EECA who did not identify themselves as Catholic usually had mestizo friends as teenagers, spoke Spanish most fluently, graduated from high school at younger ages, had children, and had mothers with some formal education score higher on the rejection of mestizaje scale. Taken together, *R*² indicates that the seven independent variables account for 34 percent of the variance in the dependent variable.

DISCUSSION

The empirical results are interesting, and even though they are based on a small, specific population of indígena university students, we believe that they reveal potentially important factors in the broad phenom-

enon of ethnic identity. Both the concept and the reality of ethnicity are complex. In his discussion of ethnic groups, David Maybury-Lewis (1997) has asserted: "Ethnic groups do not form therefore because people are of the same race, or share the same language or the same culture. They form because people who share such characteristics *decide* they are members of a distinct group, or because people who share such characteristics *are lumped together* and treated by outsiders as members of a distinct group" (Maybury-Lewis 1997, 61, his emphasis). Indígenas became an ethnic group when they were lumped together by the conquering Europeans. Over the centuries, the defining characteristics of "Indians" have been controlled mostly by Spanish, Portuguese, English, or other colonial powers. The indigenous social and political movements of the second half of the twentieth century have attempted to gain some control over "definitional rights" and more practical concerns. The point is, ethnicity is created, re-created, and redefined by numerous processes and actors. Groups that share central characteristics are only ethnic groups in relation to one or more other groups with whom they have contact and relate to in some manner.

In Ecuador as in many other Latin American nations, one task for leaders of indigenous peoples has been to re-create or at least redefine a sense of indígena distinctiveness and a pride in that distinctiveness in the face of increasing pressures from powerful actors to "homogenize" and "modernize" the populations of their developing countries. It seems clear that one strategy for maintaining distinctiveness and thus ethnic solidarity is to reject elements of the broad, dominant mestizo society represented by the modern state of Ecuador. We assert that this element of redefined indígena identity has been measured (albeit with error) in the scale labeled rejection of mestizaje.

Among those who identify themselves as indígena, how they define and act out their ethnicity varies. The population of committed self-identified indígena university students investigated here certainly displayed variation. Some students affirmed their indigenous identities and expressed some degree of support for mainstream culture and projects, while other students' identities as indígenas seemed to be based on strongly renouncing mestizaje. We found that indígena students who appeared to have had more acculturation experiences with mainstream mestizo society during their formative years were more strident in rejecting markers of mestizo society. Using Barth's (1969) seminal concepts of boundaries and boundary maintenance, it appears that indígena university students who have lived closer to the mestizo side of the boundary separating indígena and mestizo (and blanco) cultures expressed their ethnicity in part by desiring to maintain a clear boundary between the two. We interpret the positive effect of number of children as reflecting a sensitization factor. That is, the reality of children as the future generation produces a marked determination to maintain a distinctive identity.

While the subjects of this study were a select group, we assert that these findings should pertain to the broader population of indígenas, at least in Ecuador. For the one dimension of indígena ethnicity, rejection of mestizaje, the important factors determining variation should also exert important effects among adult indígenas in general. Those who identify as indígenas in Ecuador but have had more extended experiences with the national mestizo society are expected to be the ones who reject most strongly elements of that hegemonic society. This conclusion must be tentative and awaits investigations of more representative samples. In addition, the factors important in determining other dimensions of ethnicity, such as patterns of interaction, may well differ from those uncovered in this analysis.

APPENDIX 1 *Content of Item on Religion and Those Making Up the Rejection of Mestizaje Scale*

Religion item:

Respecto a la religión, yo me considero ser:

Católico

Protestante (nombre de la iglesia)

Religión tradicional (de su grupo étnico)

Católico y religión tradicional

Otra religión (el nombre es)

No tengo religión

Items constituting the scale for "rejection of mestizaje." All of the items below were listed (along with others) next to columns with the closed-ended responses "De acuerdo fuertemente," "De acuerdo," "No tengo opinión," "No estoy de acuerdo," and "No estoy de acuerdo fuertemente."

1. Es importante que los jóvenes de mi propio grupo indígena aprendan sobre su historia y herencia.
2. Yo prefiero la música latina a la música tradicional de mi propio grupo indígena.
3. Es más importante para mis niños hablar con facilidad en español que hablar con facilidad en la lengua de mi propio grupo indígena.
4. El proceso de mestizaje debe ser alentado en Ecuador.
5. El gobierno del Ecuador actuó correctamente en el conflicto limítrofe reciente con el Perú.
6. Las organizaciones indígenas serían más efectivas si formaran una alianza con un partido político.

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