

Rachel Johnson

Thesis Proposal

While studying abroad in Ecuador, I would like to research indigeneity and how people feel about the inclusion of indigenous groups into politics and society in the city of Quito.

I will read academic journals pertaining to the history of indigenous identity in Latin America for background on the subject. In addition, I will research CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous National Identities of Ecuador) and the different indigenous groups in Ecuador which have a major presence in Quito. I will rely on information from classes at the University of Mississippi and research here as well as from USFQ.

The main part of my thesis will be devoted to information gained from an interview based off a pre-written questionnaire. The questionnaire will be mainly coded questions with responses numbered 0-5 for interviewees to mark their selection. There will be 10-15 of these questions. Then there will be 3-5 open-ended questions which I will ask orally and record via Flip camera and/or auto recording device. I will survey 30 people: 15 students from the University and 15 community members from Quito and the area I will be living about what they believe about Ecuadorean identity and how they feel about indigenous groups.

The interviews will all be identified with a number rather than a name, to protect the people speaking but there will be a space for interviewees to indicate their gender, race, age, and political affiliation. I will acquire the correct documents for interviewees to sign to indicate their approval of participation in my thesis research and the use of the audio and video materials for educational purposes.

Because I will be interviewing and speaking with people in mainly Spanish, I will write the final questionnaire in Spanish. I will video tape or audio record the interviews with a Flip camera or hand-held recorder so I can refer back to them with a fluent speaker later. I will also conduct the interviews with a fluent speaker as frequently as possible to better understand the conversations.

The possible shortcomings that I can see with my research methods are: the size of the sample is quite small, my grasp of the Spanish language is not as advanced as most studies of this nature require, and my exposure to the people in Quito could possibly be limited to only educated, white, upper-class people. I feel that working with a fluent speaker while conducting the interviews will help my understanding of the conversations and that conducting these conversations will only increase my knowledge of the Spanish language. Also being able to go back and listen to the conversation will allow me to better understand them. Because I am only an undergraduate student working on my own, it is impossible to take on a large sample of people. I feel that starting with a sample this size will give me a good basis for later research projects, while challenging me to talk to lots of people from different backgrounds while abroad.

Researchers who go out and pursue projects of this type do not usually complete one hundred or more (my ideal sample size) interviews in three months, so it would be unreasonable for me to attempt this. As to my exposure to different people, I am committed to creating a balanced sample of students and community members with different background, and using the large size of Quito to accomplish this. Knowing an exchange student down there already (Scarlett Andrews) will help in this pursuit, and I will elicit her assistance in this project.

From this data and my research in academic journals, I will determine conclusions about Ecuadorean indigenous identity in Quito and whether these groups are integrated into society.

Sample Questions:

Open-ended:

What do you think it means to be an Ecuadorean?

What stereotypes do you see that exist for indigenous people?

What effect do you believe race has on politics and elections in Ecuador?

Coded:

To what extent do you believe indigenous people are included in society?

0- no opinion, don't know

1- Not included at all

2- Included very little

3- Included at times

4- Mostly included

5- Included completely

Is race an issue in Ecuador?

0- no opinion, don't know

1- Not at all

2- Very minor issue

3- At times it is

4- Fairly important issue

5- Urgent issue that needs to be dealt with