AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES: THE IMPACT OF POST-NEOLIBERAL POLICIES ON REDUCING RACIAL INEQUALITY IN ECUADOR

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Race in Post-Colonial Ecuador

- Ethnic make-up of Ecuador: 72% are mestizos; 7% Montubian; 7% Afro-Ecuadorian and 7% indigenous people; 12% white – numbers disputed.
- Inequality in literacy rates and years of schooling
- Income inequalities: Continued persecution after the end of slavery (1822)
- Continued persecution of indigenous communities, based on religion and race.
- Structural adjustment policies
Post-Neoliberal Policies

- Rafael Correa (2007-2013): ‘El Revolución Ciudadana’ (the ‘Citizen Revolution’)
- Political stability and the strengthening of the state: El ‘Plan del Buen Vivir’ (the ‘Plan for Good Living’)
- Changes in 2008 Constitution (implemented 2009):
  - Article 2 of the Constitution: The State shall adopt affirmative action measures that promote real equality for the benefit of the rights-bearers who are in a situation of inequality.
  - Policy of affirmative action for Afro-Ecuadorian and Indigenous communities in public sector employment and higher education.
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<th><strong>Methodology</strong></th>
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<td>10 interviews/surveys</td>
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<td>Mix of male/female</td>
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<td>Range of ages</td>
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<td>Kichwa and Otavalo tribes</td>
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<td>General questions about racial discrimination</td>
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<td>General questions about government actions</td>
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<td>Questions about affirmative action policies – multiple framing</td>
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Results from Literature Review

- Supports idea that there has been a positive impact
- Increase in college access
- Very limited increase in representation in government jobs
Results from Interviews

Mixed responses
→ Indigenous communities did have varied responses on the extent to which they had been discriminated against

Inconsistent responses
→ The majority of respondents stated supported quotas in employment and higher education
→ The majority of respondents said that access to higher education should be based solely on merit.
→ Some respondents stated that their race did not suffer from discrimination, but went on to give examples of when they had been discriminated against.
Lack of understanding about reparations
→ Many respondents had never heard of the term ‘reparations’
→ Some respondents supported the idea of reparations, while others were opposed.

Knowledge that the government was working to tackle racial inequalities but not how
→ 90% believed the government had changed its policies towards racial inequality in the last 50 years.
→ 75% had never heard of affirmative action policies
→ Only one respondent referenced the 2008 Constitution
Respondents put a great focus on education as a driver of social change:

→ “At the moment, race does not matter. The important thing is academic preparation.”

→ Education as both an individual effort and a government responsibility

But this was also something that respondents brought up as a positive action that the government was taking.
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<td>Geographic limitations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sample size</td>
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<td>Only two tribes (out of 14)</td>
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Areas for Future Research

Consider the impact on Afro-Ecuadorian communities

How much does education impact rates of inequality?

More extensive surveying

More comprehensive research into other outcomes

A comparative study across post-neoliberal policies in South America


• Catherine Walsh, ‘Affirmative action(ing)s and postneoliberal movement in South America and Ecuador’ in *Cultural Dynamics*, 27(1), 2015, pp. 19-41.


• Sara Caria and Rafael Dominguez, ‘Ecuador’s Bien Vivir’ in *Latin American Perspectives*, 43(1), 2016, pp. 18-33.