

**Ethnic Identity and Support for *Indígena* Demands in Ecuador:  
Report from a Preliminary Study**

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## Abstract

Over the past 30 years indigenous social movements and pro-*indígena* organizations have appeared in various Latin American nations, including Ecuador. One common effort of pan-indigenous movements has been to build ethnic pride and solidarity. In Ecuador this has certainly been a central goal of the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (CONAIE). There is some evidence that the organization succeeded, at least through the early 1990s. The research reported in this paper addresses the issue of solidarity through a special group of respondents. Located in Guaranda, the capitol of the rural Sierra province of Bolívar, is the *Universidad Estatal de Bolívar*. In 1992 this small university created *La Escuela de Educación y Cultura Andina* (EECA) to begin training teachers for the CONAIE-led program of bilingual/bicultural education in public schools located in areas heavily populated by *indígenas*. Most of the students in this program are *indígenas* who are already committed to civic and political activism in support of *indígena* causes. From responses of these **self-identified** *indígena* students to statements taken from various CONAIE goals and demands, the authors created a "CONAIE Demands Scale". Based on Barth's ideas concerning boundaries and boundary maintenance and the authors' previous research, it was generally expected that those self-identified *indígenas* who had characteristics and experiences more similar to *mestizos* (i.e., mainstream Ecuadorian society) would actually express stronger support (militancy) for CONAIE's demands -- reflected by higher scores on the CONAIE Demands Scale -- than would students with less exposure to and experience with mainstream *mestizo* culture. Regression analysis generally supported the main thesis. Specifically, the data indicated that scores on the CONAIE Demands Scale were higher when the respondent: had a father with higher formal education who was not a farmer; had fewer siblings; was born in an Oriente as opposed to a Sierra province; graduated high school at a normal age (i.e., by age 19). It is asserted that these kinds of factors that produce heterogeneity in the life experiences and personal and family goals of indigenous peoples in Ecuador are one source of contention and disagreement that make solidarity problematic for regional and national associations such as CONAIE. Recent events that reveal fissures and conflict within CONAIE and between CONAIE and other indigenous organizations may mirror the increasing heterogeneity of the historically oppressed indigenous peoples of Ecuador and may, in turn, intensify cleavages that already exist at the base.

## **Introduction**

In response to five hundred years of domination and oppression, first at the hands of the Spanish and later by those who inherited the post-colonial spoils, Ecuador's indigenous peoples, beginning in the 1960s, began to organize themselves into confederations. The expressed goals of these *indígena* organizations were to defend and reclaim *indígena* lands, human rights, cultures, and identities. While these efforts were not the first responses by indigenous peoples -- one source (CONAIE) counts some 145 uprisings between 1543 and 1972 (cited in Meisch, 1994: 56) -- they are the first successful attempts to create long-lasting institutions which represent the wants, needs and demands of Ecuador's various indigenous groups.

In 1986 two of the regional indigenous organizations formed the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (CONAIE), a pan-Ecuadorian confederation which contended that it represented all indigenous peoples and groups. Though protection of *indígena* lands continued to be an important focus for indigenous organizations, CONAIE also embarked on an intensely ethnic agenda, which included the promulgation of a number of demands to the Ecuadorian state. CONAIE's leadership affirmed that such demands were in the interest of and would be supported by all *indígenas* in the country. Such a claim assumes that there exists a significant degree of homogeneity among Ecuadorian *indígenas* regarding their common ethnic identity. The claim further assumes that the force of that allegedly common identity is sufficiently strong to mobilize universal support among *indígenas* regarding CONAIE's demands. This essay will focus on those assumptions. Based on data gathered from a special group of Ecuadorian university students, this research investigates the degree of solidarity in support of central CONAIE demands, and subsequently analyzes factors that may account for differing levels of support for those demands.

## **Growth and Development of Indigenous Organizations in Ecuador**

The 1964 Agrarian Reform Law, seen by several observers as the catalyst for the modern indigenous movement (e.g., Meisch, 1994; Zamosc, 1995), abolished the *huasipungo* system, Ecuador's version of virtual serfdom for indigenous peoples. The law also encouraged land colonization in the Oriente which led to conflicts between the land-seeking *colonos* and *indígena* peoples in Ecuador's Amazonian region who claimed the land belonged to them. One response to this *colono-indígena* clash was the creation of the Shuar Federation whose primary agenda was defense of *indígena* lands against colonization (Salazar, 1981). First formed in 1961 at the initiative of the Salesian missionaries in cooperation with the local association of *Centros Jíbaros*, it first evolved into the Shuar Association and in 1964 became the Shuar Federation (Trujillo, 1991: 389). According to one researcher, the Shuar Federation addressed the issue of colonization not only from the standpoint of prior claims to specific territory, but asserted the more ideological and far-reaching demand of autonomy and self-determination (Trujillo, 1991: 390-391). Furthermore, the Shuar Federation presaged the bilingual education agreement reached between the Borja Administration and CONAIE by establishing its own system of bilingual and bicultural education programs broadcast over Shuar-controlled radio (Trujillo, 1991:391). This educational outreach made manifest the federation's commitment to self-determination and autonomy of action.

The ensuing years witnessed the creation of additional indigenous confederations in the Oriente, including the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana* (CONFENAIE) and the *Organización de Pueblos Indígenas de Pastaza* (OPIP). The first of the

regional indigenous organizations to form in the Sierra was *Ecuador Runacunapac Riccharimui* (ECUARUNARI) which espoused a class-based ideology focusing on the struggle for land. As the military regimes and succeeding civilian administrations in the 1970s began to change their agrarian policy from one of land distribution to one which emphasized production, ECUARUNARI shifted from its stress on class analysis and land reform to demands which included claims against ethnic discrimination and defense of *indígena* languages and culture (Zamosc, 1994: 48). ECUARUNARI also increased its cooperation and partnership with the Oriente group, CONFENAIE, which led to the formation in 1986 of the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (CONAIE), the first and thus far only pan-Ecuadorian indigenous confederation.

In contrast to the Shuar Federation which included economic projects in its agenda and whose opposition was clearly manifest in the form of the *colono*, ECUARUNARI confronted an ideological division. The Sierra provinces which were less populated by *indígenas* were more likely to be favorable to a class discourse whereas in the more heavily indigenous provinces the preoccupation was one of *indígena* identity. Unlike the relative homogeneity of condition and concerns of the Amazonian *indígenas*, the *indígenas* of the Sierra are much more heterogeneous in their status, needs and material conditions, varying, for example, from the relatively prosperous *Otavaleños* of the northern Sierra to the more dispersed, poor, and isolated rural *indígena* groups living on the *páramo* in the province of Chimborazo. Such a division created tension between the leadership of the confederation and its rank-and-file members, forcing ECUARUNARI to face opposition both within and outside of the Sierra, and leading many in the 1970s to believe that ECUARUNARI would not survive as a viable organization. Moreover, the Shuar Federation sought both modernization and confirmation of their ethnic identity; modernization was seen as an ethnic project. In contrast, ECUARUNARI at first opposed modernization and looked to the past for defense of *indígena* ethnicity (Trujillo, 1991: 393-401).

In August of 1980 the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía* (CONFENAIE) was formed as a regional organization in the Oriente, much as ECUARUNARI was in the Sierra. Together with ECUARUNARI, CONFENAIE began a process of integration and organizing the remaining indigenous populations, particularly in the Costa. This organizational and integrating process eventually led to the creation of CONAIE in November of 1986. According to one observer, the only indigenous organizations that remained outside of CONAIE were quite small ones which were under the control of evangelical churches or small local organizations, such as the *Unión de Organizaciones Campesinas de Cotacachi* (UNORCAC), connected with labor-related organizations such as the *Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios* (FEI) which is the campesino sector of the *Confederación de Trabajadores Ecuatorianos* (CTE) (Trujillo, 1991: 407).

### **Indígena Achievements and the Problematic of Solidarity**

There is evidence that *indígena* organizations have met with some success in their activities. CONAIE achieved a significant victory in 1988 when it struck a deal with the administration of President Rodrigo Borja regarding bilingual education. Under the agreement with Borja, CONAIE assumed responsibility for managing bilingual education in all *indígena* areas of the country. This achievement was followed two years later by the CONAIE-led *Levantamiento Nacional Indígena* (National Indian Uprising) in June 1990, a massive demonstration of protest by tens of thousands of *indígenas* in the Sierra which shocked *mestizos* and *blancos* across the country. While testimonies

from participants in the *levantamiento* reveal that a strong sense of ethnic solidarity developed as a direct consequence of the mobilization, one analyst has argued that CONAIE's performance since then regarding the continued articulation of the "symbols of collective identity" has been relatively weak (Zamosc, 1994: 56-61). If CONAIE is to continue to be successful in mobilizing according to the conviction that the struggle must focus on *indígena* aspirations and *indígena* autonomy, CONAIE's leadership must pay more attention to the creation and sustenance of the common ideology which underlay the ethnic solidarity manifested during and after the 1990 *levantamiento*.

Leaders of indigenous organizations as well as those outside of such organizational movements (e.g., *blanco* and *mestizo* politicians) are certainly aware that solidarity and militancy amongst the rank-and-file are important political weapons in a relatively pluralistic society as exists in Ecuador. Therefore, an important theoretical and empirical question -- and an important practical question from the viewpoint of organizational leaders and politicians -- is the actual extent of solidarity among the rank-and-file. Given the inevitably competing agendas that arise at the individual, family and community levels, to what extent can leaders and militants of organized movements maintain a set of goals with strong support from the base? Such maintenance of support may be especially problematic when organizations have a broad agenda with numerous demands and goals as is the case with *indígena* organizations in Ecuador.

A good example of such ample goals is a list of demands to the Ecuadorian state put forth by CONAIE in the name of all indigenous peoples and groups. Lynn Meisch (Meisch, 1994: 69-73) classified CONAIE's demands into three (not really mutually exclusive) categories: cultural, economic and political. Cultural demands include bilingual and multicultural education programs; state support for, and legal recognition of, traditional medicine; national legislation to allow for CONAIE-supervised control of excavations at archaeological sites. Demands Meisch calls primarily economic include a call for a prohibition of municipal taxes on indigenous farmers' properties; the forgiveness of debts owed by indigenous communities to banks and government agencies; unrestricted export and import privileges for indigenous merchants and artisans; the creation of CONAIE-controlled credit unions at the local and regional level; a two-year price freeze on raw and manufactured materials used in agriculture; prompt construction of high-priority, basic infrastructures in indigenous communities; the immediate delivery of money budgeted for indigenous communities. One demand is characterized by Meisch as both religious and political: that the government be empowered to limit the activities of missionary groups. A less polite way to phrase this is to say that CONAIE wants the Ecuadorian state to expel the Summer Institute of Linguistics (also known as the Wycliffe Bible Translators), an Evangelical missionary group which has been particularly active in the Oriente. Two primarily political demands are, one, CONAIE's demand that the government dismantle certain political-party positions at the municipal and provincial levels for their alleged manipulation of elections in indigenous communities and, two, the demand to amend the first article of Ecuador's Constitution to declare Ecuador a multinational and multicultural state (The first article has been slightly modified as a result of *indígena* pressure. A sentence has been added after the one declaring Spanish as the national language which says that Quichua and other aboriginal languages form part of the national culture).

It should be apparent that the above demands reflect an ambitious and broad agenda. Meisch herself, a veteran student of Ecuadorian *indígena* life and culture, argues that the call for authentic land reform is what really binds together the indigenous movement. Regarding CONAIE's veritable

laundry list of demands, Meisch claims that "[m]any *indígenas* do not have a clue, and could care less, about the rest of CONAIE's agenda." (Meisch: 58). If Meisch is correct, it may well be because the heterogeneity in the life experiences and contemporary situations of *indígenas* will produce differences in the level of support for various goals set forth by indigenous leaders. Furthermore, this same heterogeneity may lead to quite distinct understandings of one's identity as an *indígena*. In a previous essay, for example, the authors found systematic differences regarding the likelihood of *indígena* acceptance or rejection of specific facets of mainstream mestizo culture (Beck and Mijeski, 1997).

In addition to the problematic *indígena* support for CONAIE's demands produced by life experience heterogeneity, there is recent evidence of fissures or splits developing both within CONAIE and between CONAIE and other indigenous organizations. At first, CONAIE previously held the position that the confederation would neither participate in elections nor provide official support for electoral candidates. Shortly thereafter, President of CONAIE Luis Macas resigned his post and ran, successfully, for the Chamber of Deputies. During the 1996 presidential campaign, the leaders of CONFENAIE and others involved with the *Oriente*-based confederation endorsed the candidacy of Abdala Bucaram while the leadership of CONAIE was officially neutral.

With apparent designs to exacerbate this apparent fissure between indigenous organizations, now-deposed President Bucaram created -- despite the opposition of CONAIE -- a Ministry of Ethnic Affairs to which he appointed members of CONFENAIE. A recent indigenous congress ended prematurely and contentiously in Saraguro over disagreements about control of CONAIE leadership (*Hoy*, 16 de enero de 1997, Internet edition). Traditionally, the Sierra has controlled the presidency of CONAIE. In Saraguro, the Sierra faction accused the Bucaram regime of buying delegates through its appointment of Rafael Pandam, a Shuar from the Oriente, to the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs. The faction then elected someone from the Sierra. Meanwhile, the Oriente faction elected the leader of the *Organización de Pueblos Indios de Pastaza* (OPIP) to the CONAIE presidency. Thus the congress ended, only to reconvene in Quito on another hostile note: Shuar-controlled military commandos took over CONAIE's Quito offices the day before the congress was to reconvene.

It may well be that the incursion into national electoral politics of former CONAIE president Luis Macas and five other *indígenas* combined with the divisions and hostilities emerging between Sierra and Oriente *indígena* organizations will make more problematic CONAIE's success in nurturing a common ethnic identity and fostering country-wide indigenous support for its agenda more problematic. This essay will directly address the question of the degree of solidarity of *indígena* support for CONAIE's demands by analyzing data collected during February and April of 1996 at the *Universidad Estatal de Bolívar* in Guaranda, Ecuador. The following section of this paper will describe more fully the nature of the data base and will explicate the methodology and goals of our research.

### **Student Population and Methodology**

The *Universidad Estatal de Bolívar* (UEB), located in Guaranda, Ecuador is a small four-year institution founded in 1988. Guaranda is the capitol of the sierran province of Bolívar, approximately 150 miles south of Quito. Primarily as a result of the new national program of bilingual education in public schools, UEB established *La Escuela de Educación y Cultura Andina*

(EECA) in 1992. This is a unique program in Ecuador, the primary purpose of which is to train teachers to carry out the CONAIE-led program of bilingual/bicultural education in rural areas heavily populated by *indígenas*. The students, primarily *indígenas*, not only take courses in pedagogy but in history, anthropology, sociology and political development. The director and faculty of EECA desire not only to produce teachers but community leaders as well and the program is explicitly oriented toward the advancement of the indigenous cause. Virtually all of the students seek a *licenciado* (Bachelor's degree) in bilingual education and community development.

It is not surprising, given the information above, that the large majority of students at EECA are *indígenas* who have been active in local and regional indigenous organizations. As will be shown in the ensuing section, those EECA students who identify as *mestizos* are, by and large, strong supporters of the indigenous cause in Ecuador. The authors viewed this student population as a unique opportunity to investigate the backgrounds, experiences, attitudes and degree of solidarity of a group that we argue represents the vanguard of the younger generation of *indígenas* committed to economic, social and political advancement.

In cooperation with faculty at EECA, the authors created a questionnaire instrument specifically for the student population of EECA. While questionnaires certainly have limitations, the familiarity of college students with forms and the question-answer format reduces artificiality and discomfort that this technique of data collection may entail among more heterogeneous populations. In fact, a few years ago one of the authors observed the EECA students responding to a self-administered questionnaire. Furthermore, this technique allows for the efficient collection of considerable information on different topics, albeit with relatively little depth. Students at EECA are either juniors or seniors and the fourth-year students were asked for their voluntary participation in February, 1996 and the third-year students were asked likewise in April, 1996. A total of 114 students did participate while approximately 25 were either absent at the times of administration or chose not to respond.

Although 114 students participated, two did not complete items central to the analysis and therefore the effective size of the EECA sample is 112. A critical variable in this study is ethnicity and it was operationalized through the following item on the questionnaire:

"Yo me considero ser: \_Blanco    \_Mestizo    \_Indígena"  
("I consider myself to be")

Thus, ethnicity is defined via self-identity instead of some externally-defined criterion such as language use. None of the EECA students consider themselves *blancos*, one-third chose *mestizo* and two-thirds self-identified as *indígena* (76, though two were deleted in this analysis due to missing information). Basic information on the EECA students, by ethnic self-identity, is presented in Table 1.

Most of the students are men and there is a noticeable difference in the gender distribution by ethnicity. While three-fourths of the *indígenas* are men, almost half of the *mestizo* students are women. In a number of ways, the EECA respondents are not traditional Ecuadorian college students and the mean of their ages is one indication. A majority of both the *indígena* and *mestizo* students are not only beyond 22 but are 30 years old or older. The overwhelming majority of respondents were born in a sierra province and almost 90% of the *indígena* students grew up in rural areas. It should be noted that although more than half of the *mestizo* respondents were born in an urban area,

these urban areas were almost always small cities (e.g., Guaranda with a population of 15,000) as opposed to large ones such as Quito, Guayaquil or Cuenca.

All of the *indígena* students and certainly the majority of the *mestizos* are from poor or working class backgrounds and this is indicated by the parental variables of education and occupation. Completed levels of education are noticeably lower for the parents of *indígenas* and almost 80% in this group reported that their fathers are or were farmers. Even among the *mestizo* respondents there are very few instances in which either the education levels of the parents or occupation of the father indicate middle class background.

Large nuclear families are common among the EECA students and this holds for *mestizo* as well as *indígena* respondents. Given the age distribution of the respondents it is not surprising that most are currently married. The ethnic difference in proportion married is mostly a reflection of a gender difference wherein the large majority of men are married but most of the women students are not; since half the *mestizo* students are women this is reflected more in that group than among the *indígena* respondents. A variable that will take on importance in the later analysis is the age at which the respondent graduated from high school (H.S. Grad. Age). This has surprising variability, especially among *indígenas*, and there are many instances in which EECA students did not receive their high school degree until aged 25 or older. Finally, most of these students work, usually more than 30 hours per week. The majority already work as teachers in rural public schools, before they have earned their *licenciado*, an indication of the demand for bilingual educators in rural areas.

### **Support for CONAIE Demands Scale: Variation in Level of Militancy**

One purpose of the questionnaire was to measure the degree of solidarity among EECA students in regard to goals or demands of CONAIE. As discussed previously, Meisch (1994) annotated the numerous statements put forth by the pan-indigenous organization between the late 1980s and early 1990s. Although there are more distinct, specific goals and demands of CONAIE, the authors and faculty of EECA constructed 12 statements that we believe cover the major points of the CONAIE agenda. As shown in Appendix A, this section of the questionnaire includes an explanatory introduction, the statements, and after each statement a scale ranging from 1 to 9 with the descriptors "not important/ disagreement", "important" and "extremely important". The scores of the respondents for each statement are based on the number they circled and are assumed to represent their degree of agreement with that goal.

Though the 12 statements presented to the students cover quite different issues, they are viewed as having a common underlying factor - degree of support for the CONAIE agenda. Reliability and factor analyses were conducted for both the complete student population (n=112) and for *indígenas* only (n=74). Both analyses showed that one scale -- which we will call the "CONAIE Demands Scale" -- for a common factor is a reasonable conclusion. The scale consists of 11 of the 12 items, the one deletion being statement 5 concerning control of missionary activities. This statement had the lowest mean score and the largest standard deviation, indicating considerable disagreement. Using the 11 items, the reliability coefficient is high for the total population ( $\alpha=.79$ ) and for the *indígena* group ( $\alpha=.80$ ). Under the specification of one factor, principal components analysis shows large eigenvalues (for both *mestizos* and *indígenas* = 3.65, for *indígenas* only = 3.72).<sup>1</sup> As expected, the EECA students generally show strong support for the 11 items of the CONAIE Demands Scale. Such strong support may appropriately be characterized as militancy.



This is shown to be the case for both *indígenas* and *mestizos* at the bottom of Table 1. The minimum score possible was 11 and the maximum score possible was 99, so means of 86 show strong support by the majority of the students.

Although the mean score on the CONAIE Demands Scale clearly reveals an overall high degree of support among EECA students, equally *mestizos* and *indígenas*, there is nonetheless variation in the degree of militancy expressed by these students. While the range of variability in the support for the CONAIE demands is not extreme, there are measurable and, we believe, important differences that warrant analysis and explanation. In light of the fact that this student population is likely committed *a priori* to an indigenous agenda and since the EECA is, itself, committed to furthering the cause of *indígena* empowerment through bilingual and bicultural education, we would expect virtually no variation in the students' support for the CONAIE Demands Scale. A key question, then, is why is there variation in students' militancy and how can it be accounted for?

### **Analytic Strategy**

Our interest is in developing a model to explain variance in the students' level of support for the CONAIE Demands Scale. More specifically, the goal is to test certain ideas developed through the authors' related research involving the same student population. Based on Barth's (1969) concepts of ethnic group boundaries and boundary-maintenance activities, as well as more general comments by Maybury-Lewis (1997) on the nature of ethnic groups, Beck and Mijeski (1997) analyzed differences in the strength of ethnic identity among *indígena* students at EECA. The authors constructed a scale termed "Rejection of *Mestizaje*" based on responses to six opinion statements that were favorable to *mestizaje* or *mestizo* acculturating experiences.<sup>2</sup>

The general argument proposed in this earlier research was that those self-identified *indígenas* who had more *mestizo*-like experiences or characteristics (i.e., who had been at that "boundary" where *mestizo* culture predominates) would tend to (re)assert their indigenous identities by more strongly **rejecting** sentiments favorable to *mestizo* acculturation. By contrast, those EECA *indígena* students whose life experiences were more clearly within the "boundaries" of indigenous society and culture would be less likely to define their identities by an ardent rejection of the mainstream *mestizo* culture. In general, the idea is that those self-identified members of an ethnic minority group who have been at, and perhaps crossed over, that boundary where the larger, hegemonic society dominates are the ones who most desire clear boundary maintenance by zealously rejecting majority practices and projects. The empirical results based on the self-identified *indígena* EECA students generally supported this line of reasoning.

In the present analysis we ask whether such reasoning also applies to the extent to which self-identified *indígenas* embrace CONAIE's political agenda. In general, the expectation is that those self-identified *indígena* EECA students who have characteristics or experiences more similar to *mestizos* will exhibit more militant support for the CONAIE goals, i.e., will have higher scores on the CONAIE Demands Scale. Given our specific interest in variation in strength of *indígena* identity and level of *indígena* support for the agenda of the major pan-Ecuadorian indigenous political organization, EECA's *mestizo* students will not be included in our analysis.

Discussed below are the independent variables we used to predict scores on the CONAIE

Demands Scale. Since knowledge about, and support for, the demands promulgated by CONAIE are developed over time, only those factors that can be reasonably viewed as exogenous to such orientations are used as predictors. Thus, other opinions or attitudes measured in the questionnaire and current, adult characteristics such as occupation or organizational involvements are excluded from the model.

### **Demographic/Family Variables**

This set of factors are those most antecedent to the dependent variable. **Gender** contrasts women (coded 0) to men (coded 1). This is most appropriately viewed as a control variable but it is hypothesized that the mean score for women on the CONAIE scale will be higher. This expectation is based on the view that *indígena* women in Ecuador are a double minority and those who self-identify as *indígenas* are likely to express support for the CONAIE agenda with greater fervor.

**Urban** contrasts those born in rural areas (coded 0) to those born in towns or cities (coded 1). The reader should note that the small proportion of *indígenas* born in urban areas lived in small cities such as Guaranda or Loja in the sierra and Puyo in the oriente. Those *indígenas* born in small cities would likely have more mainstream cultural experiences and thus are hypothesized to score higher on the dependent variable than those raised in more isolated rural areas.

**Oriente** is a dichotomy of those born in Sierra provinces (coded 0) and those born in the Eastern or Oriente provinces (coded 1). While the sparsely populated Oriente region may have a larger proportion of their population considered indigenous, over the last 35 years it has been this area of Ecuador that has experienced the most intense state-sponsored modernization efforts (agricultural, timber and oil developments) and thus *indígenas* from these areas have probably had more direct, often negative experiences with the hegemonic culture. It is hypothesized, then, that Oriente-born, self-identified *indígenas* will exhibit higher mean scores on the CONAIE Demands Scale.

**Father's Education** is a family variable used as an indicator for two factors: economic well-being and *mestizo* influence. Attending school for this older generation of *indígenas* is a sign of relative affluence. And since formal education for these students' fathers meant an experience totally controlled by *mestizos*, we expect that the number of years of schooling is a good indicator of participation by fathers in mainstream *mestizo* culture. Such acculturation experiences are then passed on to the children — now themselves adults — through the family socialization process. The expectation, therefore, is that the “higher” the father's formal education, the higher the respondent's score on the CONAIE Demands Scale.

**Farmer** contrasts those self-identified *indígenas* whose father's main occupation is/was farming (coded 1) to those whose fathers are/were not farmers. While farmers sell their goods in the market, it is a reasonable assumption that they and their families are less often exposed to mainstream *mestizo* society than are those who are employed in wage jobs. Thus, it is hypothesized that *indígena* EECA students whose fathers are farmers will score lower on the dependent variable.

The final family variable used in the analysis is **Number of Siblings**. This is used as an indirect indicator of economically-imposed isolation among *indígena* families. The reasoning is that those families with more children consume more of their restricted resources in simple survival costs

and have less for goods and services that, in various ways, expose the family to mainstream *mestizo* culture (television set, transportation into town, etc.). The hypothesis is that the greater the number of siblings, the lower the respondent's score on the CONAIE Demands Scale.

### **Experiential/Behavioral Variables**

This set of variables are more proximate to the development of political ideas and, specifically, support for the CONAIE agenda. **Primary Language** is based on a question that asked *indígena* students what language they speak most fluently. Language use is something that develops over a long period of time and is primarily influenced by family. The variable is a dichotomy that contrasts those who responded "Spanish" (coded 0) to those who responded "Quichua", "Shuar" or another indigenous language (coded 1). It is expected that those who are more fluent in their indigenous language will score lower on the CONAIE Demands Scale.

Respondents were asked about the ethnicity of their friends when they were children. **Indígena Friends** contrasts those who responded that most of their childhood friends were *mestizos* (coded 0) to those who responded that most of their childhood friends were *indígenas* (coded 1). As per the logic previously explicated, those with *indígena* friends are expected to exhibit a lower mean score on the dependent variable.

**High School Graduation Age** is a variable constructed by using the respondent's current age (Spring 1996) and subtracting from that the number of years between their reported year of high school graduation and 1996. As noted earlier, there is considerable variation in age at high school graduation among these EECA students, especially among those who self-identify as *indígenas*. This variable is seen as an indirect indicator of the respondent's (and respondent's family's) economic struggle. More directly, those *indígenas* who graduated "on time" (by age 19) had more conventional, *mestizo*-like educational experiences whereas those who did not graduate until they were in their twenties (or in a few cases, early thirties) obviously had interrupted, unconventional academic experiences. Put another way, these late graduating students had less exposure to *mestizo* schooling until rather late in their lives. This variable was an important predictor in the authors' related analysis of the ethnic identity dimension labeled "Rejection of *Mestizaje*". In that analysis there was a negative relationship between age at high school graduation and scores on the Rejection of *Mestizaje* scale (where high scores represent strong rejection) (Beck and Mijeski, 1997: 20). In the present analysis the expectation is the same: the later the age at high school graduation, the lower the score on the CONAIE Demands Scale.

### **Statistical Considerations**

The EECA students who self-identified as *indígenas* are not a probability sample of a larger population of either Ecuadorian *indígenas* or university students. Thus, it is more appropriate to consider this analysis as a quantitative case study of a special population. Though the authors believe that the findings will provide important implications for analyses of broader populations of indigenous peoples, the use of inferential procedures (tests of significance) would be inappropriate. In essence, this analysis is viewed as a heuristic tool in advancing understanding of the dynamic processes involved in producing political militancy and activism among indigenous peoples.

Given that the dependent variable is interval and the set of predictors are a mix of interval and categorical variables, it is appropriate to employ correlation coefficients and ordinary least

squares regression to assess the direction and degree of covariance among the factors. Given that tests of significance are inappropriate, coefficients will be treated as parameters for this small, select population. The criterion for substantive significance of correlations and partial betas (net effects) will be an absolute value of .10 or higher. The CONAIE Demands Scale will first be regressed on the set of demographic/family variables and then the full model will include the experiential/behavioral predictors.

## **Results**

The zero-order correlations among the dependent and independent variables are shown in Table 2. Reading down the first column, the negative coefficient for Gender indicates, as per expectations, that the mean score on the CONAIE Demands Scale is lower for men than for women. *Indígena* EECA students born in urban areas exhibit a somewhat higher mean on the dependent variable compared to those born in rural areas. While there is a positive sign for Oriente, the association is trivial. As hypothesized, Father's Education does have a positive relationship with scores on the CONAIE Demands Scale. *Indígena* EECA students whose fathers are farmers exhibit lower scores on the dependent variable compared to students whose fathers are not farmers. In accordance with expectations, Number of Siblings is negatively related to CONAIE Demands Scale scores. At the bivariate level, Primary Language (language most fluently spoken) has absolutely no relationship with the CONAIE scale. *Indígena* EECA students who reported that most or all of their childhood friends were also *indígenas* generally have lower scores on the dependent variable. Finally, the strongest correlation with the CONAIE Demands Scale is exhibited by the High School Graduation Age variable and, as hypothesized, the relationship is negative. There are many noticeable correlations among the nine predictors, but none are strong enough to present a problem of multicollinearity.

Results of the regression models are presented in Table 3. In Model 1 only the six demographic/family predictors are entered. The direction of the relationships between the predictors and the CONAIE Demands Scale are in accord with expectations, but the net effects are generally weak. The variables Gender, Urban and Oriente all have insignificant effects on the CONAIE Demands Scale. The net positive effect of Father's Education is considered significant, as is the negative effect for Farmer. Interestingly, the largest net effect on the CONAIE Demands Scale in Model 1 is exhibited by the siblings variable, indicating that as the number of brothers and sisters increases, the lower the score on the dependent variable. Overall, these six predictors explain 14% of the variance in CONAIE Demands Scale scores.

In Model 2 the three experiential/behavioral factors are added to the six tested in Model 1. The net effect of the Oriente variable increases past the .10 criterion in Model 2 but the net effect of Father's Education is reduced to a trivial size with the addition of the three experiential/behavioral predictors. The Farmer dichotomy retains its significant negative coefficient, as does the Number of Siblings variable. While the Primary Language dichotomy does exhibit the expected negative sign in the multivariate context, the beta is not substantively significant. Much the same situation exists for the Friends contrast in that the mean scores on the CONAIE Demands Scale for those who had *indígena* friends are not substantially lower than those who had mostly *mestizo* friends, when controlling for other factors. The hypothesized negative effect of High School Graduation Age remains substantively significant in the multivariate context, though reduced somewhat from the

zero-order correlation. This latter variable and the number of siblings have the largest net effects on the CONAIE Demands Scale among the set of nine predictors. The full model explains almost one-fourth of the variance in the dependent variable.<sup>3</sup>

To summarize, we found that the data generally supported the line of argument that self-identified *indígena* students who had greater exposure to and experience with mainstream *mestizo* society and culture would be more emphatic in their support for the CONAIE agenda than would *indígena* students less exposed -- either directly or vicariously -- to the *mestizo*-dominated mainstream. That is, *indígena* students who graduated from high school at a normal age, who had fewer siblings, who were born in the Oriente rather than in the Sierra, and whose fathers had more formal education and were not farmers scored higher on the CONAIE Demands Scale than their compatriots. While many of these variables are indirect measures of the central concepts in and substantive argument of our reasoning, we believe they clearly point us toward a continuation of this research vein utilizing methodologies which would permit more direct measurement of the key variables (see Beck & Mijeski, 1996, for a description and discussion of our plans and tentative methodologies for an extension of this research endeavor).

## **Discussion**

As noted by other analysts, ethnic identity is often dynamic and changing, whether one considers it from the view of outsiders (identifying members of an ethnic group) or from the inside (identifying with an ethnic group). In many Latin American nations over the past 30 years various forces, including social movements, indigenous organizations, non-governmental organizations, aid organizations, governmental policies, local and national politicians, have produced immense changes in the lives and identities of peoples referred to as *indígenas*. This has certainly been true in Ecuador. A common effort of organizations representing *indígenas*, exemplified by CONAIE in Ecuador, has been to build and solidify a political bloc in order to effect desired changes that would potentially benefit indigenous peoples. As noted earlier, in Ecuador there have been some successes in this effort (e.g., bilingual education in many public schools). However, recent events reveal the difficulty in maintaining such solidarity. As we pointed out previously in this paper, fissures and contentious actions have occurred within the leadership and among militants of CONAIE. A recent story in the newspaper *Hoy* is probably a reflection of these cleavages. In the newspaper's report it is stated that "CONAIE does not want people to continue indiscriminately using the terms 'indio' or 'indígena'. According to the organization, Ecuadorians should begin to refer to distinct peoples by their nationality. That is, they should refer to 'Shuar', 'Secoya', 'Quichua', or 'Saraguro'." (*Hoy*, 7 de marzo de 1997, Internet edition). What does this position imply in regard to solidarity among *indígenas*? Does it indicate the beginnings of a retreat from CONAIE's pan-indigenous stance in the face of apparent discords both internal to the organization and between CONAIE and, most recently, CONFENAIE and OPIP as noted previously in this essay, or is it simply another declaration against the stereotype that "all Indians are alike"?

The empirical results of our investigation reported above suggest one general source of differentiation among *indígenas* in Ecuador. Taking into account the authors' related research on one dimension of ethnic identity — the tendency to (re)affirm one's indigenous identity by strongly rejecting elements of *mestizo* culture — as well as our analysis of support for CONAIE's demands, the findings indicate that among self-identified *indígena* students at the *Escuela de Educación y*

*Cultura Andina* those who have characteristics and experiences more similar to *mestizos* are more militant in their expressions of maintaining distinctiveness — “rejection of *mestizaje*” — and in their support for the far-reaching goals expressed by CONAIE’s various demands.

It is important to note the frequent use we have made of the phrase “self-identified *indígena*”. It is our assertion that self-identity is essential in determining who is, and who is not, a member of an ethnic group. Hence, our argument that *indígenas* who have had substantial experience with *mestizo* culture (through schooling, by having mostly *mestizo* friends when they were children, by speaking Spanish more fluently than an indigenous language, etc.) are more likely to exhibit sentiments and possibly actions that favor maintenance of clear “boundaries” separating indigenous peoples from the broad mainstream “*mestizo* society” hinges on self-identity as the marker of ethnicity. We are **not** advancing this argument in the case of persons who are defined as *indígenas* externally but who do not self-identify as such.

We should also reiterate that the self-identified *indígenas* of the EECA are very likely not representative of the population of Ecuadorian self-identified *indígenas*. As we asserted previously in this essay, the indigenous EECA students are predisposed to identify themselves as *indígenas* by virtue of their enrolling in a university program which is committed to the CONAIE-led crusade of empowerment

of indigenous peoples through bilingual and multicultural education. Accordingly, one would expect little digression by them regarding either their posture with respect to *mestizo* culture or their support for CONAIE’s major demands to the Ecuadorian state. That the authors found such divergence in this group of presumably *indígenas militantes* leads us to suspect one would find even greater differences on those dimensions among less militant, less politically active *indígenas* in the larger population.

The implications of our findings and the recent revelations of divisions within and among some of Ecuador’s major indigenous organizations for the continued success of the indigenous movement are at least twofold. First, the initial phase of our research project aims at elucidating the dimensions of ethnicity as self-identification at the base. Insofar as indigenous organizations have relied upon a high degree of ethnic solidarity among the rank-and-file in their efforts to demonstrate their power capability to the state through mass mobilization, fractures in the solidarity of that mass may well dilute the movement’s strength. Furthermore, variation in levels of *indígena* support for CONAIE’s demands to the state -- which we found even among a group of militant adult *indígena* students -- could also lead to CONAIE’s retraction of some of those demands or its persistence in pursuing them but with a hand weakened by divisions and differences in its major power base. Second, recent reports of fractures and even hostilities at the level of organizational elites could weaken the movement from the top and even further exacerbate differences at the base. If solidarity among *indígena* brothers and sisters is not in evidence among those who would speak for all *indígenas*, can it really be sustained at the popular level?

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for EECA Students  
by Ethnic Self-Identity.

Variables	<i>Indígenas</i> (n=74)		<i>Mestizos</i> (n=38)	
	Mean*	S. D.	Mean	S. D.
Gender (Men=1)	0.76	0.43	0.53	0.50
Age	30.53	4.50	30.76	5.29
Province (Oriente=1)	0.19	0.39	0.05	0.22
Area (Urban=1)	0.12	0.33	0.55	0.49
Father's Educ.	2.43	2.92	4.82	4.24
Mother's Educ.	1.03	1.71	4.29	3.67
Father's Occup. (Farmer=1)	0.78	0.41	0.53	0.50
No. of Siblings	5.65	2.46	5.74	2.82
Marital Status (Married=1)	0.73	0.45	0.47	0.50
H.S. Grad. Age	21.95	4.06	19.82	3.17
Labor Force Status (Working=1)	0.95	0.22	0.68	0.46
CONAIE Scale	85.90	10.00	85.95	9.68

\* For dichotomous variables (Gender, Province, Area, Father's Occupation, Marital Status, and Labor Force Status) the mean represents the proportion of the respondents in the group coded "1". For example, for Gender the mean of .76 signifies that 76% of the *indígena* EECA students are men.

**Table 2. Correlations Among Dependent and Independent Variables, N= 74**

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<u>Variables</u>	1*	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
CONAIE	1.000									
Gender	-.148	1.000								
Urban	.133	-.078	1.000							
Oriente	.067	.113	.454	1.000						
Fath. Ed.	.217	-.220	.130	.309	1.000					
Farmer	-.250	.238	-.206	-.082	-.228	1.000				
Siblings	-.182	.125	.222	.464	.021	-.008	1.000			
Prim. Lang.	.000	.212	.030	.444	.124	-.168	.209	1.000		
Friends	-.190	.161	-.206	.002	-.148	.043	.086	.166	1.000	
H.S. Grad.	-.356	.172	-.057	-.096	-.298	.196	.025	-.098	.180	1.000

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\* The numbered columns refer to the order of variables as listed down the rows.



Table 3. Regressions of CONAIE Scale on Nine Predictors, N = 74.

<u>Predictors</u>	<u>Model 1</u>		<u>Model 2</u>	
	<u>b*</u>	<u>B**</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>B</u>
Gender	-1.129	-.049	-0.108	-.005
Urban	2.627	.086	1.764	.058
Oriente	2.286	.090	2.847	.112
Father's Ed.	.447	.130	.178	.052
Farmer	-4.467	-.185	-4.057	-.168
Siblings	-.980	-.241	-.909	-.224
Prim. Lang.	---	---	-1.053	-.052
Friends	---	---	-2.051	
H.S. Grad. Age	---	---	-.682	-.277
Intercept		93.959		110.108
R <sup>2</sup>		.143		.225

\* b represents the unstandardized regression coefficient. In the case of dichotomous predictors (dummy variables), b represents the difference in means between the two groups.

\*\* B represents the standardized regression coefficient, which is the same as the (partial) correlation, bounded by -1 and +1.

## Appendix A

Now, below are some statements that reflect cultural, political or economic goals of some groups in Ecuador. You may think that some are very important, that others are only slightly important, and that some are not at all important or you might even disagree with the goal. After reading each statement, circle the **number** that corresponds to the degree of importance the goal has for you.

1. The national government of Ecuador should recognize *medicina natural* as useful in promoting health by allowing traditional healers to work with physicians and nurses in health centers.

Not Important (Disagree)				Important				Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

2. There should be actual support for, and adequate funding of, bilingual education in public schools where a large majority of students are *indígenas*.

Not Important (Disagree)				Important				Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

3. The government should help to create and support credit unions for *indígenas* that would be controlled by CONAIE or other indigenous organizations.

Not Important (Disagree)				Important				Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

4. There should be the development of substantial political autonomy from the national government for indigenous communities.

Not Important (Disagree)				Important				Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

5. A law should be instituted that gives the national and/or provincial governments power to control the missionary activities of religious groups.

Not Important (Disagree)			Important				Extremely Important	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

6. The first article of the constitution should be amended to recognize Ecuador as "a multinational and multicultural state".

Not Important (Disagree)			Important				Extremely Important	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

7. The national and provincial governments should provide adequate funds to create potable water systems in small towns and rural areas.

Not Important (Disagree)			Important				Extremely Important	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

8. The law of agricultural development should be abolished and instead, a law promulgated that recognizes and protects communal land titles.

Not Important (Disagree)			Important				Extremely Important	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

9. The government should include relevant indigenous organizations in decisions about archaeological excavations.

Not Important (Disagree)			Important				Extremely Important	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

10. The Ecuadorian government should suspend all colonization programs involving ancestral territories of Amazonian indigenous groups.

Not Important (Disagree)				Important				Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

11. CONAIE, and specific indigenous organizations, should have a direct voice in negotiations between the Ecuadorian government and oil companies for land concessions.

Not Important (Disagree)				Important				Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

12. National parks, protected forests and forest reserves should be directly administered by indigenous organizations that represent people who inhabit those areas.

Not Important (Disagree)				Important				Extremely Important
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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## Endnotes

1. With only the specification that a factor have an eigenvalue in excess of 1, three factors emerge but the second and third have relatively small values (1.45 and 1.15, respectively) and the factor loadings do not have a logic. That is, the items that load on one as opposed to the other two factors do not have substantive similarity.
2. The six opinion statements were part of a larger set of 16 statements, all of which had the response categories “Strongly Agree”, “Agree”, “No Opinion”, “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree”. For the specific wording of the six statements that comprise the Rejection of *Mestizaje* Scale, see Appendix A in Beck and Mijeski (1997).
3. While the amount of variance explained may not appear impressive, the reader must understand that some variance is “noise.” That is, some variance is due to idiosyncratic tendencies of the respondents which often results in weakening the relationships among variables.