

**Anais Parada**

Anthropology

**Tentative Title of Dissertation:**

The Puruhá Entrepreneurs of Ecuador: Creating and Contesting the Boundaries of Indigenous Identities Through Dress

**Dissertation Abstract:**

This dissertation investigates the social, economic, and political impact of emergent Puruha dress styles in Ecuador as it contributes to larger global discourse on cultural heritage, appropriation, and the boundaries of cultural citizenship, primarily for minority creative producers. Through fieldwork in both Quito and Riobamba, Ecuador, data has been gathered from designers, sellers, and consumers of this unique dress style, which roots itself in complex histories while simultaneously speaking to the future of indigenous identities. Critical discourse and narrative analysis will be employed to parse apart the racial, ethnic, gendered, and classed distinctions that arise in talking about dress, as well as how individuals exhibit agency by using these styles to complicate and contradict political and social categorizations of belonging. Moreover, dress itself will be analyzed as material culture that can be read as an intertextual discourse between non-indigenous and indigenous Ecuadorians, as well as between Ecuador and the global community. This research suggests that female entrepreneurs and consumers in particular are negotiating ideals of femininity and indigeneity within their own Puruha community, as well as at national and global scales. Indigenous women worldwide continue to fight for rights to cultural heritage, based in part on the ability to align with particular identities, and so exploration of how identities are crafted on a daily basis through material culture like dress is absolutely necessary to understanding the shifting legal and political boundaries of citizenship.