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Patrick Simon  
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# Social Statistics and Ethnic Diversity

Cross-National Perspectives in  
Classifications and Identity Politics

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Editors

# Social Statistics and Ethnic Diversity

Cross-National Perspectives  
in Classifications and Identity Politics



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# Chapter 1

## The Making of Racial and Ethnic Categories: Official Statistics Reconsidered

Patrick Simon, Victor Piché, and Amélie A. Gagnon

### 1.1 Introduction

One of the most striking features of the end of the twentieth century was the resurgence of the ethnic question in public debates, both in developing and in developed countries. Between conflicts and wars interpreted from an ethnic perspective (the Balkans and central Africa), nationalist struggles (the Basque country, Quebec and Belgium), and demands for recognition and political representation by new ethnic minorities resulting from immigration, every country is currently affected by what is commonly known as cultural pluralism (Hobsbawm 1993; Dieckhoff 2000; Faist 2009; Simon and Piché 2013). This ‘ethnic renewal’, to coin the expression used to qualify the growing interest for ethnic diversity in the 1960s in the US, is not only driven by a sort of obsession for cultural differences as an explanation for all kinds of social and political phenomenon. It derives from different legacies: from the increasing diversity of the population of countries that have undergone large immigration flows to the long lasting cohabitation of national minorities within modern Nation states, from the history of slavery to the post-colonial era. This

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resurgence or extension of the salience of ethnicity in most of the societies around the world can be found not only in public discourses, policy-making, scientific literature and popular representations, but also in the pivotal realm of statistics. Indeed, at the turn of century, an increasing number of countries are processing routinely data on ethnicity or race of their population. This is precisely what this book is about: ethnic and racial classifications in official statistics, as a reflection of the representations of population and an interpretation of social dynamics through different lenses.

The use of ethnic categories is not without problems, and a growing literature discusses the issue of the social and political significance of such categories (see for instance Anderson and Fienberg 1999; Zuberi 2001; Szreter et al. 2004; Rallu et al. 2006; Brubaker 2009; Williams and Husk 2012). The linkages between political framings and the statistical categories that support them can be observed in every society (Nobles 2000). Population statistics are indeed not only aiming at producing knowledge of demographic dynamics, they provide a benchmark for policies and contribute to the production and reproduction of national identity (Desrosières 1993; Alonso and Starr 1987; Anderson 1991). Official and scientific statistical categorisations *reflect* and *affect* the structural divisions of societies, as well as mainstream social representations. As *conventions*, they offer arbitrary definitions of the social objects they are intended to describe, but these definitions ensue from historical, social and political processes of negotiations between public authorities and social forces. In this respect, censuses are a strategic place in which views on race and ethnicity are confronted by official statistics. In this sense, censuses do more than reflect social realities; they also participate in the construction of these realities (Kertzer and Arel 2002, p. 1).

What type of data on ethnicity and/or race are processed, using which definitions and for which purposes are they collected are questions of a crucial importance. In order to highlight the challenges related to ‘ethnic statistics’, the book is organized around three main issues. In the first part, ethnic enumeration and systems of classification are shown to vary considerably from one society to another. Two chapters, in attempting to answer such questions as ‘who counts’ and ‘for what purpose’, offer a comparative and global perspective on the production and use of ethnic statistics. In the second part, the link between enumeration and identity politics is highlighted through a series of case studies dealing with France, Québec (Canada), Brazil and Great Britain. Finally, as mentioned above, measuring ethnicity and race poses tremendous challenges and the third part of the book, in examining some of the problems involved in measurement issues and the solutions implemented in different countries. The chapters argue that measurement issues are not technical in nature but are linked to competing claims within societies. Case studies include discussions of Malaysia, Uruguay, Belgium, Mexico and Canada.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>All chapters except Chaps. 5 and 7 are revised papers presented at the *International Conference on Social Statistics*, organized jointly by the CIQSS and INED in 2007. For other case studies focused on competing claims, see Simon and Piché (2013).

## 1.2 Comparative Accounts of Ethnic Statistics

Statistical constructions around ethnic categories cover a wide diversity of situations across state boundaries, which make any attempt at generalization difficult. This is essentially owing to historical and social specificities and the political dynamics that shape racial and/or ethnic stratification. Conquests, annexations, redefinition of borders, or migration have placed certain groups in minority positions, whether they are old or recent minorities. Looking at the wide variety of practices of ethnic and racial categorizations in time and space, we have suggested elsewhere a basic but yet comprehensive typology of types of ‘data collection regimes’ (Rallu et al. 2006). Six cases were identified. The first two cases reflect the situation where ethnicity is not part of the official statistical production (labelled here *not counting in the name of national integration or in the name of multiculturalism*). The first type is associated with the nation-building process in which homogenization of population is conceived as a condition for national cohesion (Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1990). According to the so-called *republican perspective*, ethnic ‘particularisms’ are downplayed as undesirable markers of fragmentation and should disappear through an unavoidable assimilation process, or should be kept in the unofficial representation of the society. Ethnic categories are therefore avoided in statistics for the same reason than ethnic communities are perceived to threaten the cohesion of the national society. The second case (*not counting in the name of multiculturalism*) seems contradictory since it is associated with not counting for reasons that have little to do with racist views or national unification, but rather with a positive value of cultural mixing and multiculturalism.

The four following types involve counting (i.e., ethnicity is part of national statistics) for different reasons. The third case (*counting to dominate*) has characterized a major part of historical experiences associated with ethno-cultural supremacy, colonialism and imperialism. Although very widespread in the past, it still exists in some newly independent countries and neo-imperial states. The fourth case (*counting in the name of multiculturalism*) is the mirror image of the second case above whereby counting is associated with an appreciation of cultural mixing. The fifth case (*counting for survival*) refers to ‘threatened’ national minorities using ethnic statistics to demand more power enabling them to maintain their cultural specificity. Finally, the sixth case (*counting to justify positive action*) has appeared recently and implies a complete reversal of the racist and discriminatory perspective characterizing the third case above. Even if the categories may have been produced in a different context, and to serve opposite purposes, data collection is embedded in a broader equality policy (Simon 2005). Classifications are thus defined by equality laws to fit with legal or semi-legal standards describing protected minorities.

This typology should not be used in a unilateral mode. Different types of rationales and uses can be found simultaneously in the same country or sequentially according to historical contexts. However, the typology does convey a sense of diversity, which is illustrated in Chaps. 2 and 3. Ann Morning’s chapter on ethnic classification in a global perspective presents a cross-national survey of the 2000

census round. This chapter draws on a global data set compiled by the United Nations Statistical Division to survey the approaches to ethnic enumeration taken in 138 countries. Thirty seven percent of the countries surveyed forgo ethnic enumeration ('do not count') for reasons associated with national unity. On the other hand, 63 % of the national censuses studied incorporate some form of ethnic enumeration, but their question and answer formats vary along several dimensions that betray diverse conceptualizations of ethnicity (for example, as 'race' or 'nationality'). Moreover, these formats follow notably regional patterns. The nations of the Americas are most likely to field census questions regarding ethnicity, while European and African states are much less likely to do so. Among those doing so, 'ethnicity' is generally the preferred term, but 'nationality' (distinct from citizenship) is frequently used in European censuses, queries about indigenous status appear regularly on South and Central American censuses, and 'race' is sharply limited to the former slave societies of the Americas and their territories. Despite the diversity of approaches to ethnic enumeration, Ann Morning concludes that they can be grouped into a basic taxonomy of classification schema, as is suggested by Rallu et al. (2006), implying greater commonality in worldwide manifestations of the ethnicity concept than some have recognized.

Tahu Kukutai and Victor Thompson (Chap. 3) argue in their chapter on 'the politics of enumerating the Nation' that ethnic enumeration practices are framed as the by-products of parochial and socio-political contexts influenced by inter-group relations. As a result, systematic patterns in the concepts and categories that states use for racial and ethnic enumeration within and across state boundaries are left unexplained. Their chapter compares and empirically tests two perspectives for understanding national ethnic enumeration practices in a global context. First, they evaluate the responsiveness of nation-states to external pressures in the form of trans-global politics vis-à-vis a state's commitment to achieving ethno-racial equality in the international arena. They test whether states that are highly committed at the international level are more willing to engage in ethnic enumeration at home than those who show little commitment, in part because ethnic enumeration is an indispensable tool for monitoring and addressing inequality. Secondly, they test the argument that state enumeration practices are shaped primarily by internal pressures and structural conditions, and specifically, that minority group claims and interests are influential in whether or not the state decides to recognize differences within its border (or not to recognize differences). As will be discussed in Part III, an underlying assumption of this perspective is that nominating groups into existence through enumeration is a matter of political negotiation, and not the objective assessment of internal diversity (Simon and Piché 2013). These hypotheses are tested with multivariate models based on a unique data set of national census questionnaires and population registration forms for over 200 countries, covering the period 1990–2006. Using information gathered from the website of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), and another dataset, Minorities at Risk (MAR), Kukutai and Thompson construct variables that capture internal and external pressures. The results show that not only the net effect (*ceteris paribus*) of internal factors but also the net effect of external factors play a significant role in whether or not states are involved in ethnic enumeration.

### 1.3 Enumeration and Identity Politics

As Ann Morning has shown above, many countries have opted not to count populations based on ethnic or nationality criteria (in our typology, ‘not counting for nation-building and assimilation’). The justifications are not all identical, but in all cases, ethnicity as a basis for social stratification is rejected, either in the name of national integration, as is presently the case in many African countries, or in the name of the principle of national unity, as is the case in several countries in Western Europe. The case of West Africa is particularly interesting insofar as ethnic analyses, which were omnipresent during the colonial period, have been abandoned in the postcolonial period in favour of a nation-building ideology. Indeed, they have moved from a situation in which ethnic classification, invented by colonial administrators and ethnologists (Amselle 1990: 22), was used as a basis for domination and distinction between populations to a situation in which the effort of developing and building a national identity was monopolized by the postcolonial state involved in a modernization process implying the disappearance of ethnic awareness (Otayek 2000: 87, 90). In this context, ethnic categorization became taboo owing to the weakness of the state trying to build a nation within borders drawn by the colonizers, borders that rarely took ethnic geography into consideration. For West Africa, analysis of ethnicity is all the more lacking as vast circular migratory movements have turned the region into an integrated economic space (Adepoju 1988:60; Cordell et al. 1996: 13). The concept of citizenship is of little importance in societies in which access to *social security* remains essentially within the family sphere and outside state-controlled legislation.

The refusal to include ethnic categories in official statistics characterizes nearly all the countries of Western Europe. According to a recent inventory, the reasons that these countries refuse to include questions regarding ethnic groups are mainly political, constitutional and legal: this is the case notably of France, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Denmark and Italy (Simon 2012). The case of France deserves particular attention insofar as the debates there are particularly virulent. Indeed, in France, the question of using ethnicity as an analytical or simply descriptive category is far from being resolved as is confirmed by debates that are ideological and controversial in nature (Lorcerie 1994; Blum and Guérin 2008; Simon 2008). This situation can be extended to most of western European countries where the absence of ‘multicultural’ traditions and the recent emergence of debates around ethnic and racial discriminations explain the absence of data on ethnic and racial categories. Furthermore, many objections, be they political or emanating from civil society, have recently arisen with respect to the relevance of collecting such data. Legislations and institutions dealing with data protection forbid, under certain conditions, the collection of sensitive data such as ethnic and racial origins (Ringelheim and De Schutter 2010).

Patrick Simon (Chap. 4) addresses specifically this public debate in France. In the first part of his chapter, he attempts to explain why there is resistance to collecting ethnic data. According to Simon, the framing offered by the French (republican) model of integration which promotes the invisibility of ethnic minorities and the

rather recent emergence of debates around ethnic and racial discriminations explain the absence of data on ethnic and racial categories. In Belgium also, ethnicity remains taboo although, as we shall see in the next section, diversity is increasingly questioning the adequacy of the 'nationality' category for the study of ethnic relations. However, it is the French case that is mostly referred to as the example of fierce debates regarding the collecting of ethnic statistics. On the one hand, the republican paradigm, based on the assimilation model, posits that immigrants would (and should) lose their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness. Against this colour- or ethnicity-blindness, a competing approach argues for the need of ethnic data in order to study and monitor discrimination practices. Hence each model or paradigm calls for specific indicators: the assimilation perspective is satisfied with the three official categories (French, French by acquisition and foreigners), because they are geared to the study and monitoring of the assimilation of foreigners. Although the competing paradigm (anti-discrimination monitoring) has found its place since the end of the 1990s, the official approach remains republican for the time being.

In contrast to France, counting is considered crucial for certain countries, particularly when notions of survival and visibility are at the centre of identity politics. This situation prevails when numbers are significant in the balance of power relations. In this case, minority groups may find it useful to have access to statistical data, which document their fragile and precarious situation and allow them to make demands for a more equitable place in society.

The case of Quebec within Canada also illustrates the continuing debates about the nature of identity with respect to census categories. Ethnic studies have a long-standing history in Canada, upheld by ethnic statistics dating back to the nineteenth century (Beaud and Prevost 2008). For a long time, the study of ethnicity was based on the ethnic origin questions and was basically focused on French and English Canadian duality. Victor Piché's chapter presents an historical overview of how the changing nature of French-Québécois nationalism impacted on the choice of ethnic and linguistic indicators produced by the Canadian census (Chap. 5). For many years, there was a consensus on the choice of ethnic and linguistic indicators used for the monitoring of the French group in Quebec. Mother tongue and language spoken at home were two such indicators, in line with the prevailing ethnic nationalism and assimilation perspectives. However, with the important increase in ethnic diversity due to immigration, proponents of civic nationalism insisted on a more inclusive definition of identity and argued for indicators more in line with official policy geared towards integration into the use of the French language in the public sphere. This shift illustrates the close links between political discourse and ethnic and linguistic classifications. It also illustrates how ethnic data have been crucial in nationalist debates and the notion of ethnic survival.

The most compelling case for the production of racial and ethnic statistics has been the emergence of positive action policies and the concomitant demand for data for monitoring and evaluation purposes. All ideological constructions regarding notions of race and ethnicity are currently under pressure and being called into question. In particular, countries using statistical categories in order to dominate are being challenged by the minority rights movement and antiracist and

anti-discriminatory ideologies. The recognition of pluralism is imposing an increasing number of new statistical practices and transforming the enumeration practices of censuses. This is particularly true in the case of Eastern Europe, where the issue of pluralism has appeared (Blum and Gousseff 1997; Abramson 2002; Arel 2002). Even countries such as France, which, as discussed above (Chap. 4), are characterized by the absence of ethnic statistics, are confronted by the increase in social demand for data requesting information concerning the integration of immigrants beyond the first generations (Simon 2008). Hence, a new issue is appearing in the countries of the European Union, supported by the Council of Europe, which expresses the need for reliable statistical data 'to encourage peaceful intercultural relations and ensure the protection of national minorities' (Haug 1998: 11; Mannila 2005).

Almost all chapters of the book deal directly or indirectly with this type of utilization of racial and ethnic data. Two chapters however deal explicitly with the positive action perspective. The Brazilian case discussed by José Luis Petrucelli is one of the most recent cases. The situation is characterized as presenting a persistent racial fragmentation, configuring it as a structural variable of its society, expressed in socioeconomic inequalities constantly observed by field research. In this sense, much information converges in showing the ethno-racial criterion as a decisive parameter of exclusion and of social subordination. Among the reasons for this reality, the permanence of several discriminatory practices in public and private institutions against the Africans and indigenous descending populations stands out (Telles 2006). The country can count on a reasonable tradition of statistical experience of racial classification (Loveman 2009). In this sense, two aspects are outlined: firstly, that the majority of Brazilians identifies with a restricted group of colour representation and second, that the spontaneous denominations and their relationship with the re-codified classic categories have shown a relatively temporal stability. But an important ambiguity persists in what concerns the pertinence of the category that accounts for the miscegenated groups at the national level and particularly in some areas of the country that have been, historically, less influenced in their population composition by the Atlantic slave traffic. Hence, it does have methodological pertinence to wonder about the best possibility of identifying the mentioned racial categories, which present temporal persistence and sociological consistence (Loveman et al. 2012).

The case of Great Britain is interesting because it clearly shows that the political use of ethnic and racial data can change over time. Debra Thompson (Chap. 7) argues that the British state has changed its approach to counting race over time. Using Rallu et al. (2006) typology, this chapter demonstrates that the British state has transitioned from not counting in the name of multiculturalism before and during the 1981 census to counting to justify positive action after the introduction of the ethnic question in 1991 and finally, counting in the name of multiculturalism with the modifications to the question in 2001. Hence, she argues that in a first phase, UK 'did not count' in the name of multiculturalism, based on two sets of arguments: it was considered impossible to define race and the question on race or colour would be perceived as offensive. On the other hand, there were considerable

concerns that without such data, the seriousness of the government's commitment to ending racial discrimination in Great Britain would be undermined and a growing number of public bodies were thus advocating for the collection of racial statistics. But, conservatives campaigned against answering the question on race or ethnicity in the Census Test in 1979. Thus, there was sufficient opposition to exclude such questions in the 1981 census. One central argument refers to principles of neo-conservative thought, concerned with the intrusion into the private affairs of individuals.<sup>2</sup> With time the need for racial and ethnic data proved unsustainable, mostly from internal needs of the state bureaucracy. Once the production of ethnic data became officially acceptable, the next step involved negotiating the best definitions through a series of field tests. Ethnic minority organizations played an important role in these negotiations, particularly demands from Black and Asian groups for Black British and Asian British categories, indicating sensitivity to the race/citizenship nexus in Great Britain. In brief, the analysis of the political development of the ethnic question on the British census between 1981 and 2001 demonstrates that racial classifications are not simply the consequence of three often-posed drivers of census politics – demography, social mobilization and civil rights legislation – but rather are inherently connected to identity politics and debates over the nature of citizenship and belonging in a given country. These debates are partially informed by ideas about race, colour, ethnicity and difference, which are mitigated through the institutions of the state and are given administrative life and scientific legitimacy through the forum of the census (see also Aspinall 2012).

## 1.4 Measurement Issues and Competing Claims

The production of official ethnic and racial statistics is never unilateral, nor straightforward. On the contrary there are often competing paradigms, and policy outcomes are the result of contestations, negotiations and compromises (Simon and Piché 2013). Six case studies illustrate how measurement issues go beyond technical aspects and are confronted with contrasting approaches carried by different social groups within societies.

The chapter on Malaysia by Shyamala Nagaraj, Tey Nai Peng, Ng Chiu-Wan and Jean Pala (Chap. 8) illustrates how data on ethnicity are useful for the strengthening and monitoring of policies that seek to improve access to services in spheres such as employment, education and health. A great many of Malaysia's economic policies are linked to ethnicity, in order to reduce the imbalances that affect the *Bumiputera* community, which comprises mostly people of Malay origin but also some other minority groups accepted as 'sons of the soil'. The policy has seen some changes since the 1970s when it was first introduced, but it continues to be a powerful force

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<sup>2</sup>Interestingly, the same type of argument has been used by the Canadian Conservative government to justify the elimination of the compelling aspect of the long census questionnaire dealing, among other things, with ethnic and racial questions.

in the design and implementation of public policies. Malaysia has thus long been concerned with its many ethnic groups, be it in the political, economic or social arena. The counting of its major and minor groups has been an important function of the (usually) decennial census. Furthermore, information on ethnicity appears to be collected in almost all areas where documentation is involved whether in the public or private sector. But all this was possible because the Bumiputera groups were able to claim visibility due to ethnic revival brought about by the introduction of self-identification.

Uruguay, as analyzed by Cabella and Porzecanski (Chap. 9), presents a very different historical point of departure but ends up debating about what to do with diversity and discrimination. Historically, Uruguay has built upon what the authors call a national myth of racial democracy, homogeneity and equality of opportunities, all this based on the predominance of a population of European descent and the national state efforts of constructing a highly integrated society. Hence, referring to our typology, Uruguay was a country which 'did not count' for a long time. However, the country had to face increasing pressures exerted by Afro-Uruguayan organizations, which, in the end, contributed to the redefinition of Uruguayan identity. Furthermore, the myth of racial homogeneity was contradicted by a variety of social movements and ethnic leaders, based on studies showing empirically the significant socio-economic gaps between Afro-descendants and Whites. In other words, the 'statistical' growth of the Afro-descendant and Indigenous populations during the last decades in Uruguay has fostered ethnic revival due to the increasing legitimacy of non-white identities as a means to combat discrimination. This process can be seen in most of Latin American countries, where an impressive upsurge of questions related to afro-descendent people had occurred in censuses in the last 30 years. In 1980, only two countries were asking questions about race or colour, namely Brazil and Cuba; Colombia; Ecuador and El Salvador joined in during the 2000 census round, and to date, out of 18 countries which have conducted a census, 14 collect information on both indigenous people and afro-descendents (Cruces et al. 2012).

Like for other categories based on ethnicity, race or ancestry, the definition of Afro-descendent is not stabilized yet. The Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent<sup>3</sup> has defined 'People of African Descent' as 'descendants of the African victims of the Trans-Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea slave trade'.<sup>4</sup> The chairperson of the working group adds in his report that 'for the definition to be completed, it must also include Africans and their descendants who, after their countries' independence emigrated to or went to work in Europe, Canada and the Middle East where they also experienced racial discrimination suffered by those who live in Western European countries'.<sup>5</sup> This all-encompassing definition has taken different

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<sup>3</sup>Established by the CHR resolution 2002/68.

<sup>4</sup>*Identification and definition of 'People of African descent' and how racial discrimination against them is manifested in various region*, Working Paper prepared by Ambassador P.L. Kasanda, Chairperson of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, E/CN.4/2003/WG.20/WP.3 28 January 2003.

<sup>5</sup>Op.cit. para 6.



translation in Latin-American censuses in the 2010 round (Angosto Ferrandez and Kradolfer 2013).

The situation in Belgium is similar to the one described above for France. According to Nicolas Perrin, Luc Dal and Michel Poulain (Chap. 10), the ethnic reference has long been a taboo, particularly in the French-speaking region. Ideological debates, as in France, focus around the contention that origin-based statistics will foster the ethnicization of society, as opposed to arguments stating that current statistics do not provide an adequate portrait of the immigrant population. Indeed, there are growing pressures for taking into account discrimination, but existing official statistics on nationality are insufficient for that purpose. The intense immigration of the twentieth century is behind the emergence of a Belgian society profoundly marked by diversity. Until the 1980s, the distinction based on nationality was considered adequate to describe Belgian society characterized by a restrictive right to nationality. Multiple reforms in the Nationality Code adopted since 1984 have radically challenged this consensus. Today, Belgian society is progressively recognizing its ethnic diversity and the development of origin-based indicators from objective data such as nationality at birth or the country of birth of parents seems to be more and more accepted.

A number of chapters presented so far ask the question ‘how different groups use census questions to redefine themselves’. Hence, different definitions of race and ethnicity will have important impacts on the size of different groups, thus addressing the issue of what is the correct definition. This is particularly true in the case of Indigenous populations. The next two chapters deal explicitly with this issue. In Olivier Barbary’s chapter, two different criteria for defining the Indigenous population in Mexico produced 17 types of household, thus highlighting the high heterogeneity of the indigenous population (Chap. 11). Distinguishing among these different sub-groups is essential to capture the socio-economic differentiation between non-indigenous and indigenous households and among indigenous groups themselves. In this country, the census identification of Indigenous populations using linguistic criteria exists since the beginning of the twentieth century. However, with migration out of zones of origin and urbanization, the linguistic criterion is no longer appropriate inasmuch as it underestimates the importance of contemporary indigenous groups. The 2000 census thus included a self-declared ethnic identification. This chapter suggests a systematic approach to different statistical definitions, combining two dimensions: individual linguistic and self-declaration responses and household-level data linking individual responses to other household members. Multivariate analyses of the different groups based on the combined typology of households show that differences among indigenous groups and between them and non-indigenous groups are not only cultural but also based on differential access to economic resources.

The definition of Indigenous populations in Canadian censuses has always been fraught with great difficulties, particularly with respect to mixed origins. During the 1980s and 1990s, Aboriginal populations have experienced a demographic explosion. According to Eric Guimond, Norbert Robitaille and Sacha Sénécal (Chap. 12), this can be accounted for by the phenomenon of ethnic mobility, i.e., changes in ethnic

affiliation among individuals and families. This is particularly the case of intragenerational mobility (changes in the ethnic affiliation of a person over time). The authors note the same phenomenon for Aboriginal populations in the United States and Australia. They link these changes to social factors such as the restoration of Aboriginal people's pride. Territorial claim settlements and employment equity policies can also generate ethnic mobility.

## 1.5 Conclusion

If there were any beliefs that the production of census categories is objective and straightforward, the chapters presented here clearly show that racial and ethnic categories are social constructions embedded in historical and political dimensions of societies. To make a long story short, we argue that enumeration and identity politics are closely related, not only by the type of categorical identities that censuses display but also by those illegitimate identities that official statistics ignore. Furthermore, it is important to take into consideration competing claims when discussing racial and ethnic categorization and measurement issues in national censuses. On the one hand, it enables us to understand the history of ethnic and racial data production and use in a dynamic and contradictory way. On the other hand, it reminds us that the present cannot be taken for granted since competing claims and paradigms never disappear and the hegemony of one model can rapidly be questioned and inversions can occur depending on the force of specific political and social factors favouring one model over the other.

Canada illustrates, if need be, an unexpected historical case of inversion in the official production of ethnic data. We say 'unexpected' because Canada had always been pinpointed as an example of the consensual production of ethnic data. The fact is that a year ahead of the 2011 census, the government took an unforeseen decision to discard the mandatory full census form and to transfer all the questions to a non-mandatory household survey. This decision has fostered an unprecedented controversy on the risks of degrading the quality of the information gathered previously in the census. Technically, the non-response rate of a voluntary survey is obviously higher than for a compulsory census. Statistics Canada has assumed a response rate of 50 % for the Household survey, to be compared with a 94 % in the census. The agency tried to compensate for this reduction in the expected participation by increasing the sample size, so that the non-response bias will not affect the findings. Critical on the governmental decision, the head of Statistics Canada decided to resign from his mandate in protest, in July 2010.

The United States too have entered in a long process of revision of the statistical representation of race and ethnicity. After the introduction of a "Hispanic ethnicity" question in the census in 1970, the second major evolution of census classification occurred in 2000 with a multiple answer available to the race question. These evolutions came up as a combination of group negotiation (bottom-up) and state imposition (top-down) in the context of Civil Rights Movement and the shift in census understanding

for the nation-state, government officials, interest groups and individuals (see Skrentny 2001). The census functions somehow as a mode of escaping oppression and the avenue for ethnic/racial groups to compete for a place within the larger nation-state, and ethnic and racial lobbying groups negotiate with special task forces within the Census Bureau gain recognition in official statistics (Schor 2009). In preparation of the next census in 2020, the Hispanic ethnicity and Race questions are under a new revision. The census bureau experiments different questions, wordings and coding to collect race and ethnicity (Compton et al. 2013). If retained after the National Content Test of 2015, the major change would consist in a combination of race and origin in a single question, with open ended questions for each ethnoracial category. Not only would the Hispanic question be conflated with the Race question, but the ethnic ancestry of (predominantly White) Americans would then be associated with their race. The introduction of a “MENA” category (“Middle Eastern or North African”) in this redesigned ethnoracial question is also debated. This is a good example of the use of the census as a political forum to bringing about changes in collective representations and public policies (Prewitt 2013). In North America, like in all parts of the world, statistics tell a lot about how the State defines legitimate identities for the purpose of policy making and redistribution.

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**Part I**  
**Comparative Accounts of Ethnic Statistics**

# Chapter 2

## Ethnic Classification in Global Perspective: A Cross-National Survey of the 2000 Census Round

Ann Morning

### 2.1 Introduction

Many if not most countries around the world categorize their inhabitants by race, ethnicity and/or national origins when it comes time to conduct a census. In an unpublished survey of census questionnaires, the United Nations found that 65 % enumerated their populations by national or ethnic group (United Nations Statistics Division 2003). However, this statistic encompasses a wide diversity of approaches to ethnic classification, as evinced by the spectrum of terms employed; ‘race,’ ‘ethnic origin,’ ‘nationality,’ ‘ancestry’ and ‘indigenous,’ ‘tribal’ or ‘aboriginal’ group all serve to draw distinctions within the national population. The picture is further complicated by the ambiguity of the meanings of these terms: what is called ‘race’ in one country might be labelled ‘ethnicity’ in another, while ‘nationality’ means ancestry in some contexts and citizenship in others. Even within the same country, one term can take on several connotations, or several terms may be used interchangeably.

This article surveys the approaches to ethnic enumeration that 141 nations took on their 1995–2004 (or ‘2000 round’) censuses. Using a unique data set compiled by the United Nations Statistical Division, this research identifies several dimensions along which classification practices vary. Specifically, I address three research questions:

1. How widespread is census enumeration by ethnicity, in global terms?
2. Among national censuses that do enumerate by ethnicity, what approaches do they take, in terms of both their question and answer formats?
3. What geographic patterns, if any, do ethnic enumeration practices follow?

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## 2.2 Classification by Ethnicity

This chapter uses a broad definition of ‘ethnic enumeration’ that includes census references to a heterogeneous collection of terms (e.g., ‘ethnic group,’ ‘race,’ ‘people,’ ‘tribe’), which indicate a contemporary yet somewhat inchoate sense of origin-based ‘groupness.’ Despite the fluidity between the conceptual borders of ethnicity, race and nationality, at their cores they share a common connotation of ancestry or ‘community of descent’ (Hollinger 1998). Each concept relies on a different type of proof or manifestation of those shared roots – ethnicity discerns it in cultural practices or beliefs (e.g., dress, language, religion), race in perceived physical traits, and nationality through geographic location – yet they all aim to convey an accounting of origins or ancestry. As a result, in the research to be described I have included all three of these terms – and others – as indicators of one underlying concept of origins. For this umbrella concept I use the label ‘ethnicity’ rather than ‘ancestry,’ however, to emphasize the immediacy that such categories can have when individuals identify themselves. As Alba (1990: 38) points out, ancestry involves beliefs about one’s forebears, while ethnicity is a matter of ‘beliefs directly about oneself.’ He illustrates the difference as being one between the statements, ‘My great-grandparents came from Poland’ (ancestry) versus ‘I am Polish’ (ethnicity).

Identifying a core meaning shared by varied ethnicity-related terms makes possible a global comparative study of ethnic categorization. Previous academic comparisons of census ethnic enumeration have usually included only a few national cases, as part of an intensive examination of the social, historical and political factors behind diverse classificatory regimes (e.g., Kertzer and Arel 2002a; Nobles 2000). And the broader surveys available are generally either regional (e.g., Almey et al. 1992), not based on systematic samples (e.g., Rallu et al. 2004; Statistics Canada and U.S. Census Bureau 1993), or focused on informal conventions rather than official categorization schemes (e.g., Wagley 1965). As a result, no comprehensive international analysis of formal ethnic enumeration approaches precedes this study. One of the fundamental contributions made here is thus an empirical one, in the form of a profile of ethnic enumeration worldwide and typology of such practices.

Providing information about a large sample of contemporary national censuses is also a major step forward for theory-building about the origins of different classificatory systems. Collecting data on the dependent variable of classification type suggests important features to measure and eventually to explain. Rallu et al. (2004) exemplify the possibilities of such an analysis by proposing four types of governmental approach to ethnic enumeration:

1. Enumeration for political control (*compter pour dominer*)
2. Non-enumeration in the name of national integration (*ne pas compter au nom de l'intégration nationale*)
3. Discourse of national hybridity (*compter ou ne pas compter au nom de la mixité*)
4. Enumeration for antidiscrimination (*compter pour justifier l'action positive*)



Rallu et al. (2004) identify colonial census administration with the first category, as well as related examples such as apartheid-era South Africa, the Soviet Union and Rwanda. In these cases, ethnic categories form the basis for exclusionary policies. In the second category, where ethnic categories are rejected in order to promote national unity, western European nations such as France, Germany and Spain are prominent. The third category is largely associated with Latin American countries, where governments take different decisions about whether to enumerate by ethnicity, but a broader discourse praising interethnic mixture or hybridity is not uncommon. The final category is illustrated with examples from Latin America (e.g., Brazil, Colombia) and Asia (China), but the principal cases discussed here are those of England, Canada and the United States, where ethnic census data serve as tools in combating discrimination. Despite the number of regions that Rallu et al. (2004) take into account, however, their conclusions are drawn from a limited set of countries rather than the complete international pool. As a result, the four-part schema they identify might be altered if a wider sample of national censuses were considered.

Another element that is missing from the existing literature on ethnic enumeration is comparative content analysis of the language of census ethnicity items. The studies previously described generally focus on the question of which political motives result in the presence or absence of an ethnic question on a national census. They do not delve into the details of the precise format of the question. But such nuances offer particular applied interest for demographers and other census officials. Maintaining that such technical information is of use for the architects of population censuses, this chapter investigates what terminology is used in different countries (e.g., ‘race’ or ‘nationality’?), how the request for information is framed, and what options are given to respondents in formulating their answer. In this way, the project may suggest alternative approaches to implement when census forms are being redesigned and offer a basis for weighing the relative strengths and weaknesses of diverse formats.

## 2.3 Data and Methodology

As publisher of the annual Demographic Yearbook, the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD) regularly collects international census information, including both questionnaire forms and data results. For the 2000 round (i.e., censuses conducted from 1995 through 2004), UNSD drew up a list of 231 nations and territories from which to solicit census materials. As of June 2005, this researcher located 141 national questionnaires in the UNSD collection and elsewhere (i.e., from 61 % of the countries listed) and calculated that 30 nations (13 %) had not scheduled a census in that round. Therefore questionnaires were missing from 60 countries (26 % of the original list, or 30 % of the 201 countries expected to have conducted a census within the 2000 round).

The gaps in the resultant database’s coverage of international census-taking were not spread randomly across the globe, as Table 2.1 shows. The nations of Europe were best-represented in the collection, as all of the 2000 census round

**Table 2.1** Countries included in study

	N. America		S. America		Africa		Europe		Asia		Oceania		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Included in study	18	49	11	79	19	34	37	76	37	76	19	76	141	61
Missing questionnaire	17	46	3	21	26	46	0	0	9	18	5	20	60	23
No census planned	2	5	0	0	11	20	12	24	4	8	1	4	30	13
Total	37	100	14	100	56	101	49	100	50	100	25	100	231	100
Region % share in study sample		13		8		13		26		26		13		100
% Region covered		51		79		42		100		80		79		70

Notes:

(1) See Appendix Table A for list of countries comprising each region.

(2) 'No Census Planned' includes both countries that have foregone census enumeration in favour of population registers (this is most often the case in Northern Europe) as well as those that have not scheduled any enumeration for the 2000 round

questionnaires available have been located. Next came Asia (including the Middle East), for which 80 % of the available questionnaires have been obtained, followed by South America and Oceania (79 % each), North America (at 51 %, including Central America and the Caribbean), and Africa (42 %). One effect of this uneven coverage is that African countries, which would make up 22 % of the sample and the second-largest regional bloc after Asia if all its 1995–2004 censuses were included, contribute only 13 % to the final sample of national census questionnaires studied. More generally, the variation in coverage suggests that while the results to be described can be considered a good representation of enumeration in Europe, Asia, South America and Oceania, this is not the case for discussion of North (and Central) America or of Africa. Moreover, the country-level data below do not indicate what percentage of the world's population is covered by the census regimes studied here; findings are not weighted by national population in this inquiry.

Each census form available was checked for questions about respondents' 'race,' 'ethnicity,' 'ancestry,' 'nationality' or 'national origins,' 'indigenous' or 'aboriginal' status – in short, any terminology that indicated group membership based on descent. Although language, religion and legal citizenship questions also appear frequently on national censuses and may be interpreted as reflections of ethnic affiliation, I do not include such indirect references to ancestry. (Consider for example how poor an indicator of ethnicity 'Native English Speaker' status would be in a multicultural society like the United States.) When an ethnicity item as defined above appeared on a census, both the question text and response categories or format were entered verbatim into a database. Translations into English were provided by national census authorities, United Nations staff, the author and others for all but three questionnaires, resulting in a final sample of 138 censuses.

## 2.4 Findings

### 2.4.1 *Frequency of Ethnic Enumeration*

Among the 138 national census questionnaires analyzed, 87 countries or 63 % employed some form of ethnic census classification (see Appendix for complete listing). As Table 2.2 shows, North America, South America and Oceania were the regions with the greatest propensity to include ethnicity on their censuses. While Asia's tendency to enumerate by ethnicity was close to the sample average, both Europe and Africa were much less likely to do so. This regional variation may be explained by Rallu et al's. (2004) hypothesis that concern about the preservation of national unity leads some countries to forgo ethnic enumeration. The tendency toward ethnic counting in the Americas also suggests, however, that societies whose populations are largely descended from relatively recent settlers (voluntary or involuntary) are most likely to characterize their inhabitants in ethnic terms. As Bean and Tienda (1987: 34–35) wrote of the United States, 'an ethnic group is created by the entry of an immigrant group into...society.'

**Table 2.2** Share of countries studied using ethnic enumeration, by region

	N. America		S. America		Africa		Europe		Asia		Oceania		Total	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Enumerating ethnicity	15	83	9	82	8	44	16	44	23	64	16	84	87	63
Total N countries studied in region	18		11		18		36		36		19		138	

## 2.4.2 Census Ethnicity Questions

### 2.4.2.1 Terminology and Geographic Distribution

Not only do nations and regions vary in their censuses' inclusion of ethnicity items, but they also employ widely differing terminology for such questions. In 49 of the 87 cases of ethnic enumeration (56 %), the terms ethnicity or ethnic (or their foreign-language cognates like '*ethnicité*' and '*étnico*') were used. This terminology was found on censuses from every world region. Often the term was combined with others for clarification, as in: 'Caste/Ethnicity' (Nepal); 'cultural and ethnic background' (Channel Islands/Jersey); '*grupo étnico (pueblo)*' (Guatemala); 'Ethnic/Dialect Group' (Singapore); 'Ethnic nationality' (Latvia); and 'race or ethnic group' (Jamaica). Overall, nine different terms or concepts appeared in census ethnicity questions; Table 2.3 lists them in descending order of frequency. The table also distinguishes between 'primary' terms (i.e., first to appear if more than one term is used in one or more questions) and 'secondary,' or following, terms. For example, in the Nepal example above, caste was recorded as the primary term and ethnicity as a secondary term.

As Table 2.3 shows, the second most frequent term after ethnicity was nationality, used by 20 nations (or 23 %). Here nationality denoted origins rather than current legal citizenship status. This distinction was made clear in most cases either by the presence on the census questionnaire of a separate question for citizenship (e.g., Romania, Tajikistan) or by the use of the adjective 'ethnic' to create the term 'ethnic nationality' (Estonia). However, I also include in this category census items that combined ethnicity and nationality by using a single question to identify either citizens' ethnicity or non-citizens' nationality. For example, the Senegalese question ran, '*Ethnie ou nationalité: Inscrivez l'ethnie pour les Sénégalais et la nationalité pour les étrangers*' [Ethnicity or nationality: Write down ethnicity for Senegalese and nationality for foreigners].

References to nationality as ethnic origin came largely from Eastern European nations (e.g., Poland, Romania) and Asian countries of the former Soviet Union such as Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (see Table 2.4). This regional concentration reflects a number of historical factors. First, twentieth century (and earlier) movements of both political borders and people in Eastern Europe left groups with allegiances to past or neighbouring governments situated in new or different

**Table 2.3** Terminology of census ethnicity questions

	Number of countries using term as:		Total frequency	
	Primary term	Secondary term	N	%
Ethnicity	45	4	49	56
Nationality	17	3	20	23
Indigenous group/tribe	6	7	13	15
Race	3	10	13	15
Ancestry/descent/origin	3	3	6	7
Cultural group	2	2	4	5
Community/population	3	0	3	3
Caste	2	0	2	2
Colour/phenotype	2	0	2	2

*Notes:*

(1) The number of primary terms does not sum to the full number of countries that enumerated by ethnicity (87) because some censuses either included an ethnicity term in a secondary position only, preceded by terms referring to language or religion, or used no descriptive term at all (e.g., Philippines: ‘How does [the person] classify himself/herself?’).

(2) The sum of term frequencies exceeds 100 % because some censuses feature more than one term

states (Eberhardt 2003). Second, this reinforced existing Romantic notions of nations as corresponding to ethnic communities of descent (Kertzer and Arel 2002b). Finally, the Soviet Union’s practice of identifying distinct nationalities within its borders extended the equation of nationality with ethnic membership (Blum and Gousseff 1996).

Roughly 15 % of the national censuses asked about respondents’ indigenous status. These cases came from North America (e.g., Mexico: ‘¿[Name] *pertenece a algún grupo indígena?*’; [Does [name] belong to an indigenous group?], South America (e.g., Venezuela: ‘¿*Pertenece usted a algún grupo indígena?*’; [Do you belong to an indigenous group?], Oceania (e.g., Nauru: ‘family’s local tribe’), and Africa (Kenya: ‘Write tribe code for Kenyan Africans’). Indigeneity seems to serve as a marker largely in nations that experienced European colonialism, where it distinguishes populations that ostensibly do not have European ancestry (separating them from mestizos, for example, in Mexico) or who inhabited the territory prior to European settlement. The indigenous status formulation was not found on any European or Asian censuses.

The same number of countries (13, or 15 % of all censuses using some form of ethnic enumeration) asked for respondents’ race, but this term was three times more likely to appear as a secondary term than as a primary one. For example, the Brazilian question placed race after colour (‘*A sua cor o raça e:*’), and Anguilla used race to modify ethnicity: ‘To what ethnic/racial group does [the person] belong?’. Race usage was largely confined to North America (including Central America and the Caribbean), as well as to United States territories in Oceania (American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands). More specifically, census usage of race is found almost entirely in the former slaveholding societies of the Western Hemisphere and their territories.

**Table 2.4** Census ethnicity terminology by region

Primary or secondary term:	N. America		S. America		Africa		Europe		Asia		Oceania		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Ethnicity	8	53	3	33	4	50	9	56	12	52	13	81	49	56
Nationality	0	0	0	0	2	25	9	56	8	35	1	6	20	23
Indigenous/tribe	2	13	6	67	1	13	0	0	0	0	4	25	13	15
Race	7	47	1	11	1	13	0	0	0	0	4	25	13	15
Countries covered by 4 terms	13	87	8	89	5	63	16	100	20	87	16	100	78	90
No. Countries using some ethnicity term	15		9		8		16		23		16		87	

*Note:*

Percentages do not total to 100, because (a) not all ethnic terms are included; and (b) many countries use more than one ethnic term on their censuses

Of the 13 countries studied that enumerate by race, 11 are either New World former slave societies (United States, Anguilla, Bermuda, Brazil, Jamaica and Saint Lucia) and/or their territories (United States Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, and Northern Mariana Islands).

Table 2.4 summarizes the geographic patterns in usage of the four most frequent ethnic terms found on national census questionnaires. Reference to ethnicity is most prevalent in Oceania and least prevalent in South America, whereas nationality is found on more than half of the European censuses but on none in the Americas. Conversely, references to indigenous status or 'tribe' reach their peak in South America, but are absent on European and Asian censuses. Similarly, race is not found on European or Asian censuses, but appears on almost half of those used in North America (which includes Central America and the Caribbean). Still, in all regions ethnicity remains the most frequent term used, with the exception of South America, where references to indigenous status appear twice as often as those to ethnicity. Together, the four most frequent terms – ethnicity, nationality, indigenous group and race – appear on 90 % of the censuses that enumerate by ethnicity.

#### 2.4.2.2 The Language of Census Ethnicity Questions: The Subjectivity of Identity

Census ethnicity questions vary considerably not just in their terminology but also in the language they use to elicit respondents' identities. In particular, census questionnaires differ noticeably in their recognition of ethnicity as a matter of subjective belief, as opposed to objective fact. Twelve (or 14 %) of the 87 countries that practice ethnic enumeration treat it as a subjective facet of identity by asking respondents what they 'think,' 'consider,' or otherwise believe themselves to be. Examples come from every world region. Saint Lucia's census asks, 'To what ethnic group *do you think* [the person] belongs?' (emphasis added) rather than simply, 'To what ethnic, racial or national group *does* [the person] belong?' The same explicitly subjective formulation is found on the census questionnaires of New Caledonia ('*A laquelle des communautés suivantes estimez-vous appartenir?*' [To which of the following communities *do you think* you belong?]), and Paraguay ('*¿Se considera perteneciente a una étnia indígena?*'; [*Do you consider yourself* as belonging to an indigenous ethnic group?]), for example (emphases mine).

In addition to the recognition of the subjectivity of identity through references to respondents' beliefs, these censuses achieve the same end by emphasizing the personal, self-selected aspect of ethnicity; it is what the individual says it is, not the product of an objective external measurement. Accordingly, the individual respondent's choice is paramount here, as in the Philippines' question, 'How does [the person] classify himself/herself?' or Bermuda's 'In your opinion, which of the following best describes your ancestry?' South Africa's census asks, 'How would (the person) describe him/herself in terms of population group?' while Jamaica asks, 'To which race or ethnic group would you say you/... belong(s)?', both questions employing the conditional tense. Deference to the individual's choice of

self-recognition is found in non-English formulations as well, such as Argentina's '*¿Existe en este hogar alguna persona que se reconozca descendiente o perteneciente a un pueblo indígena?*' [Is there someone in this household who considers him/herself a descendant of or belonging to an indigenous people?], or Suriname's '*Tot welke etnische groep rekent deze persoon zichzelf?*' (With which ethnic group does this person identify him/herself?). Peru's census question even lays out the basis on which individuals might construct their ethnic identity, asking '*¿Por sus antepasados y de acuerdo a sus costumbres Ud. se considera:...*' [Given your ancestors and traditions, you consider yourself...].

Many of these examples also illustrate another strategy of recognizing the subjectivity of identity, and that is the reference to ethnic groups as something with which one is affiliated, as opposed to the more total ethnicity as something that one is. The difference between an essential being ethnic and a constructed belonging to an ethnicity can be illustrated by juxtaposing the question 'What is your ethnic group?' (United Kingdom) against 'To what ethnic group do you belong?' (Guyana). The difference is subtle, yet it marks a distinction between a more essentialist concept of ethnicity as objectively given, and a more constructionist understanding of ethnicity as socially and thus subjectively developed. In addition to the 14 % of the national censuses studied that presented ethnicity as subjective in the ways previously described, another 21 % (18 countries) used the concept of belonging (*appartenir* in French, *pertenecer* in Spanish) in the formulation of their ethnicity question. Again, this approach was found on censuses from every world region.

It is clear however that in the majority of cases, census ethnicity questions were brief and direct, simply treating ethnicity as an objective individual characteristic to be reported. Some did not in fact include a question, merely a title (e.g., 'Ethnic Group,' Bulgaria). However, it should be noted that three national censuses from Eastern Europe indicated that it was not obligatory to respond to the ethnicity question, ostensibly due to its sensitive nature. Croatia's census notes 'person is not obliged to commit himself/herself,' Slovenia's reads, 'You don't have to answer this question if you don't wish to,' and Hungary adds, 'Answering the following questions is not compulsory!'

### 2.4.3 Answering the Ethnicity Question

#### 2.4.3.1 Response Formats

Turning now to the structuring of response options for ethnicity questions, the national censuses studied employed three types of answer format:

1. Closed-ended responses (e.g., category checkboxes; code lists)
2. Closed-ended with open-ended 'Other' option (i.e., permitting the respondent to write in a group name not included on the list presented)
3. Open-ended (i.e., write-in blanks)



The three approaches were used in nearly equal proportions among the 87 countries employing ethnic enumeration: 32 (37 %) used the entirely closed-ended approach, 28 (32 %) the mixed approach, and 27 (31 %) permitted respondents to write in whatever ethnic identity they chose.

The closed-ended approach generally took two forms: either a limited number of checkbox category options, or the request to select a code from a list of ethnic groups assigned to codes. The former strategy can be found, for example, on the Brazilian census, which gave respondents five options to choose from to identify their 'colour or race': (1) *Branca* (white); (2) *Preta* (black or dark brown); (3) *Parda* (brown or light brown); (4) *Amarela* (yellow); (5) *Indigena* (indigenous). This listing of five categories is a relatively brief one; another such example is Romania's series of 'nationality' answers: (1) Romanian; (2) Hungarian; (3) Gypsy/Roma; (4) German and (5) Other. At the other end of the spectrum, Guatemala offered a list of 22 indigenous groups plus Garifuna and Ladino, and Argentina and Paraguay each presented a list of 17 indigenous groups for selection by the respondent. However, the second type of closed-ended format – the linking of ethnic groups to code numbers – permitted respondents to select from an even longer list of choices; Laos offered 48 such code options. Other countries to use the code-list strategy were Ghana, Kenya, Malaysia, the Philippines and India.

An even wider range of responses was possible on the censuses that featured the combination of closed-ended categories with a fill-in blank for the 'Other' option alone. After giving respondents six options to choose from – Estonian, Ukrainian, Finnish, Russian, Belorussian and Latvian – the Estonian census requested that individuals choosing the seventh 'Other' box write in their specific 'ethnic nationality.' In Mongolia, respondents either identified with the Khalkh option or wrote in their ethnicity. Singapore listed 13 possibilities for 'ethnic/dialect group' – Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Hakka (Khek), Hainanese, Malay, Boyanese, Javanese, Tamil, Filipino, Thai, Japanese and Eurasian – before requesting specification from anyone selecting the last, 'Others' option.

In the last, entirely open-ended strategy, respondents were simply asked to 'write in' (Senegal) or 'provide the name of' (China) their ethnic group. This approach may not always offer the respondent as much latitude as it appears, however. In nations where one's ethnic affiliation is firmly fixed in other official records (e.g., mandatory identity documents), individuals may not choose freely from an unlimited range of identities so much as they reproduce the label that has already been assigned to them by state bureaucracies.

Although the sample of censuses studied was fairly evenly divided across the three types of ethnic response format, each world region generally favoured one approach more than the others. Table 2.5 shows that in South America and Africa, the closed-ended approach was taken by about two thirds of the national censuses, whereas roughly the same share in Europe used the mixed approach, and about two thirds of Asian censuses relied on the open-ended strategy.

In addition to geographic distribution, census ethnicity response formats also vary depending on whether the terminology in use is ethnicity, nationality, indigenous status/tribe, or race (see Table 2.6). In particular, questions on nationality are

**Table 2.5** Census ethnicity response formats by region

	N. America		S. America		Africa		Europe		Asia		Oceania		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Primary term only:														
Closed-ended	7	47	6	67	5	63	2	13	6	26	6	38	32	37
Closed w/ 'other' write-in option	6	40	3	33	1	13	11	69	2	9	5	31	28	32
Open-ended	2	13	0	0	2	25	3	19	15	65	5	31	27	31
Total	15	100	9	100	8	101	16	101	23	100	16	100	87	100

*Note:*

Each country is represented only once here even if its census includes more than one question on ethnicity. In that case, only the first question is classified here

**Table 2.6** Census ethnicity response formats by question type

	Ethnicity		Nationality		Indigenous/ Tribe		Race	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Primary term only:								
Closed-ended	17	38	2	12	4	67	2	67
Closed w/ 'other' write-in option	14	31	6	35	1	16	1	33
Open-ended	14	31	9	53	1	16	0	0
Total	45	100	17	100	6	99	3	100

*Note:*

Only 71 countries, rather than the full 87 that enumerate by ethnicity, are included in this table because it is limited to census questionnaires whose primary ethnicity term is one of the four most frequent terms: ethnicity, nationality, indigenous/tribe, or race. See Table 2.3 for the breakdown of ethnicity terms by primary and secondary status

most likely to permit some kind of write-in response, while those inquiring about indigenous status and race are the least likely to do so. The first finding may reflect the expectation that fairly few national origins are likely to be elicited and thus an open-ended approach is not likely to become unwieldy. The second finding may reflect governmental tendencies to develop official lists of indigenous and racial groups that are formally recognized by the state, coupled with a sense of necessity to assign all respondents to such predetermined indigenous or racial groups. In addition, popular conceptions of these identities may depict them as involving a limited number of categories (such as 'black,' 'white,' and 'yellow' colour groupings) or even simple dichotomies (e.g., indigenous versus non-indigenous).

### 2.4.3.2 Response Options

Census response formats for ethnicity vary in other ways worth noting:

(a.) Mixed or Combined Categories. Several census questionnaires permit the respondent to identify with more than one ethnicity. This flexibility takes three forms. First, some censuses allow the respondent to check off more than one category (e.g., Channel Islands – Jersey; Canada; New Zealand; United States; U.S. Virgin Islands). Other census questionnaires offer a generic mixed-ethnicity response option (e.g., 'Mixed': Channel Islands – Jersey, Saint Lucia, Anguilla, Guyana, Zimbabwe, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Mozambique, Solomon Islands, Suriname; 'Mestizo': Belize, Peru; 'Coloured' in South Africa). Finally, some censuses specify exact combinations of interest, for example: 'White and Black Caribbean,' 'White and Black African,' etc. in the United Kingdom; 'Black and White,' 'Black and Other,' etc. in Bermuda; 'Part Cook Island Maori,' Cook Islands; 'Eurasian,' Singapore; 'Part Ni-Vanuatu,' Vanuatu; 'Part Tokelauan/Samoan,' 'Part Tokelauan/Tuvaluan,' etc., Tokelau; 'Part Tongan,' Tonga; and 'Part Tuvalu' in Tuvalu.

(b.) Overlap between ethnic, national, language and other response categories. The conceptual proximity between such concepts as ethnicity and nationality is

illustrated once again by some censuses' use of the same set of response categories to serve as answers to distinct questions on ethnicity, nationality, or language. For example, the Bermudan census response category 'Asian' can be selected when responding either to the race or the 'ancestry' question. An even more striking example comes from Hungary, where the same detailed list of categories serves as the response options to three separate questions (one each for nationality, culture and language). The options are: Bulgarian; Gipsy (Roma); Beas; Romani; Greek; Croatian; Polish; German; Armenian; Roumanian; Ruthenian; Serbian; Slovakian; Slovenian; Ukrainian; Hungarian, and 'Do not wish to answer.' Moldova also uses the same responses for three questions (one each on citizenship, nationality and language), while Estonia and Poland use the same categories for their citizenship and ethnic nationality questions, and Latvia, Romania, and Turkmenistan use the same response options for nationality and language questions.

It is also worth recalling that even when only one ethnicity question appears on a census with one set of response options, the answer categories themselves may reference multiple concepts such as race and nationality. The United States' race question, which includes answers like 'white' and 'black' alongside national or ethnic designations like 'Korean' and 'Japanese,' provides a good example. Similarly, Saint Lucia and Guyana's ethnicity options include races like 'black' and 'white' alongside national designations like 'Chinese' and 'Portuguese.'

Nationality and ethnicity are also intertwined on censuses that use a single question to ask respondents for ethnicity if they are citizens, but for something else if they are foreigners. For example, Indonesia requests, 'If the respondent is a foreigner, please specify his/her citizenship and if the respondent is an Indonesian, please specify his/her ethnicity.' Kenya's ethnicity question reads, 'Write tribe code for Kenyan Africans and country of origin for other Kenyans and non-Kenyans.' Zambia's ethnicity question instructs, 'If Zambian enter ethnic grouping, if not mark major racial group.' And Iraq's census asks only Iraqis to answer the ethnicity question.

Perhaps the simplest cases of conceptual overlap occur, however, on censuses that combine multiple terms in the same item, such as the conflation of ethnicity and race in the Solomon Islands' question: 'Ethnicity. What race do you belong to? Melanesian, Polynesian, Micronesian, Chinese, European, other or mixed?'

(c.) Use of examples. National censuses vary considerably in the extent to which they employ examples to facilitate response to their ethnicity questions. Given typical space constraints, this strategy is not widespread; instead, the list of checkbox response options may serve as the principal illustration of the objective of the question. For example, the Philippine presentation of examples before its closed-ended code-list question is unusual: 'How does [the person] classify himself/herself? Is he/she an Ibaloi, Kankanaey, Mangyan, Manobo, Chinese, Ilocano or what?' Instead, examples are more likely to be employed when the answer format calls for an open-ended write-in response; it is in this context, for example, that Fiji offers respondents the examples 'Chinese, European, Fijian, Indian, part European, Rotuman, Tongan, etc.' The U.S. Pacific territories do the same for their 'ethnic origin or race' write-in item.

In summary, both the amount of latitude that census respondents enjoy when answering an ethnicity question and the amount of guidance or clarification they are given vary widely across the international spectrum.

## 2.5 Conclusions

### 2.5.1 *Summary of Findings*

Although widespread, ethnic enumeration is not a universal feature of national censuses; 63 % of the censuses studied here included some type of ethnicity question. In nearly half of these cases, 'ethnicity' was the term used, but significant numbers of censuses inquired about 'nationality,' 'indigenous status,' and 'race.' Each of these terms tended to be associated with a particular type of response format: questions about indigenous status were most likely to entail a closed-ended response format (checkboxes or code lists), whereas nationality questions were the most likely to permit open-ended responses (i.e., fill-in blanks). National census practices also varied in terms of their allowance of multiple-group reporting and use of examples.

The large number of questionnaires studied here (138 in total, with 87 employing ethnic enumeration) permits the exploration of geographic patterns in census practices. Based on this sample, it appears that nations in the Americas and in Oceania are most likely to enumerate by ethnicity, while those in Europe and Africa are the least likely. Among the countries that do practice census ethnic classification, the term 'nationality' is most likely to be used in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, while 'indigenous status' is most likely to be a concern in the Americas, as is 'race.'

### 2.5.2 *Evaluating Ethnic Enumeration*

In addition to the empirical, theoretical and applied contributions to be made to existing research on ethnic classification (see Morning 2008), the findings reported here are relevant to debates about the formulation, feasibility and desirability of both census ethnic enumeration and international guidelines concerning it. Any proposal for new enumeration strategies, however, must reckon with the fact that census construction is not merely an exercise in survey design; it is fundamentally a political process, where state and group interests and ideology thoroughly inform the final census product (Anderson 1988; Kertzer and Arel 2002a; Nobles 2000; Skerry 2000). The United States in particular offers a long record of instances in which official racial classification has been shaped by forces other than methodological concerns (Lee 1993; Morning 2003; Wolfe 2001). The current format that

distinguishes Hispanics as an ethnic group but not a race; the inclusion of multiple sub-categories of the 'Asian' race option; and the retention of a 'Some other race' response are just a few examples of census features championed by political actors.

Consequently, it is not enough to appeal to methodological principles of logic, consistency, parsimony or clarity – nor to international precedent – when calling for change in census questionnaires. Political interpretation and agendas around the census must also be taken into account. More specifically, potential revisions that are suggested by cross-national comparison must address the policy concerns and motivations that shaped the current questionnaire. Are these political exigencies still salient or have they diminished in importance? Does the proposed revision solve or exacerbate the social problem in question, or do neither? Will the suggested change have other benefits or costs? How do they compare to the benefits and costs of the existing arrangement? Although survey design problems such as inconsistency or lack of clarity may not seem pressing enough to overhaul longstanding census items, we should not overlook the fact that they entail real costs: confusion, non-response, offense and lack of representation are just a few. In other words, the kinds of census design flaws that cross-national comparison reveals are most likely to be addressed if their implications for data quality are translated into the political language of social costs and benefits that has always shaped national census-taking.

International guidelines for the conduct of population censuses must also take both design imperatives and policy motivations into account. The most widely-applicable guidance is the United Nations Statistics Division's (1998) Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses (Revision 1). In its discussion of ethnic enumeration, this document stresses the practical difficulty of proposing a common, cross-national approach to ethnic enumeration:

The national and/or ethnic groups of the population about which information is needed in different countries are dependent upon national circumstances. Some of the bases upon which ethnic groups are identified are ethnic nationality (in other words country or area of origin as distinct from citizenship or country of legal nationality), race, colour, language, religion, customs of dress or eating, tribe or various combinations of these characteristics. In addition, some of the terms used, such as 'race', 'origin' and 'tribe', have a number of different connotations. The definitions and criteria applied by each country investigating ethnic characteristics of the population must therefore be determined by the groups that it desires to identify. By the very nature of the subject, these groups will vary widely from country to country; thus, no internationally relevant criteria can be recommended. (p. 72)

Despite the United Nations' conclusion that 'no internationally relevant criteria can be recommended,' given the many ways that ethnicity is operationalized around the world (i.e., with measures such as language or dress), this analysis has revealed a great deal of commonality in official approaches to ethnic enumeration. And despite national variety in the groups recognized or the ethnicity terminology used, a broad class of ethnicity questions targeting communities of descent can be identified. Diversity in indicators of ethnicity – which as the U.N. rightly notes, are context-driven – does not preclude recognizing and analyzing them as reflections of a shared fundamental concept. Despite the different formulations used, such as 'race' or 'nationality,' their shared reference to communities of descent justifies both

academic and policy interpretation of them as comparable categorization schemes. Just as different countries might define ‘family’ membership differently, we can recognize that their varied enumeration approaches target an underlying, shared concept of kinship – and suggest census guidelines accordingly. In short, these findings challenge the United Nations conclusion that international guidance on ethnic enumeration is not possible.

The feasibility of proposing international guidelines on ethnic enumeration is an entirely separate matter, however, from the question of what recommendations should be made, including first and foremost any guidance about whether ethnicity should be a census item at all. The debate about the desirability of formal ethnic classification is a political one – and it is important and timely. In the United States, some public figures have called for the removal of racial categories from official state-level records, believing that government policies should not be informed by data on race (Morning and Sabbagh 2005). In some European countries, France in particular, the potential introduction of official ethnic classification has been hotly debated (Blum 2002; Simon and Stavo-Debaughe 2004). While supporters believe such categories are necessary to identify and combat discrimination, opponents fear that government adoption of such a classification scheme would divide the nation, stigmatize some groups, and generally bolster concepts of difference that have been closely associated with prejudice. Given such concerns, Zuberi’s (2005) admonition that ethnic categories not be used on censuses without a clear objective, and one that will not harm those groups traditionally stigmatized by such classifications, is essential. But as the French case illustrates, it can be difficult to ascertain the pros and cons of ethnic enumeration, as its likely impact may be highly contested. While the presentation of results on global classification practices cannot answer the normative questions posed here, empirical findings on the reach and uses of such categorization schemes should nonetheless be a meaningful resource that informs the important debate over whether populations should be enumerated by ethnicity at all.

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## Appendix: Countries Included in Regional Groupings

Organizing scheme borrowed from United Nations Statistical Division

North America	South America	Africa	Europe	Asia	Oceania
<b>Anguilla*</b>	<b>Argentina*</b>	Algeria	Albania*	Afghanistan	<b>American Samoa*</b>
Antigua and Barbuda	<b>Bolivia*</b>	Angola	Andorra	<b>Armenia*</b>	<b>Australia*</b>
Aruba	<b>Brazil*</b>	Benin	Austria*	<b>Azerbaijan*</b>	<b>Cook Islands*</b>
Bahamas*	<b>Chile*</b>	Botswana*	Belarus*	Bahrain*	<b>Fiji*</b>
Barbados	Colombia	Burkina Faso	Belgium*	Bangladesh	French Polynesia*
<b>Belize*</b>	Ecuador	Burundi	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bhutan	<b>Guam*</b>
<b>Bermuda*</b>	Falkland Islands (Malvinas)	Cameroon	<b>Bulgaria*</b>	Brunei Darussalam	<b>Kiribati*</b>
British Virgin Islands	French Guiana*	Cape Verde*	Channel Islands (Guernsey)*	Cambodia*	Marshall Islands
<b>Canada*</b>	<b>Guyana*</b>	Central African Republic	<b>Channel Islands (Jersey)*</b>	<b>China*</b>	<b>Micronesia (Federated States of)*</b>
Cayman Islands	<b>Paraguay*</b>	Chad	<b>Croatia*</b>	<b>Cyprus*</b>	<b>Nauru*</b>
<b>Costa Rica*</b>	<b>Peru*</b>	Comoros	Czech Republic*	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	<b>New Caledonia*</b>
Cuba	<b>Suriname*</b>	Congo	Denmark	East Timor*	<b>New Zealand*</b>
Dominica	Uruguay*	Cote d'Ivoire	<b>Estonia*</b>	<b>Georgia*</b>	Niue
Dominican Republic	<b>Venezuela*</b>	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Faeroe Islands	<b>Hong Kong*</b>	Norfolk Island
El Salvador		Djibouti	Finland*	<b>India*</b>	<b>Northern Mariana Islands*</b>
Greenland		Egypt*	France*	<b>Indonesia*</b>	Palau
Grenada		Equatorial Guinea	Germany	Iran	Papua New Guinea*
Guadeloupe		Eritrea	Gibraltar	<b>Iraq*</b>	Pitcairn
<b>Guatemala*</b>		Ethiopia	Greece*	Israel*	Samoa

(continued)



North America	South America	Africa	Europe	Asia	Oceania
Haiti*		Gabon	Holy See	Japan*	<b>Solomon Islands*</b>
<b>Honduras*</b>		Gambia	<b>Hungary*</b>	Jordan	<b>Tokelau*</b>
<b>Jamaica*</b>		<b>Ghana*</b>	Iceland	<b>Kazakhstan*</b>	<b>Tonga*</b>
Martinique		Guinea*	Ireland*	Kuwait*	<b>Tuvalu*</b>
<b>Mexico*</b>		Guinea-Bissau	Isle of Man*	<b>Kyrgyzstan*</b>	<b>Vanuatu*</b>
Montserrat		<b>Kenya*</b>	Italy*	<b>Lao People's Dem. Republic*</b>	Wallis and Futuna Islands*
Netherlands Antilles		Lesotho*	<b>Latvia*</b>	Lebanon	
Nicaragua*		Liberia	Liechtenstein*	<b>Macao*</b>	
<b>Panama*</b>		Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	<b>Lithuania*</b>	<b>Malaysia*</b>	
<b>Puerto Rico*</b>		Madagascar	Luxembourg*	Maldives*	
Saint Kitts and Nevis		Malawi*	Malta*	<b>Mongolia*</b>	
<b>Saint Lucia*</b>		Mali	Monaco*	Myanmar	
Saint Pierre and Miquelon		Mauritania	Netherlands	<b>Nepal*</b>	
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines		<b>Mauritius*</b>	Norway*	Occupied Palestinian Territory*	
<b>Trinidad and Tobago*</b>		Morocco*	<b>Poland*</b>	Oman	
Turks and Caicos Islands		<b>Mozambique*</b>	Portugal*	Pakistan*	
<b>United States*</b>		Namibia*	<b>Republic of Moldova*</b>	<b>Philippines*</b>	
<b>U.S. Virgin Islands*</b>		Niger	<b>Romania*</b>	Qatar	
		Nigeria	<b>Russian Federation*</b>	Republic of Korea*	
		Réunion	San Marino	Saudi Arabia	
		Rwanda	Slovakia	<b>Singapore*</b>	
		Saint Helena	<b>Slovenia*</b>	<b>Sri Lanka*</b>	
		Sao Tome and Principe	Spain*	Syrian Arab Republic	
		<b>Senegal*</b>	Svalbard and Jan Mayen Islands	<b>Tajikistan*</b>	
		Seychelles*	Sweden	Thailand*	
		Sierra Leone	Switzerland*	Turkey*	

(continued)

North America	South America	Africa	Europe	Asia	Oceania
		Somalia	<b>Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*</b>	<b>Turkmenistan*</b>	
		<b>South Africa*</b>	<b>Ukraine*</b>	United Arab Emirates	
		Sudan	<b>United Kingdom*</b>	<b>Uzbekistan*</b>	
		Swaziland*	<b>Yugoslavia*</b>	<b>Vietnam*</b>	
		Togo		Yemen*	
		Tunisia			
		Uganda			
		United Rep. of Tanzania*			
		Western Sahara			
		<b>Zambia*</b>			
		<b>Zimbabwe*</b>			

Countries marked with an asterisk \* are those whose censuses from the 1995–2004 period were used for this study; countries in bold include an ethnicity question on the census

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# Chapter 3

## ‘Inside Out’: The Politics of Enumerating the Nation by Ethnicity

Tahu Kukutai and Victor Thompson

### 3.1 Introduction

Since the 1990s, state practices of counting and classifying populations by ethnicity have come under increased scrutiny within the social sciences (Arel 2002; Kertzer and Arel 2002; Nobles 2000; Perlmann and Waters 2002; Petersen 1997; Statistics Canada and U.S. Census Bureau 1993). A number of excellent case studies have provided critical insights into how and why ethnic enumeration is pursued in particular times and places.<sup>1</sup> However, with some notable exceptions (Morning 2008; Rallu et al. 2006), little attention has been given to theorizing or empirically testing a global model of ethnic classification and counting. Consequently, there is a limited understanding about the general conditions that impede or encourage state recognition of ethnicity in the national census and the forms that such recognition takes.

This chapter represents an exploratory attempt to develop and test a general theoretical model of ethnic enumeration. It is underpinned by two assumptions. The first is that the recognition of ethnic differences in forums such as the census is influenced by factors that have similar effects across states. This assumption marks

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<sup>1</sup> The following is a select list of studies of the ethnic enumeration practices in specific countries or regions: South Africa (Khalfani and Zuberi 2001); Canada (Curtis 2001); France (Blum 2002); Brazil (Bailey and Telles 2006); Soviet Union (Arel 2002); United Kingdom (Bonnet and Carrington 2000); and United States (Perlmann and Waters 2002; Rodríguez 2000). Examples of comparative studies across two or more countries include: Nobles (2000); Rallu et al. (2006); and Marx (1998).

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a significant departure from the prevailing view that ethnic enumeration is best understood as the unique product of a country's historical relations and contemporary conditions. The second premise is that ethnic classification and counting is influenced as much by factors exogenous to states, as by domestic conditions. Research in the world society tradition has persuasively shown that states are not disconnected islands, but are enmeshed in global networks through trade, participation in International Governmental and Nongovernmental Organizations (IGOs and INGOS), and the endorsement of global human rights instruments (Cole 2006; Tsutsui and Wotipka 2004). We propose that the extent to which states suppress or embrace the recognition of ethnic diversity within their boundaries is likely to be influenced by their level of integration into global civil society (Meyer et al. 1997). This theoretical approach is novel, because it considers how integration into world society<sup>4</sup> influences the recognition of ethnic differences 'at home'.

We examine these proposals through empirical analyses of census and population registration forms for 151 countries for the period 1995–2004. Our comparative approach enables us to empirically weigh the relative importance of internal and external state factors, and it raises a set of fascinating questions. What are the domestic conditions or features that systematically encourage or suppress state recognition of ethnic differences? Does state support for ethnic equality on the world stage translate into the recognition of ethnic differences at home? Why do some states recognise ethnicity as a dimension of difference, but stop short of acknowledging specific group identities?

We begin by considering critical perspectives on census-taking and ethnic enumeration. From the literature we identify a set of factors most likely to predict whether states engage ethnic counting and classification and what form it is likely to take. After showing the relative distribution of how states enumerate, we use maximum likelihood ordered logistic regression models to examine two related outcomes: if states enumerate by ethnicity and if specific collective identities are recognised. Our findings support the prevailing view that national strategies of ethnic enumeration are shaped by dynamics internal to states, but we also find support for our hypothesis that ties to global civil society matter. The findings confirm our general argument that the effects of state-level factors, whether internal or external, can be generalised across vastly different geographic contexts. This latter finding offers much promise for broadening the theoretical understanding of ethnic accounting, particularly if it can be extended in the future to include a greater set of variables and additional time periods. Before discussing the empirical analysis in more detail we first briefly review theories of census-taking and ethnic enumeration below.

### 3.2 The Politics of Classifying and Counting by Ethnicity

Given the considerable resources involved in producing a census and the varied ways in which census data are used, it is unsurprising that governments promote census-taking as a universal and efficient model of objective, scientific inquiry (Ventresca 1995; 2002). Among social scientists, however, counting and classifying

people is seen first and foremost as a political endeavour (Anderson 1991). As a political process, the census is influenced by pressures exerted from the 'top down,' as well as the 'bottom up' (Arel 2002; Bonnet and Carrington 2000; Kertzer and Arel 2002; Morning and Sabbagh 2005; Nobles 2000; Prewitt 2000; Rallu et al. 2006). From the former vantage point, ethnic classifications and categories are seen as an extension of hierarchical arrangements and dominant group interests. Early US censuses are an often-cited exemplar of these impositions. Early censuses divided the populace into 'free' whites, slaves and Indians, taxed or untaxed. Depending on which group an individual was assigned to, he or she would be counted as a 'whole' person, 'three-fifths' of a person, or not at all.<sup>2</sup> This symbolic positioning not only justified and reinforced dominant racial logics and race-based inequalities, but also influenced the balance of power in a way that ensured Southern state interests would have a strong presence in US politics (Ellis 2000). The federal government's ability to influence race is most apparent in its institution of blood quantum rules to determine who could identify as American Indian, the effect of which was to limit the size of the American population and the state's obligations to them (Snipp 1989).

The notion that state practices of ethnic enumeration are also shaped from the 'bottom up' is a comparatively recent idea that follows transformations in ethnic relations, notably growing diversity and the diffusion of minority rights (Petersen 1997; Rodríguez 2000). Evidence of bottom up politics may be seen in the shifting purpose of ethnic data collection, from a tool for maintaining minorities' sub-ordination, to one that helps ensure compliance with anti-discrimination legislation (Morning and Sabbagh 2005; Simon 2005). In many developed, multicultural countries ethnic minorities have successfully lobbied to have ethnic distinctions recognised in official data collections, and sometimes to have their group identities explicitly listed on official forms.<sup>3</sup> The US again provides an interesting example with the multiracial lobby. In the lead up to the 2000 census, multiracial activists were instrumental in pushing through changes that allowed people to tick more than one racial category, but failed to institute a specific mixed race category (Perlmann and Waters 2002).

Despite a number of groundbreaking studies of ethnic politics and censuses within states, few have studied these processes in an international context, and attempts to advance theoretical arguments about global enumeration practices are rare. The closest to a general theory comes from Rallu et al. (2006) typology of ethnic enumeration. Their model identifies four dominant paradigms of ethnic counting, characterised by different political goals: (1) for political control (e.g., colonial censuses); (2) to support a discourse of national hybridity (e.g., Latin America);

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<sup>2</sup>The obvious omission of 'black' as a category is not accidental. Early censuses were primarily interested in a person's legal and political relationship to the state (Snipp 2003). Free blacks were subsumed under the category 'all other free persons,' thereby distinguishing them from free whites.

<sup>3</sup>In the US, Mexican-American groups successfully lobbied for the inclusion of a separate Hispanic Origin category in the 1980 census, while Asian interest groups pushed for the inclusion of specific categories in the 1980 and 1990 censuses (Nobles 2000). By contrast, Arab Americans failed to have a pan-ethnic geographic category (Arab American or Middle Easterner) included in the 2000 census even though they did lobby for its inclusion (Rodríguez 2000).

(3) for anti-discrimination policies (e.g., US); and, (4) non-enumeration in the name of national integration (e.g., France). Implicitly, the typology frames enumeration as a top down process, influenced by internal conditions such as migration and inter-ethnic relations. It provides a valuable heuristic framework within which to situate states with broadly similar political motivations but, as a typology, is best positioned to describe ethnic enumeration rather than explain it.

Part of the difficulty of developing a global theory of ethnic enumeration is the lack of a common understanding about the dependent variable – what counts as ethnic counting? In the absence of a global standard of identity, states have at their disposal a wide range of concepts with which to define difference. In the US human difference has historically been filtered through the biological frame of phenotype or race (Omi and Winant 1994). Elsewhere, and at other times, language, origins and culture have served as the salient boundaries distinguishing socially defined groups. Contextual diversity in how difference is understood is complicated by the multiple meanings attributed to equivalent terms. Nationality, for example, is interpreted in France as a civic, legal identity akin to citizenship, but in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet states is more closely aligned with cultural identity derived from ethnic origins (Kertzer and Arel 2002). Even seemingly unambiguous markers such as language may be subjectively rendered. Arel's (2002) analysis of census-taking in the post-Soviet states demonstrates how the distinction between mother tongue and everyday language became infused with political meaning, bound up with claims to ethnic nationality and territory. Morning (2008) notes these parochial perturbations, but argues that the diversity of ethnic indicators should not dissuade from the identification and analysis of cross-national similarities. Her innovative comparative research has shown that much of the diverse nomenclature used to describe collective identities (e.g., ethnicity, race, ancestry, and indigeneity) is underpinned by the common concept of descent.

Morning's work provides a valuable starting point for efforts to develop empirically grounded theoretical arguments about ethnic enumeration processes. By integrating census and population registration data with information about state characteristics and conditions, we are able to empirically test whether countries with similar profiles adopt similar strategies for enumerating their populations by ethnicity. We also examine whether states go beyond the acknowledgement of ethnic differences, to legitimise collective identities by listing them on the census or registration form. Such recognition concedes the presence of pre-existing collective identities and may even nominate new ones into existence (Abu-Laban and Stasiulus 2000).<sup>4</sup> The intent of identification need not be supportive of groups' rights – indeed, such strategies might be pursued to mark out groups for discriminatory treatment, or to facilitate 'statistical fragmentation' (Arel 2002). Our approach is to treat state

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<sup>4</sup>An obvious example of nominating groups into existence is the creation of pan-ethnic categories such as 'Asian', 'Hispanic', or 'Pacific Islander'. Although these sorts of aggregations obscure important differences between national origin groups and may perpetuate the persistence of group stereotypes, those so labelled may also find the grouping to be politically expedient in the pursuit of resources and recognition.

motivations as unmeasured and focus on establishing whether systematic associations exist between state-level factors and strategies of ethnic enumeration. These relationships are elaborated below.

### **3.3 Factors Internal to States That Affect Ethnic Enumeration**

In the absence of a general explanatory model of ethnic counting and classification, we look to national and regional studies for clues about the factors most likely to influence state approaches to ethnic enumeration. Though couched in parochial terms specific to time or place, there are common themes that can be rendered in more abstract and thus generalisable, terms. We identified four sets of factors endogenous to states that are critical to understanding how and why states enumerated by ethnicity. They are: ethnic group relations, immigration, post-colonial sovereignty and resources.

#### ***3.3.1 Ethnic Group Relations***

Most studies agree that inter-ethnic relations within a country play a key role in shaping the ethnic enumeration approach taken in its national census. Depending on the specific nature of ethnic groups and their concomitant rights claims, relations between them could influence ethnic classification and enumeration in various ways. In seeking to articulate and measure the effects of ethnic relations on ethnic counting and classification we focus specifically on ethnic contenders. Contender groups are those whose collective identities are founded on claims of territorial or political independence, or who occupy distinct social and economic niches as a result of unequal historical arrangements such as slavery. Ethnic contenders include indigenous peoples whose aspirations often include some form of self-government, as well as regionally concentrated ethno-nationalist groups with a history of organised political autonomy (e.g., Turkish Cypriots in Cyprus). From the perspective of governments, the claims of such groups are often seen as more contentious than those of ethnic immigrants. The latter may seek to retain rights of ethnic customs and associations, but they rarely challenge the legitimacy of the political status quo in their host countries (Koopmans and Statham 1999). The claims of indigenous and ethno-nationalist minorities are made especially potent by the growth of international support for indigenous rights in legal and political forums, making it difficult for states to avoid some form of ethnic enumeration. Yet states also have an inherent interest in building national cohesion and limiting claims that might arise from the politics of recognition. This tension suggests a solution that acknowledges the existence of ethnic difference, but minimises the leverage that such groups might gain through the explicit legitimisation of collective identities.



### 3.3.2 *Immigration*

Increasing transnational flows of migrant workers and refugees have heightened awareness of ethnic differences in states hitherto secure in the myth of ethnic homogeneity and further diversified states with visible multicultural populations. Much has been written about how traditional immigrant countries in North America, Europe and Australasia have liberalised their exclusionary immigration policies to meet pluralistic models of entry and settlement (Dumont and Lemaître 2005; Pearson 2002). Just how immigration shapes ethnic enumeration practices is likely to depend on whether immigration is driven by temporary labour market demands, or oriented towards more permanent settlement. In the former instance, we expect governments will be reluctant to emphasise ethnic differences or legitimate collective identities. Rather the impetus is more likely to be geared differentiating the native- from the foreign-born through enumeration strategies that focus on civic-legal status. Even if the census excludes migrants on short-term permits of one or a couple of years, the issue of how to enumerate the rest of the foreign worker population remains.

Where immigration is linked to more permanent settlement patterns, we expect governments will adopt an ethnically cognisant approach. One reason is the increased potential for discrimination and ethnic conflict that arises from significant migrant inflows. Whereas traditional ‘host’ societies tend to contain white majorities, most of the ‘source’ countries comprise persons who constitute visible minorities in their new settings. This disjuncture suggests a growing incentive for ethnic enumeration because governments require ethnic data to monitor discrimination and institute ameliorative policies (Simon 2005). Their motives may, of course, be less benevolent. The collection of ethnic information may also assist governments to monitor and control the dispersion of migrant communities whose ethnic traits and patterns of association appear to defy integration into the existing social and economic order.

### 3.3.3 *Post-colonial Sovereignty*

Historical and political factors feature prominently in research documenting the evolution of ethnic enumeration in a specific country or region (see, for example, Nobles’ research on racial enumeration in the United States and Brazil). A core feature of a state’s political trajectory is its history of independence. Whether a state has an established history of sovereignty, or emerged from the bonds of colonialism or other political struggles, may bear upon the government’s willingness to give expression to ethnic differences. States that gained sovereignty after 1965 emerged in a fundamentally altered world system – one marked by the Cold War, civil rights, ethnic revivalism and the growth of human rights regimes. In 1965 a slew of international organisations emerged, setting an international agenda whose primary

goals reflected the post-colonial and post-war civil rights demands for equality. These included the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The subsequent expansion of international human rights organizations under the auspices of the United Nations institutionalised the global recognition of minority rights and formalized the expansion of human rights to the masses. States born into this new world system may be more inclined to adopt ethnic enumeration strategies that reflect these political sentiments.

In addition to coming of age during a period of transformative change, newly independent states are less rooted in historical path dependencies and freer to incorporate new ideas and discourses trumpeting ethnic equality and the rights of groups and individuals to self-define. Processes of ethnic recognition might simply entail the continuation of a colonial legacy of drawing ethnic distinctions, but with the goal of legitimating ethnic differences, rather than for the purpose of domination and exclusion (Rallu et al. 2006). By comparison, established states – especially ones that have been sovereign for many centuries – are much more likely to be vested in an approach that stresses national unity above ethnic differences. The most glaring example of this is France's resistance to the inclusion of ethnic and cultural distinctions in its own census in the name of secularism and French identity.

### 3.3.4 Resources

Finally, a state's level of resources is also likely to bear upon the kind of ethnic enumeration strategy it adopts. The cost of census-taking is well documented. In the US alone the 2000 census cost \$6.6 billion, double that of the previous census. The cost of the 2010 census is expected to be twice as high again, at close to \$12 billion (United States General Accounting Office 2004). Rising costs create a strong inducement to rationalise census taking so that only items that yield information vital to governance are included. Some countries have dispensed with regular censuses altogether, opting either to construct a virtual censuses from population registration data (e.g., the Netherlands), or to administer a nominal household census form that is supplemented with other administrative data (e.g., Norway and Spain).<sup>5</sup> A more pointed argument is that the politics of diversity, of which ethnic enumeration is part and parcel, is a distinctly first world practice that can only be afforded by countries with a reasonable standard of living. Although developing countries may contain considerable ethnic diversity, resource constraints may mean

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<sup>5</sup>The US Census Bureau is now in its fourth year of administering the American Community Survey. This new program has replaced the 'long form' version of the census that was administered to 1 in 6 households until 2000. This change was made to enable a continual collection of data on a sub-sample of the U.S. population. The shorter version of the census will continue to be administered to the full population.

that the census is seen primarily as a tool to document the basics of fertility, mortality, literacy and employment, rather than to track the expression of identities.

### 3.4 Factors External to States That Affect Ethnic Enumeration

Historical and structural properties of states might account for the key endogenous influences on ethnic enumeration practices but alternative theoretical perspectives suggest external forces also shape processes of ethnic recognition. Research in comparative politics and sociology, especially the world society literature, emphasise the responsiveness of nation-states to global politics and the impacts on domestic policy-making (Boli and Thomas 1997, 1999; Meyer et al. 1997). From this perspective integration into global civil society ought to lead to isomorphism in ethnic enumeration norms and/or practices by drawing countries into a common global culture and providing political activists with the forum within which to advocate for minority recognition. There are at least two channels through which exogenous factors might influence processes of state recognition. The first is through membership in INGOs; the second is through support for specific international human rights instruments (Cole 2006; Tsutsui and Wotipka 2004). INGOs and IGOs are distinguished in the world society literature by their relationship to the state and civil society. While IGOs are often seen as empowering the state and state interests (Olzak and Tsutsui 1998), INGOs are characterised by their unique position to diffuse global norms about civil society and human rights (Boli and Thomas 1997, 1999; Tsutsui 2004). States with strong ties to INGOs open up political opportunities for ethnic groups to pressure states to adopt policies that compliment international agreements about human rights (McAdam and Rucht 1993).

Since the 1960s, the United Nations has established a slew of international treaties enshrining the rights of minorities with the express goal of forcing governments to act even-handedly towards them. As one of the UN's oldest human rights instruments ICERD expressly prohibits 'any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent and national or ethnic origin', and it allows for the provision of special measures to ensure the 'adequate development and protection of certain racial groups or individuals belonging to them'. In theory, states that signal their commitment to ethnic equality on the world stage ought to pursue ethnic enumeration because it legitimates the expression of diversity within their borders and provides the bases for the collection of data with which to evaluate and ameliorate group-level disparities (Morning and Sabbagah 2005). In reality, several factors militate against this. One is that ratification of a convention need not engender a genuine commitment to its goals (Cole 2006; Neumayer 2005). The stringency with which conventions are monitored and enforced can vary widely, making it relatively easy for nominally committed members to evade their responsibilities. In some cases, provisions for monitoring, compliance and enforcement are ostensibly nonexistent or weak, with powerful states often loath to use coercive strategies to pressure states

into addressing their poor human rights records (Neumayer 2005). To some extent, we see the disconnection between membership and commitment as a problem of measurement. Rather than treat ratification as an expression of a state's commitment, we prefer to measure commitment directly. This allows for a more careful evaluation of how expressed dedication to ethnic equality in the international arena translates into ethnic enumeration practices at home.

A trickier problem to resolve is the fact that although most signatories to ICERD condemn ethnic discrimination, there is no consensus about whether ethnic data collection is the salve. Some states view the collection of ethnic data as necessary to combat discrimination; others, as an act of discrimination in itself (Arel 2002). Indeed several European countries have argued that their commitment to eliminating discrimination is precisely why they do *not* enumerate by ethnicity. However, arguments invoking the historical misuse of ethnic data (e.g., to identify Jewish individuals during WWII) and constitutional prohibitions have been found wanting. Investigations have found several of the countries claiming non-enumeration on those grounds nevertheless collect ethnic data 'under the radar', especially on visible minorities of interest (e.g., Roma in the Czech Republic, and Romanians and Algerians in France, see Goldston 2004). Moreover, upon closer examination, it has been found most constitutions do not explicitly prohibit ethnic data collection but rather impose restrictions that make its collection subject to specific privacy and protection safeguards (Ramsay 2006). Our view is that concerns about enumeration as a form of discrimination testify to the ongoing salience of ethno-racial distinctions within states' boundaries. Without ethnic data, strategies to eliminate discrimination by ethnicity are impossible – a genuine commitment to eliminating ethnic discrimination requires ethnic data.

### 3.5 Data and Method

To examine the connections between the foregoing factors and state processes of ethnic recognition and legitimisation, we use data from the Ethnicity Counts? database, which codes national census questionnaires and population registration forms for the period 1985 to 2014.<sup>6</sup> For the purpose of this study we restrict our analysis to the 2000 census round which spans the decade 1995 to 2004. To define the sample population we consulted the United Nations Statistics Division's (UNSD) list of countries that existed in June 2005, then referred to a separate UNSD list to determine whether a census was conducted in the 2000 census round (also see Morning, Chap. 2, this volume).<sup>7</sup> We restricted our analysis to sovereign states for

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<sup>6</sup>Ethnicity Counts? was funded by a Royal Society of New Zealand Marsden grant. The census forms are available at: <http://www.waikato.ac.nz/nidea/research/ethnicitycounts>.

<sup>7</sup>The UNSD's list of nations and territories can be found at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49alpha.htm>. A separate list containing information on national censuses conducted for each decennial period may be found at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/>

which a 2000 round form could be located. The exclusion of territories and dependencies was necessary to avoid inflating the effects of governing states (e.g., United States), and because membership in ICERD is limited to sovereign nations.<sup>8</sup> Of the 203 nations in our sample, 175 had conducted a census in the latest round, for which 151 forms were located.<sup>9</sup> To maximise our sample, we included countries missing from the 2000 round for which forms for preceding or successive rounds could be located. The earliest census form was for 1995; the most recent was for 2004. Because our interest is in the factors underlying state processes of ethnic recognition, we also deviated from a strict focus on the census to include countries that maintained population registers as a substitute.<sup>10</sup> Population registers are prevalent throughout Europe, providing a regularly updated source of information on individuals (Poulain and Herm 2013). The scope of data collection varies across countries, but may include information on births, deaths, marriage and dissolution, family relations, education, employment, taxation, residence and migration status (Legoux and Perrin 1999). For each population registration country, we obtained copies of the appropriate forms directly from the agencies responsible for administering the databases. Once the census questionnaires and population registration forms were assembled and translated, we coded a wide array of ethnic variables.

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[censusdates.htm](#). We expand the range of years to 1995–2004. This adds 3 states (The Holy See, Bhutan, and the United Arab Emirates) that would otherwise be excluded from the data and has no effect on the overall results.

<sup>8</sup>Our argument that a state's ethnic enumeration strategy is the result of endogenous and exogenous factors implies temporality and causality. We note an inevitable lag exists between finalising the census questionnaire and the enumeration date. In countries that perform a decennial census, decisions about what items and categories to include may be decided up to 3 years in advance. To allow for this lag we constructed most of the predictor variables to measure conditions at the start of the census round (i.e., 1995 or earlier). Because the vast majority of censuses in our sample were conducted between 2000 and 2004, we minimise the risk that the predictor variables followed rather than preceded the census. Nevertheless, the cross-sectional nature of our data means we cannot determine causality, even if the models used suggest a causal relationship. Only longitudinal analysis of questionnaires would satisfy the more rigorous conditions needed to test whether changes in exogenous and endogenous factors produced changes in processes of ethnic recognition or group legitimisation. We are fairly confident, however, that changes in the outcome variables are likely to be unidirectional. All the evidence suggests that states that enumerate by ethnicity are unlikely to revert to a non-cognisant approach.

<sup>9</sup>We used a combination of strategies to locate census forms. We were able to download many of the questionnaires from the University of Minnesota's Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) International website (<http://www.hist.umn.edu/~rmccaa/IPUMSI/enumform.htm>) and from the website of the United Nations Statistics Division ([www.unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/censusquest.htm](http://www.unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/censusquest.htm)). The remaining forms were located on the websites of national census offices, and through direct correspondence with those offices.

<sup>10</sup>Our sample included 14 population registration countries: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Faeroe Islands, Greenland, Finland, Iceland, the Netherlands, San Marino, Andorra, Belgium, Germany, Spain, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the cases of Norway, Finland, Spain and Belgium, nominal censuses (i.e., using dwellings forms) were conducted in the 2000 round, but the primary source of data on the population was derived from population registers, thus we only coded the latter. In cases where countries conducted a full census (i.e., using a personal form) and maintained a population register we only coded the census form (e.g., Estonia).

Relaxing the selection criteria to include forms beyond the 2000 census round and population registration countries yielded a final sample size of 151 states. The characteristics of our sample can be seen in Table 3.1.

### 3.5.1 Variables

Our first dependent variable, *ethnic cognisance*, measures the number of ethnicity items listed on a state's census questionnaire or, in the case of population registration countries, the total number of unique ethnicity questions asked across all of the constituent instruments. We operationalise ethnicity to include questions that use the following terms: ethnicity, ethnic group, ethnic origin, descent, ancestry, race, indigenous, tribe, language, mother tongue, nationality, national origins and ethnic nationality. The variable is coded on an ordered scale from 0 to 3 where 0=no questions; 1=one question; 2=2 questions; and 3=3 or 4 questions.<sup>11</sup> Since the variable only had a range of 0–3 we treat it as an ordered categorical variable in our models. Our second dependent variable, *ethnic legitimisation* is a dummy variable that indicates whether states explicitly nominate groups into existence by specifying the name of at least one ethnic group on the enumeration form. States were coded as 1 if at least one ethnic group name was listed or appeared as a tick box on the form, and 0 otherwise.<sup>12</sup>

The endogenous variables cover structural properties of states, as well as inter-group dynamics arising from the presence or absence of migrants and ethnic minorities. With respect to immigration we use two separate measures. The first, *net migration rate*, was derived from the United Nations' World Population Prospects data (United Nations 2000). It is the net average annual number of migrants from 1995–2000 per

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<sup>11</sup> In making these determinations, we encountered several ambiguities regarding the use of ethnic terminology and number of items elicited. Some census forms did not contain a specific reference to ethnicity (or race etc.) in the question or heading, although the response categories clearly indicated an ethnic distinction. For example, the Honduras census asked: '*A que grupo poblacional pertenece?*' ['To what population group do you belong?'], with response categories that included indigenous populations such as the Lenca and the Pech (Paya). Similarly, the Canadian census simply asked 'Is this person', followed by a list of tick boxes that include White, Chinese and Latin American. In these sorts of cases the item was coded as an ethnicity item. In other instances, several questions were asked about a single dimension of difference. Again using the Canadian example, three separate questions were asked for aboriginal identity, membership in an Indian Band/First Nation; and status as a Treaty or Registered Indian. These too were treated as a single case of aboriginal recognition.

<sup>12</sup> We ran two alternative configurations of ethnic legitimisation. The first included write-in prompts with examples, of which there were 12 cases. Our rationale was that a write-in prompt with an example constituted a weak form of identity legitimisation when compared to the explicit naming of a tick-box or response category. Nevertheless, when we ran the same models including the write-in with examples, the results were similar in significance and direction. The second alternative model omitted identities based on mother tongue from the ethnic legitimisation category, with the rationale that language categories do not necessarily constitute collective identities (n=13). This yielded significant, albeit weaker effects, in the same direction.

Table 3.1 Census coverage and types, 1995–2004

Year	All Countries		Africa		N. America		S. America		Asia		Europe		Oceania	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1995–2000	68	45 %	13	46 %	9	43 %	4	40 %	24	71 %	9	20 %	9	64 %
2001–2004	71	47 %	15	54 %	12	57 %	6	60 %	10	29 %	23	52 %	5	36 %
Population registry	12	8 %	0	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %	12	27 %	0	0 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<b>% of total from each region</b>		<b>100 %</b>		<b>19 %</b>		<b>14 %</b>		<b>7 %</b>		<b>23 %</b>		<b>29 %</b>		<b>9 %</b>
<b>Enumeration types</b>														
Census	139	92 %	28	100 %	21	100 %	10	100 %	34	100 %	32	73 %	14	100 %
Population registry or other	12	8 %	0	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %	12	27 %	0	0 %
<b>Total coverage from region</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>74 %</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>53 %</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>91 %</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>83 %</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>76 %</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>98 %</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100 %</b>
No census available	16	8 %	12	23 %	1	4 %	2	17 %	4	9 %	1	2 %	0	0 %
Census taken, but missing	24	12 %	9	17 %	1	4 %	0	0 %	6	13 %	0	0 %	0	0 %
Missing information on country	12	6 %	4	8 %	0	0 %	0	0 %	1	2 %	0	0 %	0	0 %
<b>Total countries</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Source: Ethnicity Counts? database (<http://www.waikato.ac.nz/nidea/research/ethnicitycounts>)

1,000 people. We selected net migration over the number of foreign-born persons because it captures the most recent newcomers to the population, rather than the cumulative effect of immigration.

Unfortunately, the scarcity of complete and internationally comparable data on immigrant workers means we are unable to include a direct measure. Instead, to capture the visibility of immigrant workers in the labour market we use the percentage of international migrants that is male as a proxy.<sup>13</sup> This variable is taken from the United Nations' Population, Resources, Environment and Development data bank (PRED Bank 2006). The international spread of migrant workers has historically been characterised as a male dominated phenomena (Houstoun et al. 1984), albeit that women have a growing presence among global migrant communities (Pedraza 1991; Alcalá 2006). At the very least, our proxy variable is indicative of a sex imbalance that may translate into differential treatment of immigrants within the borders of host states.

We constructed the variable *ethnic contender* using Phase IV data from the Minority at Risk (MAR) project, maintained by the Center for International Development and Conflict Management at the University of Maryland. The global dataset identifies 284 communal groups that were politically active in 2003, classified into 6 types of minorities: ethnoclass; ethnonationalist; indigenous; religious; communal contenders; and national minorities.<sup>14</sup> We constructed a dummy variable coded 1 if an indigenous, ethnonationalist, or ethnoclass group existed within a state; and 0 otherwise. We note that MAR data is compiled from multiple sources besides the census, which minimises the risk that the variable *ethnic contender* is endogenous to the measured outcomes. For example, MAR identifies five separate 'minorities at risk' in France, including Muslims, Basques and Corsicans. The absence of official ethnic or racial data in France as the criteria used to define these groups in the MAR dataset was not based on census or population registration forms alone.

To capture a state's level of national resources we use the 3 year average (1990, 1995 and 2000) of Gross Domestic Product per capita in (GDP), measured in constant US\$. A natural log-transformation was performed to correct for a skewed distribution. The historical emergence of state autonomy is measured with a dummy

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<sup>13</sup>We were unable to include a direct measure of immigrant workers because, for the 2000 census round, such data was only available for 20 % of countries in the International Labour Organization's International Labour Migration Database (see: <http://laborsta.ilo.org/>). Nevertheless, to test the robustness of our proxy variable, we ran our models using the direct measure of immigrant workers in 1995 as a predictor variable. These models were restricted to 43 states. We then used multiple imputation techniques to reconstruct the 1995 ILO immigrant worker variable and re-ran the models. In both cases, the predictive power of immigrant workers was significant and similar in magnitude and strength as our proxy variable for immigrant males.

<sup>14</sup>The MAR dataset focuses specifically on ethno-political, non-state communal groups that have contemporary political significance because they collectively suffer, or benefit from, systematic discriminatory treatment vis-à-vis other groups in a society; and, are the basis for political mobilization and collective action in pursuit of self-defined group interests. The majority of groups documented in Phase IV of the project were also politically active in Phase I, covering 1945–1990. For a description of the project see Gurr (1993). The Minorities at Risk data were obtained from: <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/>.



variable *new sovereign nation*. We coded countries as 1 if they gained sovereignty after 1965; and 0 otherwise.<sup>15</sup>

We constructed three variables to capture the effects of exogenous factors on state enumeration practices. Two of them measure a state's commitment to international treaties associated with the elimination of ethnic and racial discrimination. The first is a dummy variable *ICERD signatory* coded 1 if the state is a signatory to ICERD; 0 otherwise. The second is a measure of state commitment to ICERD based on the following factors: (1) if ICERD was signed; (2) if Article 14 was enforced, vesting the ICERD committee with the power to hear individual and group grievances against member states; (3) if at least 50 % of reports due were filed within the allotted timeframe; and (4) if countries signed ICERD on or before 1975. We treat commitment as a 4-point interval variable with 0 representing no membership in ICERD and 4 being fully committed. Ties to the international community are measured through a state's involvement with international nongovernmental organisations. The *INGO* variable represents the total number of organisations of which a state is a member, either directly or through the presence of member organisations within that country. We take the natural log of INGO to correct for skewness.

Finally, we include several control variables. The *Gini index* controls for the effect of relative income inequalities on state processes of ethnic recognition. We derived Gini values from the 2007 World Bank development indicators (World Bank 2007) for a range of years over the 2000 census time frame (1994–2005). Where recent data was unavailable we used older data extending back to 1989 (n=8), or imputed values using multiple imputation techniques (n=20, see Shaefer 2002). Index values vary from 0 to 100, with 0 representing perfect equality. We also control for regional variation by using a region variable that denotes the broad geographic area in which a state is located. The literature suggests regional variation in ethnic recognition is partially due to historical trajectories such as slavery, colonisation, civil wars and so forth. We do not try to model these processes directly but treat the region variable as a weak proxy for these historical variations in state governing practices. Lastly, for reasons that may include differential resources, lack of infrastructure or newness of states, there are varying lengths of questionnaires in terms of the number of questions asked. We created a dummy variable that was coded as 0 if states had less than the median number of questions on their census form (median=20) and 1 if states had a greater than median length of questions (see Table 3.2).

### 3.6 Results

We start by briefly discussing the results of our descriptive analysis by broad geographic region (see Table 3.3). Like Morning (2008), we found significant regional variation in the prevalence of ethnic enumeration and in the concepts used to define difference.

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<sup>15</sup> Information on the sovereignty status of each country in our sample was derived from the website of the US State Department: <http://www.state.gov/s/inr/rls/10543.htm>.

**Table 3.2** Distribution of Key Variables by Region, 1995–2004 (N = 151)

Key variables in model	Africa	Europe	South America	Asia	North America	Oceania	Total
<b>Dependent variables</b>							
<i>Cultural cognizance – Dependent variable</i>							
Recognizes 0 items	9	18	2	11	3	1	44
Recognizes 1 item	14	15	4	17	6	7	63
Recognizes 2 items	4	11	3	6	8	3	35
Recognizes 3 or 4 items	1	0	1	0	4	3	9
Total recognizing at least 1 item	67.9 %	59.1 %	80.0 %	67.6 %	85.7 %	92.9 %	70.9 %
<i>Ethnic legitimization (%) – Dependent variable</i>							
Yes	21.4 %	36.4 %	60.0 %	41.2 %	85.7 %	57.1 %	43.3 %
<b>Independent variables: external to states</b>							
<i>Ties to CERD</i>							
Signatory countries in region (%)	40.0 %	54.5 %	80.0 %	26.5 %	52.4 %	14.3 %	43.1 %
Ethnic commitment (total)							
Not a member	2	1	0	2	2	0	7
Committed 1 dimension	13	9	1	21	7	12	63
Committed 2 dimensions	9	16	5	8	9	1	48
Committed 3 or 4 dimensions	4	18	4	3	3	1	33
<i>Ties to INGOs</i>							
Average per region	1,239	3,464	2,237	1,502	1,625	953	2,040
<b>Independent variables: Internal to states</b>							
Ethnic contender present (%)	39.3 %	45.5 %	70.0 %	47.1 %	42.9 %	21.4 %	43.7 %
New state	33.3 %	31.8 %	20.0 %	37.1 %	38.1 %	78.6 %	37.7 %
<sup>1</sup> Net migration	–842.1	18,756.3	–820.0	–41,443.8	56,876.4	13,112.7	5,048.9
Percent of international migrants that are male, 2000	52.4 %	47.3 %	50.1 %	56.3 %	49.9 %	54.4 %	51.5 %
Ethnic fractionalization	62.0 %	32.0 %	50.0 %	41.0 %	36.0 %	33.0 %	41.0 %
<b>Controls</b>							
GDP, 1995 (constant 1990 US\$)	\$870	\$13,008	\$2,490	\$3,767	\$4,737	\$3,958	\$6,012
GINI	47.9	32.1	54.7	37.3	47.7	59.3	42.4
Percent of region that is sovereign	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	94.6 %	80.1 %	82.4 %	93.9 %

Source: Ethnicity Counts? database (<http://www.waikato.ac.nz/nidea/research/ethnicitycounts>)

<sup>1</sup>Numbers in tables reflect the values of net migration after performing a Box-Cox transformation

**Table 3.3** Maximum likelihood ordered logistic regression models for ethnic cognizance

Control variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Population, 1995 (in ten millions)	0.02		0.02		0.01	
Long questionnaire <sup>1</sup>	0.76	*	1.21	**	1.38	**
<i>Region</i> <sup>2</sup>						
Africa	-0.50		-0.68		-0.72	
Asia	0.05		0.36		1.12	
South America	1.10		1.47		0.87	
North America	1.65	**	2.00	**	2.66	**
Oceania	0.81		1.50		2.21	*
<b>Endogenous variables</b>						
<i>Immigration</i>						
Net migration, 1995–2000 (in ten thousands)			0.02		0.03	*
Percent of international migrants (male), 2000			-0.10	**	-0.12	**
Ethnic contender			0.97	**	0.91	*
Sovereign after 1965			1.22	**	2.35	**
GDP, 1995–2000 (log)			-0.43	*	-0.82	**
Gini <sup>3</sup>			-0.03		-0.02	
<b>Exogenous variables</b>						
<i>CERD</i>						
CERD signatory					0.23	
Ethnic commitment					0.77	*
# of INGOs, 2000 (log)					0.61	*
N	151		151		151	
Likelihood ratio chi-square	31.7	**	71.89	**	91.47	**
* ≤ .05; ** ≤ .01 (two-tailed tests)						

Source: Ethnicity Counts? database (<http://www.waikato.ac.nz/nideea/research/ethnicitycounts>)

<sup>1</sup>Compared to questionnaires with less than median number of questions. We did not count the number of questions on population registers

<sup>2</sup>Compared to Europe

<sup>3</sup>Gini coefficients are derived from a range of years. There are 133 countries with Gini coefficients between the years 1989–2002, and 16 from earlier years. Two were imputed

In Oceania, for example, ethnic enumeration was near universal but in Africa, Europe and Asia, ethnic enumeration ranged from 59.1 % in Europe to roughly 68 % in African and Asia. Overall, ethnic terminology was most often used to define difference, although regional preferences were also apparent.<sup>16</sup> In South America, concepts of indigeneity and tribe prevailed while references to ethnic nationality and race were largely confined to Europe and North America respectively. In about

<sup>16</sup>If a question contained references to two concepts – for example, ‘ethnicity or nationality’ – it was coded in terms of both. References to color were coded as ‘race’. Where questions referred to a community or population, they were coded according to the response categories. If there was clearly a reference to ‘race’ or ‘color’, it was coded as race. If it appeared to be a nationality or ethnicity, it was coded accordingly.

half of all countries (56.7 %) the recognition of ethnic differences did not extend to the recognition of specific group identities. Only a little more than a third of European and Asian countries explicitly recognized group identities on their forms and only one-fifth in Africa, significantly less than the proportion that counted by ethnicity. North America and Oceania were the only regions for which the listing of ethnic groups on the census was commonplace.

In terms of the independent variables, a clear distinction is evident between immigrant receiving (Europe, North America, and Oceania) and sending regions (Asia, South America, and Africa). The growing presence of female immigrants in developed regions of the world is also apparent, with North America and Europe having slightly less male than female immigrants. The ethnic contender variable highlights two outliers. Oceania and South America represent two ends of the continuum with 70 % of South American countries having at least 1 ethnic contender group, compared to just one-fifth of Oceanic countries. Regional variation was also apparent with respect to the exogenous variables. Europe, Africa and South America had the highest percentage of state signatories to ICERD, whereas Asia and Oceania had relatively few signatories. Regions with the highest proportion of signatories also tended to be the most committed. Finally, we see regional variation with respect to participation in INGOs. The large number of INGOs in Europe and the sparse involvement of Oceania and Asia most likely reflect regional variation in the level of involvement in global civil society generally and national resource capacities.

Tables 3.3 and 3.4 examine the intersection between the foregoing elements using ordered logistic and binominal logistic models. We begin by exploring the factors associated with a state's level of ethnic cognizance. In light of the strong regional differences apparent in the earlier tables, we expected geographic location to exert an effect on a state's propensity to recognize ethnic distinctions. This was the case for North and South America and, to a lesser degree, Oceania. Compared to European states, those in North America were about 9 times more likely to enumerate by ethnicity, while states in South America and Oceania were three to four times more likely to do so. The coefficient for questionnaire length was positive and significant, with instruments of above median length more likely to elicit ethnic information. This cannot be attributed to national differences in resource capacities, as the effect remained even when GDP was included. Rather, it suggests governments that are committed to fully documenting their population's characteristics are more disposed to recognize ethnicity as a necessary component of the national stock-take.

Results from model 2 in Table 3.3 are consistent with the prevailing view that endogenous factors are important influences of whether states support ethnic enumeration. States with higher levels of net immigration were slightly more likely to recognize ethnic distinctions, whereas the presence of immigrant workers, measured by our proxy variable, male immigrants, had a countervailing effect. Consistent with our expectation, the presence of an ethnic contender enhanced the likelihood of ethnic recognition; although the variable's magnitude and significance was slightly reduced once exogenous variables were introduced (model 3). Nevertheless, states with at least one indigenous, ethnonationalist, or ethnoclass minority were twice as likely to recognize ethnic distinctions as those without. Taken together, the

**Table 3.4** Maximum likelihood logistic regression models for ethnic legitimization

Control Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Population, 1995 (in ten millions)	0.01	0.01	-0.02
Long questionnaire <sup>1</sup>	0.35	0.56	0.55
<i>Region</i> <sup>2</sup>			
Africa	-0.77	-1.00	-1.50
Asia	0.02	0.73	1.17
South America	0.75	0.63	0.01
North America	2.29 **	2.44 **	2.62 **
Oceania	0.76	1.07	1.32
<b>Endogenous Variables</b>			
<i>Immigration</i>			
Net migration, 1995–2000 (in ten thousands)		0.01	0.00
Percent of international migrants (male), 2000		-0.13 **	-0.14 **
Ethnic contender		0.11	-0.28
Sovereign after 1965		0.36	1.32 **
GDP, 1995–2000 (log)		-0.29	-0.71 **
Gini <sup>3</sup>		0.01	0.03
<b>Exogenous Variables</b>			
<i>CERD</i>			
CERD signatory			0.50
Ethnic commitment			0.08
# of INGOs, 2000 (log)			1.01 **
Constant	-0.78 *	6.61 *	2.43
N	151	151	151
Likelihood ratio chi-square	27.31 **	46.03 **	56.36 **
* ≤ .05; ** ≤ .01 (two-tailed tests)			

Source: Ethnicity Counts? database (<http://www.waikato.ac.nz/nidea/research/ethnicitycounts>)

<sup>1</sup>Compared to questionnaires with less than median number of questions. We did not count the number of questions on population registers

<sup>2</sup>Compared to Europe

<sup>3</sup>Gini coefficients are derived from a range of years. There are 133 countries with Gini coefficients between the years 1989–2002, and 16 from earlier years. The rest were imputed

group variables suggest the benefits of specifying the ethnic terrain within which decisions about ethnic recognition are undertaken. Immigrants, foreign workers and ethnic contenders all appear to influence, in different ways, the willingness of states to enumerate ethnicity, irrespective of their structural properties.

With respect to the latter, we were surprised to find that state resource capacities, measured by GDP, were negatively associated with ethnic cognizance. We can only speculate that countries with high GDP are less likely to have internal pressures on the state due to the relative wealth of its citizens. That is, favourable material conditions may have a unifying effect on the country, reducing the likelihood of ethnic disenfranchisement, or making it difficult for ethnic advocates to gain traction. In turn, such conditions may be less likely to draw the attention of international organizations

that might otherwise push for minority differences to be addressed. States that gained independence in the post-1965 period of ethnic and post-colonial transformations were also more likely than the established states to recognize ethnic distinctions.

Turning to the exogenous variables, we find significant support for our hypotheses that international ties influence state processes of ethnic recognition. Consistent with findings from world society research (e.g., Neumayer 2005), we find simply being a signatory of ICERD has little effect on whether or not a state enumerates by ethnicity. Of greater importance is the level of commitment that states exhibit in their participation in these organizations. For each level of state commitment to ICERD, the likelihood of enumerating by ethnicity doubled. These findings challenge the implicit assumption that ethnic enumeration is exclusively or even primarily the product of endogenous state characteristics. It also suggests state expressions of support for eliminating ethnic and racial inequities and ensuring minority rights are not just displays of empty benevolence, but can translate into the active recognition of those differences. Our argument that global civil society matters is buttressed by the positive effect of participation in INGOs, with an increased likelihood of ethnic recognition among those states with more INGO linkages.

The models in Table 3.4 provide insights into the factors that underlie state recognition of ethnic differences generally, but do they extend to the recognition of specific group identities? To answer this question we re-ran the same models, changing the outcome variable to reflect the recognition of specific group identities (see Table 3.4). Interestingly, immigration flows, ethnic contender groups and commitment to ICERD – all variables significantly associated with ethnic cognizance – were inconsequential to state recognition of specific groups. In keeping with the earlier results, the presence of foreign workers decreased the likelihood of group recognition, as did a higher level of state resources. Regional effects were also stronger than in earlier models. North American states were about 17 times more likely than European states to name a group on their enumeration forms, perhaps reflecting the prevalence of identity politics in the former part of the world.<sup>17</sup> States that gained independence after 1965 were also much more disposed to recognize specific group identities. Included among these states were the Czech Republic and Slovakia whose 'Velvet Revolution' began a series of events that led to the mostly peaceful dissolution of the former Czechoslovakia; Fiji and East Timor, which broke from the colonial legacies of oppression and control; and states such as Namibia and Lesotho whose independence was secured only after civil war and/or internal disputes. To some extent the effect of recent independence is also likely to capture international influences, given that many of these states were born into a fundamentally altered world system.

Overall, our models suggest a commonality between the factors that influence processes of ethnic recognition and identity legitimization. That is, these processes may be theoretically distinguished, but are difficult to separate out empirically. We note, however, that the models in Table 3.4 provide a somewhat weak test of identity

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<sup>17</sup>These effects were weaker when we excluded countries using population registries from the analysis. North American states were only about six times more likely in these models.

legitimization processes. A more nuanced distinction between the specific groups listed on census questionnaires and registration forms might have yielded somewhat different results but our goal was to tap general processes, rather than to home in on particular sorts of ethnic minorities.

### 3.7 Discussion

This study was motivated by two broad concerns. The first was the dearth of a comprehensive, empirically driven research agenda on the factors underlying state recognition of ethnic differences and group identities in enumeration practices. Notwithstanding the important contributions made by the numerous case studies of ethnic classification regimes, we were concerned by the implicit message that state practices were best understood as parochial products of unique historical, political and social factors. To some extent, our findings support the prevailing view that structural conditions, internal group relations and state histories are important influences on processes of ethnic recognition. However, we go further to show that these influences can be generalized beyond specific national contexts. Consistent with Morning's finding of an underlying cohesion to apparently divergent indicators of ethnicity; our cross-national comparative approach has revealed systematic patterns in the factors that influence state processes of recognition. Often these factors have similar effects across states that, at first blush, would appear to have very little in common.

Our second concern was the almost exclusive focus on endogenous state factors and the contradiction this posed with broader sociological efforts to nest state-level processes within a global context. By including exogenous influences alongside endogenous ones, we were able to demonstrate that ties to global civil society do have some bearing on national ethnic enumeration practices. First, we showed that the expression of state commitment to human rights instruments on the world stage was strongly associated with a greater willingness to recognize ethnic differences within national borders, even if this did not extend to the recognition of specific group identities. Second, state participation in INGOs enhanced the likelihood of both ethnic recognition and state legitimization.

Our findings may be best understood by conceptualizing the effects in terms of internal and external pressures. Internally, there are two types of pressures on the state: those that emanate from groups and those associated with structural conditions. With respect to groups, we singled out those that were most dominant in the literature – that is, established ethnic minorities with particular rights claims that challenge the state. In our models, higher levels of net immigration and the presence of an ethnic contender group were positively associated with the likelihood of ethnic enumeration. These findings are consistent with our expectation that these groups are sufficiently entrenched in state politics and able to mobilize at least some support for recognition, even if it does not always translate into a formal legitimization of the group on questionnaires and population registries. In addition, the presence of

immigrants heightens awareness of difference within the state and the likelihood of recognition of ethnic groups as members of its citizenry. The increased visibility of immigrant workers had a countervailing effect, decreasing the odds of ethnic cognizance. This latter finding suggests states may be more likely to minimize differences in the context of the perceived economic and social threat posed by a large population of immigrant workers. We note too that migration variables are not strictly endogenous as they clearly tap into international migration flows. However, to the extent that inward migration shapes the ethnic terrain of the receiving society, we are able to conceptualize them as primarily endogenous.

Pressures from the 'inside' also arise from structural conditions. Our finding that older independent states are less likely to enumerate by ethnicity points to historical path dependencies and a distancing from the post-colonial push for minority and indigenous rights. Finally, states with a high GDP may have less at stake in terms of violating global human rights norms and be less likely to receive opposition from ethnic groups within their states, given their economic position and relative lack of deprivation.

To our knowledge this research represents the first empirical attempt to model the processes underlying state enumeration practices in a systematic fashion. By providing theoretical motivations for our variables and identifying key mechanisms, we have made a start to more general theorizing about ethnic enumeration. In the process, we have contributed to knowledge about the ways racial and ethnic categories work around the globe. As our title suggests, ethnic enumeration appears to be best understood as the product of factors that are internal *and* external to states, rather than one or the other. Our findings are of growing importance as states are confronted with increased rates of immigration, and the recognitive demands of national minority groups show no signs of abating. Despite the limitations associated with cross-sectional research, we are careful to distinguish between causality and relationship. For the time being, it is difficult to make a causal argument, but given the availability of previous censuses, there is a great deal to learn from exploring repeated cross-sections of census rounds.

Theorizing these processes is at an early stage in its development, but we have been greatly assisted by developments in data collection. Until recently, the collection of census forms was a long and tedious project. Each country had to be contacted separately, which took a great deal of time as attested to by our efforts to collect questionnaires in this manner. The concerted efforts of a few individuals and organizations and the widespread availability of electronic versions of questionnaires from online sources means the collection of enumeration forms is now much more efficient. These collective efforts have made this and future research projects possible. Consequentially, the future of theorizing and empirically mapping global strategies of ethnic enumeration appears to be blossoming.

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**Part II**  
**Enumeration and Identity Politics**

# Chapter 4

## The Choice of Ignorance: The Debate on Ethnic and Racial Statistics in France

Patrick Simon

### 4.1 Introduction

A researcher or a journalist trying to compare the situation of ethnic and racial minorities in the United States and in France immediately confronts a crippling obstacle. The concept of ‘ethnic and racial minority’ as such is not used in France. This is not simply a matter of vocabulary –something the French typically like to argue about; the problem rather lies in the very incomparability of populations that one is talking about. Many of the categories that do exist in political discourse and public debate can of course be found in statistics. But there are no data describing the situation of minorities in France that could be compared with those produced in the United States. This state of affairs in French statistics – gathering has been the subject of major criticism for some 20 years now; it has gotten to the point that it has triggered a controversy of rare violence between those that would like to see statistics take into account the diversity of the population and those who denounce the danger that such statistics might pose of ethnicizing or racializing society. The media focus on the contentiousness of this debate has been such as to sometimes lose sight of the very existence of discrimination and the flaws of the Republican model that are at the root of the controversy in the first place.

For more than a century and a half, the census has been recording the nationality and the country of birth of individuals, variables that have been used to distinguish foreigners from Frenchmen (citizens) and immigrants from natives. The statistics have served the special institutional purposes of managing immigration. They were

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designed to perform a model of integration according to which immigrants would gradually lose their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness as they progressed on the path to citizenship. There was no need, therefore, to distinguish among French citizens on the basis of their origins: a political credo was believed to be tantamount to a sociological truth. Hence the descendants of immigrants have remained invisible to quantitative research. The idea of a hyphenated Frenchman (as in ‘French-Algerian,’ for instance) acquired no political or social legitimacy (Simon 2005b). With the passage of time it became possible to claim that ‘statistical identities,’ and their colour-blindness or ‘ethnicity-blindness’, served to erase the heritage of immigration and reinforce assimilation into the nation.

Such invisibility therefore occupies a central position in the French political and legal framework, since it is supposed to ensure equality of all before the law and, consequently, in social life. Equality through invisibility – if we were to summarize the Republican strategy into a slogan – requires that ethnic and racial divisions not be represented. The credo of indifference to differences – the French colour-blind approach – leads to promoting what I would call the choice of ignorance by removing any reference to ethnic or racial origin from policies or laws – in compliance with the Constitution<sup>1</sup> – as well as from statistics. Nevertheless, such a strategy reaches its limits with the growing spread of the categories of ‘race’ and ethnicity in public debates, political addresses, representations conveyed by the media and in social reports. The omnipresence of references to ethnicity and race reminds us that while France is officially a society without ‘race,’ racism and racial discriminations are as widespread as anywhere else. No one would contest the fact that the absence of the official use of ethnic or racial categories fails to curb the spread of prejudice and stereotypes.

The virulence of such prejudice and its translation into countless instances of discrimination, insult or humiliation based on ethnic or racial origin have for a long time been trivialized, ignored or straightforwardly denied. The main result of the social and statistical invisibility of ‘race’ and ethnicity may well have been to conceal the extent of discrimination. Be that as it may, since around the year 2000 discrimination has become a major political issue, and all the more so after the riots of November 2005 made the crisis of the French integration model obvious to everyone. Contributing too to this growing awareness have been the struggles, which have come to saturate the political arena, over recognizing the memory of slavery and the weight of the colonial past. In a return of the repressed of unprecedented proportions, controversies over the nature and extent of the colonial legacy<sup>2</sup> and the appearance on the public scene of organizations – such as the *Indigènes de la République* [Indigenous People of the Republic], a name repeating the label given

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<sup>1</sup>Article 1 of the Constitution of 1958 thus stipulates that ‘France is an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic. It ensures equality before the law of all citizens regardless of origin, race or religion.’ The question whether, with this phrase, the Constitution prohibits creating statistics referring to origin is not cut-and-dried. See the discussion later in this article on the recent decision by the Constitutional Council about the use of ‘ethnic statistics.’

<sup>2</sup>‘Qui a peur du post-colonial?’ *Mouvements* 51 (September 2007).

to the colonized people in the French colonial empire or the CRAN (*Conseil Représentatif des Associations Noires* [Representative Council of Black Associations]) – speaking on behalf of ‘racial’ or racialized minorities, have come to challenge the strategy of ignoring differentiation and the colour-blind character of the Republic itself.

In this context, the issue of statistics has emerged to crystallize conflict. Hence, the unusual passion that takes hold of researchers, political leaders, antiracist associations, the media and, now, heads of companies when they bring up the question of ‘ethnic statistics.’ Initially a confidential topic confined to the circles of demographers and statisticians, the debate over what type of statistics to use to analyze discrimination has rapidly moved into the public sphere where it transformed into a violent controversy. The ‘controversy of the demographers’ began in 1998–1999 in what turned out to be only a first phase in a cycle of emotionally charged confrontations (Stavo-Debaugé 2003; Spire and Merllié 1999). In the short term, the status quo was preserved. References to the Jewish files from the Vichy period and invocations of risks of various kinds of persecution seemed to disqualify the very idea of a revised approach. But the debate recently started up again with the creation of new initiatives for the fight against discrimination. The needs have become more pressing and a pragmatic approach to the issue seems to be replacing the ideological debates. Methods that provide an alternative to the creation of ethnic categories are being proposed: audit studies (known as ‘testing’ in French), the use of proxies, small sample surveys, etc. This article will address more specifically (1) the categories currently in use and their limitations; (2) the arguments exchanged and the justifications mobilized to support or reject ‘ethnic statistics’; and (3) the alternative methods used and their limitations. As one of the protagonists involved in this debate, I cannot claim to be absolutely impartial in the presentation of the different arguments: some of them to me seem more convincing than others. I will try, however, to avoid caricature and to offer a fair rendering of this difference of opinions on what may be the main challenge all multicultural democracies are facing today.

## 4.2 The Categories of Public Statistics

Rejected as scientific and legal concepts, ‘race’ and ethnicity were never codified in France as categories in official statistics, save for just two exceptions related to special legal definitions: colonial statistics (which referred to the indigenous status of colonial subjects), and the ‘racial’ registration of Jewish people by the Vichy regime, inspired by the classification used by the Nazis. The racial category of ‘Jewish’ was removed from the official texts in 1944 and gradually disappeared from statistics.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>A controversial debate broke out in the 1980s when data going back to the war were found in the police and gendarmerie files. It all started after Serge Klarsfeld discovered a file in the archives of the minister of war veterans that looked like it could have been the ‘Tulard File,’ named after the Prefect of Seine in the 1940s who had coordinated the census of the Jewish people in the department.

Conversely, colonial categories have lasted longer in the census carried out in Metropolitan France. To understand current debates, it is useful to take a brief look at the history of the categories ‘French by acquisition’ [*Français par acquisition*] and ‘French Muslims’ [*Français musulmans*].

From 1891 to 1999, the categories produced and used by official statistics were remarkably stable: they were limited to three categories of citizenship status – ‘French,’ ‘French by acquisition,’ and ‘foreigners’ (Simon 1998). Some major variations were nevertheless noted; they were related to the nomenclatures used and the tabulations published in the census volumes. The categories selected by public statistics to describe immigrant populations seemed to stay within the framework of legal nationality. Nevertheless, by identifying immigrants who were ‘naturalized,’ they reflected by way of comparison an ambiguous notion of citizenship. Whereas by law there is practically no difference among French citizens based on the mode of acquisition of their nationality, the method by which it was acquired has been recorded since 1871 and was used in a number of detailed works between 1926 and 1946. The desire to learn about and to monitor the naturalization process, which was devised as the touchstone of the French assimilation model, led to creating and applying the category of ‘French by acquisition’ as an *ordinary* component of the population. The importance given to the ‘French by acquisition’ shows above all that statistics are not simply a reflection of self-evident administrative categories but are constructed in response to issues of public policy. An understanding of the reasons why people came to be registered as ‘French by acquisition’ thus reminds us that the objective has been, in the words of the INSEE, ‘to study the assimilation of foreigners within the French population’ and ‘to analyze and compare the demographic and social characteristics of the various components of the population as a whole.’<sup>4</sup>

The new classification of the colonial subjects of the French empire, who inherited a system in which nationality and citizenship not always coincided, also shows all the ambiguities of the ‘colonial Republic’ (Bancel et al. 2003). Indeed, the situation of ‘indigenous’ residents of the French colonial empire was always the subject of special codification in the territories under French administration. A special classification was adopted in Algeria whereby, despite extending French citizenship to all the inhabitants through the Organic Law of 1947, the distinction by status (civil or personal, which was defined on a mix of racial and religious criteria) was

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The file turned out not to be that one. On this ‘Jewish File’ issue see Joinet L. (1991) ‘Affaire dite du ‘Fichier des Juifs,’ in CDJC *Le statut des Juifs de Vichy*, Paris, CDJC and (Rémond et al. 1996).

<sup>4</sup>The introduction to the 1946 census volume entitled ‘Population of Foreign Origin: Naturalized Persons and Foreigners’ provides the following argument: ‘The questions relative to nationality that are raised in the general census must make it possible to answer three concerns: to know the distribution of the population in France among French people and foreigners, to study the assimilation of foreigners into the French population, to analyze and compare the demographic and social characteristics of the various components of the population as a whole. [...] Thus, it would be desirable to study in full the issue of the assimilation of foreigners, in order to be able to classify people based on their situation with respect to the legislation on the acquisition of French nationality.’ (INSEE 1953: 305).

preserved (in Article 3). The category of 'French Muslims' was thus born from the juxtaposition of the criterion of citizenship and the personal status of Muslim (Kateb 2001). Yet, while the census applied in Algeria, a French department, used a nomenclature including the various statuses, this was obviously not the case in metropolitan France, where there had been no mention of personal status in the standard census form. This then compelled the census services to come up with an original encoding rule which, to my knowledge, has never had any equivalent. To restore the distinction by personal status, 'people born in Algeria who also have an Arabic or Berber sounding first and last name' were classified as 'Muslims native of Algeria' and those with a 'Christian or Jewish first name' as 'French-born natives of Algeria.'<sup>5</sup> The classification of names was based on a list provided by the Statistics of Algeria.

The same principle was applied in 1962, when Algeria had just acceded to independence. And in fact, how was one to recreate a division by nationality that did not exist in reality when filling out a questionnaire? While it would have been logical to group natives of Algeria by reference to their nationality (French or Algerian), it was decided at the time to preserve the inherited distinction by personal status. Once again, this was done based on people's first and last name. As a result, the categories describing migrants from Algeria grew in numbers: French-born repatriates, French Muslims who elected to preserve their French nationality, French Muslims who had become Algerian. And indeed, the 1968 census did shed some light on things insofar as the tables presenting the distribution of natives of Algeria were now based on their current nationality. One table was nevertheless still used exclusively for natives of Algeria other than repatriates (of metropolitan French ancestry, according to the classification used), which placed together the 85,520 'French Muslim natives of Algeria' and the 471,020 Algerians. Finally, a classification as 'natives of Algeria' supplemented the category of 'Algerian repatriates,' which were defined by excluding Algerian nationals and 'French Muslims.'

Whereas nomenclatures contribute to establishing an accepted division of society, the information selected by an official institution and circulated through published tables serves to legitimize the categories in use. The publication of the tables on foreigners or 'naturalized persons' was quite irregular: sometimes, there were detailed monographs; sometimes, data were practically non-existent. However, generally speaking, the volume and the nature of the tables used reflected, as did the classifications used, the public officials' preoccupations with immigration. From 1926 to 1946, censuses appeared every 5 years (though with a hiatus in 1941) in which more than 350 pages of tables presented in detail the major characteristics of foreigners and naturalized persons in France as a whole and by department. These reports included extensive details on occupational activity. This particular treatment of foreigners and naturalized persons was abandoned between 1954 and 1968, a period during which the category of 'French Muslims' appeared provisionally. The census of 1968 then inaugurated a new era in the use of the 'nationality' variable.

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<sup>5</sup>Excerpt from the encoding instructions, Annex 2, General census of the population of 1962, INSEE. It is not known what decisions were made when people had an Arabic or Berber first name, but a different sounding last name. Perhaps there was never such a case.



Once the shock of the decolonization was more or less absorbed, there was a revival of interest in foreigners, whose numbers had kept on growing since the beginning of the 1960s – hence the special attention given to them in the census, as well as to Algerian repatriates and to the various groups of population identified on the basis of their place of birth. But the main rupture came with the introduction of nationality in the construction of tables on households and housing. At first timid (8 tables in 1968), this focus became systematic and routine after 1975. From then on, nationality became one of the major category variables, alongside sex, age or socio-occupational category. Its widespread use as a legitimate descriptor and signifier of the individual or the household thus announced and accompanied the articulation of immigration as a public issue. The censuses of 1982 and 1990 continued along this path by giving an important place to foreigners and to French people by acquisition, distinguishing them on the basis of previous nationality and place of birth. Finally, the category ‘immigrant’ (with a meaning close to ‘foreign born’) appeared in the census of 1999.

In fact, the primacy of the division by nationality in statistics extended from the census to almost all quantitative surveys and administrative files. Thus, until the end of the 1980s, immigrant populations were almost always classified in the binary categories of French and foreigners; details on the main nationalities were sometimes provided. Most often, a distinction between ‘EEC foreigners’ and ‘non-EEC foreigners’ was used to present a breakdown of individuals, households or families, and was included as an annotation in the files. These are the categories that were used, and still are, in a good number of cases, as proxies for populations that analysts tend to grasp in a completely different manner. To summarize the state of statistics available in France today, it is easy to obtain tables on foreigners or immigrants based on the census, not so often in administrative statistics, and in several surveys ‘second generations’ are identified. At the same time public debates bring up immigrants and talk about ‘Blacks,’ ‘Arabs,’ ‘Maghrebians,’ or ‘youth descendants of immigrants.’ The gap between the statistical categories and the terms used in everyday discourse is huge.

And yet, in the last two decades, a certain number of changes have been introduced in a rather discrete manner. The 1990s saw the spreading of the category of ‘immigrants’ that is fairly close to that of *foreign born* as used in the United States. Validated by the *Haut Conseil de l’Intégration* [High Council on Integration] in its first report (HCI 1991), this category was soon systematically included in the production of statistics by the INSEE (*Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques* [National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies]). Then the *Histoire Familiale* [Family History] survey,<sup>6</sup> teaming up with the census of 1999, included for the first time in a survey of this magnitude information on the country of birth of parents. At that point the descendants of immigrants turned into a statistical category, almost 20 years after they became part of public debate and media coverage. It seemed credible to assume that this classification would quickly become widely used. This option seemed to offer a strong tactical response to the critics

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<sup>6</sup> 380,000 persons surveyed.

calling for better data to describe discrimination, and it avoided taking the further step of adopting ethno-racial classifications via self-identification. Data on parents' place of birth, however, involves limitations that I will examine in detail in the third part of this article, though such limitations, from a political point of view, may be largely offset by the possibility that this category of data could offer an exit from the cycle of endless controversy that has arisen over so-called 'ethnic statistics.'

### 4.3 The Controversies on 'Ethnic Statistics'

A year before the census of 1999, a violent controversy erupted in the French press over rumours of a plan to introduce ethnic categories in the census questionnaire.<sup>7</sup> Amid a blaze of press articles, the controversy pitted a number of researchers, on the one hand, ready to denounce the idea as part of a drift toward racism, against a few researchers, on the other, who called for modifying the statistical system, and in particular by substituting the category of immigrant for foreigner. The controversy was fuelled by the criticism of the '*Mobilité Géographique et Insertion Sociale*' [Geographic Mobility and Social Integration] survey coordinated in 1992 at the National Institute for Demographic Research (*Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques* or INED) by Michèle Tribalat (Tribalat 1995). The use of native language to distinguish among the various native African 'ethnic groups' or among the native 'Arabophones' and 'Berbers' of Algeria and Morocco, and finally the introduction of the concept of 'ethnic belonging' in the analysis of the survey were the object of virulent attacks (Blum 1998; Le Bras 1998). The controversy between Michèle Tribalat and Hervé Le Bras, both researchers at INED became highly personalized. The media portrayed it as a battle between a 'taboo breaker' and a promoter of a Republican rhetoric of *colour blindness* (Stavo-Debaugé 2003). When this first controversy ended, the status quo had prevailed, and the statistical apparatus remained unchanged. The episode did, however, deepen mistrust of how the managers of administrative files and of those at the INSEE handled variables having to do with immigrants. In the years that followed, the state statistics apparatus, overwhelmed by an ethical responsibility often poorly understood, practiced an excessive degree of self-censure, applying to any classification involving these variables conditions of validity that were more stringent than those worded by the data protection authority. What resulted were greater limitations on access to information showing the nationality or the country of birth of individuals (theoretically allowed, but heavily controlled in reality). The choice of censure before the fact in order to avoid any negative usage directed toward immigrant populations continues to be the favoured strategy to this day.

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<sup>7</sup>The INSEE unions had sounded the alarm and obtained media coverage. An examination of the proposed changes to the census questionnaire shows however that no request to introduce ethnic categories was ever made. The existence even of a 'plan' in this sense has not been established.

When the controversy resumed in 2004, the political context had changed completely. Discrimination had found its way onto the political agenda (Fassin 2002). The issue of statistics no longer concerned only the sphere of social scientists; it had become a political issue (Simon and Stavo-Debaugé 2004). The desire to make discrimination more conspicuous created more pressing needs for statistical data. References to skin colour or to ‘visible minorities,’ an expression borrowed from the Canadian debates, had become omnipresent. While there was a large consensus on the need to fight against discrimination, the role of statistics in policy and policy-making was the subject of contrasting views. Two petitions published within less than a month of each other advocated opposing positions. In the first one – ‘*Engagement républicain contre les discriminations*’ [*Republican commitment against discrimination*], published in the daily *Libération* on February 23, 2007 – the signatories defended the idea that it was possible to fight against discrimination effectively by using currently available statistics and limiting oneself to audit studies. The dangers of ethno-racial categorization were put forward to justify the use of alternative methods presumed to be operational so as to avoid the creation of ‘ethnic statistics.’ Sponsors of the petition sought to defend the ‘Republican model,’ worried as they were about the risk of sliding into inter-ethnic confrontations and drifting into affirmative action [*discrimination positive*] on behalf of discriminated minorities. As a reaction to this petition, a manifesto was then published in the daily *Le Monde*.<sup>8</sup> The signatories – the author of these lines being one of them – did not propose adopting a predefined set of categories; rather, they called attention to the deficiencies of current statistics as a basis for pursuing an antidiscrimination policy. They argued that given the systemic discrimination that occurs in France, as in any other multicultural and post-colonial society, the use of accurate statistics was an indispensable tool and that the alternative methods proposed by opponents met neither the needs of knowledge nor those of political action.

Because the stakes in this controversy clearly have gone beyond what is customary in scientific and technical debate, the exchanges have attracted a great deal of media coverage, which in turn has made them all the more violently polemical. Concepts or principles of analysis are not the only matters involved: the opponents of ‘ethnic statistics’ have rather sought to intervene, in the name of science, against what they see as a political danger. Mixing ends (the fight against discriminations) and means (the racialization of statistics), they are concerned that the constitutive power of statistics might strengthen ethnic or racial boundaries. It should be underscored that the controversy has not been about the nature of the findings that studies have presented on the situation of ‘immigrant populations’ or their descendants in French society. Few critics have challenged the analysis of the educational or professional trajectories of these groups such as have been made in those rare studies that do make use of categories of origin. Generally speaking, most researchers who criticize the idea of ‘ethnic statistics’ do not do research on discrimination. Their criticism grew mainly out of an ‘epistemological’ point of view in the social sciences – an ‘epistemology’ that in fact was less concerned with the conditions of

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<sup>8</sup> ‘Des statistiques contre les discriminations’, *Le Monde*, March 13, 2007.

knowledge and the establishment of 'facts' than with a desire to flag political and moral dangers. Most of these critics have not bothered to formulate concrete proposals for alternative categories.

Even though located in different political contexts, the controversies raise somewhat similar arguments. Taken together, the principal texts written against 'ethnic statistics' show recurrent topics that could be summarized as follows:

1. The use of 'ethnic variables' for scientific purposes revives the debate on the scope of the prerogatives public statistical services should be allowed to have and on their responsibility in structuring the social field. From this perspective, one can fear that by looking into the 'origins' of individuals the bodies collecting statistical information might violate their privacy. And what about respect for the rule law? Is an inappropriate use of the records, for political or other purposes, really that inconceivable? The precedent of recording information on Jewish people during Second World War and the ethno-racial profiling practiced, even today, by police and other institutions (including public housing bodies) are evidence of the reality of that risk. Despite an extremely rigorous control of the management of electronic files by the CNIL, an authority with relatively broad powers, the possibility of abuse cannot be excluded.
2. Ethno-racial classifications contribute to an essentialization of identities, relegating individuals to origins that cannot change or be transcended. These classifications tend to substitute for other forms of identification that may be just as viable and socially relevant, if not more so, such as class or gender. Essentialization and over-determination thus make the use of these categories extremely problematic. Researchers concerned about their social responsibilities would better refrain from using racist stereotypes in their work.
3. Even when ethnic or racial categories are not referring to 'objective' definitions of origin, but are based on an identification that leaves room for the actors to play a role in defining them, there is a risk of reifying blurred, unstable entities. By tracking data, the statistical classification generates boundaries within the social body, where previously there was only a loose conglomeration of moving identities. Statistics result in rigid ethnic and racial frontiers and validate commonplace prejudices.
4. The use of 'ethnic statistics' to fight against discrimination is not justified; it is possible to reveal discrimination through ethnographic observations or special surveys instead of statistical data gathering. Audit studies and indirect methods of classification, such as the use of first names, may make it possible to obtain comparable results while avoiding the collection of 'ethnic data.'

Obviously, the set of arguments called upon to disqualify the use of the concepts of 'race' and ethnicity and their operationalization in statistical categories play upon a variety of rhetorical registers. In debates, the opponents of ethnic statistics easily shift from one register to the next, mixing what pertains to the logic of political action with what is more a matter of scientific method. One of the main rhetorical tricks, for example, consists in lumping together statistics and preferential quotas. Because the idea of 'positive discrimination' is quite unpopular in France, many

people all too readily assume that 'ethnic statistics' would only serve to ensure the creation of quotas for 'Blacks' and 'Arabs' seeking access to universities and jobs. The principle of ensuring equality of treatment through monitoring is still not very well understood. Most arguments, then, against 'ethnic statistics' share the common feature of exploiting the fear of a slippery rope by invoking apocalyptic forecasts of what will follow.

One sees this mode of argument in the reference to the Vichy government's persecution of Jewish populations during World War II. This criminal misappropriation of statistical files is now historically well established and its significance should not be underestimated. However, a distinction should be made among the various types of statistics a government might collect. Inquiries based on anonymous samples are not censuses and should not be confused with population registers or administrative files. In a remarkable study, William Selzer (1998) has shown that while the deportations of Jewish people by the Nazis and the governments collaborating with Hitler's regime were facilitated by the use of demographic statistics, it was mostly the population registers (specifying names), not the census, that had turned out to be most useful in carrying out the Final Solution. To be sure, the Nazis themselves routinely performed administrative registration in the occupied countries, as an early step in the perpetration of mass murders. In the Second World War, moreover, even democratic countries were not immune from abusing statistical records, as was the case with the use of the census in the internment of Japanese Americans (Selzer and Anderson 2001).

Another problem with the risk-of-persecution argument is that it may be applied to a large number of 'sensitive' data that are already routinely collected for purposes of redistributing resources or correcting social ills. Most social policies involve a whole series of statistics that have to do with characteristics inducing disadvantages, and for this reason, run the risk of reinforcing stigma: single-parent families, need-based scholarship recipients, the unemployed, the disabled, and so on; the list is long. The only viable guarantee that these data will only be used for legitimate purposes is provided by the state and by the data protection authority. But should the state be trusted? The negative answer implicitly given to this broad question is precisely what determines for the most part the hostility encountered by the creation of ethnic categories. This characteristic mistrust of the state clearly distinguishes France from many other countries in the North of Europe (Great Britain, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, etc.)

The use of ethnic or racial categories for purposes of research, or even more so for targeting public policy, could create the illusion that it substitutes essentialist distinctions for socially constructed definitions of difference. In reality, however, the main currents in the field of race and ethnic studies have clearly distanced themselves from the essentialist tradition. The concepts of ethnicity or of 'race' that are dominant today in the academy are constructivist in inspiration (Brubaker 2009). The recent plea of the American Sociological Association in favour of collecting 'racial' data through the federal statistical apparatus unequivocally testifies to that conviction (ASA 2003). The ASA's statement, entitled 'The Importance of Collecting Data and Doing Social Scientific Research on Race,' argues that to

invalidate popular beliefs in the existence of 'biological races' the social effects of the circulation of racial classifications and prejudices must be studied. In this context, abandoning racial classifications would amount to precluding the understanding of one of the fundamental forms of social stratification in the United States, and – as a consequence – failing to grasp some of the most important mechanisms that produce inequality.

It is also unconvincing to argue that a focus on ethnic and racial inequality would displace or impede efforts to address socio-economic inequality. For a long time a great many studies have sought to find ways to understand the connections between 'race,' gender, and class without getting trapped into this fallacy. The role of the researcher is not to define a hierarchy of contemporary forms of domination, but instead to consider their plurality and describe their evolving configurations. In France, by contrast, where the very notions of ethnic origin and 'race' have been discredited, it is assumed these categories should not under any circumstances be exploited, even for the positive purposes of aiding individuals. Since racial categories are produced by racial thought, the idea itself of a reappropriation giving a certain prestige to the derogatory identity by the person who suffers it (reversing of stigma) is unconceivable. This line of reasoning is probably what most radically differentiates the United States and Great Britain from France: 'race' and ethnicity are regarded as self-evident in the first two countries; they are seen as nothing but a historical creation that needs to be eradicated in the case of France. A compromise between these alternative perspectives could probably be found. One may well wonder whether the negation of minority identities that prevails in France in the name of universalism is not often simply a tactic for consolidating the position of dominant groups. At any rate, it is striking to note that through some sort of pernicious effect of the universalistic logic the fight against ethnic and racial inequality leads to a deepened mistrust of any mention of origin, as if origin had become shameful in itself, a defamatory mark that should be erased as swiftly as possible.

Contested with respect to their substance, statistics involving ethnicity or 'race' are also contested with respect to their form. Whereas the variables of nationality and country of birth reproduce civil status data and are thus relatively easy to collect, the data regarding ethnicity and 'race' – when left without an institutional definition – are by nature subjective and changing. The corresponding categories are thus potentially unstable, likely as they may be to evolve under the effect of identity claims or changes in equality policies. It is, however, precisely from these limitations that the singular value of 'ethnic and racial' categories are derived; these are categories that constitute in reality – to cut against the grain of a hackneyed argument – the paradigmatic example of a non-essentialist classification system, since subjectivity is incorporated in their very definition. In this sense, they represent a new generation of quantitative data where 'authenticity' is less important than the possibility of recasting the principle and the content of categorization as a matter for debate. Because they claim to be subjective and fragile, because they assume their inscription into a history made up of slavery, colonization, xenophobia, exploitation and domination, because they prevent an evasion of what lies buried in the structures of our formally egalitarian but highly hierarchized societies, 'ethnic and racial'

statistics have the power of revealing historically crystallized relationships of power. The use of a self-identification method makes room for the dynamics of representation, imposition and interiorization of labels to emerge. If the self-identification of persons prevails – as is the case almost everywhere today – it will also make it possible to measure the acceptance and interiorization of current labels. More generally, this registration method based on choice opens the door to a kind of ‘statistical dramaturgy’, through which the conflicts and competition – between majorities and minorities and within these groups – characteristic of ethnic and racial relations in multicultural societies get reflected in the classification operations themselves.

Granted, there remains a gap between the logic of self-identification and the fundamental basis of discriminatory practices: the perception that others have of the origin of individuals (third party identification). This ascribed identification and its determinants call for a sociology of appearances and markers (patronymic, linguistic, body posture, etc.). It is difficult to reduce this complexity so as to make it fit with traditional data collection practices. But an awareness of the inherent limitations in data collecting should not lead to depriving ourselves of statistical tools built on self-identification, imperfect though those tools may be. A number of studies show that there is a relatively close convergence between the classifications established by third parties and those chosen by the individuals themselves,<sup>9</sup> or at least a sufficient convergence to make self-identification effective for the purpose of defining populations likely to be discriminated against because of their presumed ‘race’ or ethnicity.

Let us close this discussion of the case against statistics by looking at the terminological pitfalls that beset the Francophone world. While the terms race, ethnic group or ethnicity could not be more commonly used in English-speaking countries, they are highly charged objects of criticism in France.<sup>10</sup> That being the case, could we use other signifiers instead of ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ that would still preserve the meaning that has been attributed to them? A detour through geography, ‘culture’ or national origin, however, raises some delicate issues. The notion of ‘culture’ is scarcely more consistent (nor less controversial) than that of ‘ethnicity,’ since using it tends to attribute explanatory power to the most obvious ‘cultural’ features (notably language and religion) at the expense of more political and social dimensions of ethnicity. As for geography, which postulates the primacy of a territorial relationship and sees migration as the founding event of ethnicity, its relevance – already debatable but plausible with respect to immigrants – is more than doubtful with respect to their descendants. For them ethnicity has less to do with a continuous tie to a territory or national origin than with an individual’s socialization in the family and in the educational milieu (communalization, to borrow a concept from Weber). It is a matter more of history than geography. Indeed, the debate over ‘ethnic statistics’ is itself best understood in light of the very special relation the Republican model has to history. The difficulty in taking into account, much less overcoming,

<sup>9</sup>For France, see (Simon and Clément 2006).

<sup>10</sup>On the registers of meaning of ‘ethnic’ or ‘ethnic group’ see (Krieg-Planque 2005.) On the choice to talk about ‘racist discrimination’ or ‘racial discrimination,’ see (De Rudder et al. 2000).

colonial history as well as the way immigration has been managed by the Republic remain at the core of the controversy over statistics – at its core, but never fully acknowledged.

#### 4.4 The Search for Alternatives: Replacements and Placebos

Collecting ethnic data is not only a political question, it is also a legal issue framed within the restrictions of the data protection law that was adopted in 1978 and amended in 2004. Article 8 of that law stipulates as follows:

It is prohibited to collect or process data of a personal nature that reveal, directly or indirectly, the racial or ethnic origins, the political, philosophical or religious opinions, the union membership, the health or the sexual life of persons.

This ban can be lifted under certain conditions. Therefore there is no blanket prohibition, but rather a prior check over what may be done. As a result, surveys that attempt to ask questions related to ethnicity and ‘race’ in their questionnaires are extremely rare.

However, this legal framework regarding the collection of data has been subjected to significant criticism by researchers and, more recently, by the companies that wish to implement monitoring with a view to fighting discrimination and promoting diversity. Faced with repeated and growing pressures, on July 9, 2005 the French Data Protection Authority (*Commission Nationale Informatique et Libertés*, or CNIL)<sup>11</sup> issued its first formal recommendations on the ‘measurement of diversity.’ In them, the authority leaves it to the legislature to decide whether ‘nationwide ethno-racial nomenclature’ ought to be created, while acknowledging that statistics referring to origins are legitimate in the context of the fight against discrimination. These first recommendations produced no effect and the pressures grew stronger. Calls to establish a framework for using ‘diversity statistics’ grew significantly and came from many different sectors of society. In turn, the French High Authority against Discrimination and for Equality (*Haute Autorité de Lutte contre les Discriminations et pour l’Égalité*, or HALDE) declared its opposition to any ‘ethno-racial nomenclature,’ arguing that it was sufficient in fighting discrimination to have data on the country of birth of individuals and their parents and to carry out audit studies.<sup>12</sup>

The hostility of the HALDE towards any ‘ethnic monitoring’ carried out by companies for antidiscrimination purposes led the CNIL to reconvene a task force on the issue of measuring diversity. After several months of conducting hearings of researchers, representatives of anti-racist associations and human rights advocates, members of institutions, ministers and members of Parliament – some of which

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<sup>11</sup>The CNIL is an independent authority created by the Data Protection Law of 1978 (amended in 2004) to ensure its application.

<sup>12</sup>Decision 2006-31 of February 27, 2006.



were held in front of the press, the CNIL issued a new report on May 16, 2007. This report contains ten recommendations that open the door to a well thought-out collection of ‘ethnic and racial’ data as part of carefully supervised surveys, as well as to the collection of data that might be useful in analyzing how people ‘experience discrimination.’<sup>13</sup> The CNIL also conveyed that it was open to introducing the country of birth and nationality of parents into the census.

To widespread surprise, these recommendations inspired the filing of an amendment on ‘studies on the measurement of the diversity of origins’ in a legislative bill on immigration control, which Parliament examined in September 2007. Several anti-racist associations and the socialist party criticized the amendment, either for its content or for its insertion in a bill on immigration which was acutely discriminatory in itself. The HALDE and CNIL, however, supported it.<sup>14</sup> After having been slightly modified by the Senate, the bill was officially approved on 23 October 2007. On this occasion, the HALDE issued a press release reconfirming its opposition to the creation of official ‘ethnic statistics’ while at the same time accepting the possibility of using ‘ethnic’ categories in scientific studies.<sup>15</sup> Yet, ultimately, the Constitutional Council accepted the claim put forward by a large number of left-wing members of the parliament that the provision in the law authorizing the collection of data on race and ethnicity was unconstitutional. That provision, whose *raison d’être* was paradoxically to strengthen the power of control of the data protection agency, was nullified as a result, primarily on the ground that it was a rider devoid of any connection with the object and purpose of the law into which it had been inserted (regulating immigration and redefining the conditions under which foreigners could reside in France). Yet, the Council also took it upon itself to add a statement on the unconstitutional nature of any data collection process that would rely on race or ethnic origin, described as a violation of article 1 of the 1958 Constitution. What the consequences of this decision will be is difficult to say for now.

For the time being, the political and legal constraints on ‘ethnic statistics’ have stimulated are sourcefulness in terms of methods and makeshift solutions. Rather than collecting data on origin by asking a direct question, such data is deduced from indirect information: last and/or first name; country of birth and nationality of the individual, a person’s parents or even grandparents; native language or language spoken at home.<sup>16</sup> Taken separately or combined, these variables enable one to build categories that, after all, are not much different from ‘ethnic categories’ but for

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<sup>13</sup>The entire report of the CNIL, as well as a verbatim of the hearings are available at <http://www.cnil.fr/index.php?id=2219>.

<sup>14</sup>See the CNIL press release on its website; also see the platform published by its president Alex Turk and Anne Debet, rapporteur for the task force on the measurement of diversity (Debet and Turk 2007).

<sup>15</sup>Decision 2007-233 of 24 September 2007. See the following excerpt: ‘The high authority underscores that the use of such inquiries should not result in the creation of ‘ethno-racial categories’ and cannot under any circumstances justify the use of official files referring to, directly or indirectly, the origins of people.’

<sup>16</sup>For an inventory of the data available and of the different approaches and problems encountered, see the publication of the Strategic Analysis Council (*Centre d’Analyse Stratégique*, or CAS 2006).

their indirect and derivative nature. These replacements or proxies underscore, by contrast, the ambiguities of statistical invisibility: some solutions could seem even more reifying than the categorization that they claim to be avoiding. In a good number of cases, they turn out to be less reliable. It is often surprising to find that the terms ‘ethnic’ and ‘race’ have the effect of the bogeyman, but when all is said and done, no one really knows what they are about.

The main strategy applied to make up for the unavailability of ethnic categories consists in collecting information with similar or equivalent meaning. In particular, the interest in descendants of immigrants has favoured the use of questions on nationality and parent’s country of birth (Simon 2003). The 1999 *Histoire Familiale* survey, the 1993 and 2003 FQP<sup>17</sup> surveys, the employment survey<sup>18</sup> since 2005 and the 2006 housing survey<sup>19</sup> make it possible to analyze the situation of the descendants of immigrants. Eurostat chose this option when it introduced such data in the questionnaire of the forthcoming 2008 European labour force survey. Yet, while the study of the ‘second generation’ plays a crucial role in the analysis of the integration process, it is far from clear that the category of descendants of immigrants is the most appropriate for looking into ethnic and ‘racial’ social relationships. Easy to collect and accommodate in the French context, the category offers a pragmatic compromise in the short term, but it is bound to become obsolete with the next generations. In the case of France, the oldest waves of immigration go back to the middle of the nineteenth century. It would be impossible to describe the situation of the descendants of Belgian, German, Polish, Armenian or Italian immigrants who came prior to 1940 based on the ‘second generation’ category. For the most recent waves, which are also those that are truly exposed to discrimination, the criterion of the country of birth of the parents still allows one to cover between 80 and 90 % of the populations concerned (Simon and Clément 2006). Yet, within the next 10 years, the subsequent generation will reach the age of social autonomy and no longer be identifiable in statistics. The transition to recording origin by self-identification will then be the only viable solution.

Another option involves identification based on already recorded markers. Thus, first and last names constitute basic information recorded as part of the individual’s (civil) identity and can be classified into quasi-ethnic categories based on what they sound like. This seemingly simple method can be applied to any administrative file. And even though these individual data are protected by the CNIL, which theoretically limits their use for statistical purposes, this approach is at the heart of a growing number of studies on segregation or discrimination. Applied to French National Education files (Felouzis 2003; ORES 2007), to corporate files (Cédiey and Foroni 2005) or to judiciary data (Jobard and Névanen 2007), the ‘patronymic method’ undeniably yields results. To be sure, we have no precise measurement of the magnitude of the observational biases involved in relying on first name choices. But if we assume that in most cases first names given by parents are chosen from a

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<sup>17</sup> *Formation et Qualification Professionnelle*, approximately 40,000 persons sampled.

<sup>18</sup> Approximately 55,000 persons were polled in 1 year.

<sup>19</sup> Approximately 30,000 persons sampled.

culturally limited list, they can be considered as markers of ‘cultural origin’ (Felouzis 2003: 420) and can therefore be used to track and measure the segregation or discrimination of the people with the relevant names.

The decision to use the first name, last name, or a combination of the two, however, is fraught with consequences. Even though it is always possible to change one’s name, either through a special procedure, or through marriage, a patronym is in fact a lot more stable than a first name (Lapierre 1995). Conversely, the latter is a wonderful sociological signifier that enables one to uncover the effect of collective norms on personal choices, in particular in the case of immigrant families faced with the contradictory processes of acculturation, on the one hand, and reproduction of marks of attachment to their culture of origin, on the other. Thus, as a marker a first name is not independent from the very social processes that it is being used to measure, namely the integration process and exposure to discrimination based on origin. The choice families make to give or not to give a culturally marked first name cannot be isolated from strategies of social mobility or *invisibilization* [blending in]. Studies on Hispanics in the United States come to this conclusion (Sue and Telles 2007), as does most notably one of the few quantitative studies dedicated to the first names of children of immigrants (Valetas and Bringé 2005). Based on the MGIS survey conducted in 1992, M-F. Valetas and A. Bringé show that while Algerian immigrant parents choose a ‘traditional’ first name in  $\frac{3}{4}$  of cases, their descendants born in France, i.e., the second generation of Algerians will prefer ‘international’ (38 %) or ‘French’ (22 %) first names for their children and will gradually abandon the ‘traditional’ (20 %) or ‘modern Maghrebian’ (20 %) first names. The disappearance of ‘typical’ first names as well as the assimilation through name change is at the root of claims by Hispanic lobbies that led to the introduction of the Hispanic question in the United States census in 1980. Until that date, ‘Hispanics’ were reclassified based on their first and last names by the departments of the Census Bureau. Based on the conclusion that persons of Hispanic origin were potentially underrepresented due to mixed unions and the expansion of Anglo names in the Hispanic community, the lobbies requested and obtained the introduction of the question of Hispanic origin by self-identification (Choldin 1986).

Finally, the efficiency of the patronymic method as part of the observation of discrimination processes is far from being established. The assumption under which a first and last name constitute a significant signal on the basis of which potential discriminators direct their behaviour is in part confirmed by the audit studies that have been carried out in recent years. A good deal of discrimination, however, occurs without the perpetrators knowing the civil identity of the persons that they discriminate against. And what about individuals who are exposed to discrimination due to a ‘visible’ sign of their origin in interpersonal interaction but who do not have a first or last name that would denote such an origin? These types of discrimination remain undetected by a method that is based on patronymic identification. And are descendants of immigrants or people from the overseas departments [DOM] who have blurred the signal usually delivered by a ‘typical’ first name shielded from discriminations based on other distinctive signs? Obviously not.

Those limitations notwithstanding, does the use of first names at least make it possible to avoid the much-dreaded ‘ethnicization of statistics’? In this respect, the arguments made are not exempt of hypocrisy. In fact, and despite all the carefully selected words for the occasion,<sup>20</sup> the construction of a category of persons ‘with an Arabic first name’ (or ‘Maghrebian’ first name) makes sense in relation to a universe of ethno-cultural reference that is constitutive of patronymic semantics. An ‘Arabic’ first name is a classification criterion only because it is correlated with the alleged belonging of the person with such name to a group defined as Arab. The fact that origin is attributed based on a first name does not necessarily correspond to the self-identification of the persons thus classified, as Cédiey and Foroni rightly note (2005: 9). Nor does it prevent the ‘Arabic first name’ from being an ‘ethno-racial’ characteristic based on collective stereotypes. As a matter of fact, one cannot easily escape from stereotyping. Stereotypes are at the root of discrimination and therefore they will certainly surface when one tries to monitor it.

#### 4.5 Antidiscrimination as a New Political Frame

The issue of discrimination finally found its place on the political agenda at the end of the 1990s in France, after having for a decade been the subject of a growing number of research studies and publications (Fassin 2002). Compared with the scholarly output in North America or Great Britain, the interest in French social sciences was certainly very slow in coming. This situation has been all the more paradoxical because works on racism as an ideology were relatively numerous and, given how long a history France had with immigration, discrimination was hardly a new phenomenon (Amiriaux and Simon 2006). But it does not suffice for the facts to exist to automatically become topics of research or intervention by state authorities.

Following the 1996 report by the *Conseil d’État* [Council of State] on the principle of ‘equality,’ the 1998 report by the High Council for Integration (*Haut Conseil à l’Intégration*) on the ‘fight against discrimination’, and Minister of Employment and Solidarity Martine Aubry’s speech before the Council of Ministers on October 21, 1998 proclaim equality to be the key element in the revitalization of French integration policy, the fight against discrimination has become part of the French political agenda. Two EU directives introducing the notion of indirect discrimination

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<sup>20</sup> See for instance this passage from the very interesting study on access to higher education in Nord-Pas-de-Calais based on a classification by first name: ‘Attributing a certain ‘ethnic origin’ to students here is out of the question. The debates on this concept are sufficiently old and rich to admit that a first name is only one of many more or less reliable indicators.’ (ORES 2007, p.7) In a context where ‘ethnic’ studies have come to be seriously stigmatized, the authors have felt compelled to apologize for their identification approach and go as far as to claim that their classification does not attribute an ‘ethnicity’ to students ‘with Arabic or Muslim first names’. What, then, does this category based on first names stand for?

into European law were adopted in June and November 2000.<sup>21</sup> They were transposed into French law by the Law of November 16, 2001 and supplemented in January 2002 by the Law on social modernization. In 2004, the HALDE succeeded the Group to Study and Combat Discriminations (*Groupe d'Étude et de Lutte contre les Discriminations*, or GELD), which had been created in 2000. The list of matters covered by the HALDE is now identical to those listed in the European directive on equality in employment and therefore includes sex, religion, handicap and sexual orientation, in addition to ethnic or racial origin. Between 2000 and 2005, the public system of antidiscrimination law enforcement was thus gradually set up, but has been largely unable to effectively tackle what is more akin to a discriminatory system or order than to a succession of isolated cases.

The structural dimension of discrimination is clearly acknowledged by European law, which has sought to sanction not only direct discrimination but also those forms of indirect discrimination that are more diffuse and are captured by the more sociological concept of systemic discrimination. Indirect discrimination is defined in Article 2 of the European Directive as ‘an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice likely to entail a specific disadvantage for persons of a given race or ethnic origin compared to other persons, unless such provision, criterion or practice can be objectively justified by a legitimate objective and the means to reach such an objective are appropriate and necessary.’ By now this definition ought to be a standard reference in French law, but the concept has not been fully appropriated by legal and non-legal actors. The main stumbling block for putting this legal principle to use is precisely the lack of a system of categories and of the necessary statistics (Calvès 2002). France in fact was sanctioned in June 2007 by the European Commission with a request for a ‘reasoned opinion’ – the second and final degree of sanction prior to notifying the European Court of Justice – for its incomplete incorporation of the concept of indirect discrimination.

Indeed, the concept of indirect discrimination itself presupposes the availability of statistical monitoring. Indirect discrimination is assessed essentially through its consequences, and those can only be grasped through statistical comparisons designed to ascertain whether a given practice has what in American legal parlance is known as a ‘disparate impact.’ Unjust and unfavourable treatment does not consist solely in refusing to grant goods or services on account of a person’s sex or origin. The question of intent is not decisive in determining whether discrimination is involved. A set of procedures and decisions, none of which is, strictly speaking, discriminatory, could end up filtering individuals in a sufficiently regular manner (but never completely – this is what separates discriminatory systems of this type from apartheid models) based on their origin without its author even consciously trying to produce that result.

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<sup>21</sup> Directive 2000/43/EC of 6/29/2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, known as the ‘race directive’; Directive 2000/78/EC ‘for the creation of general framework in favor of the equality of treatment in terms of employment and occupation.’

Likewise, so-called ‘positive action’ measures, designed to promote equality, use statistics abundantly for diagnostic purposes, to set objectives, or to evaluate the effects of policy (Simon 2005a). Based upon complex monitoring systems, these antidiscrimination policies only rarely use quotas to establish equality. Statistics are used mainly to track impediments to advancement or access, identify their internal mechanisms and measure the progress made in overcoming them. The objective is to enforce equality of treatment, rarely to grant preferential treatment to persons considered to belong to an ‘ethnic or racial’ minority. The regulative ideal at play here remains the impartiality of resource allocation systems, of their selection procedures and conditions of access. Yet, in the French debate, these positive action models are routinely described as being nothing more than preferential policies based on racial or ethnic quotas, which are extremely unpopular in public opinion. Quotas are then described as the inescapable end point of the establishment of statistical monitoring, in spite of the fact that the two same things are clearly distinct. The equation ‘ethnic statistics=quotas’ has thus become one of the most commonplace claims in the controversy, despite all attempts to correct this fallacy and to explain what is really involved in the policies promoting affirmative action and equal opportunity. This persistent effort to caricature policies designed to fight against discrimination arises in part from ignorance, but also from a deliberate strategy to discredit them in order to justify political and scientific choices. From this point of view, the debate on ‘ethnic statistics’ is far from being a model of intellectual rigor.

All in all, research in the social sciences, and especially in the field of statistics, is called upon to describe society not as researchers would like it to be but as it has come to be shaped by social relationships and political and institutional forces, in order to understand its dynamics and find the tools necessary to transform it. To carry out such a program, it is important to define proper questions for research and to devise methods for tackling them. It is essential to remember, too, that ‘ethnic’ categories are by no means unique in their fragility and in the fuzziness of their boundaries. Such properties simply require the statistician or researcher to explore the subjective dimension of classifications, even in the case of variables that appear to be the most stable and reliable. To take just one example, some of the critiques frequently levelled at ‘ethnic statistics’ could easily apply to socio-occupational categories (about the variation in survey responses that fail to correspond to objective changes in status, the imposition of categories that fail to capture the diversity of personal experiences, and so on). Occupational categories have problems, too, then, but this does not mean we have to challenge their existence.

Developments in the fight against discrimination have gradually led to calling into question the ‘choice of ignorance’. This is no longer only a debate among specialists. The diversity charter,<sup>22</sup> the promotion of diversity in the public service,<sup>23</sup> diversity in the media: the calls and recommendations to introduce visible difference in the social makeup of organizations and their hierarchies are growing in

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<sup>22</sup>The Diversity charter has been signed by close to 1500 companies since 2004.

<sup>23</sup>‘Rapport sur la diversité dans la fonction publique’, Dominique Versini, December 2004.

numbers. Companies that have taken the initiative to ask the CNIL about the authorized methods for collecting data ‘relating to diversity’ are breaking new ground. The debate is far from theoretical. Directors of human resources are asking a pragmatic question: How to measure discrimination without identifying the groups likely to have suffered it? The HALDE in turn has taken a position against the establishment of ‘ethnic’ statistics while at the same time being open to targeted surveys. For the time being, it remains committed to a defence of audit studies as an alternative method to statistical monitoring.

In fact, the French strategy does not conform to the guidelines issued by the international bodies. The recommendations of the CERD<sup>24</sup> to the UN (Banton 2001), of the ECRI to the Council of Europe,<sup>25</sup> or those of the EUMC<sup>26</sup> in Vienna aim at promoting the collection of statistical data that show, one way or another, ethnic and racial origins. In its last report<sup>27</sup> to the European Council and the European Parliament on the application of Directive 2000/43/EC, the European Commission noted the critical role statistics have played in the implementation of antidiscrimination policies and the strengthening of their ability to ensure social cohesion and to promote diversity equitably. It also underscores the persistent misunderstandings, sometimes deliberately entertained, that surround the relations between data protection and the production of statistical information on discrimination. As the report put it, ‘The rarity of ethnic data in most member states can, however, hinder the proper monitoring of the application of European community legislation.’

Objections have been raised to the collection of this type of data on the grounds that they presumably violate provisions of the European Union directive on data protection. This argument, however, is not quite correct. The directive prohibits in general the treatment of sensitive data of a personal nature. Some exceptions to this rule are nevertheless allowed, notably when ‘the person concerned has granted explicit consent for such treatment,’ or when ‘the treatment is necessary for the purpose of respecting the obligations and special rights of the person responsible for such treatment in terms of labour law.’ In addition, ‘subject to appropriate guarantees, member states can allow exceptions on grounds of major public interest.’ Therefore, member states are responsible for deciding whether ethnic data must be collected to produce statistics with a view to fighting discrimination, provided that the guarantees established by the directive on data protection are respected.<sup>28</sup>

On a European scale, France is not the only country to experience difficulties in becoming involved in an effective equality policy. The controversies regarding statistics are nevertheless a lot more passionate there than elsewhere because of the place occupied by immigration, colonization, and slavery in the national history. The special role of the researchers in social sciences in these controversies is also

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<sup>24</sup> Comité pour l’élimination de la discrimination raciale/Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

<sup>25</sup> European Commission against Racism and Intolerance.

<sup>26</sup> European Monitoring Center on Racism, Xenophobia and Anti-Semitism.

<sup>27</sup> COM (2006) 643 of 10/30/2006.

<sup>28</sup> COM (2006) 643 of 10/30/2006.

exceptional in France. For a long time, reminding researchers of their civic duties was aimed at building awareness about the dangers that were thought to be inherent in the development of ‘ethnic’ statistics (Noiriel 2006). The collective blindness and silence that prevailed on racial discrimination were not perceived to be a matter of collective responsibility. That being said, it is obvious today that the *choice of ignorance* no longer protects the populations exposed to discrimination; on the contrary, it reinforces the system that puts them at an unfair disadvantage. This is indeed the meaning of the latest interventions by sociologist Dominique Schnapper, who until very recently had embodied the ideal-typical republican position in the field of integration research. She says now that ‘taking ethnic categories into account will gradually happen in France as in the democracies of northern Europe,’ since it is ‘impossible, politically and morally, for researchers to renounce their role in the creation of the self-awareness of a democratic society by establishing knowledge that is as objective as possible’ (Schnapper 2007: 99). Assuming, however, that this French exceptionality among multicultural societies is indeed fast disappearing, the joint agenda of research and public decision on the issue of discrimination has only begun. What should ‘ethno-racial’ categories look like, how and where could they be collected, and according to which procedure would the categories be defined: there is a new research frontier that awaits us beyond the controversies and caricatures that have come with the ‘choice of ignorance.’

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# Chapter 5

## Ethnic and Linguistic Categories in Quebec: Counting to Survive

Victor Piché

### 5.1 Introduction

For some time, statistical categories emanating from official data-producing agencies have been analyzed within their underlying ideological and historical contexts.<sup>1</sup> In the introductory chapter,<sup>2</sup> we have suggested a typology for the political use of ethnic categories. The case at hand – that of Quebec through the history of its ethnic and linguistic relationships in the Canadian context – illustrates the political and ideological role of ethnicity and language statistics in power relationships and survival strategies, especially with regards to the French-speaking minority group. The Canada/Quebec example is also interesting because it demonstrates that, within the same country, the use of these statistics may vary from one group to another. If, in the Canadian multicultural context, ethnicity-related census categories are currently legitimized by anti-discriminatory programmes, they also enable Francophone<sup>3</sup> Quebecers to monitor the evolution of the use of the French language – a monitoring scheme whose interpretations sometimes differ widely but which remains highly dependent on census data availability.

In Quebec, the political use of ethnic categories is linked to the history of nationalism and immigration. To understand this history, a distinction must first be made between ethnic nationalism based on the cultural notion of the nation, which is exclusive, and civic nationalism based on the notion of an inclusive political community (Bouchard 2001; Canet 2003). Most authors divide the history of Quebec

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<sup>1</sup> See Simon (1997), Kertzer and Ariel (2002), Szreter et al. (2004), Rallu et al. (2006).

<sup>2</sup> See Chap. 1.

<sup>3</sup> The notion of *francophone* is discussed later.

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nationalism into three periods: (1) 1800–1840, a period of inclusive civic nationalism; (2) 1840–1960, the quintessential period of ethnic nationalism for survival; and (3) since 1960, a period in which inclusive civic nationalism returned and dominated.<sup>4</sup>

Extending this periodization, we suggest four phases that constitute the periods in which the use of ethnic and language categories have changed significantly. The first phase, prior to 1860, was a period characterized by the notion of ‘peoples’ rather than ethnicities. Numbers were indeed very important but were basically related to majority-minority relations and the struggle for political representation. In this period, Canadian immigration took place in an imperial and colonial context, marked by a significant flow of British immigrants, especially beginning in 1815. This imperial context provided the British with particular advantages that were unavailable to other Europeans, and Francophones were therefore excluded from the imperial logic (Ramirez 2001). In fact, the *ethnic* category only appeared as such in the next phase (1871 census). We will therefore not focus on this first period, which has been characterized as one of political and civic nationalism (Balthazar 1986; Canet 2003). This characterization is important within the context of the current debates that oppose the tenets of civic nationalism and those of ethnic nationalism – an issue that will be revisited in the conclusion.

This chapter will thus examine the three subsequent phases. In brief, the second phase (1860–1960) was one in which ethnic nationalism and the notion of survival were dominant. In the third period (1960–1990), language categories began to emerge alongside ethnic ones. Though they broadened the *Francophone* category, they remained based on indicators similar to those of ethnic categories such as mother tongue or the language spoken at home. The *other* (allophone) category also appeared at this time as a Francophone-Anglophone integration issue from a statistical and political perspective. The last period, beginning in 1990, is characterized by the re-definitions of identity that have emerged as a result of increasingly diverse immigration and the development of a relative consensus on the need to re-examine nationalism from a more civic inclusive standpoint. A new category, *common public language*, therefore tended to replace standard language categories. However, ethnic nationalism is still very much alive and, as we will see, debates are still raging with respect to the choice of language categories and whether or not they should contain an ethnic dimension.

## 5.2 Ethnic Categories and Survival: 1860–1960

Throughout the period, the political use of ethnic categories was intimately related to immigration. Two regimes characterize twentieth century immigration in Canada. The first one, which occurs during the period examined here, has been qualified as racist and assimilationist (Piché 2003). From a purely quantitative perspective, immigration was characterized by highs and lows. A first sub-period (1880–1920)

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<sup>4</sup>According to Bourque (2003: 9), this periodization reflects the basic theoretical and empirical writings on the notion of nation. Canet (2003: 135) bases his categorizations on Balthazar (1986) and Rioux (1977), among others.

was marked by significant migration beginning in the 1880s and constitutes what is considered to be the first massive wave of migration. It was a time of economic upswing in the manufacturing industry, whose production increased until the 1930s (Elliott 1979) and during which land colonization projects in the West were introduced (Burnet and Palmer 1991; Labelle et al. 1979).

In the wake of the intense official recruitment campaigns conducted outside Great Britain in continental Europe, the importance of the British group diminished as compared to that of other Europeans. In Quebec, the effect of the recruitment policy on ethnic composition was obvious in the shifts that took place between the 1901 and 1921 censuses. The British group shrunk from 18 % in 1901 to 15 % in 1921, and the *non-British and non-French* group grew from 2 to 5 % (Piché 2003). Several new groups from continental Europe arrived in Quebec but their weight remained relatively small, contrary to what was happening in Western Canada.

There was less migration in 1921–1930, and, in 1931–1950, immigration practically stopped, especially due to three factors: the impacts of WWI, the 1918–1922 economic slowdown and the significant postwar anti-immigration sentiment that was sweeping Canada. It was a time in which the nativist trend was violently expressed. According to Burnet and Palmer (1991: 43), Canada was sufficiently settled, did not require new immigrants and could not absorb additional entrants, especially those who were from outside Great Britain. Certain religious sects, including the Mennonites, Hutterites and Doukhobors were not allowed in Canada (Burnet and Palmer 1991). For other reasons, unions would also jump on the bandwagon, requiring better working conditions over the recruitment of low-cost, strike-breaking immigrant labour (Labelle et al. 1979: 20). The government therefore restricted immigration, establishing a list of desirable and non-desirable countries (Labelle et al. 1983). Black and Asian (especially Chinese) immigration was banned.

During this period, the Quebec government intervened very little in terms of immigration even though the Canadian confederation allows for shared jurisdiction between Canada and the provinces. It was a period in which Quebec frowned upon immigration for historical reasons arising out of French-English conflicts. Immigration was perceived as negative, and people were wary of the Canadian immigration policy that gave preference to the British and which was seen as a strategy to undermine French Canadian majority (Labelle et al. 1979; Linteau et al. 1989: tome 1, 44–45).<sup>5</sup> According to Juteau (1999: 65–69), in this particular period, the federal state was seen as the instrument of the Anglo-Canadian majority, controlling immigration issues. Up until WWII, federal policies sought to reproduce the existing social order and promote Anglo-conformity.

From an integration perspective, Canada's assimilationist solution was not well-received in Quebec, where the presence of a double majority-minority constituted exceptional circumstances. Ethnic duality made assimilation into a single group highly problematic. As a result, the integration model that was set out was based on

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<sup>5</sup>The essay that most extensively develops the thesis of immigration as a plot to undermine the French Canadian majority is (Bouthillier 1997).

a separate development strategy characterized by segregated institutions based on ethnicity and religion (Linteau et al. 1989: tome 1, 63).

It was the golden age of ethnic statistics in Canada and Quebec. Census data and ethnic categories served to fuel two major questions in Quebec. The first had to do with the proportion of French Canadians in Canada and went unresolved as French Canadians became a small minority in Canada and Quebec's national weight continued to wane to reach less than 30 % by the end of the period (1961). The second concern pertained to the proportion of French Canadians within Quebec – an issue that would develop further in the next two periods – and was considered to be more or less resolved in light of the *revanche des berceaux* [cradles' revenge]<sup>6</sup> phenomenon. Both preoccupations were fed by ethnic nationalism that defined *us* as Canadians of French origin. In sum, it was a period in which ethnic relations were essentially driven by the notion of ethnic duality.

### 5.3 Ethnic and Language Categories in the Context of Catching-up: 1960–1990

After WWII, a new immigration policy was implemented as a result of the economic and political transformations that were affecting most industrialized societies (Simmons 1999). However, two basic principles remained unchanged: a political one affirming national sovereignty in immigration matters and an economic one that took a more systematic approach to linking immigration and national needs and especially labour requirements. However, the mechanisms to meet these needs changed radically. Ethnic preference criteria were replaced by professional qualification criteria (human capital), and the 'laissez-faire' immigrant integration policy was abandoned in favour of an explicit government integration program, which would come to be known as multiculturalism in Canada and interculturalism in Quebec (Juteau et al. 1998).

As in the past, policy changes led to variations in immigration origins (Piché 2003), and immigration became more diverse in Canada and Quebec. In fact, this diversity would continue to increase up until today. These transformations were reflected in Quebec's ethnic structure at the time, as the *others* category increased significantly from 5.8 % in 1951 to over 20 % in 1991 (Piché 2007).

Quebec only began to take a serious interest in immigration in the current period. Beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, Quebec demography underwent considerable changes, and the secular reproduction mechanism of the French-speaking group (strong natural growth) could no longer maintain the demolinguiistic balance that, up until then, had been considered acceptable: more or less 80 % Francophones and 20 % Anglophones and allophones. Demolinguiistic projections showed that the relative importance of the Francophone group would shrink significantly if nothing

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<sup>6</sup>A revenge that lies more in myth than in reality (Marcoux 2010).

was done to incite immigrants to integrate the Francophone group (Charbonneau et al. 1970). In addition, the 1961 census sent shockwaves through Quebec when it brought to light the vast socio-economic inequalities between linguistic groups, putting Francophones at the bottom of the ladder (Monière 1977: 327; Linteau et al. 1989: tome 2, 205–206). It was this convergence of the economic and ethnic stratification that led to the notion of *ethnic class* (Dofny and Rioux 1962).<sup>7</sup>

With regards to the integration component of the immigration policy, Quebec was uncomfortable with the multicultural approach implemented by the federal government in the early 1970s. The province openly criticized the model and tried to replace it with cultural convergence and interculturalism (Helly 2000). Multiculturalism continued to be seen as a federal strategy to drown the French Canadian group in the Canadian mosaic, while interculturalism asserted Quebec's Francophone character and invited all groups to fully take part in the collective project (Rocher et al. 2007: 49; Bouchard 2012).

As long as concerns were focussed on ethnicity and the Francophone question blended into the ethnic issue, indicators based on ethnic categories fulfilled their social and political monitoring function, namely to follow the evolution of Anglophone majority/Francophone minority relations in Canada and Francophone majority/Anglophone minority relations in Quebec. But two major changes would come to weaken this quasi-secular perspective. The first arose in the 1960s–1970s with the project, led by the new governing classes, to modernize Quebec. With its universalistic objectives, the project was at odds with the ethnic reference (Rudin 2001). Though the French Canadians became Francophone 'Québécois' in the nationalist discourse, several analysts continued to see in this new terminology a reference to the French Canadian group (Salée 2001; Robin 1996). The second major change occurred with the emergence of pluralism and the need to redefine the notion of *us* to account for the increasing diversity of Quebec society, shaped by the last 30 years of immigration (Piché 2002). In addition, Quebec began to take proactive immigration actions through selection and integration policies to preserve the importance of the French language. Several voices began advocating the need to move beyond ethnic nationalism through an approach based on civic citizenship (Bibeau 2000; Bouchard 2001).

The ethnic categories of the census became increasingly irrelevant to this new twist in the political debate.<sup>8</sup> With self-identification, ethnic origin became more subjective and fluid. In addition, the creation of a *Canadian* category made it practically impossible to use the responses to this question in analysing the evolution of ethnic groups. Finally, the possibility of recording several ethnic origins beginning in 1981 added still more difficulties in comparing categories with those of earlier censuses. However, these statistical problems did not lead to major offsets since, beginning in the 1970s, they coincided with the gradual replacement of ethnic categories with language categories in the nationalist dis-

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<sup>7</sup>Putman (2007: 163) suggests that diversity produces more negative effects when ethnic divisions coincide with economic ones.

<sup>8</sup>For a critical analysis of census ethnic categories, see Simon (1997) and Rallu et al. (2006).

course. From then on, monitoring focussed on the state of the French language in Quebec, and several language indicators were advanced to follow the evolution of the use of French. Indicator development therefore went from an ethnic to a linguistic phase. Two particular indicators would dominate demolinguistic debates: those based on mother tongue and those on the language spoken at home. Both are discussed in the next section.

#### 5.4 Since 1990: Civic or Ethnic Nationalism?<sup>9</sup>

Beginning in the 1990s, a fourth phase began with the implementation of a new immigration and integration policy focussed on widespread francization. With this policy arose the need for new indicators, since the language indicators that had been used until then were more ‘private’ and measured the linguistic assimilation process through the notion of language shift (i.e., moving from mother tongue X to language Y spoken at home). While recognizing the sociological interest in studying linguistic assimilation as so defined, several critics argued the need to introduce new indicators that were more in line with Quebec’s integration policy (Béland 2009). Current debates on language indicators, which often give the impression of a ‘numbers’ war between specialists, must therefore be situated in this context. The next paragraphs will demonstrate that the challenges do not lie in the numbers (or calculation methods) themselves but rather in the choice of indicators and their political and ideological interpretation.

The main question is *which indicators for which objectives?* The language debate in Quebec essentially rests on the pursuit of two contradictory objectives. The first is directly linked to the concerns of the previous period and the idea of ethnic survival and it aims to propose a social project based on the interests of the ‘*francophones de souche*,<sup>10</sup> as defined by this group’s common history and heritage. This vision of Francophone society in Quebec, which was closely related to the sovereigntist political movement, was coined *ethnic nationalism*. All relevant statistical categories therefore referred to *mother tongue* and *language most often used at home* – two indicators with a marked ethnic connotation. This choice of indicator was not politically or ideologically neutral since it made it possible to follow the evolution of the numerical importance of the Francophone group so-defined. The indicators also showed the decline of the French language in Québec and especially on the Island of Montreal at regular intervals (e.g., every 5 years as part of the censuses).

In 2011 (most recent available census), the percentage of Quebecers who spoke French as their mother tongue was less than 80 % (78.1 % compared to 80.9 % in 2001). On the Island of Montreal, the figure was less than 50 %. Projections based

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<sup>9</sup>The setting of historical periods always constitute an artificial exercise and it could be suggested that civic nationalism was not completely absent in other periods, but this needs to be documented.

<sup>10</sup>*Souche* as in roots, refers to the francophone of French origin.



on language spoken at home (e.g., Termote and Thibeault 2008) were used as a wake-up call in the face of the ‘decline’ of the French language, especially on the Island of Montreal where the Francophone group would become a minority. Census metropolitan area (CMA) figures indicated higher percentages (63 % of people listed French as their mother tongue in 2011), but the definition of the geographical area is also an ideological issue. The difference between the two *Montreals* stems from urban sprawl, since the proportion of Francophones who left the Island of Montreal for the suburbs is greater than that of any other group. In this case, mathematics thus plays a key role, since the Francophone exodus automatically causes the proportion of allophones on the Island of Montreal to rise. In addition, immigration increases the fraction of people who speak a language other than French at home and therefore decreases the proportion of Francophones, especially on the Island of Montreal, where most immigrants choose to live.

At the other end of the spectrum is an approach stipulating that the relevant criteria for language indicator selection can only arise out of the objectives of implemented policies. These objectives were initially set out in the Charter of the French Language in 1977 and then more clearly defined in Quebec’s 1992 Policy Statement on Immigration and Integration (Québec 1990). In sum, the objectives define two fundamental trends: a pluralist non-assimilationist integration model and a model to francize immigrants in the public sphere. In keeping with this vision, in as much as the francization policy was explicitly aimed at public communication, language spoken at home, which is a private matter, cannot constitute a relevant indicator to measure the evolution of the French language (Piché 2004; Béland 2009). A public use language indicator became necessary.

In 1997, the *Conseil supérieur de la langue française* recommended a new indicator based on a series of questions (sample survey) on the use of French in various public spheres. At the time, it was the indicator that yielded the highest percentage of Francophones in Québec (87 %) and Montreal (78 % for the CMA and 71 % for the Island). Again, these figures were not surprising since the first two indicators (mother tongue and language spoken at home) did not reveal which language allophones use outside their homes. The Francophone underestimation on the Island is particularly striking, especially when considering the first two indicators. Unfortunately, this type of indicator was used only for 1 year, and the censuses conducted prior to 2001 did not provide information on language use outside the home. Since 2001, the censuses have introduced certain questions on the languages spoken in the workplace. For example, in 2006 in Montreal (CMA), 73 % of people used French most of the time at work (Béland 2008); for 2011, this figure was 71.8 %. However for the Island of Montreal, figures are lower: in 2011, only 60 % of the population claimed the use of French at work (language mostly spoken); another 10 % used French and English equally while 14.5 % used French on a regular basis.

In summary, regardless of the demographic tool used (indicator, transfer or projection), the choice of indicator (and its relevance) remains at the heart of every debate. In fact, the choice is ideological and political. Language categories linked to ethnic groups fuel ethnic nationalism. By focussing on the Island of Montreal, these

categories also emphasize the threat to the French language. However, public language indicators reveal a less menacing situation, even in metropolitan Montreal, and they support the civic approach of the province's immigration and integration policy, as well as the inclusive perspective that stems from the increasing diversity of the population of Quebec.

## 5.5 Conclusion

Indicator production is intimately linked to the political context and therefore meets a social demand based on historical issues. In Quebec, if one excludes a first phase in which the ethnic issue as defined subsequently is absent, we have suggested three other phases with respect to the production of categories and indicators. The first and longest phase was in response to Canada's ethnic duality issue, which monopolized ethnic relations throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For many years in Quebec, interethnic relations were examined from the dual perspective of French Canadians versus English Canadians and in which French Canadians were the oppressed national minority. There was, in fact, little room for other ethnic minorities given the national minority's concern for its own survival. Also, this view of interethnic relations was linked to the notion that Canada's assimilationist immigration policy posed a threat to the survival of the French Canadian group. This dualistic outlook endured until the 1960s, and indicators served to follow the evolution of the two founding peoples and especially measure French Canadian assimilation outside Quebec. It was the golden age of ethnic statistics based on the census questions on ethnic origin.

With the advent of the modernist and universalistic project implemented in the second half of the twentieth century, a second phase arose along with the need for language rather than ethnic indicators. French Canadians became Francophone 'Québécois', and the pursuit of the demolinguistic balance was rooted in the need to monitor the evolution of French as a national language. In this period, language indicators remained marked by ethnicity given their reliance on criteria pertaining to mother tongue and language spoken at home.

The nationalist discourse of the 1960s continued and even intensified the ethnic approach based on the idea of Quebec as a nation. What changed was the interest in *others*, since when the discourse assessed other *ethnicities*, it was mainly to denounce their language choices, which favoured Quebec's Anglophone minority (Piché 1992). The notion of *allophone* then appeared and became the root of many language conflicts in Quebec, even up until today. The dualistic vision became a triangular one, Francophone-Anglophone-Allophone (Piché 2002).

The increasing diversity of Quebec society made these criteria less and less legitimate in light of their assimilationist underpinnings, since changing one's mother tongue or adopting the use of French at home involves a relatively advanced degree of assimilation. Because Quebec's integration policy was focussed on the public sphere (commerce, schools, labour market, etc.), new indicators were required. A

third phase therefore emerged and new indicators pertaining to the use of French as a public language were established. The 2001 census responded to this social necessity and introduced questions on languages used in the workplace.

Linguistic debates opposing ethnic and civic nationalists continue to characterize Quebec society. On the one hand, several intellectuals began to reject the *old nationalism*, which interpreted the history of Quebec through the ethnic and linguistic conflicts and a long series of humiliations experienced by French Canadians following the conquest (the source of these humiliations). This type of nationalism has been coined ‘*conquétiste*’ (Lamoureux 2000) or resentment nationalism (Maclure 2000). For the moment, there seems to be consensus on the fact that this nationalism has fallen out of date, remaining too exclusive, relying on a traumatising view of the past and conveying an ethicizing ideology (Bibeau 2000).<sup>11</sup>

If ethnic nationalism is rejected in the name of increasing diversity of Quebec society, on the other hand, civic nationalism is accused of evacuating the notion of culture in the definition of the nation (Bouchard 2012). Hence, many voices are presently being heard against the civic approach and the pluralistic perspective (Gagnon 2000; Cantin 2002). The civic model has particularly been criticized by Bock-Côté (2007) as ignoring the common history of the French Canadian people and, as one author puts it, the majority guidelines (Lizée 2007). Given that ethnic and linguistic categories will continue to fuel identity politics, it is important to clarify the ideological and political premises that underlie their use in everyday debates.

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<sup>11</sup> See Mathieu 2001 for an overview of the debates surrounding the redefining of the Quebec nation.

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# Chapter 6

## Brazilian Ethnoracial Classification and Affirmative Action Policies: Where Are We and Where Do We Go?

José Luis Petruccelli

### 6.1 Introduction

The present chapter was inspired by an article (Prewitt 2005), which aimed to examine the future of the racial classification in the censuses of the USA. With the longest statistics tradition in that matter – more than two centuries of ethnic and racial categorisation of its population – the USA dared to implement a radical change in the census of 2000, allowing respondents to identify officially with as many racial groups as they saw fit (Williams 2006). Although only a few countries in the Americas include in their statistical surveys the ethnic origin of its inhabitants (Allan 2001), there is wide consensus about ethnicity, race, colour or origin as a key variable for understanding current societies. Its measurement became an indispensable resource for the detection of racial inequalities and, consequently, for the creation of compensatory policies.

There is a reasonable statistical tradition of racial classification in Brazil, although it has only been continuously incorporated in household surveys since the 1980s. The first national census of 1872 enumerated the population and classified it racially according to categories that a hierarchically organized Brazilian society used for the ethnoracial identification of its members. This same basic procedure was applied in the last demographic census, carried out in 2010. However, up to now, throughout these 135 years, political, techno-scientific and demographic considerations added or subtracted certain racial categories of the classification, or in some cases, eliminated the racial classification itself. Consequently, certain periods suffered from a lamentable lack of information, as occurred in the half century between 1890 and 1940. However, the ‘hard core’ of the racial categorization, consisting, on one hand, of the black/white dichotomy, and on the other, the residual

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classifications of mixed groups and native peoples, remained untouched during that long period of Brazilian social history. This continuity persisted in spite of the enormous differences between the second half of the nineteenth century, the time of the first census, and the beginning of the twentieth century. To mention the most conspicuous example, in 1872 slavery was still effective during the imperial period. In current times, after the 2001 Durban conference where even the Brazilian government recognized the existence of racism in the country and engaged to combat it, the battle for the acceptance of multiculturalism and the introduction of affirmative action policies characterize a period of social transformations concerning the construction and recognition of new identities.

Such different social realities point to a probable inadequacy of the current Brazilian system persistently in place, and makes the following question unavoidable: where are we and where are we going to in terms of ethnoracial classification in the country?

## 6.2 The Racial Classification

As in the USA, the public face of Brazilian racial classification is its population census, thus the racial categories used on the census are socially perceived as ‘official’. However, an aspect of this classification, included in the first national statistical operation, reflected the legal status of part of the inhabitants of the country: their civil condition of servitude. Differentiated from the inhabitants of free condition, the captives were classified mainly as black in the census, or, less frequently, as brown. On the other hand, by that time the country counted with a large contingent of free African-descent population, classified mainly as brown. Because of this, black became strongly associated with enslavement, while brown became associated with free descendants of former slaves. ‘It was from the separation between free and enslaved that the profile of this society defined clearer its contours and projected it in the 1872 census’ (Oliveira 2003).

Beyond the rigidity of the racial classification system mentioned above, a constant has been verified since 1872 until the present date: the discomfort generated by the uncertainty of the mixed groups. This resulted in a ‘residual’ category, which usually came under the label of brown, although the 1890 census used the term ‘mestizo’. In the particular case of the 1940 census, the instructions for enumerators were to draw a dash in the corresponding place of the form for any of those answers that were outside the black-white basic dichotomy, these were later tabulated as brown. This occurrence is one of the few alterations carried out so far, in a period in which 11 national level censuses of population have been completed, in 3 of which, 1900, 1920 and 1970, the racial classification was omitted. The 1950 census added the category of brown to the other three currently used: white, black and yellow. From 1980 to 2000, the racial classification appears exclusively in the long form of the census, applied only to a sample of the population. Nevertheless, the 2010 census returned it to the general or basic form, which concerns the whole population.



One other modification took place with the *caboclo* term, used in the 1872 and the 1890 censuses for the native nations. The absence of this category in the 1940, 1950, 1960 and 1980 censuses, forced to include these groups in the brown category. In this way, Brazilian Indians were ignored for a whole century in the national statistics, although they constituted 9 % of the total population in 1890. They only reappeared statistically in 1991 with the indigenous category. In this same year, the classification changed from 'colour' to 'colour or race', apparently because it counted the native peoples separately. The categories of 'colour', such as white, brown, black or yellow, were now differentiated from what would constitute a classification of 'race', such as Indian. The myth of Brazilian national origin was thus statistically completed in 1991 as expression of 'the intercrossing between the Portuguese colonists, the African slaves and the native population' (Oliveira 2003). The 2000 and 2010 censuses, despite numerous complaints and critiques, kept the classification identical, as well as other surveys conducted in this decade.

### 6.3 Studies on Racial Inequalities

Since the end of the 1970s, several studies on racial inequalities were carried out, based on the first household survey to include open racial classification in 1976. They have shown that, despite the perceived gradation socially expressed in the three categories of white, brown and black, the Brazilian system of social discrimination behaves in a bipolar way: the whites located in a much more favourable position than Afro-descendants. Therefore, the dichotomy whites/non-whites – the latter identified as black and brown – characterize the paradigm of the contrast between those who have and those who do not have racial advantages, with doubtless effect in the interpretation of the data on racial inequalities. Social justice policies formulated in response to statistical findings are accepted world-wide, being that 'the ideal of equal opportunity fuelled a demand for more equal outcomes, and as the negative goal of nondiscrimination turned into the proactive policy of redress that came to be called affirmative action' (Prewitt 2005). Therefore, statistical disparity worked its way into the implementation of policies and definition of laws to fight the exclusion and to promote social mobility of specific groups.

The historical generator of the concept and the practice of positive discrimination policies is B.R. Ambedkar (1891–1956), Dravidian thinker and militant. Jurist and historian, he argued that in the case of twentieth-century India, it would be impossible to dismantle the caste system without the adoption of focused specific measures, concerning the 'untouchable' and 'stigmatized tribes' who represented 65 % of the population. Contrary to conventional wisdom, which holds that compensatory policies originated in the USA (and later emulated in Brazil), Ambedkar already considered in 1928 (Shet 1998) for the first time the proportional representation of the depressed classes in the national elections (separate electorate), and his demand configured the founding idea of the public policies of affirmative action. Furthermore, as prime minister of Justice of independent India, he included affirmative action policies in the first constitution of the country of 1949 (Gautam 2000).

During the 1940s and 1950s, and as a consequence of the decolonization process in African and Asian countries, similar policies of preferential treatment for ethnic minorities were proposed and implemented in Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Ghana and Guinea, amongst others. They followed the pioneering trajectory of India, which reflected in the USA initiatives, better known in Brazil. By the 1990s demographic changes, the end of apartheid in South Africa and the rise of multiculturalism transformed the political panorama. New political demands questioned the existing racial and ethnic categories in Brazil, together with the need for better identification of the groups to be targeted with compensatory policies for their now officially recognized disadvantages.

The question of racial classification raises diverse arguments, from orthodox Marxism up to ideological right-wing positions, trying to depict the difficulties of identifying who the beneficiaries of the proposed actions would be. The ghost of the miscegenation ideology rises again to contest the justice of the compensatory policies. If Brazilians are all mixed, runs the argument, they would be all 'equal' and it could not be a means of differentiating blacks from non-blacks, since all would have something to do with African origins. To this 'ideological' position a 'scientific' point of view recently emerged: the geneticists discourse about the genealogical mixture of the ancestries of Brazilian whites, shuffling genomic characteristics with social representation of ethnoracial identity, in spite of the well-known differences between origin (and DNA) and colour (or mark). Yet, whatever the extent of racial mixture in the country 'the majority have lacked the basic rights associated with citizenship for most of the twentieth century and for all of the country's earlier history' (Nobles 2000).

The fact is that the discourse of black identity and the real possibility of achieving racial equality are thus delegitimized: in this way, the affirmation of the unequal condition of blacks in Brazil is silenced. 'Because the discourse of blackness would dislocate the debate from an abstract celebration of the interpenetration of cultures to a vehement denunciation of the precarious and always unequal life conditions faced by the black population in the country of the supposed racial democracy' (Carvalho 2005). Thus, the vindication of racial mixture is presented as the solution for ethnic conflict and racial prejudices, allowing 'the reproduction of a simulated modality of racism (the so called <Brazilian racism> that intends to be adapted to the self-representation of Brazilians as "cordial man")' (Oliveira 1997).

## 6.4 What Surveys Say

The results of two national surveys: the 1976 PNAD<sup>1</sup> and the 1998 PME,<sup>2</sup> counter-balance the arguments of uncertainty concerning racial categorization in Brazilian society. Both surveys included two questions on colour or race and two on origin,

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<sup>1</sup>National household survey.

<sup>2</sup>Monthly employment survey.

an open-ended one, of spontaneous response, and a pre-codified one. The results obtained promoted the notorious debate on how many categories of colour occur in the country. Both surveys found, in terms of number of answers, more than a hundred different terms. This initially perceived multiplicity of categories supported the idea of the supposedly enormous complexity of the Brazilian classification system. Ideologically pushing a bit further, the conclusion was that it is not possible to know who black is and who is not. However, among such terminological variety, just a few terms appear as statistically significant. Thus, of the 143 terms found in the PME-98, 77, more than half of them, appear only once in the sample and 12 other identifications are related to nationality or state of origin or birth. Furthermore, variations of basic categories found may compose single groups and, finally, 16 categories complement or modify 'white' with some particular name or adjective, seeming to relate to a hierarchic differentiation with the 'pure' white. Therefore, a small set of denominations of spontaneous use cover almost the entire range of identifications collected, just 7 categories – including white, brown, black, Moreno and yellow – incorporate 97 % of the answers and only 10 categories cover 99 % of them (Petruccioli 2004). However, this is commonly omitted in the studies and papers that dogmatically indicate supposed insurmountable difficulties concerning the Brazilian ethnoracial identification, such as the exaggerated heading of a newspaper's article 'The 300 colours of Brazilians'. In consequence, it deserves to be outlined that almost all Brazilians identify themselves according to a well-restricted set of colour categories.

#### **6.4.1 Polysemy and Ambiguity of the Brown Category**

Nevertheless, an important ambiguity persists – in the intention to improve the system of racial classification as in the elaboration of affirmative action policies – concerning the pertinence of the brown category at the national level and particularly in the Centre-West and North regions of the country. 'What it is classified in each region as brown has a historical origin and a distinct and absolutely singular ethnic reality' (Oliveira 1997). As was already pointed out, the term designates in fact a residual category in the system of colour classification, within which can be distinguished at least three types of ethnic groups: firstly, the group that identifies itself in this way for its phenotype perceived as from African ancestry, which is, without any doubt, the majority of this category. Secondly, a group that can be identified as predominantly Indian-descendant, characteristic of the regions mentioned above, that identifies himself with the brown colour and that refers historically to the *caboclo* figure. Finally, a population group found basically in the Federal District, but also in other cities and that, as Carvalho (2005) points out, represents 'a way to express an adhesion to a specific historic-geographic condition' and not an identification of colour in the sense of physical appearance, since they are, in the practice of social relations, perceived as whites.

The studies on racial inequalities and discrimination at the national level are fully justified placing together black and brown categories into a single category, because of their enormous similitude of behaviour and the significant separateness with the white group. Nonetheless, it is also methodologically relevant to try the possibility of better identifying and differentiating socio-racial categories, such as the mentioned above, that present secular persistence and sociological consistency in specific regions. In consequence, instruments and information should be improved in order to fit better to the social reality, in the understanding that the ethnoracial identification aims to allow the free expression of identities as well as to promote the correct formulation of laws and anti-discriminatory measures. 'The statistic classification presents a normativity that points out to two contingent registers: that of description and knowledge, related to science, and that of description and action, related to politics' (Simon 2005a). The possibility of joining any categories would be sustained, preserving their double justification: 'Statistically, for the uniformity of socio-economic characteristics of both groups and theoretically, for the fact that discriminations, potentials or effective, suffered by both groups, are of the same nature' (Osorio 2003).

#### ***6.4.2 Racial Classification: Its Relational Nature***

The former reflections led to the following questions: Which would be the proper number of ethnoracial categories? Moreover, what would be the best form to take account of the mentioned specificities, granting the necessary recognition to the expression of socially distinct identities and regional differences? According to Melissa Nobles, currently 'there are no laws, social mores, intellectual agreements or general consensus about what constitutes a racial identity' (quoted by Prewitt 2005). However, Brazilian society demonstrates a forceful racial polarization, suggesting that race is a variable that profoundly structures society. What expresses this reality is the recurrent socio-economic inequalities present in every social research report. The most diverse information converges to show that ethnoracial group membership is a determinant for social exclusion. Among the reasons underlined for this reality figures the 'permanence, along the twentieth century, of diverse discriminatory practices in the repressive apparatus, the judiciary system and other state and civil institutions... against the Afro-descendant population, hindering its physical and social mobility' (Paixão 2003). Discrimination exists as a current practice suffered by people according to appearance or colour, among other characteristics, like those perceived as of aboriginal origin or darker skin. It 'is very frequent, in the world and in Brazil, that the origin of an individual, his physical appearance, his culture and other traces of identification (religion, way to dress, accents and used dialects), is still today, used as a way to establish hierarchical relations between people and collectives' (Paixão 2004). Furthermore, racial categorization – the output of an operation of perception and attribution of a 'score' in a scale of colour classification – works as a contextual phenomenon, meaning that the same person

can be perceived and classified differently according to context, the group and the region of reference. However, this is not an obstacle to the feasibility of a classification system in surveys, since the ultimate goal is that each person should be identified in agreement with how he/she is perceived and self-identified in his/her context. 'Being the border lines that separate the three most conspicuous zones of colour – black, brown and white – fluid, the classification gains the capacity to apprehend the situation of the individual classified in his social microcosm, in the relational context that effectively counts in the definition of pertaining to the discriminating group or the discriminated one' (Osorio 2003).

## 6.5 Critical Perspective

The various studies that coincide in pointing to the relative consistency of the current system of racial classification (Silva 1994; Piza and Rosenberg 1996; Petruccelli 2000; Osorio 2003; Telles 2003), do not deny either the imprecision or the eventual inherent imperfections of this system, mainly concerning the field collection of data. A recurrent issue in many analyses refers to the fact that, despite the explicit instruction of the mandatory of the self-declaration in the colour identification, what actually occurs is a mixture of self with hetero-classification. On the other hand, since a single informer supplies most of the collected information of the household and, as not all the inhabitants are actually present at the interview, this informer usually proceeds to identify the colour of the whole family. Furthermore, 'as there is no information on who answers the questions, it is impossible to distinguish the group of people who had declared his colour to the one that had its colour pointed for another resident of the household' (Osorio 2003). The ideology of the racial relations influences also the context of interview, bringing about difficulties in formulating the question.

## 6.6 Conclusions

It seems to be clear that new approaches concerning the Brazilian classification system, as well as the multiple dimensions implied in the phenomenon of ethnicity, have to contemplate the diverse contemporary expressions of race or colour identity. Although conceptual and methodological reasons may rise before the possibility of changing the measurement of social phenomena, as well as its social and political consequences, 'neither racial measurement nor policy that relies on it is in a settled state – and this provides a historical opportunity for fresh thinking, starting with the term 'race' itself' (Prewitt 2005). Thus, the current debate around racial classification appears as more than pertinent, even urgent. All the representations of identities must have their right of expression guaranteed, a right still to be conquered which means that: 'the fights for ethnic or regional identity, for properties (stigmas or

emblems) attached to origin through the place of origin and the durable marks that are correlative... are a particular case of the fights for classifications' (Bourdieu 1980).

The persistence of Brazilian structural, institutional and individual racism throughout its 500 years of history has meant that the concept of race (with its correlates, ethnic group and colour) was kept effective as an analytical and political category with its 'nominal existence ... in the social world' (Guimarães 2002) of doubtless symbolic effectiveness in the imposition of the social hierarchy. Thus, racism produces and assumes the concept of race and not the opposite. 'More than an ideology, racism is found in the base of the addition of small decisions, behaviours or appreciations that, chained and repeated in almost invisible routine way, compose a dense system of discriminatory acts and hinder full and entire access for the joy of rights by individuals defined by their ethnic and racial origins' (Simon 2005b). People are the object of discrimination when they are perceived by a culturally shared construction as carrying features that remit to racial categories. Independently of the conscience and attitude of the potentially discriminating agent, the perception of the other as belonging to an ethnic group socially imposes his racial categorization. In addition, when classification is followed by discrimination, the stigmatized groups see themselves through the eyes of the discriminator, thereby reinforcing race. 'To refuse the entrance in public space to agents defined by a particularism including more or less explicitly a concept of race, is to deny this particularism, to intend to reject it or to crush it, when, very frequently, it has been inflicted to the concerned agents by coups of social exclusion or discrimination' (Wiewiorka 1994).

The urgent and obligatory recognition of multiculturalism and the multiethnic reality of the country calls for the development of studies and analyses that will improve current knowledge about how ethnoracial categorization is constructed and used; this will doubtless help to develop a better ethnoracial classification system. 'Once collected, racial and ethnic data are the raw materials for a wide range of policies and laws' (Nobles 2000). Even if aiming at a 'non-racial' democracy and the deconstruction of the notion of race, it is imperative to continue looking for the elaboration of an improved racial classification, relevant to the formulation of public policies that aim to promote a still delayed inter-ethnic coexistence, which is, fair, balanced and equitable. Therefore, 'on moral and methodological grounds, the classification used in census 2000 can and should be improved' (Prewitt 2005), in the USA, as expressed by the quoted author and should certainly be improved in Brazil.

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# Chapter 7

## The Ethnic Question: Census Politics in Great Britain

Debra Thompson

### 7.1 Introduction

In her analysis of a global data set compiled by the United Nations Statistical Division to survey the approaches to ethnic enumeration, Ann Morning (2008) finds that of the 141 countries under study, 63 % incorporate some form of ethnic enumeration though question and answer schema vary along dimensions that suggest diverse conceptualisations of race/ethnicity/indigeneity/nationality. Given the substantial number of countries that enumerate identity, it is no surprise that the academic scholarship envisions the census in a variety of ways. One of the first analytical treatments of the census appeared in Benedict Anderson's seminal work on nationalism, *Imagined Communities*. The census, Anderson argues, is one of the three institutions (alongside maps and museums) that states use to create a common imagination for its subjects (Anderson 1991: 163–164). James Scott's understanding of the census is similar – it is part of the state's ongoing 'project of legibility' in which instruments of statecraft such as the census, the map, surnames, the centralisation of traffic patterns, the creation of official languages, and even scientific forestry are used to create both a geographical terrain and population with standardised characteristics that will be most efficiently monitored, counted, assessed and managed (Scott 1998: 81–82). Statistics are indeed the science of the state, as Foucault points out in his essay on governmentality. The production of statistics leads to the 'emergence of population,' an outcome that relies on the will of the population to itself be managed (Foucault 1991).

However, the most common interpretation by policymakers and political elites is to think of the census as an instrument of *governance* rather than a potentially insidious instrument of statecraft. The data produced by the census are a crucial source

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of information that allows governments to make policies; the census is the neutral tool of demographers that provides a wealth of statistical data for various government sectors, like health and education (Simon 2004; Potvin 2005; Aspinall 2000, 2003). The three most dominant explanations claim census politics are driven by demography, civil rights legislation, social mobilisation, or some combination thereof. Official government documents are most likely to give causal weight to demography and the need to make the census institutionally consistent with civil rights legislation.<sup>1</sup> In the United States, explanations of census politics also emphasise the causal role of social mobilisation. These accounts have been particularly dominant in explaining the adoption of a ‘mark one or more’ approach on the 2000 census, which scholars claim can be attributed to the actions of a very vocal mixed-race social movement that pushed Congress for the change to its classification standards (Nobles 2000; Aspinall 2003; Williams 2006; DaCosta 2007).

These interpretations of both the nature of the census and drivers of census politics seem insufficient. Though the data on ethnicity and race produced from censuses are indeed critical for the state to monitor the effectiveness of, for example, anti-discrimination policies, this is one among many other possible employments of the census as an instrument of government(ality). Kertzer and Arel (2002) argue that the census does not simply reflect objective social reality, but rather plays a constitutive role in the construction of that reality.<sup>2</sup> In this instrumentality, the very idea of race – however constructed, constituted, or fabricated – is animated through the forum of the census and further solidified in law and policy. The census is a contributing (though not a monopolising creation) factor in the proliferation of racial taxonomies. In turn, censuses help to constitute racial discourse, which itself helps to shape and explain policy outcomes (Nobles 2002: 43). Using the American-led academic literature on the social construction of race, the census can also be conceptualised as a *racial project*<sup>3</sup> (Omi and Winant 1994): governmental conceptions of the meaning of race are developed (Where do the dividing lines between

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<sup>1</sup>For example, Canada, the US and the UK all have legislation in place that relies on statistical data produced from the census in order to monitor the extent of racial discrimination in employment, housing, and other areas of social life. In the United States, the relevant legislation is the *Civil Rights Act* (1964) and the *Voting Rights Act* (1965), compared with Great Britain’s *Race Relations Act* (1976; 2000) and Canada’s *Employment Equity Act* (1986; 1995). All three countries also use census data to fund a wide array of social programs.

<sup>2</sup>On the census as a causal factor that affects national identity, see Miller (2007).

<sup>3</sup>Omi and Winant (1994) contend that a racial project is ‘*simultaneously an interpretation, representation or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines*’ (1994: 56; emphasis in original). Racial projects link together social structures and experiences that are racially organised with the meaning of race in a particular discursive practice. For example, the politically organised racial projects of the New Right claim to hold colour-blind views but covertly manipulate racial threats and fears in order to achieve political power (1994: 58). Another example is nationalist projects, which stress the extent to which racial identity is incompatible with the production of a homogenous nation and demand the separation of the two (1994: 59). These exemplify macro-level, sometimes state-driven projects in which very particular discursive meanings of race are connected with ideas about or attempts to organise institutions, policies and other social structures in accordance with the discursive meanings.

racess lie? Who should count as white/non-white? What racial labels are appropriate for which groups?) and connected with a means of organising society (Are racial classifications discrete or multiple? Which racial groups should have access to government programming?). The census categories themselves are less important than the fact of social differentiation (Brown 2009: 15) and the role of the state in promoting and reifying it.

The argument that approaches to racial enumeration employed in national censuses are driven by singular causes such as demography, civil rights legislation or social mobilisation also misses important nuances of the dynamics of census politics and are unlikely to hold true across time and space. In their analysis of racial enumeration throughout the world, Rallu et al. (2004) identify four main government approaches to racial enumeration. The first, *counting to dominate*, characterises the colonial situation and other cases such as the Soviet Union and early twentieth century North America, whereby censuses were politically important tools for collectively identifying racialized others. Second, *not counting in the name of national integration* occurs when race or ethnicity is rejected either in the name of national integration, as is presently the case in many African countries, or in the name of the republican principle of national unity as occurs in Western Europe. The third approach, *counting or not counting in the name of multiculturalism*, refers to Latin America's tendency to valorise racial mixing through the distinct practices of either not counting by race, which emphasises racial hybridity beyond counting, or to count by race, which promotes harmonious race relations by measuring the country's degree of whitening. Finally, *counting to justify positive action* invokes the pluralist models of Canada, the United States and Great Britain, all of which view racial enumeration as a tool in the fight against discrimination (Rallu et al. 2004: 534–536).

This chapter explores the political development of the ethnic question<sup>4</sup> on the British census. It seeks to complicate these causal accounts, which have a tendency to over-simplify the complex political processes involved in the politics of racial

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<sup>4</sup>This chapter's use of the terminology of 'race' versus 'ethnicity' is a tricky business. It will most often refer to the question on the census as an "ethnic question," because this is the terminology used on the census, in archival records, and by those in Britain. However, I am hesitant to use the language of ethnicity in my analysis. Like race, ethnicity is a social signifier of identity, but it is also fundamentally different. Ethnicity, which can overlap and intersect with race, often describes a collectivity with common ancestry, a shared past, culture and language, and a sense of peoplehood or community (Cornell and Hartmann 2007: 16–20). The importance of race or ethnicity in a given society is context-specific. However, the origins of race are in assignment and categorization, and while ethnicity can have similar beginnings it is more often associated with the assertions of group members (Cornell and Hartmann 2007: 28). Race is not simply about skin colour and morphological characteristics, but rather should be understood as the signifier of a complex set of power relations: 'power is almost invariably an aspect of race; it may or may not be an aspect of ethnicity' (Cornell and Hartmann 2007: 31). In conducting this research, it seems to me that the language of ethnicity by elites, policy-makers and academics is often used to disguise these power relations and I am wary of furthering this problematic tendency. My use of race is also not a dramatic departure from what the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) itself has noted: '*the census ethnic categories are essentially racial*' (OPCS 1996: 40, emphasis added).

enumeration, by devoting particular attention to the cumulative and compounded relationships among ideas, institutions and interests that permeate census politics in Great Britain. In doing so, I make two general arguments. First, the British state has changed its approach to counting race over time. Using Rallu et al.'s (2004) typology, I argue that the British state has transitioned from not counting in the name of multiculturalism in the 1981 census to counting to justify positive action after the introduction of the ethnic question in 1991 and finally, counting in the name of multiculturalism with the modifications to the question in 2001. Secondly, my analysis of the political development of the ethnic question on the British census between 1981 and 2001 will demonstrate that censuses are not simply reflective of demographic reality or a consequence of social mobilisation or the state's initiative to maintain consistency with its civil rights legislation, but rather are inherently connected to debates over the nature of citizenship and belonging in a given country. These debates are partially informed by ideas about race, colour, ethnicity and difference, which are mitigated through the institutions of the state and are given administrative life and scientific legitimacy through the forum of the census.

## 7.2 Not Counting in the Name of Multiculturalism: Census Politics in the 1970s and 1980s

The tradition of censuses<sup>5</sup> of the population in Great Britain dates back over 200 years; however, census question on ethnic identity only appeared on the decennial census in 1991.<sup>6</sup> This inclusion effectively aligns Great Britain more closely immigration-based countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand than with other Western European states, which do not have census questions on race or ethnicity (Coleman and Salt 1996: 17–23).

Though Blacks and Asians have a long history in Britain (Fryer 1984; Ramdin 1999), the majority of the non-white population derives from the arrival of immigrants from the Commonwealth in the post-World War II era, when debates over

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<sup>5</sup>Strictly speaking, there are currently three censuses in the UK – England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Beginning in 2001 final decision-making power on the questions to be included in the census was devolved to the legislatures of Scotland and Northern Ireland. Although the census content of these three endeavours is closely related, the specific wording of the question on ethnicity and even the timing of its introduction have been known to vary; for example, a question on ethnicity appeared for the first time in Northern Ireland in 2001, 10 years after its introduction in other parts of Britain. This chapter focuses on the census in England and Wales because of the institutional prominence of OPCS and its path-breaking decisions on whether or not (and the extent to which) a question on ethnicity should be included.

<sup>6</sup>Between 1841 and 1961 (excluding 1941, in which Great Britain did not conduct a decennial census) the census included a question on nationality. In 1841 this question pertained only to persons born in Scotland or Ireland, while the years between 1851 and 1891 contained a question as to whether or not the respondent was a British subject. A complete list of Census topics from 1801 to 2001 can be found at [http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/pdfs/topics\\_1801\\_2001.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/pdfs/topics_1801_2001.pdf).

immigration became increasingly racialized in spite of the fact that the majority of immigrants to Britain during this time came from European countries and Ireland (Solomos 2003). The history of British immigration control has been documented more extensively elsewhere<sup>7</sup>; for our purposes, however, the political responses to increased non-white immigration are of interest. Linking the seemingly contradictory elements of state imposition of racially specific immigration controls and measures to prevent racial discrimination towards the non-white population already residing in Britain, the *Race Relations Acts* of 1965 and 1968 sought to end discrimination based on race. As Labour MP Roy Hattersley famously stated, 'Integration without control is impossible, but control without integration is indefensible.'<sup>8</sup> The concept of integration was wrought with an air of prevention; at the time it was believed that without political institutions to address the social problems of immigrants, Britain would soon be facing the prospect of US-style racial tension and violence (Solomos 2003: 81). The tasks of the *Race Relations Acts* of 1965 and 1968 were therefore to set up special bodies to deal with problems faced by immigrants in relation to discrimination, social welfare and integration and to educate the population as a whole about race relations in an attempt to minimise the potential for racial conflict.

Though the census was the most obvious vehicle to gather information on both the extent of racial discrimination and the effectiveness of the *Race Relations Acts* of the 1960s, it was not considered feasible to ask a question on race or ethnic identity in preparation for the 1971 census. The assertion of Dale and Holdsworth (1997) that the General Register Office (the predecessor of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys) was adamant that such a question be neither asked nor answered is not entirely correct. The decision to include a question on parents' country of birth – rather than the previously asked question about the respondents' 'country of origin' or a direct question on race or ethnicity – reveals the internal politicking at work within the state apparatus. Bureaucrats discussed the possibility of including a question on ethnic origin in the census as early as 1966.<sup>9</sup> When plans for the 1971 census took more definite shape in 1967, the bureaucrats at the Ministry of Health suggested there should be a question on ethnic origin, but the Home Office could not initially agree to support this proposal because of the 'considerable political implications' of asking the question, even in the context of a test survey. However, the need for racial data was acknowledged by senior Home Office bureaucrat Jack Howard-Drake, who wrote in a memo that his initial concern surrounded 'the impossibility of defining immigrant or colour in precise terms,' but that he was

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Paul (1997); Spencer (1997); Joppke (1999); see also Hansen (1999) for a different view. Though the British government did not restrict immigration by legislative action until the *Commonwealth Immigrants Act* of 1962, a study by Carter et al. (1987) concluded that between 1948 and 1962 the state was involved in a complex political and ideological racialisation of British immigration policy, in which covert and sometimes illegal administrative measures were implemented by both Labour and Conservative Governments to discourage Black immigration.

<sup>8</sup> *Hansard*, House of Commons, Vol. 709, col. 378–85.

<sup>9</sup> PRO HO 376/175, Letter by J.T.A. Howard-Drake to Miss Hornsby, 14 November 1966.

'now not so sure that this view is correct,' noting that '[with] the emergence of the second generation it will become increasingly important for us to have as much statistical information as we can about the coloured minority in the United Kingdom'.<sup>10</sup> In early 1968 the matter was referred to the Statistical Policy Committee for Ministers to decide; therein, the majority of the Committee were clearly in favour of collecting information about racial origin and decided to make the suggestion at the upcoming Home Affairs Committee meeting.<sup>11</sup> At this meeting the Minister of Health proposed that a question on ethnic origin be included on the census, but the Secretary of State recorded his concern about the 'political difficulties' that would result,<sup>12</sup> and the decision to include a question on 'parents' country of origin' rather than a direct question on race was decided at the Ministerial level<sup>13</sup> though Cabinet acknowledged that using this proxy would not provide accurate information on ethnic origin.<sup>14</sup>

This initial call for a direct question on ethnicity therefore originated with bureaucrats in line departments and central agencies, who had discussed the issue internally for 2 years before it was proposed to Ministers. At the ministerial level the proposal was met with hesitance and caution, as political considerations (that had indeed been acknowledged by bureaucrats) played a much larger role in the decision-making process. These 'considerable political implications' were many: first, British bureaucrats and Ministers alike felt that it was impossible to define race or colour in the precise terms required for a statistical exercise such as the census. Second, there was a clear concern that asking a direct question on race or colour would be perceived as offensive to both 'coloured' and white respondents. The proposal to instead ask the country of origin of the respondent's parents was more familiar, and thus less controversial, since the 1961 census asked for country of birth with the intention of identifying immigrants to the United Kingdom. The 1971 question, designed to identify the children of these immigrants, was not the extreme break from tradition that a direct question on ethnicity represented. Third, the government could not ignore the political implications that arose from its own policies. The *Race Relations Act* of 1968 was on the table during this decision-making process and given the Labour government's 'acknowledged as accepted policy to

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<sup>10</sup> PRO HO 376/175, Minute by J.T.A Howard-Drake 17 November 1967.

<sup>11</sup> PRO HO 376/175, letter from J.T.A Howard-Drake to Mr. Weiler, 19 January 1968. There were also substantial discussions at the meetings of the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration in 1968 and 1969, but these took place after the decision to not include a direct question on ethnicity had already been made (PRO HO 376/123).

<sup>12</sup> PRO HO 376/175, Note on the Home Affairs Committee meeting, n.a., 6 February 1968.

<sup>13</sup> PRO HO 376/123, Memorandum on the Collection of Racial Statistics, Cabinet Committee on Immigration and Community Relations, 19 March 1969.

<sup>14</sup> PRO HO 376/124, Cabinet document dated 6 February 1968. The original wording of the question on parents' country of origin stated: 'Was your father/mother of African, Asian or West Indian origin? If "yes" state the country (for example, Pakistan, Nigeria, Jamaica, etc.)' This was later changed to a more generic question about parents' country of origin because this original version was too explicit in its focus on the non-white population (PRO HO 376/175, Paper to Statistical Policy Committee, January 1968).

promote the integration of the immigrant population,' a memo to the Prime Minister on the issue stated that it was 'undeniably important that the Departments concerned should have particulars of [the immigrant population's] numbers, whereabouts, employment, housing circumstances, education and so forth'.<sup>15</sup> The memo also notes that a failure to collect this information, or, as it was put at the time, to 'take the opportunity of obtaining it,' would open the government to criticism about the seriousness of their commitment to ending racial discrimination in Great Britain.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, and likely most relevant, were the implications of the politics of numbers, which became a salient issue in Britain for a variety of reasons. In a time of restrictionist immigration policy, anti-immigration agitators laid claim that the actual size of the Black population in Britain was considerably larger than official estimates (Bulmer 1986: 472). For example, in 1964 the Conservative MP Peter Griffiths ran in the general election in the constituency of Smethwick under the infamous anti-immigration slogan, 'If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Liberal or Labour' – and won. Four years later, coinciding with the decision to avoid a direct question on race in the 1971 census, Enoch Powell made his famous 'Rivers of Blood' speech to the West Midlands Conservative Political Centre in Birmingham. Any statistics concerning the actual size of the non-white population Britain could serve multiple politically instrumental purposes: on the one hand, the forthcoming census data could be used to, as bureaucrats hoped, establish the true facts and 'disprove wild estimates of the future coloured population'<sup>17</sup>; on the other hand, Conservatives sought the same facts to call for more restrictive immigration policies. The seminal study of race in Britain of this time, *Colour and Citizenship*, noted that fears of being 'swamped' by the incoming 'flood' of immigrants was a key element to the formation of racist attitudes and that these fears were largely derived from exaggerated notions about the size of the coloured population, which, the study notes, were compounded by the absence of reliable statistics on the subject (Rose et al. 1969: 551–605). The connection between immigration and race relations was as much numerical as political – would the natural increase of the second and third generations of non-white Britons make immigration restrictions less salient, or would it give further reason to restrict the flow?

These political considerations inhibited the government's willingness to directly enumerate race; as such, the 1971 census collected information on both the respondent's country of birth (as in the 1961 census) and his or her parent's country of birth in order to gauge the approximate size of the racial population. It was acknowledged at the time – and indeed, throughout the policy-making process – that this method would be inaccurate for enumerating those white Britons who happened to be born in colonies overseas, pockets of the historic (and indigenous) Black British population, in, for example, Cardiff and Liverpool and people of mixed-race. There were also concerns regarding the extent to which mixed-race people should be

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<sup>15</sup> PRO PREM 13/2703, Memo to Prime Minister, subsection Country of origin of the respondent's parents, 5 February 1968.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> PRO HO 376/175, memo by Miss M. Hornsby, 11 November 1966.

‘counted’ as part of the New Commonwealth immigrant population.<sup>18</sup> Generated indirectly using country of birth, parents’ country of birth, nationality and surnames, the subsequent census data was flawed and proved inaccurate (Sillitoe and White 1992: 142; Ballard 1996: 10), but nevertheless estimated that 36.5 % of the non-white British population was born in the UK (OPCS 1975).

Thus, in spite of over a decade of legislation on racial integration in the UK, the state did not address the need for explicit racial census data until the mid-1970s. Though the proposal was still controversial at the time, there was a growing number of public bodies that advocated for the collection of racial statistics, including the Race Relations Board (1975: 9), the Community Relations Commission (1975: 10), and the Parliamentary Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration (HM Government 1975: 20–22).<sup>19</sup> A series of field trials between 1975 and 1979 were instigated by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS)<sup>20</sup> in order to develop a direct question on race/ethnicity that would be both acceptable to the public and would generate more reliable and accurate than the indirect question in 1971. In general, however, there were two main difficulties recorded by OPCS bureaucrat Ken Sillitoe (1978a, b, c). First, the classification of mixed-race respondents presented a problem to the question designers, with twenty percent having provided ‘ambiguous’ answers and fifteen percent providing ‘no answer’ during field trials in 1975, likely because respondents were unclear which box to check (Sillitoe 1978a: 15). The second difficulty was that West Indians were suspicious of the motives behind the data collection; response rates were generally low and this group was among the most likely to object to the ethnicity question on principle. However, Sillitoe notes that the hostility could be avoided if they were able to design some form of category ‘to record that although of non-UK descent he is nevertheless a U.K. citizen...because asking about ethnic origins only [...] can be taken to imply that anyone who is not of U.K. origin continues to be in some sense different, or alien to our society, no matter how long he or his forebears have been in Britain’ (Sillitoe 1978a: 46).

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<sup>18</sup>PRO HO 332/58, Report of the Working Party on Departmental Statistics for Commonwealth Immigrants, April 1970. On this issue, the report recommends: ‘We do not think that it is possible to recommend any hard and fast rule be followed. But it seems likely that we are moving to a stage when it will often at least be necessary to make available figures for children with one parent born in a new Commonwealth country at the same time as figures for those with both parents so born. In some instances however knowledge of the local situation might indicate whether children born to parents whose country of birth differs could properly be excluded from the “immigrant group”.’ It was eventually decided to include mixed-race persons as part of the New Commonwealth population; a ‘statistical difficulty’ resolved in this manner “partly due to the political climate and to Mr. [Enoch] Powell’s influence on the terms of the discussion” (PRO RG 26/436).

<sup>19</sup>However, as Erik Bleich points out, the continued tension surrounding the collection of racial data was epitomized by the Home Office’s White Paper on race relations, which stated that ‘the Government considers that a vital ingredient of equal opportunities policy is a regular system of monitoring;’ but failed to recommend the collection of the racial data that would support these activities (2006: 228).

<sup>20</sup>The OPCS merged with the Central Statistical Office in 1996 and is now called the Office for National Statistics.

The testing of an ethnic question did not guarantee its implementation on the 1981 census. The 1978 report of the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration recommended including an ethnic question and Ministers with responsibilities for social services felt that better information about ethnic minorities was required. However, some central agencies, including the Lord President of the (Privy) Council, Michael Foot, felt that the adoption of such a question would be ‘ill-advised’ given the recent focusing of the public’s attention on immigration issues in the pre-election period.<sup>21</sup> Specifically, the Cabinet felt that ‘the category “white” in particular would be open to sensational and damaging treatment in the popular Press’.<sup>22</sup> However, the political considerations of the previous decade remained salient; Cabinet concluded that a reintroduction of the 1971 question on parents’ country of origin would not only be ineffective, but would also be interpreted as a sign of weakness, showing a lack of resolve to tackle the problems of racial disadvantage. The final decision, summed up by Prime Minister James Callaghan, recognised the need for the racial data that could be provided by a direct question on the census, but noted that Cabinet ‘rejected the form of the question proposed for the census test, in particular the inclusion of the category “white”’.<sup>23</sup>

OPCS heeded the Cabinet order to find alternative system of classification couched exclusively in ethnic terms and in the Census Test in the London borough of Haringey in 1979 the ethnic designations ‘English, Welsh, Scottish or Irish’ were used as well as a further category, ‘Other European,’ alongside the ‘non-white’ ethno-national-geographical categories of ‘West Indian or Guyanese,’ ‘African,’ ‘Indian,’ ‘Pakistani,’ ‘Bangladeshi,’ ‘Arab,’ ‘Chinese,’ and ‘Any other racial or ethnic group, or if of mixed racial or ethnic descent’. However, the results of this test were greatly affected by a campaign by local organisations and the media which urged people not to answer the question on race or ethnicity; 25,000 pamphlets were purportedly distributed to residents, linking these questions to the proposed nationality laws that ‘would make nationality dependent on your parents’ nationality, not where you were born [...] If we say now who is and who is not of British descent, we may one day asked to ‘go home’ if we were born here or not’ (cited in OPCS 1990: 9). In this pre-election climate of 1979, the connection between race and immigration was explicit: the politics of numbers was (in)famously reinforced by the future Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who when asked about Tory policy on immigration in a January 1979 television interview for Granada *World in Action* stated:

Well, now, look, let us try and start with a few figures as far as we know them...if we went on as we are then by the end of the century there would be four million people of the new Commonwealth or Pakistan here. Now, that is an awful lot and I think it means that people are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture and, you know, the British character has done so much for democracy for law and

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<sup>21</sup> PRO CAB 128/63/14, Conclusions of Cabinet Meeting, 13 April 1978.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*



done so much throughout the world that if there is any fear that it might be swamped people are going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in.<sup>24</sup>

The concern of racial minorities in Haringey was clearly related to these proposed immigration controls and *Nationality Act*, the latter of which was passed by Thatcher's government in 1981 and was criticized for reinforcing discriminatory immigration policies: 'Indeed, the category of British Overseas Citizen effectively deprived British citizens of (mostly) Asian origin of the right to live in Britain' (Solomos 2003: 65). Two years before this Act saw the light of day, campaigners believed that the reformed nationality law would jeopardise the status of racial minorities in Britain. The local campaign against the 1979 census test was therefore based on false but understandable concerns. Regardless, the number of people who objected in principle to the questions on ethnicity rose dramatically, with only 54 % of households returning their census test forms and as many as 32 % of both the West Indian and Asian respondents expressing views that they thought the inclusion of such a question was wrong. Even greater objections were expressed in regards to the parents' country of birth question (OPCS 1980). After consultations with ethnic organisations following the Haringey affair, the government decided in November 1979 to not include a question on ethnicity in the 1981 census.

Archival research reveals that Haringey was indeed an important factor that led to the exclusion of the ethnic question; however, other mitigating circumstances played important and often overlooked roles in the government decision-making process. The position that a potentially offensive ethnic question would jeopardise the entire census project was taken by the Registrar General (the head of OPCS); however, it is likely that the same line departments responsible for social services that had argued for racial data since the 1960s continued to do so. In post-Haringey consultations with the ethnic minority organisations and the public, opinion was split. Some powerful organisations, such as university departments, census users, and the Commission for Racial Equality, argued that an ethnic question was necessary to monitor and combat racial disadvantage and that the incident in Haringey was largely caused by inadequate public relations (Commission for Racial Equality 1980). Others, including the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science, the Haringey Community Relations Council and numerous ethnic organisations, vehemently opposed the inclusion of a question for a variety of reasons, ranging from the contention that the collection of racial data indicates that non-whites – rather than institutional racism – were the problem<sup>25</sup> to the 'uncertainty of the Government's intention on the nationality law.'<sup>26</sup> In the end, the decision to present

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<sup>24</sup><http://www.margarethatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=103485>, site viewed 6 June 2009. Note that the BBC transcript is slightly different than this, the Granada transcript, recording that Thatcher commented that people are afraid of being swamped by people *of* a different culture (emphasis added).

<sup>25</sup>PRO HO 376/223, Press Release – British Society for Social Responsibility in Science, 17 October 1979.

<sup>26</sup>PRO HO 376/223, Haringey Community Relations Council – Response to 1981 Census Test, July 1979.

the government's conclusion as a technical one was partially a matter of political spin. An internal memo to Home Secretary William Whitelaw and Minister of State Tim Raison noted that the use of the 'technical' justification was the lesser of all evils:

The least unsatisfactory course would seem to be to try to present the decision as essentially a technical one; namely, that the Haringey test has shown that the Census is not a way of getting this information and that the Government will employ other and more acceptable techniques. It will be particularly important, therefore, that any announcement of the decision should be framed in as positive a way as possible, both to emphasise the Government's continuing commitment to obtaining information designed to be used for the benefit of the ethnic minority communities and to indicate that positive steps are being taken to find alternative sources of data.<sup>27</sup>

Again, the government was aware that the exclusion of the ethnic question from the census would leave it open to criticism about its commitment to race relations. Accepting the Registrar General's concern about the ethnic question's potentially damaging effect to the census project as a whole was a convenient way to quash the initiative while minimising the damage to the new government's credibility in the politics of race relations. Moreover, this justification also permitted the government to mask the true weight that organised opposition had in determining the outcome of the Haringey test and the subsequent policy decision to drop the question, a revelation which government officials believed 'could be seriously damaging to race relations'.<sup>28</sup> It is also likely that the mobilising power and impact of ethnic organisations were deeply troubling to government officials – it was therefore necessary to belay any public insinuations that local organisations could so deeply sway the course of politics in Britain.

Another mitigating factor beyond the Haringey test that led to the exclusion of the ethnic question was the role of political climate and ideology. If Haringey had never happened, would the newly instated Conservative government have approved a direct question on race for the 1981 census? The evidence suggests that it is not likely. In a letter from Patrick Jenkin, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, to Home Secretary William Whitelaw, Jenkin conveyed that in a meeting with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher she suggested that much of the information gained from the census was unnecessary because it duplicated data available elsewhere. In a testament to the principles of neo-liberal thought, Thatcher was 'very concerned about the intrusion into the private affairs of individuals and feels strongly that Government will lay itself open to justifiable criticism unless it can be shown that these questions are really necessary for policy analysis and decisions'.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, upon further inspection Thatcher found many of the questions (i.e., whether

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<sup>27</sup>PRO HO 376/223, Memo from G.I. de Doney to Raison (Minister of State) and Whitelaw (Secretary of State), 2 November 1979.

<sup>28</sup>*Id.*

<sup>29</sup>PRO 376/223, Letter from Patrick Jenkin, Secretary of State for Social Services, to William Whitelaw, Secretary of State for Home Department, 13 December 1979.

working, retired, housewife, etc.) to be ‘completely unnecessary’.<sup>30</sup> The state’s incursion into the private lives of individuals was a compelling neoconservative concern, complemented well in this circumstance by another tenet of the Conservative platform – cost-cutting. The introductory speech on the 1980 Census Order in the House of Lords ended with the proclamation that the census budget of £44 million was a 17.5 % decrease in the cost projected by the previous Labour administration’s White Paper.<sup>31</sup> To be clear, the decision to drop the ethnic question from the Census had been made in early November 1979, over a month before Thatcher culled other census questions from the final product. However, as noted by government officials at the time, ‘[Thatcher’s] concern to avoid complexity and unnecessary intervention into privacy seems to be to have been likely to lead her to challenge the ethnic question on these grounds had the decision not already been taken to abandon them.’<sup>32</sup> Haringey or not, the proposed ethnic question would not likely have resurfaced until the 1991 census, when its implementation was unavoidable.

In sum, a variety of ideational, institutional and interest-based factors combined to shape the approach to racial enumeration used by Britain during the 1970s and 1980s, which can best be described as *not counting in the name of multiculturalism*. According to Rallu et al.’s (2004) typology, this is a circumstance in which ‘racial mixing is acknowledged in political and ideological views as a positive value’ and therefore the countries do not enumerate according to race or colour. The thrust of this approach lies in the tendency to valorise racial mixing by not counting race, which emphasises racial hybridity beyond the necessity of counting, contrasted with those countries that count by race in the name of multiculturalism, which promotes harmonious race relations by measuring the country’s degree of whitening. Though the original formulation of this approach refers to the unique cases of Latin America, I contend its very label – not counting in the name of multiculturalism – suggests circumstances when the state intentionally does not count by race in spite of a host of characteristics that imply it would or should. Given the empirical evidence presented here, it is possible to identify a number of more specific idiosyncrasies that characterise the gradients of this approach.

First, states that do not enumerate by race in the name of multiculturalism have a legislative, political or symbolic commitment to multiculturalism, however defined.<sup>33</sup> Second, quite aside from this commitment to multiculturalism, there will also often be legislation that prohibits discriminatory state action and condemns

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Hansard*, House of Lords, vol. 408, 22 April 1980, col. 737.

<sup>32</sup> PRO HO 376/223, Letter from G.I. de Deney to Miss Maurice (Director of Statistics), re: 1981 Census Ethnic Question, 12 December 1979.

<sup>33</sup> Multicultural regimes are defined differently in various national contexts, but ultimately speak to similar principles. For example, paradigms of multiculturalism, racial equality and racial integration are not the same, and yet all employ similar principles of non-assimilation and respect for racial and/or cultural difference, and are enshrined in other political or discursive attempts to create a national community based on these principles.

racial discrimination in housing, employment, and other areas of social life. This legislation, however ineffectively designed or implemented, has the goal of alleviating or eradicating racial disadvantage in social, political and economic life. Third, *in spite of* both commitments to multiculturalism and legislation that may require racial statistics to be properly implemented or to create a more effective system of monitoring, there is still controversy or general discomfort around the very notion of race. In the upper echelons of government, this controversy or discomfort translates into the general idea that counting by race will negatively affect national and social cohesion. Fourth, the aversion of race and racialism is specific to counting by race and is not necessarily an opposition to colour-consciousness. In other areas of law and policy, colour-consciousness may feature predominately or may appear in other political commitments to racial equality. In short, states do not wholly or explicitly adhere to the republican principle of colour-blindness, and therefore not counting by race in the census is not because the state itself ignores race is all avenues.<sup>34</sup> And finally, this refusal to count often occurs in spite of calls for the collection of racial data or an acknowledged need for racial statistics from within the state.

### 7.3 Counting to Justify Positive Action: The 1991 Census<sup>35</sup>

The state's approach of not counting in the name of multiculturalism proved unsustainable. The unavailability of the direct question on race was partially due to the fact that disparate arms of state authority had begun to publically recognise the need for racial data. Vocal support for the question had unwaveringly been provided by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE 1980) and this call for change was augmented by several prominent governmental bodies. Calls for a direct question on ethnicity were made by the 1981 report of the Home Affairs Committee on Racial Disadvantage and Lord Scarman's 1982 Report on the Brixton riots (Leech 1989: 9), but the most influential call for action was to come from the Sub-Committee on Race Relations and Immigration. The Sub-Committee began its enquiry into whether or not an ethnic or racial question should be asked on the national census in 1982, inviting evidence from a variety of external stakeholders, including Local Authorities, other public bodies such as Health Authorities and ethnic minority organisations. Its members also travelled to Canada and the United States to familiarise themselves with the collection of ethnic and racial data in other countries. In

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<sup>34</sup>This is the crucial distinction between two approaches to racial enumeration: not counting in the name of multiculturalism and not counting in the name of national integration, the latter of which occurs when race or ethnicity is rejected in the name of national integration, as is presently the case in many African nations, or in the name of the republican principle of national unity as occurs in Western Europe.

<sup>35</sup>See Appendix 7.1.

its parliamentary report issued in May 1983, the multi-party Sub-Committee<sup>36</sup> publically regretted the decision to not include a question on ethnicity in the 1981 census. The report reviewed the need for information on ethnic groups in order to monitor the effectiveness of anti-discrimination policy and proposed that the OPCS carry out a further series of field tests to develop an improved design of question on race and/or ethnicity for possible inclusion in the 1991 census. The report accepted that the racial terms 'White' and 'Black' would need to be employed and went so far as to suggest a design for the ethnic question. In its reply the following year, the government accepted many of these recommendations in principle, noting that further tests needed to be carried out in order to create a reliable and publically acceptable question for the 1991 census (HM Government 1984). Thus the decision to once again address the issue of race and the census was not exactly coming from within the depths of the state itself, but nor did the driver of change derive from a completely external force, such as interest groups, social mobilisation or an exogenous shock. Though Scarman's inquiry and the various committees of Parliament were arms of the state, the common thread amongst these disparate promoters of an ethnic question on the census was their simultaneous connection to and autonomy from the state, which allowed greater manoeuvrability in the interpretation of contentious political issues.

The next series of field tests, held between 1985 and 1989, demonstrated that the categories of 'Black British' and 'British Asian' were demanded by respondents but were nevertheless fraught with complexities, since some members of racial minorities born in British colonies overseas considered themselves to be 'British Asian,' though the use of that label was intended to appeal to second-generation British-born Asians. When the field trials explicitly tested the reliability of data that allowed everyone to classify themselves as British, the finding was that respondents found the format confusing and the data were compromised. When the question eliminated the qualifier 'British' from the racial category descriptors in subsequent field trials, West Indians continued to express their wish for a Black British category or something similar.

The terms of the test were determined by government officials, with an internal working group created in 1985 to consider the design of the question. Consultations were part of the group's terms of reference, but the stakeholders the working group was to consult throughout the design process were mainly internal, with the sole exception being the CRE, an organisation that was created and funded by the state but was also autonomous from it. The group appears to have understood the necessity of consulting with ethnic minority organisations to prevent the disastrous Haringey results; however, the members were undecided on the crucial question of *when* to consult. The group recognised that if ethnic minorities were consulted

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<sup>36</sup>The Sub-Committee was chaired by the Conservative MP John Wheeler and was comprised of one other Conservative MP (John Hunt) and two Labour MPs (Alexander Lyon and Alf Dubs). Interestingly, the members' dedication to their task transcended party lines; Leech (1989) writes that 'the members of this committee were strongly committed to the question' and were often hostile to those who expressed doubts (1989: 10).

before field trials, there was a strong possibility they would object to the designs being tested, but if they were not consulted in advance, 'there might be complaints that we are failing to take heed to the SCORRI [Sub-Committee on Race Relations and Immigration] emphasis on the need for better public relations/publicity'.<sup>37</sup> There is little evidence that consultations with minority groups took place during the early field trials; according to the OPCS and General Register Office for Scotland (GRO(S)), the OPCS and CRE began a series of meetings with Community Relations Officers and representatives of ethnic minority organisations in England and Wales in late 1987 when a recommended question had already been decided. The purpose of the meetings was to discuss acceptability and 'to try to find out what doubts or fears, if any, people might have' rather than a deliberative democratic policy-making process.<sup>38</sup> Consultation, in this sense, can be likened to a public relations campaign.

The shift in governmental approaches to racial enumeration from not counting in the name of multiculturalism to counting to justify positive action became clear with the 1998 Census White Paper, which linked the rectification of economic disadvantage in minority populations with the promotion of positive race relations and the general welfare of the public. It also stated that the information collected on housing, employment, educational qualifications and age-structure of each group would help the government carry out its responsibilities under the 1976 *Race Relations Act* and serve as benchmarks to monitor the implementation of equal opportunities policies (HM Government 1988). The proposed question read: 'Please tick the appropriate box. If the person is descended from more than one group, please tick the one to which the person considers he or she belongs, or tick box 7 and describe the person's ancestry in the space provided.' The categories included (numbered 1–7) were: White; Black; Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi; Chinese; Any other ethnic group (and a mark-in space).

At this stage, the government invited further comment from members of the public and from ethnic/racial organisations on whether they would answer the question. Comments from Black groups continued to request more detail on the ethnic origins of Black people in Britain (Sillitoe and White 1992: 155). It was eventually decided, therefore, that the question on the census test of April 1989 should incorporate the following categories (numbered 1–9): White; Black-Caribbean; Black-African; Black-Other (and a mark-in space); Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi; Chinese; Any other ethnic group (and a mark-in space). Using this question design, less than one half of one percent of respondents declined to cooperate because of the question and the proportion of Black respondents who objected to the question in the 1989 census test was 19% – close to the lowest level of objection recorded amongst Black informants since 1979 (White and Pearce 1993: 295).

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<sup>37</sup>PRO RG 40/397, 1991 Census: Ethnic Question Project Group – terms of reference, 7 January 1985.

<sup>38</sup>OPCS and GRO(S), 'Major steps towards the 1991 Census,' *1981...1991 Census Newsletter*, no. 4. 17 December 1987.

The inaugural inclusion of a direct question on ethnicity in the 1991 census was heralded as a resounding success (Coleman and Salt 1996). It also represents a clear break from Britain's previous approach of not counting in the name of multiculturalism to counting, changing to one of counting to justify positive action. The need to comply with the spirit and intent of the *Race Relations Act* was given as the *de facto* justification for the collection of racial data. At an international conference in 1992 with representatives from Canadian, American, and British census offices, British civil servants from OPCS noted that ethnic data on the census was collected because of the need for reliable information about unemployment levels, pay equity, housing conditions, and educational attainment of Blacks and Asians in Britain and also 'because of the need to know the extent to which equal opportunity programs are succeeding in reducing the inequalities resulting from discriminatory practices' (White and Pearce 1993: 271). This rationale was also repeated in the White Papers of 1988 and 1999. Note, however, that the legislation itself was consistent through the employment of either approach to racial enumeration. Though census data have clearly been used to provide evidence of racial discrimination and to monitor the effectiveness of government programs (Coombes and Hubback 1992; Stavo-Debaugue and Scott 2004; Stavo-Debaugue 2005) this argument is far more of a spurious justification after the fact rather than being a singular cause of the racialization in British statistics. Instead, the British case suggests that: (1) unless provisions for ethnic monitoring are expressly stated in legislation, an institutional mandate does not necessarily lead to the implementation of a direct census question on race; and (2) the content of civil rights legislation matters a great deal. If simply the existence of civil rights legislation – or even an acceptance of the legal concept of indirect discrimination – mattered, then Britain would have seen the emergence of an ethnic question far sooner than it did. Civil rights legislation is likely a necessary but insufficient cause for the collection of racial data.

## 7.4 Counting in the Name of Multiculturalism: The 2001 Census<sup>39</sup>

In preparation for the 2001 census the British government sought to institutionalise a consultative process that incorporated input from census data users at an earlier stage in the policy-making process. Though internal working groups comprised of representatives from different departments and levels of government are the norm for many areas of policy making, it was in the mid-1990s that the OPCS decided to 'build on the experience in 1991 by involving users in an active role for planning the 2001 Census' (OPCS and GRO(S) 1995a). This active consultation was to occur through six advisory groups representing the main users of census data.<sup>40</sup> Members

<sup>39</sup> See Appendix 7.2.

<sup>40</sup> These groups represented interests from: (1) the health sector (Health Service Advisory Group); (2) Local Authorities (Information Development and Liaison Group); (3) academia (Demographic

from each of these groups were represented on the subsequent Working Group on Content, Question Testing and Classification and subgroups were formed to discuss particular questions for consideration on the 2001 census (OPCS and GRO(S) 1995b). The ethnic question, along with other questions concerning income and benefits, language, disability, careers, relationship within household, migration, labour market, qualifications and housing, were identified as high priority for testing (OPCS and GRO(S) 1995c). A subgroup on the ethnicity question was then tasked in April 1995 with determining what changes should be made to the 1991 format, to be presented in a business case to the newly renamed Office for National Statistics (ONS). The core membership of the ethnic question subgroup was comprised of members from all five of the main Advisory Groups, but the working group itself was not large.

Three modifications made to the 1991 census design are of particular interest and speak to Britain's shift from solely counting to justify positive action to also counting in the name of multiculturalism. First, the 2001 census disaggregated the 'white' category and provided the options of 'British,' 'Irish,' and 'Any other White background' with a write-in space. These options stem from the efforts of a surprisingly vocal lobby that persuaded members of the Working Group and ONS to add an Irish category. Unlike the US, lobbies are fairly unusual in the British context – the Westminster system of government and relatively closed policy networks make it far more difficult for interest groups to access decision-makers (Marsh and Rhodes 1992). However, the Irish lobby used the notion of disadvantage to make their case (Aspinall 1996) in multiple institutional access points, targeting both the Working Group and the state and finding a particularly powerful ally in the Department of Health.<sup>41</sup> This was a necessary step; as one ONS representative noted, lobby pressure from other white ethnic groups, such as the Cypriots, the Greek Cypriots, the Cornish and the Welsh were not persuasive because they could not demonstrate their groups had experienced disadvantages in health, education and the like.<sup>42</sup> When the Working Group recommended the inclusion of an Irish category on the 2001 census, the ONS was hesitant: 'ONS was reluctant to have it at all...maybe because it wasn't driven by colour. ONS didn't really have a strong appreciation of the nature and scale of the disadvantage. Although evidence was beginning to be published then [...] The Irish group was a tougher sell – it was about 1997 when they came around. There was quite a lot of resistance.'<sup>43</sup> Though the lobby eventually achieved their goal, ONS's unease with counting Irish was partially because the

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Liaison Group); (4) central government (Departmental Working Group); (5) the private sector (Business Advisory Group); and (6) devolved territories (Scottish Statistical Liaison Group) (OPCS and GRO(S) 1995a).

<sup>41</sup> Interview with ONS representative, April 2009.

<sup>42</sup> In her words: 'So, in the Irish case, you could argue that there have been discrimination, and if you wanted to overcome that discrimination – one of the key drivers behind this question, that resource allocation needed to be redirected to the improvement of housing or education or health. I don't think the Greek Cypriots could produce such a convincing case that they were suffering discrimination.' Interview with ONS representative, April 2009.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Working Group member, April 2009.



category did not align well with the state's conceptualisation of what *racial* disadvantage is, and therefore, what the ethnic question was designed to measure.

The second major discussion that led to a modification of the 1991 census design concerned the enumeration of mixed-race people. Results from the 1991 census seemed to contradict the assertions espoused by OPCS, that 'people of mixed descent often preferred not to be distinguished as a separate group,' (Sillitoe and White 1992: 149) since approximately one in four members of minority ethnic groups wrote in descriptions in the available free-text fields, and of the 740,000 persons who gave a description nearly one-third, or 240,000 people, wrote in mixed-origins descriptions (Aspinall 2003: 278). These numbers are particularly significant as they outnumbered the population for three groups counted separately on the 1991 census (Chinese, Bangladeshi and Black-African). While some respondents identified with one of the main groups, comparing the count of those mixed-race persons with individuals checking the 'mixed' box in the Labour Force Survey<sup>44</sup> suggests that around two-thirds of the mixed-race population chose to write in a description rather than select one of the designated categories (Aspinall 2003: 278). The need to find more accurate methods to collect meaningful data on mixed-race people, who were considered a growing population, was generally acknowledged (Bulmer 1996; Owen 1996; Aspinall 2000).

In stark contrast to the United States, there was near unanimous support for the proposal to enumerate mixed-race on the 2001 census from government departments, the CRE, and within the ethnic question subgroup and the Content, Question Testing and Classification Working Group. Aspinall's (1996) report on the ethnic subgroup consultation makes the case for inclusion based on demand from within the group,<sup>45</sup> the increasing size of the group, and the need for analytical clarity, particularly when the data is being used for service provision. The ONS immediately accepted the subgroup's business case and recommendation to count mixed-race. With the substantive question of whether or not to include some provision to classify the multiracial population largely decided, the subgroup discussions focussed on more semantic issues, such as whether the label should read 'mixed-race' when the question itself referred to ethnicity,<sup>46</sup> the order of labels within the category (i.e., whether the category should read 'White and Black Caribbean' or 'Black Caribbean and White'), the placement of the larger mixed category within the ethnic question,<sup>47</sup> and the use of the generic label of 'Asian' when the Black

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<sup>44</sup>Ethnicity data in Great Britain are also available from two other surveys: the Labour Force Survey and the General Household Survey. However, both these surveys are too small to give estimates at a local level, nor is their coverage as encompassing as in the census (Bhrolcháin 1990: 556). It is also interesting to note that the collection of ethnic data was introduced in these surveys in the early 1980s without any public or political debate.

<sup>45</sup>Of the three arguments, 'demand from within the group' is clearly the weakest. Aspinall's (1996) report relies heavily on evidence from the United States, where multiracial organisations were lobbying the federal government for classificatory changes to the 2000 census. Aspinall notes that the evidence of a similar consciousness or demand in Britain was 'piecemeal'.

<sup>46</sup>Note that the label in the 2001 census simply reads 'Mixed' with no further qualifier.

<sup>47</sup>The category was eventually placed second, after 'White,' to ensure that respondents did not overlook the category (Moss 1999), though some argue that this position is also an effort to avoid the historical stigma of the 'half-caste' (Kosmin 1999).

subgroups were divided into Black-Caribbean and Black-African (Caballero 2004: 121). A multiple response approach to enumerating mixed-race – as is used in both the Canadian and American censuses – was never seriously considered. One ONS representative suggested this was because multi-ticking represented ‘a failure of the question’ – respondents tick more than one box when they are confused or when instructions are unclear.<sup>48</sup> A member of the ethnicity question subgroup noted that when a two-tier question on ethnic ancestry and ethnic group that required multi-ticking was tested, ‘people were very confused by multi-ticking’.<sup>49</sup> A multiple-response approach to the mixed-race question, however, was never proposed or tested and it was ultimately the ONS that designed the 2001 mixed-race census categories: White and Black-Caribbean, White and Black-African, White and Asian and a free-text ‘any other mixed background’.<sup>50</sup> The inclusion of mixed-race categories in the 2001 census simply was not a contentious issue. This state of affairs is very different from previous policy discussions, which designated the enumeration of multiracial people as a ‘problem’. In contrast, the only concerns recorded in this instance were by census users who were apprehensive about the effects on the quality and comparability of the ethnic group data brought about by the inclusion of a mixed-race category.

The third modification is the addition of the headings ‘Black or Black British’ and ‘Asian or Asian British’ in the ethnic question. The demand for a ‘Black British’ category dates back to the early field trials of the 1970s and its continued presence in British census politics over the decades speaks to the discursive connections between race and citizenship. As Ballard (1996) notes, unlike the white majority this population had no objection to a public testament that Britain had become a diverse society, but ‘what they did find deeply offensive – understandably enough – was any indication that their distinctiveness might be read as an indication that they were in some sense non-British’ (Ballard 1996: 12). This sensitivity to the race/citizenship nexus had been used well in the 1984 election, when the Tories, vying to increase their appeal to the Black electorate, released a campaign poster which featured a well-dressed black professional under the words ‘Labour says he is black. Tories say he is British,’ (Gilroy 1987) implying, of course, that one cannot possibly be both Black and British simultaneously. However, as the 1980s and 1990s wore on, Great Britain experienced a more prominent disconnect between discourses of race relations and immigration than ever before, as second and third generation Blacks and Asians lay claim to being just as British as anyone else. In previous decades, blackness was perceived by the majority population as being synonymous with ‘immigrant’ (Gilroy 1987: 46; Ballard 1997) but the growth of a politically

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<sup>48</sup> Interview with ONS representative, 15 April 2009.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with member of ethnic question subgroup, 6 April 2009.

<sup>50</sup> Interviews with members of ethnic question subgroup, 20 April 2009 and 22 April 2009. Note the specific concern with individuals of white/non-white racial backgrounds. According to ONS representatives, the number of non-white mixes (i.e., Black-African and Asian) simply did not warrant specific categories; however, one cannot help but notice the continued lack of consideration of mixes that do not involve the white majority. On this topic, see Mahtani and Moreno (2001).

active generation of British born and bred racial minorities not willing to settle for anything but full citizenship (complete with a sense of belonging as part of the nation) helped to challenge the unspoken, but dominant, paradigm that Britishness was equated with whiteness.<sup>51</sup>

The policy proposal to include the ‘Black British’ and ‘Asian British’ as headings rather than categories in the 2001 census came from ONS. Working group members had struggled with the issue of retaining high-quality and comparable data that detailed ancestry while allowing respondents to identify as British, since there was still such demand from the public. On this topic, one working group member commented:

I’ve got to give credit to the ONS – I couldn’t sort out in my head, retaining the data about Black-African or Black-Caribbean ancestry and having Black British as a tick box. Because we knew young people born in Britain, brought up in Britain, identified as Black British, they weren’t fussed about ancestry from the Caribbean. Even their parents might have been born in Britain. And, you know, they just felt British. So why not give them a tick box so they can say what they are? And that appealed to a lot of us in the working group...but ONS wanted to know whether in ancestry terms whether people were from the Caribbean or Africa [...] ONS came up with this inspired solution of putting Black British and Asian British in the group label. Ok, you lost the facility to tick Black British as a tick box, but you got reference to national origins. I just thought that was inspired.<sup>52</sup>

The inclusion of some way of recognising Black British or Asian British identities ‘had been a sticking point for a long time’. This solution, which acknowledges both race and British nationality and/or citizenship, suggests a symbolic function of the census beyond the task of counting the population. The more intangible elements of census politics, where the census collides with ideas of citizenship and belonging, demand that policy-makers negotiate between technical requirements and the politics of recognition (Taylor 1994).

In sum, these modifications illuminate important changes that had occurred between 1991 and 2001, reflected and reinforced through the census. For example, though it is difficult to measure or define in the social scientific sense, a consistent feature in interviews with government officials and participants in census consultations was the contention that in the late 1980s and early 1990s ‘things had changed’. As one interviewee put it:

I think it’s a change in society as well. It’s a change that’s reflected in the change in government. In this government we have now all these protections for different groups; very powerful legislation protecting against discrimination. I think there’s much stronger movement to recognise diversity in different societies. There’s been a form of identity politics if you like. Britain has been a bit slower than the United States and Canada. I think now there’s just so much interest in ethnicity and race in this country; communities are organising themselves a lot more effectively, being involved in consultations and participation and all sorts of government bodies. I think these two things are entrapped with each other. Identity politics and these new legal protections.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> See Parekh (2000).

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Working Group member, April 2009.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with ethnicity question subgroup member, 6 April 2009.

To be clear, the impetus of enumerating by race in order to meet legislative requirements set out in the *Race Relations Act* was still an important factor that contributed to the initial and subsequent appearances of the ethnic question. However, as the comment above suggests, there was an equally important acknowledgement and recognition of Britain's diversity that by 2001 occurred both through and within the census.

The ethnic question in the 2001 census exemplifies some tenets of the governmental approach of counting in the name of multiculturalism. The use of this approach is clearly connected to the census designers' efforts to develop a question that would be publicly acceptable and would garner high response rates and high quality data, but there are also symbolic or discursive issues at play in the determination of census categories and classifications. Policy-makers were very concerned with providing options that allowed respondents to identify as what they 'really are' and were willing to adjust census categories (that had previously been successful at attaining high quality data) in order to accommodate these issues of identity and recognition. Also, discourses of race, citizenship and belonging are linked together through the census; the census has become an instrument of diversity governance, used by the state to promote multiculturalism and national diversity as a positive value. This use of the census is particularly potent when combined with the approach of counting to justify positive action, sending signals within the state and to the public-at-large that equality and diversity are important state priorities.

## 7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the British government's shift in the racialization of statistics, from not counting in the name of multiculturalism in the 1970s and 1980s, to counting to justify positive action in 1991 and also to counting in the name of multiculturalism in 2001. Rather than being driven by singular causes such as social mobilisation, the drive for institutional consistency with civil rights legislation or demography, census categories and classifications are the result of the complicated interplay of ideational and institutional factors.

Institutions clearly matter. The nature of the census is such that there is an institutional imperative to present publicly acceptable questions and policy success is measured by high response rates and the quality of data acquired. Other institutions have mattered in more subtle ways: Britain's unitary system of government and experiments with devolution have allowed local authorities a seat at the policy-making table, while its parliamentary system of government ensures that policy agendas are kept secret and decisions are elite- or bureaucracy-driven. Opportunities for interest groups to access decision-makers are limited and lobby efforts are stymied by party discipline (Marsh and Rhodes 1992; Smith 1993). Social mobilisation in census politics has at times been successful (i.e., the Irish in 2001), at other times has consistently failed (i.e., the Cornish) and has not followed comparative patterns found elsewhere, as demonstrated by the differences between bureaucracy-led decision to enumerate mixed-race in Britain and the lobby-led call for a multiracial

category in the 2000 US census. However, the state is far from a unitary actor (Hall and Ikenberry 1990); census politics in Great Britain illustrate well that different arms of the state have different interests and policy outcomes are often the result of internal political battles. These conflicting interests of the state are particularly relevant within the census policy network, since the state has a monopoly on setting the rules of the debate and the players permitted at the table. Census data are, first and foremost, a product designed for government use in creating policies and programming (Statistics Canada and United States Bureau of the Census 1993). The state decides what outside groups are consulted; it also decides the timing and purpose of the consultations, which matter a great deal for policy outcomes. Are outside groups consulted before the decision-makers have made up their minds? What is the purpose of consultations with ethnic minority groups: for publicity, to gain approval, to ensure the question is acceptable, or to gather substantive input into the policy-making process? Recall that the timing and intent of consultations were critical to the failure of Haringey; though given the importance of public acceptability it is rather surprising that the government did not consult the racial minorities it intended to enumerate at an earlier stage.<sup>54</sup>

Institutions alone cannot explain the dynamics of census politics in Britain. In fact, historical institutionalism emphasises that policy change is always rather *unlikely*; policy legacies and path dependent processes reproduce and magnify power distributions in politics, thus limiting opportunities for policy innovation and advantaging the status quo (Pierson 2000). The fact that the British state has sought to improve and amend the ethnic question every decade since its introduction speaks to the more ideational elements involved in the determination of racial categorisations. Ideas about multiculturalism, citizenship and belonging in the British context have played an incredible role in both preventing and supporting the ethnic question. Britain initially experienced a national discomfort with the concept of race. In the late 1970s this anxiety was so great that when minorities requested a category synonymous to ‘Black British’ the government found the label unacceptable because it placed too much emphasis on differences of race and/or colour. This unease with the concept of race is not an indication of its non-existence, but rather its omnipresence. In Britain, discourses of race and nation are articulated with the same breath, meaning that ‘statements about nationality are invariably also statements about

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<sup>54</sup>The Home Affairs Committee’s 1982 Report was particularly scathing, arguing that Haringey was ‘a flop’ because ‘in its form of questions and presentation to the public the Test asked or did everything our inquiry has suggested should not be asked or done, and because in its presentation little was done to provide assurances on confidentiality and the value of questions to ethnic minority groups themselves’ (HM Government 1983: vi–vii). The Report condemns the OPCS for the lack of publicity before and during the test, noting that the few public meetings that were held prior to the census rehearsal were poorly attended. It also recommends that OPCS establish an institutionalised consultation process with ethnic minorities based on the model provided by the U.S. Census Bureau’s advisory committees, but in its reply the government noted its ‘reservations’ about setting up such a structure because of the costs involved (HM Government 1984).

“race” (Gilroy 1987: 57). History dictates that Black and Asian people have been ‘described, discussed and legislated for on the basis that they were a “problem” for the nation, not an intrinsic part of nor an asset to it. Their presence has been deemed to be temporary and conditional’ (Alibhai-Brown 1999: 3). Attempts to promote racial equality have often perceived as threatening to national unity; however, in recent years British identity has sought to incorporate and promote multicultural principles as a source of national pride, though the balance between nationalism, citizenship and race remains somewhat tenuous (Gilroy 1987; Alibhai-Brown 2000; Neal 2003; Small and Solomos 2006; Worley 2005; Pilkington 2008).

The 2011 census demonstrated that Britain remains on its current dual trajectory of counting in the name of multiculturalism and counting to positive action. However, the issues of the nature of race and conceptions of citizenship and belonging are far from settled. They are instead pulled in different directions because of new political developments, such as the UK’s membership in the European Union and its implications for immigration controls, Scottish and Welsh devolution, and new paradigms of race relations concerned with the threat of ‘home-grown terror’ and the integration of Muslim populations. The 2011 UK censuses featured a new question on national identity, which preceded the question on ethnicity. Respondents will be able to choose from six options: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British, or Other with a write-in space. This new question is not a response to the demands for a means of allowing racial minorities to identify themselves without feeling as though such an identification would detract from their sense of belonging in the national community (i.e., Black British or Asian British), but rather is a by-product of processes of devolution in the UK, a growing sense of national identity in Scotland and Wales, the thrust to keep British nationalism intact through policies emphasising ‘community cohesion,’ and a domestic concern about increasing immigration from Eastern European countries of the EU. Whether this resurgence of nationalism in Britain is a cause or effect of devolution remains to be seen; nevertheless, the consequences for the census are real. It is also worthy of noting that while a multiple response approach was determined to be ‘too complicated’ to illicit proper responses to the ethnic question, the question on nationality on the 2011 census asked ‘How would you describe your national identity?’ and instructed respondents to ‘tick all that apply’ (ONS 2009). Once again, the census proves itself to be a fundamentally political entity situated within broader domestic and international policy debates concerning the nature of race, citizenship and belonging.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 7.1: 1991 Census

11

#### Ethnic group

Please tick the appropriate box.

If the person is descended from more than one ethnic or racial group, please tick the group to which the person considers he/she belongs, or tick the 'Any other ethnic group' box and describe the person's ancestry in the space provided.

White	<input type="checkbox"/>	0
Black-Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
Black-African	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
Black-Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>please describe</i>		


Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>	5
Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>	6
Any other group	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>please describe</i>		


### Appendix 7.2: 2001 Census

**8 What is your ethnic group?**

◆ Choose ONE section from A to E, then ✓ the appropriate box to indicate your cultural background.

**A White**

British       Irish

Any other White background, *please write in*

**B Mixed**

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

White and Asian

Any other Mixed background, *please write in*

**C Asian or Asian British**

Indian       Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Any other Asian background, *please write in*

**D Black or Black British**

Caribbean       African

Any other Black background, *please write in*

**E Chinese or other ethnic group**

Chinese

Any other, *please write in*



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**Part III**  
**Measurement Issues**  
**and Competing Claims**

# Chapter 8

## Counting Ethnicity in Malaysia: The Complexity of Measuring Diversity

Shyamala Nagaraj, Tey Nai-Peng, Ng Chiu-Wan, Lee Kiong-Hock,  
and Jean Pala

### 8.1 Introduction

Malaysia has long been concerned with the ethnic dimension in its society. Today, this concern pervades all debate whether on education or politics. Indeed, it dominates coffee room discussions on any area that relates to achievement of human potential, whether in the area of human capital, physical capital, financial capital, entrepreneurship, politics or government.

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The diversity evident in the ethnic fabric of Malaysians is officially acknowledged and celebrated in Tourism Malaysia's slogan 'Malaysia, Truly Asia'. More importantly, it is a critical and powerful driver in the design and implementation of many public policies. With the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious composition of the populace, national unity remains the main stated objective of economic, social and national development. The New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced in 1971 in response to the ethnic disturbances of 1969. Its primary objectives were reduction of poverty irrespective of race, and restructuring of Malaysian society to eliminate identification of race with economic function to reduce inequalities in income distribution between races and to reduce the identification of race with economic activities. More than three decades later, the ethnic dimensions of public policy remain important, for instance as reflected in 2007 under the National Vision Policy.<sup>1</sup>

Data on ethnicity is therefore very important for monitoring and strengthening public policies that seek to address ethnic imbalances. It is not surprising then that measuring ethnicity in Malaysia extends beyond the decennial census and is an important element in the production of official statistics. Today, it seems like information on ethnicity is collected by almost every institution, whether public or private. The question is, given the difficulty in measuring ethnicity, whether the meaning and measurement of ethnicity is the same in the different surveys and documents, and over time. This chapter examines the complexity of defining and measuring ethnicity across time and across different official documents. The most important enumeration of ethnicity in the population occurs every 10 years or so with the taking of the census. Ethnicity information is regularly obtained in other censuses (such as ethnic profile of employees in the Economic Censuses), surveys (such as in the Labour Force Survey) and as a by-product of administrative procedures (such as birth registration). The next section first provides an introduction to the diversity in the ethnic fabric of Malaysia. This is followed in the third section by an appraisal of how ethnicity is, and has been, measured in the censuses. The fourth section considers measurement of ethnicity by different agencies. The final section concludes the chapter with a discussion of the principal findings and their implications.

## 8.2 Ethnic Diversity in Malaysia

The concept of ethnicity is somewhat multidimensional, as it includes aspects such as race, origin or ancestry, identity, language and religion. As Yinger (1986) remarks, in practice ethnicity has come to refer to anything from a sub-societal group that clearly shares a common descent and cultural background (e.g., the Kosovar

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<sup>1</sup>In 1991, aspects of the policy changed and were implemented as the National Development Policy (1991–2000), with a further change in thrust under the National Vision Policy (2001–2010). In the rest of this paper, we use 'NEP' to refer to these three set of policies.

Albanians) to persons who share a former citizenship although diverse culturally (Indonesians in the Netherlands), to pan-cultural groups of persons of widely different cultural and societal backgrounds who, however, can be identified as ‘similar’ on the basis of language, race or religion mixed with broadly similar statuses (Hispanics in the United States) (as cited in Yeoh 2001).

Table 8.1 shows the population distribution by ethnic groups in Malaysia for year 2000. These categories are as different as Yinger notes, referring to groups that share a common descent and cultural background (e.g., the Chinese), persons whose parents share a former citizenship although diverse culturally (e.g., the Indians) to pan-cultural groups from different cultural and societal backgrounds broadly considered ‘similar’ (e.g., the Malays).

Some of the 18 groups listed here are categories summarizing the population of smaller groups. The degree of ethnic diversity in Malaysia is apparent when we examine the Ethnic Fractionalization Index (EFI), an index that measures the racial (phenotypical), linguistic and religious cleavages in society (Yeoh 2001). This index is based on the probability that a randomly selected pair of individuals in a society

**Table 8.1** Malaysia, population by ethnic group, 2000

Ethnic group	Number (thousands)	Percentage distribution
Total population	22198.2	100
<i>Malaysian citizens</i>		
Malays	11164.95	51.0
Kadazan Dusun	456.9641	2.1
Bajau	329.9529	1.5
Murut	80.07225	0.4
Iban	578.3544	2.6
Bidayuh	159.5528	0.7
Melanau	108.275	0.5
Other <i>Bumiputera</i>	695.7017	3.2
Chinese	5291.277	24.2
Indians	1571.664	7.2
Other Malaysian citizens	243.3723	1.1
<i>Non-Malaysian citizens</i>		
Singapore	16.66528	0.1
Indonesia	704.9711	3.2
Philippines	197.9126	0.9
Thailand	33.33057	0.2
India	28.10418	0.1
Bangladesh	64.09725	0.3
Other Foreign Citizens	164.582	0.8

Source: Based on Tables 2.10 and 2.11, Department of Statistics, Malaysia (2005)



will belong to different groups (Rae and Taylor 1970: 22–23). Table 8.2 below shows the values of the EFI for selected countries. Although the EFI is affected by the way the ethnic groups are measured for each country, it nevertheless can be used to provide a broad indication of the degree of diversity. The index for Malaysia is not as high as say, India, about the same as Canada and much greater than, say, the UK.

One reason for great variety of ethnic, religious and linguistic groups in Malaysia can be traced to its geographical location. The region that is now Malaysia comprises Peninsular Malaysia, a peninsula jutting out from the Asian continent and East Malaysia, comprising Sabah and Sarawak, two regions in the island of Borneo. Peninsular Malaysia lies at the crossroads of maritime trade between the West (India and Arabia) and the East (China). The seas between North Borneo (now Sabah) and the Sulu islands have been an important trading route between Australia and China. There have thus been far-reaching movements of peoples between the West and the East and within Southeast Asia itself (Andaya and Andaya 1982).

The richness of the ethnic heritage can be seen in the census categories used for ethnicity in the census in 1891 of the then Straits Settlements (comprising Penang, Singapore and Malacca) shown in the first column of Table 8.3. The list indicates that the Straits Settlements were home at least for some length of time to many different groups. These groupings indicate that there were people from different continents (Europeans and Americans), religions ('Parsees' and 'Hindoos') and from neighbouring regions ('Javanese' and 'Manilamen'). However, these categories were, as Hirschman (1987) observes, made up based on 'experience and common knowledge' and not necessarily on size of group in the society. Indeed, as Table 8.4 shows, the large number of categories for 'Europeans and Americans' was in direct contrast to their small proportion in the population of the time.

The inflow of immigrant workers from certain countries in somewhat large numbers also helped to define the ethnic fabric of the country. The turn of the nineteenth

**Table 8.2** Ethnic fractionalization index (EFI), selected countries

Country	EFI
Republic of India	0.876
Republic of the Philippines	0.838
Republic of Indonesia	0.754
Canada	0.714
Malaysia	0.694
Kingdom of Thailand	0.535
United States of America	0.395
United Kingdom of Great Britain & N. Ireland	0.325
Solomon Islands	0.133

Source: Based on Table 1, Yeoh (2001)

**Table 8.3** Ethnic classifications, selected censuses and regions

1871	1957	1960	1960
Straits Settlements	Federation of Malaya	North Borneo	Sarawak
Europeans and Americans (18 sub-categories)	Malaysians	European (2 sub-categories)	European (2 sub-categories)
Armenians	Malays	Dusun	Malay
Jews	Indonesian	Murut	Melanau
Eurasians	All Aborigines	Bajau (2 sub-categories)	Sea Dayak
Abyssinians	Negrito	Brunei	Land Dayak
Achinese	Semai	Kedayan	Other Indigenous
Africans	Semelai	Orang Sungei	Bisayah
Andamanese	Temiar	Bisaya	Okedayan
Arabs	Jakun	Sulu	Kayan
Bengalees and Other Natives of India not particularized	Other Aborigines	Tidong	Kenyah
Boyanese	Chinese	Sino-Native	Kelabit
Bugis	Hokkien	Chinese	Murut
Burmese	Tiechiu	Hakka	Punan
Chinese	Khek (Hakka)	Hokkien	Other Indigenous
Cochin-Chinese	Cantonese	Teochew	Chinese
Dyaks	Hainanese	Hailam (Hainanese)	Cantonese
Hindoos	Hokchia	Other Chinese	Foochow
Japanese	Hokchiu	Others	Hakka
Javanese	Kwongsai	Natives of Sarawak	Henghua
Jaweepekans	Henghwa	Malay	Hokkien
Klings	Other Chinese	Cocos Islander	Hylam/ Hainese
Malays	Indians	Indonesian	Teochew
Manilamen	Indian Tamil	Indian, Pakistani, Ceylonese	Other Chinese
Mantras	Telegu	Native of Philippines	Others
Parsees	Malayali	Others	Indian, Pakistani, Ceylonese
Persians	Other Indian		Indonesian
Siamese	Others		Others
Singhalese	Eurasian		
	Ceylon Tamil		
	Other Ceylonese		
	Pakistani		
	Thai (Siamese)		
	Other Asian		
	British		
	Other European		
	Others (not European or Asian)		

Source: First two columns, Hirschman (1987); last two columns, Jones (1961); Jones (1962)

**Table 8.4** Proportion of population by nationality, Straits Settlements, 1881 and 1891

Nationality	1881	1891
Europeans and Americans	0.0082	0.0129
Eurasians	0.0163	0.0138
Chinese	0.4118	0.4450
Malays and other natives of the archipelago	0.4503	0.4159
Tamils and other natives	0.0975	0.1052
Other nationalities	0.0069	0.0072
Total population	423,384	512,905

Source: Merewether (1892)

century in British Malaya saw the successful policy of bringing in migrant labour to work on rubber estates (workers from India) and tin mines (workers from China), when these primary products grew in economic importance. The increase in the relative size of these two groups could be seen as early as 1891 (Table 8.4). The British also tried to encourage immigration into North Borneo in the early part of the twentieth century to work in the estates there.

Since the 1970s, Malaysia has seen an increasing presence of migrant workers as the need for estate workers, and more recently, factory workers, maids, restaurant workers and security guards has increased. These have been mostly from Indonesia, and but also from Nepal, Bangladesh and the Philippines. Different from earlier British policy, these migrants are required to return home after a fixed period. However, economic opportunities have also made Malaysia a magnet for illegal economic migrants from neighbouring countries. Since Peninsular Malaysia shares a border with Thailand and is just across the Straits of Malacca from Indonesian Sumatra, while Sabah and Sarawak share a border with Indonesian Kalimantan, the erection of political boundaries even with Peninsular Malaysia's Independence from the British (1957) or the formation of Malaysia (comprising Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah (previously North Borneo) and Sarawak) has not been effective in reducing the diversity in the population. Thus, there continues to be considerable movement of people across Borneo, Indonesia and the Philippines.

These historical patterns have led to differences in ethnic composition – as well as ethnic categories measured – in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. The first region is concerned with three main ethnic groups, Malays, Chinese and Indians, that is, historically non-migrant versus historically migrant classifications, whereas Sabah and Sarawak are concerned with the historically migrant as well as the many indigenous groups in their society. This can be observed in the census categories for ethnicity for 1957 (Federation of Malaya) and North Borneo and Sarawak (1960) shown in Table 8.3.

### 8.3 The Measurement of Ethnicity in the Census

The United Nations Statistics Division (2003) in reviewing the measurement of ethnicity in censuses contends that 'ethnic data is useful for the elaboration of policies to improve access to employment, education and training, social security and health, transportation and communications, etc. It is important for taking measures to preserving the identity and survival of distinct ethnic groups.' Yet, 1 in 3 of the 147 countries surveyed which had done a census in year 2000 had not included a question on national and/ or ethnic group (United Nations Statistics Division 2003: Table 3). While these countries may have included such a question in previous, or plan to include one in future, surveys, clearly it is not a question that regularly appears in their censuses.

In contrast, Malaysia's experience in measuring national/ race/ ethnic group in a regular decennial census can be traced back to the late 1800s. Regular censuses, other than during war years, have been carried out despite the difficulties of taking a census in a population 'with so many races speaking different tongues' (Hare 1902: 4) or the need to have census questionnaires prepared in several languages as well as enumerators who can speak the language of the respondents. Furthermore, in the timing of release of census information, ethnicity data has always been considered a priority (Chander 1972: 22) and may even be released along with other essential demographic data well before the general report on the census (compare for example, Department of Statistics, Malaysia (2001a) with Department of Statistics, Malaysia (2005)).

Hirschman (1987) has explored the meaning and measurement of ethnicity in Malaysia in his analysis of the census classifications until 1980. He notes that the first modern census was carried out in 1871 for the Straits Settlements (Penang, Malacca and Singapore) which were parts of what is now Peninsular Malaysia then under British rule. In 1891, separate censuses were conducted for the Straits Settlements and for each of the four states known as the Federated Malay States that were under British protection. The 1901 and 1911 censuses were unified censuses covering these two areas. In 1911, the taking of a census was extended to some of the Unfederated Malay States. In 1921 a unified census was conducted in the Straits Settlements, Federated Malay States and the Unfederated Malay States. This practice continued for the 1931 and 1947 censuses. The 1957 census, the year of Independence from the British, excluded Singapore (which by then was a Crown Colony). North Borneo (now Sabah) and Sarawak became British protectorates in 1888. North Borneo conducted its first census in 1891; and then in 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931; and then in 1951 and 1960. The first census for Sarawak was done carried out in 1947, and then in 1960. In 1963, Malaysia was formed comprising Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore,<sup>2</sup> Sabah and Sarawak. From 1970, the decennial censuses have covered this geographical area. While these regions were all separate politically until 1963, they each had some form of linkage to the British. Thus it is

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<sup>2</sup>Singapore seceded in 1965 to form its own nation.

perhaps not surprising that a reading of the various census reports indicate experiences from censuses were shared.

Appendix 8.1 contrasts two related aspects of the various censuses, the measurement of ethnicity and number of categories. The measurement of ethnicity in the early years used the term ‘nationality’. There were obviously difficulties in using this term<sup>3</sup> to capture the various groups in the population, and E. M. Merewether, the Superintendent of the 1891 Census, in acknowledging the objections raised, proposed the word ‘race’ be used in subsequent censuses (Merewether 1892: 8). G. T Hare, the Superintendent of the 1901 Census of the Federated Malay States preferred the word ‘race’ as it is ‘a wider and more exhaustive expression than ‘nationality’ and gives rise to no such ambiguous question in classifying people’ (as cited in Hirschman 1987: 561). By 1911 the term had been changed to ‘race’ for the Straits Settlements as well, but ‘nationality’ continued to be used in North Borneo up till the 1931 census. L. W Jones, the Superintendent of the 1951 Census of North Borneo reported that the term ‘nationality’ was dropped as ‘enumerators could not distinguish between nationality and race.’ This issue did not arise in Sarawak as the first census in 1947 itself used the term ‘race’. There was recognition (Noakes 1948: 29) of the many indigenous groups that regarded ‘Sarawak as their homeland’ and who were ‘regarded as natives by their fellowmen.’

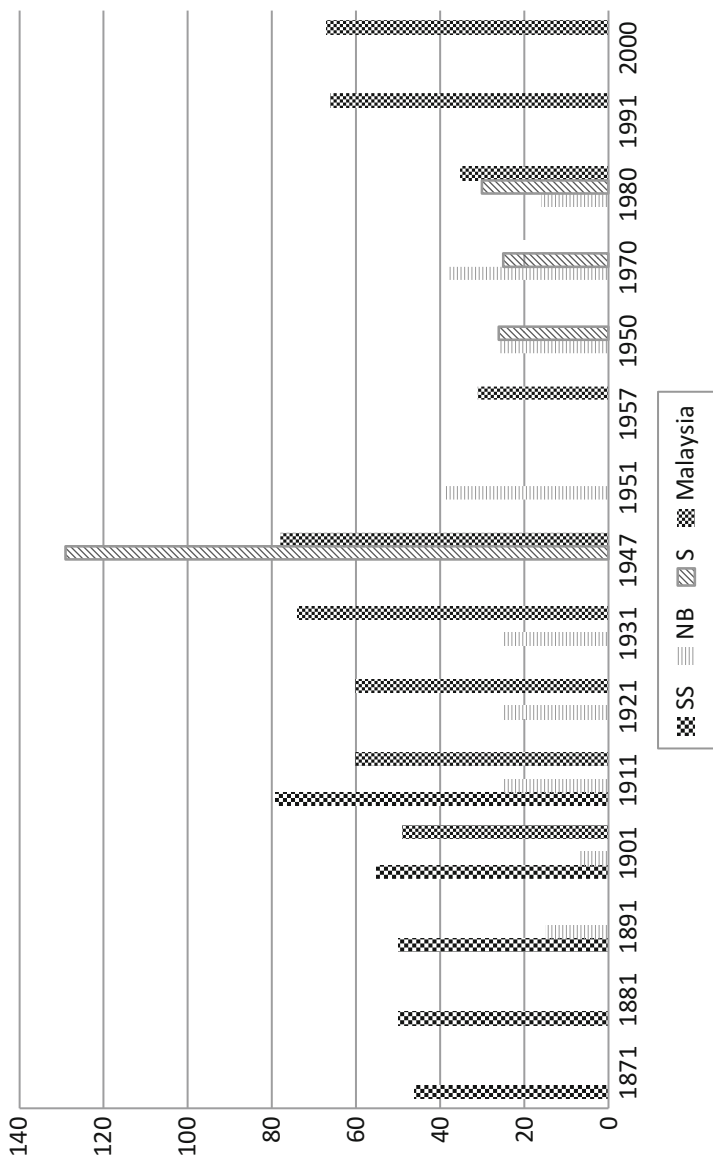
Although enumerators were told to use the term ‘race’ as ‘understood by the man in the street and not physical features as used by ethnologists’ (Fell 1960: 12), there was still dissatisfaction with the measurement. The 1947 census for Malaya and the 1970 census for Malaysia used the term ‘community’. Chander (1972: 22) justifies the return to the practice of earlier Malayan censuses noting that ‘the term race has not been used as it attempts to cover a complex set of ideas which in a strict and scientific sense represent only a small element of what the Census taker is attempting to define.’ The term ‘community’ was used to identify a group ‘bound by a common language/ dialect, religion and customs.’

There were further refinements and from the 1980 census, the term ‘ethnic/dialectal/community group’ has been used, although its description is the same as that used for ‘community’ (Khoo 1983: 289). Although the word ‘dialect’ was introduced formally only in 1980, enumerators have long been instructed to note the dialect when enumerating the Chinese community. Hare (1902: 6) recommended that in the next census that language be added in a separate column as ‘if a person now writes “Chinese” it is hard to say to which race of Chinese he belongs.’

The second aspect of the measurement of ethnicity relate to the categories. The discussion here focuses on what has been presented or published, although it is possible that enumerators obtained more detail that was subsequently coded. Figure 8.1 shows a summary of the number of categories used in the various censuses. The column for Malaysia includes the information for the Federated Malay States and British Malaya since Hirschman (1987) finds that the unified census from 1921

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<sup>3</sup>The term ‘nationality’ can be used to refer to a group with a common heritage, or established, among others, by place of birth, bloodline, place of residence or citizenship. <http://www.answers.com/nationality&r=67> [Accessed 1 October, 2007].



**Fig. 8.1** Number of categories measuring ethnicity, various censuses. Notes: Based on Appendix 8.1. SS Straits Settlements, NB North Borneo, S Sarawak; Malaysia – Up till 1980, the geographical region covered by this name is what is today called Peninsular Malaysia, thus being the Federated Malay States until 1911, British Malaya until 1947, and Peninsular Malaysia, 1957–1980. For 1991–2000, the name covers all three regions, Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah (previously North Borneo) and Sarawak

adopted basically the pattern for the Federated Malay States. A steady increase is observed in the early years of the censuses for the Straits Settlements, presumably reflecting the recognition of the different groups in the society. A similar pattern is observed for the Federated Malay States, and then British Malaya. The categories reduce for the early years of the Federation of Malaya. In contrast, Sarawak began in 1947 with 129 categories, reflecting the attempt – with the aid of Tom Harrison, Curator of the Sarawak Museum and Government Ethnologist – to document the many indigenous groups in its society, and then reduced the number when group size was ascertained. North Borneo did not have as many categories, showing an increase only in the 1951 census.

A major criterion for the inclusion of a group as a category would be its size in the population. Tom Harrison, in assisting in determining the categories for the Census, observes that (Noakes 1948: 271), ‘classification should be as scientifically accurate as possible, the groups must be reasonably balanced in size, and it should be in sufficient detail to provide a sound basis for future scientific investigations.’ For example, the aborigines of Peninsular Malaysia are not a homogenous group<sup>4</sup> (Nicholas 2004). Some of these are very small, like the 18 tribes of indigenous Proto Malays (estimated to number 147,412 in 2003) the smallest of these 18 tribes being an estimated 87 Kanaq people in 2007.<sup>5</sup>

One of the greatest problems has been the identification of people native to the region. Harrison (in Noakes 1948: 271) observes that ‘certain cultural groups have become obscured and many complicating migrations have occurred...all this is inevitable, and largely it should be...[but] .in planning a Census it introduces certain complications...[since] the exact definitions of groups must partly depend on their past.’ The use of a definition like ‘living naturally in a country, not immigrant or imported, native’ requires determination of origin. For example, the enumeration of indigenous groups in Sarawak is problematic as many of these groups ‘know themselves by the name of a place or river or mountain or even a local chief’ (Harrison in Noakes 1948: 272).

Further, there can be confusion when religion comes into play, particularly in respect of who is a Malay. As Table 8.2 shows, the populace has included not just Malays but also many different groups that today would be regarded as originating from Indonesia. Among the terms used to refer to this group have been ‘Malays and natives of the archipelago’ and ‘Malaysians’. In the 1956 census, Boyanese and Javanese were coded as Malays. Fell (1960: 12) observes that counting such groups can be difficult. Saw (1968: 10) comments that with the formation of Malaysia and the use of Malaysian to refer to a citizen of this nation, ‘The best solution is to use the term ‘Malays’ to include Indonesians as well.’ He argues that this is justified as most immigrants from the Indonesian Archipelago now have been absorbed into the

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<sup>4</sup> Colin Nicholas, The Orang Asli of Peninsular Malaysia: A Brief Introduction. [http://www.coac.org.my/codenavia/portals/coacv1/code/main/main\\_art.php?parentID=11497609537883&arID=11509699100857](http://www.coac.org.my/codenavia/portals/coacv1/code/main/main_art.php?parentID=11497609537883&arID=11509699100857). [Accessed October 1, 2007].

<sup>5</sup> <http://damak.jheoa.gov.my/intranet/index.php?mid=1&vid=2>. <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2007/4/16/southneast/17200389&sec=southneast>. [Accessed October 1, 2007].

community. The issue also extends to indigenous groups. As Noakes (1948) highlights, there has 'always been difficulty in measuring the size of the Melanau population as Islamic Melanau frequently refer to themselves as Malays.'

The importance of a group especially for public policy would be a second criterion for their inclusion as a category. Jones (1961) observes that the category 'Cocos Islanders' was included because this group was introduced into the population, and so their progress would be of interest. The most dramatic example of the impact of public policy on census classification arises from the affirmative policy introduced by the NEP (1971) which provides for special benefits to Malays and indigenous groups. The term *Bumiputera* ('son of the soil') is used to refer to all those eligible for special benefits. The definition of ethnic groups eligible for these benefits is provided for in the Federal Constitution (see Appendix 8.2). These include Malays, Aborigines of Peninsular Malaysia and indigenous tribes of East Malaysia, the latter two groups sometimes referred to as *pribumi* or 'natives of the land'.

Some of these groups have been measured in the 1970 and 1980 census for Malaysia, but it was clear that the categories needed to be re-examined, and in particular, to identify and enumerate clearly the *Bumiputera* population. Furthermore, with growing interest in the increasing presence of foreigners, there was also the need to clarify groups in the population who could be separately identified by nationality, say Indonesian Malaysians versus Indonesian Indonesians. In 1991, there was a major rationalization of ethnic categories and presentation of ethnicity information since then has included information on citizenship.

The census classifications for the 2000 census (which are only slightly different from the 1990 classifications) are shown in Table 8.5. It is interesting to note that the detailed listing of groups in East Malaysia now resembles more the detailed classifications in the pre-Malaysia censuses of North Borneo and Sarawak. The greater diversity in the Sabah and Sarawak, which together have only about 20 % of Malaysia's population, has been captured as can be seen from Table 8.6, which shows the regional EFI computed for ethnic and religious groups measured in the 2000 census.<sup>6</sup>

The role of politics in determining census classifications cannot be discounted. When Datuk Harris Salleh won the elections in Sabah in 1981, he wanted to foster more rapid integration with Peninsular Malaysia and allowed only for the measurement of three categories (*Bumiputera*, Chinese and Others) in the 1980 census (Andaya and Andaya 1982: 297). With a change in his political fortunes, the 1991 census reverted back to the measurement and presentation of information on the indigenous groups in Sabah.

Politics has also influenced the categorization of the Kadazan-Dusun group in Sabah. The Dusun and Kadazan share the same language (albeit different dialects) and culture. Traditionally the Kadazan have resided in the valleys, and the Dusun in the hills. In 1989, with the formation of the Kadazan-Dusun Cultural Association,

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<sup>6</sup>This also highlights the measurement issue in measuring ethnic diversity using the EFI. If a population is diverse but the groups are not measured then the index will show more homogeneity than it should.



**Table 8.5** Ethnic classification, 2000 census, Malaysia

Malaysian citizens		Non-Malaysian citizens
Bumiputera	Chinese	Singapore
Malays	Hokkien	Indonesia
Other Bumiputera	Khek (Hakka)	Philippines
Negrito	Cantinese	Brunei Darussalam
Senoi	Teochew	India
Proto Malay	Hainanese	Bangladesh
Dusun	Kwongsai	Other foreign countries
Kadazan	Foochow/ Hokchia	Unknown
Kwijau	Henghua	
Bajau	Hokchia	
Iranun	Other Chinese	
Murut (Sabah)	Indians	
Rang Sungei	Indian Tamil	
Sulu/ Suluk	Malayali	
Bisaya (Sabah/ Sarawak)	Sikh/ Punjabi	
Rungus	Telegu	
Sino-native	Sri Lankan Tamil	
Kadayan (Sabah/ Sarawak)	Singalese	
Tidong	Bangladeshi	
Tambanuo	Pakistani	
Idahan	Other Indian	
Dumpas	Others	
Mangkaak	Indonesian	
Minokok	Thai	
Maragang	Filipino	
Paitan	Myanmar	
Rumanau	Japanese	
Lotud	Korean	
Cocos Islander	Other Asian	
Other Bumiputera (Sabah)	Eurasian	
Iban/ Dayak Laut	European	
Bidayuh/ Dayak Darat	Others	
Melanau		
Kenyah		
Lun Bawang/ Murut (Sarawak)		
Penan		
Kajang		
Kelabit		
Other Bumiputera (Sabah)		

Source: Department of Statistics, Malaysia (2001a)

**Table 8.6** Ethnic fractionalization index, Malaysia, 2000

Region	EFI	Percentage of total population
Sabah	0.889	11.2
Sarawak	0.874	8.9
Peninsular Malaysia	0.655	79.9
All Malaysia	0.701	100

Computed from data in Tables 4.1, 4.11 and 4.12, Department of Statistics, Malaysia (2001a) only for religious and ethnic groups

the term Kadazan-Dusun was coined. Up to the 1960 census of North Borneo, only the category ‘Dusun’ was used. For the 1970 and 1980 census, the category ‘Kadazan’ was used. Since the 1991 census, both categories have been used, although in the presentation of information, both categories are combined as ‘Kadazan-Dusun’.

One important issue is how ethnicity is measured in the censuses. This has always been by self-identification, and applies to the question on citizenship as well. Jones (1962: 44) articulates the reason clearly: ‘An individual’s answer to the question on race should be accepted without question, for there would be many persons descended from at least two of the tribes listed who would claim one as their own for their own private reasons and with whom it would be quite improper to discuss or dispute these reasons.’ For persons of mixed parentage, the 1970 census, which used the definition of ‘community’, sought to identify the ethnic group to which the person felt he or she belonged (Chander 1977: 289) failing which father’s community was used.<sup>7</sup>

The measurement by self-identification, the definition of Malay and the difficulty of separating race and religion suggest that there will be great difficulty in measuring certain groups of the population. Indeed, in explaining why the Chief Minister of Sabah said that half of the state’s population is Malay, the Chief Minister of Malacca is reported to have said that ‘it is easy to become a Malay... a person who is a Muslim, converses in Malay and follows the Malay traditions is considered a Malay’.<sup>8</sup> A comparison of population figures by major ethnic categories for 1991 and 2000 suggests that indeed the identification of Bumiputera groups is problematic. The share of ‘Malays’ and ‘Other Bumiputera’ have risen greatly while the share of ‘Other Malaysians’ has declined.

The increase cannot possibly come from a greater fertility rate. For example, the implied average annual growth rate for Malays is 3.2 % per year which is much greater than the average annual growth rate based on demographic data in 1998 of 2.6 % (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 2001b: Table A1.4). The implementation of

<sup>7</sup>This would suggest a serious undercounting of mixed marriages if census data are used. While the extent of mixed marriages can be determined (see, for example, Tan 1986; Nagaraj 2009), it would not be possible to identify the ethnicity of offspring from such marriages.

<sup>8</sup><http://blog.limkitsiang.com/2007/06/11/it-is-easy-to-become-a-malay/>. [Accessed October 1, 2007]. This is in line with the definition of Malay shown in Appendix 8.2. Andaya and Andaya (1982, p. 302) note that the definition of ‘Malay’ in the Constitution just formalized colonial practice. In fact the definition is that used by the British to define ‘Malay reservation’ land.

the NEP in 1970s and 1980s witnessed mass exodus of Chinese accompanied by capital flight. Between 1970 and 1980 the Chinese had experienced a migration deficit of close to 200,000 persons and this accelerated to close to 400,000 in the following decade (Chan and Tey 2000). While the exodus of the Chinese had come to a halt in the 1990s, the slower rate of natural increase of the Chinese and Indians as compared to the Malays and other Bumiputera would result in further changes in the ethnic composition of the country. The Chinese and Indians in Malaysia have dipped below replacement level fertility by the turn of the twenty-first century, but the total fertility rate of the Malays remains well above replacement level, at about 3 per woman.

## 8.4 Measurement of Ethnicity for Other Purposes

The discussion has so far focused on the measurement of ethnicity in population censuses. Ethnicity data is also important in the collection of information of other information on population. Registration of births and deaths, which is used to produce vital statistics data, comes under the purview of the National Registration Department. The identification of ethnicity on the Birth Certificate would be that entered by the person filling up the form. This would be the parent usually, but there may be circumstances where the information is entered by a third person (say, a policeman in the interior). Births and deaths data was up till the end of the 1990s coded by the Department of Statistics, Malaysia. This function has now been taken on by the National Registration Department. It is nevertheless likely that with the close cooperation between these two government departments the coding for ethnicity will be as detailed as provided for in the census. The Department of Statistics, Malaysia also has close ties with other government departments like the National Population and Family Development Board (NPFDB) [previously the National Family Planning Board]. Information on fertility, family planning and contraceptive use has been collected by the NPFDB since the late 1960s. The early surveys used the then Census term 'race' to capture ethnicity, but from the 1970s, the NPFDB adopted the term 'community' and then from 1989, the term 'ethnic group' has been used.

Ethnicity is also measured by many institutions, whether for targeting public policy in general or in line with the need to identify target groups and monitor their progress with regard to the NEP. As Appendix 8.3 shows, Article 153 in the Constitution specifies that special privileges may be provided in education, scholarships and training, employment in public service and business licenses. Besides that, the NEP aims to reduce the identification of race with occupation and to achieve increased Bumiputera participation in the economy. Thus, ethnicity information is collected by government, by banks, by licensing agencies and other institutions that need to maintain the necessary information for policy monitoring.

Since the size of some of the smaller ethnic groups in some sub-populations may be small, categories of ethnicity may be limited to the (perceived or otherwise) major groups in the sub-population. For example, ethnicity is captured both for

**Table 8.7** Economic census, manufacturing, 2006, ethnic classifications for employment

Malaysians	Non-Malaysians
Bumiputera	Indonesians
Malays	Filipinos
Ibans	Bangladeshi
Bidayuhs	Others
Bajaus	
Kadazans	
Other Bumiputera	
Chinese	
Indians	
Others	

Source: [http://www.statistics.gov.my/english/frameset\\_download.php?file=form](http://www.statistics.gov.my/english/frameset_download.php?file=form) [Accessed October 1, 2007]

ownership and employment in Economic Censuses conducted by the Department of Statistics, Malaysia. Table 8.7 shows the categories captured for employment.<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to note that among the Bumiputera groups, ‘Kadazan’ has been captured but not ‘Dusun’; that is, the original group name used in the pre-Malaysia censuses has been dropped altogether. Since these forms are filled by the firms, it is possible that some Dusun employees may have been categorized under ‘Other Bumiputera’.

On the other hand, the number of pre-coded ethnic groups can be an issue especially when a database is expected to reach everyone in the population. For example, the ethnic categories initially used in the Educational Management Information System<sup>10</sup> were based on the composition of the population in Peninsular Malaysia, and were thus too broad to identify the proportion of children from a specific indigenous group in school. These codes were subsequently expanded as needed.<sup>11</sup> The more important classification for educational outcomes is that of Bumiputera. The monitoring of ethnic outcomes of entry into public tertiary institutions is based on parents’ ethnicity and reads thus<sup>12</sup>:

<sup>9</sup> Ownership has similar categories for the category ‘Malaysians’, but there is no distinction among Non-Malaysians.

<sup>10</sup> Education is essentially a federal matter with a common syllabi and examinations. The UNESCO website notes that the Educational Management Information System was ‘originally designed to be a management tool but is gradually being perceived as an indispensable tool and support system for the formulation of education policies, their management, and their evaluation’ ([http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=10202&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=10202&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html), Accessed October 10, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> *Report on ‘The Workshop on Optimizing the Use of Official Statistics for Socioeconomic Research and Planning’, 22 November, 2006, Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya. Unpublished.*

<sup>12</sup> Buku Panduan Kemasukan ke Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Awam, Program Pengajian Lulusan SPM/Setaraf Sesi Akademik 2007/2008. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bumiputra> [Accessed October 1, 2007].

**Peninsular Malaysia:** ‘If one of the parent are Muslim Malay or Orang Asli as stated in Article 160 (2) Federal Constitution of Malaysia; thus the child is considered as a Bumiputra’

**Sabah:** ‘If a father is a Muslim Malay or indigenous native of Sabah as stated in Article 160A (6)(a) Federal Constitution of Malaysia; thus his child is considered as a Bumiputra’

**Sarawak:** ‘If both of the parent are indigenous native of Sarawak as stated in Article 160A (6)(b) Federal Constitution of Malaysia; thus their child is considered as a Bumiputra’

Other institutions also collect information on ethnicity. For example, Maybank, the largest bank in Malaysia with over 334 domestic branches all over the country and over 34 international branches, obtains from the applicant for a new account, information on ‘race’, coded in five categories: ‘Malay’, ‘Native’, ‘Chinese’, ‘Indians’ and ‘Others’.<sup>13</sup> In other cases, it is unclear what coding is applied by the collecting institution. For example, the application form for the Practising Certificate,<sup>14</sup> an annual requirement for a practising lawyer, calls for the applicant to enter his or her ‘ethnicity’. Yet other institutions use terms that are unclear. For example, the application for a contract post as a medical specialist with the Ministry of Health<sup>15</sup> asks for ‘nationality’, which could be referring to ethnic group or citizenship. Nevertheless, the form for the annual practising certificate for doctors does not request information on ethnicity.

Ethnicity data are also obtained routinely as a part of administrative and monitoring procedures for areas that are not within the purview of the NEP. For example, the Ministry of Health (MOH) provides information on the utilisation of public health care services (mainly referring to MOH services) by major ethnic groups, including indigenous groups, for Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah and Sarawak (see Table 8.8 below). The information on ethnicity is entered on admission/ attendance forms by admission clerks who commonly base their input on the patients’ names and physical appearance, supplemented with verbal clarification only when in doubt. Patients in the Peninsular are usually classified as Malays, Chinese, Indians, Others or Non-citizens. Other indigenous groups, e.g., Senoi, tend to be recorded under ‘Others’. In Sabah and Sarawak, because of heightened awareness of the diversity in the population, the clerk would generally obtain information on the actual aboriginal group. Thus, for these two states it is possible to generate data for smaller ethnic group breakdown if necessary.

Finally, it is of interest to note that there is official documentation of a person’s ethnic group. The National Registration Department is responsible for the issuance of the MyKad (previously Identification Card) to all Malaysian citizens and permanent residents 12 years and above. Carrying an embedded microchip, it has at a minimum, the Identification Card number, name, ethnic group, date of birth,

<sup>13</sup> Online application form. [https://www.maybank2u.com.my/maybank\\_group/application\\_forms/banking/new\\_maybankacc.html](https://www.maybank2u.com.my/maybank_group/application_forms/banking/new_maybankacc.html). [Accessed 10 October, 2007].

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.malaysianbar.org.my/bardocs/membership/sijil\\_guaman.pdf](http://www.malaysianbar.org.my/bardocs/membership/sijil_guaman.pdf). [Accessed October 1, 2007].

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.moh.gov.my/MohPortal/DownloadServlet?id=312&type=1> [Accessed October 1, 2007].

**Table 8.8** Ethnic classifications for utilisation of public health care services, 2005

Peninsular Malaysia	Sabah	Sarawak
Malays	Malays	Malays
Chinese	Bajaus	Melanaus
Indians	Kadazans	Iban
Peninsular indigenous	Murut	Bidayu
Other Malaysians	Other Sabahan indigenous	Other Sarawak indigenous
Non-citizens	Chinese	Chinese
	Indians	Indians
	Other Malaysians	Other Malaysians
	Non-citizens	Non-citizens

*Source:* 2005 Annual report on medical sub-system, health management information system, information and documentation system, Ministry of Health, Malaysia

religion, photo and fingerprint and has to be carried by all persons when leaving home.<sup>16</sup> Although this card could possibly be used to ‘verify’ ethnicity, particularly where special privileges are concerned, the information is only accessible via appropriate card-readers and its use limited by legislation.

## 8.5 Concluding Remarks

Malaysia has long been concerned with the measurement of its many ethnic groups, be it in the political, economic or social arena. The discussion above raises important questions on how ethnic groups have been defined, the purpose for which such data is gathered and how the data is gathered. The counting of its major and minor groups through self-identification has been an important function of the (usually) decennial census which aims to capture the diversity in the population. Information on ethnicity is also collected in almost all areas, whether in the public or private sector, where documentation related to the implementation of constitutional provisions on ethnicity is involved. In these non-census contexts, counting has been simple and local. The selection of categories may or may not have been well thought through being defined primarily to meet the local needs, and the data collected may or may not reflect self-identification of ethnicity depending on the manner in which the data is collected. Thus, data on ethnicity in Malaysia are important not just for social analysis and policy, as for example in New Zealand (Callister 2006; Callister et al. 2006), but also for economic and political analysis and policy. This is in sharp contrast to countries like France where even the potential use of official ethnic classification has seen strong debate (Morning 2008).

The study has highlighted the difficulties in collecting ethnic data and has shown how creative the data collection agencies have been over the years in defining and

<sup>16</sup>The information is based on the Birth Certificate. More recently, the Birth Certificate has been replaced by a chip embedded MyKid.

redefining ethnicity as Malaysian society and needs evolve. While the identification of an ethnic group can be only as good as its measurement, Malaysia's experience with the measurement of ethnicity in censuses is underscored by the careful efforts by the various Superintendents of Census to define a diverse population. The first census in 1871 in the Straits Settlements may have used ethnic categories that were subjectively defined but each subsequent census has seen changes in line with size of group or its importance to public policy. There has also been considerable sharing of experiences across the three regions even under British rule or protection that has made possible the fairly detailed ethnic classification used in recent censuses, and which have shown the great diversity in the country, and more so across regions. The categorization of groups has also changed to accommodate changes in society. It is pertinent to note that categories have been refined, updated as required<sup>17</sup> or revised as necessary.<sup>18</sup> Since 1991, however, the measurement has been fairly detailed in respect of indigenous groups. Statisticians have also demonstrated their ability in collecting census data from people of 'many tongues', even against the odds of collecting data in the remotest parts of Sabah and Sarawak, doing so on a relatively regular interval. Ethnicity is also captured in other censuses and surveys, as well as in administrative databases. The population census categories have provided a guide; however, the degree of fineness of ethnic categories captured is based on purpose and need.

Over the years, the specific form of the question measuring ethnicity in the population census has been modified to capture ethnic/ dialect groups. The term used has changed from 'nationality' to 'race' to 'ethnicity/community/dialect'. Other surveys and censuses may use any of these terms. Across the world, population censuses have used a variety of terms: ethnicity, nationality, tribe, indigenous group, race (Morning 2008). The United Nations Statistics Division (2003) concludes that based on the current wording of the ethnicity question in the census, which includes dialect group in the definition, language is the principal criteria for measuring ethnicity in Malaysia. This study has shown that this is not entirely correct. The Malaysian experience with the population census reflects attempts to capture a conceptualization of an ethnic group as one that shares common interests such as language, religion and customs. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that despite all these years of experience in counting, there can still be confusion about concepts such as race (e.g., Chinese), dialect group (e.g., Hokkien or Cantonese), language group (e.g., Tamil or Telegu), nationality (Indian vs. Sri Lankan) or even ethnicity itself.

The identification of ethnicity is based on self-identification in censuses, but in other cases may be entered by a third party. Irrespective of term used to capture ethnicity, Malaysians are generally used to providing information on their ethnicity even if different terms are used to capture this information. Since just one category is provided for, there is therefore no provision to capture those who belong to more than one ethnic

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<sup>17</sup>This includes adjustment to new political entities or new names: India, Pakistan, 1947; Indonesia, 1949; Sri Lanka, 1948; Siam to Thailand by official proclamation, 1949, Brunei, 1984; Burma to Myanmar – 1989.

<sup>18</sup>The category 'Kwijau' was dropped in 1960 census of North Borneo due to small numbers but was reintroduced in 1970 census for Malaysia.

group, as for example, children of mixed marriages. A number of countries which capture information on ethnicity have moved to allowing respondents to check more than one category (for example, Canada, United States of America and New Zealand), allowing generic mixed ethnic group responses (for example, Anguilla, Guyana and Zimbabwe) or providing specific mixed ethnic group combinations (for example, United Kingdom, Cook Islands and Bermuda) (Morning 2008). Furthermore, ethnicity as measured in Malaysian censuses captures basically whatever the respondent answers to the question, that is, what he or she perceives ethnicity to be. Essentially, it measures identity, which as Statistics Canada (2006) notes,<sup>19</sup> has 'a certain appeal because it attempts to measure how people perceive themselves rather than their ancestors.' Given that mixed marriages do occur in Malaysia, the extent of the rich diversity in Malaysian society can be better captured with allowing respondents to check more than one category. Hirschman (1993) suggests that two distinct aspects be captured, primary ethnicity (which is essentially what is already obtained currently in the census) and ancestry (which captures origins and an individual could have multiple ancestries). However such a move, would as Sawyer (1998) emphasizes, require that there are clear and meaningful, and we would add transparent, guidelines on how federal agencies should tabulate, publish, and use the data once it is collected.

This is particularly important since the need to monitor the NEP has focused attention on whether a citizen is a Bumiputera or not, where the definition of a Bumiputera is constitutionally defined. The somewhat loose constitutional definition has resulted in a growth of this group. Has this now entered the social realm so that we can consider the 'Bumiputera' community as an ethnic group? It would appear so, both in terms of Yinger's (1986) description discussed previously as well Statistics Canada's measurement of ethnicity, since the Bumiputera can be distinguished as a group which has a wide range of cultural, linguistic, religious and national characteristics. It also meets Sawyer (1998) three criteria for establishing an ethnic category for statistical purposes: consistency and comparability of data over time as well a category that is widely understood, so that meaningful comparisons can be made to evaluate social progress. There are also the seemingly easy shifts between 'Malays', 'Other Bumiputera' and 'Other Malaysians' which reflect in part the commonalities in origin of a considerable part of the populace from the neighbouring regions that are now politically different, that is, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand. The movement of such peoples across the region in search of economic prosperity is not new, and continues to occur. Political boundaries that straddle cultural similarities continue to cause friction, as for example, the current row over whether Malaysia can use the popular ditty *Rasa Sayang* which some Indonesian legislators consider is part of Indonesia's heritage, in its *Truly Asia* campaign.<sup>20</sup> One implication of the shifting groups between 'Malays', Other Bumiputera and 'Other Malaysians'

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<sup>19</sup>Identity is as Statistics Canada (2003) notes, one of three ways of measuring ethnicity. The other two are 'origin or ancestry and race. **Origin or ancestry** attempts to determine the roots or ethnic background of a person. Race is based primarily upon physical attributes fixed at birth among which skin colour is a dominant, but not the sole, attribute.' <http://www.statcan.ca/english/concepts/definitions/ethnicity.htm>. [Accessed October 1, 2007].

<sup>20</sup>*Rasa Sayang* 'ours too... we have right to sing it'. *New Straits Times*, October 15, 2007.



categories suggests an underlying similarity, at the very minimum, recognition of the Bumiputera as a group both in the official and economic realms.

Although ethnic information – however imperfect – is collected and maintained by public producers of data, it is rarely available to the public, including researchers, as confidentiality is seen as a rein on ethnic sensitivities.<sup>21</sup> The data collected on ethnicity permits analyses – often only by (or with the support of) the public sector since most data on ethnicity are officially classified as confidential – on outcomes of policies contrasting the achievements of the Bumiputera group usually against the Chinese and Indian groups, now increasingly a minority. Thus it is not surprising that there are starkly different analyses<sup>22</sup> about the achievement of NEP targets. More than 30 years after the NEP, while there have been some improvements at least on the surface, inter-ethnic inequalities remain in educational achievement and occupational attainment, and in capital ownership as well as entrepreneurial spirit. The reality is that the Bumiputera are an increasingly heterogeneous group whose population is growing faster than that of the Non-Bumiputera, which may explain the observed decreasing variation among Chinese and increased variation among Malays in certain studies (see, for example, Nagaraj and Lee 2003). This raises questions on how ethnic data have been used and the policies that have been designed on the basis of the data gathered and examined (see, for example, Cheong et al. 2009).

The experience of Malaysia has also shown that not only does measurement of ethnic data support policy but that policy can also drive ethnic measurement in data. Should we then continue to collect ethnic data? The experience of census measurement of ethnicity in Malaysia lends credibility to Thomas Sawyer's assertion of the 'compelling human need for self-identity'. The nation, its Census Superintendents, its various institutions and its researchers have attempted to document the diversity in, and its effect on, society. So the answer is a resounding yes, we need to collect ethnic data, but do not just collect them. Perhaps it is time the focus shifts away from identifying major ethnic groups in order to design more effectively policies that reach the needy in the disadvantaged groups. Collect ethnicity data to meet the needs of sound policies that seek to build national unity, policies that utilize our diversity to our national advantage, that enable our citizens to celebrate the diversity. We can have unity in diversity and that is what nature itself teaches us. The problem is not the data themselves but how they are used to formulate, implement and monitor policies.

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<sup>21</sup>There are exceptions. For example, detailed information on ethnic composition in a parliamentary constituency. Ethnicity is also an important factor in social science research, including public health. The issue of the relevance of ethnicity and its measurement in the medical field is addressed in several papers in PLoS Medicine, Vol 4(9), 2007. <http://medicine.plosjournals.org/perlserv/?request=get-toc&ct=1>

<sup>22</sup>See, for example, the government-ASLI quarrel on the measurement of Bumiputera equity. [http://www.malaysia-today.net/Blog-n/2006\\_10\\_05\\_MT\\_BI\\_archive.htm](http://www.malaysia-today.net/Blog-n/2006_10_05_MT_BI_archive.htm); <http://www.malaysia-today.net/Blog-n/2006/10/asli-backs-down-over-nep-data.htm>.

## Appendices

### Appendix 8.1: Characteristics of Ethnic Classifications in Various Censuses, Malaysia

Census	Word(s) used to capture ethnicity	Total number of groups identified	Sub groupings	Remarks
1871				
Straits Settlements	Nationality	46	'Europeans and Americans', 18 sub-groupings	Categories a mix of communal (eg Achinese), religious (eg., Jews), nationality (eg. Persians); and continental (eg. African) groupings. Many categories not in use today (eg. Jaweepekans); Europeans and Eurasians specific and important categories.
1881				
Straits Settlements	Nationality	50	'Europeans and Americans', 19 sub-groupings, also divided by status in country (eg. 'pensioner'); 'Chinese', 7 dialect sub-groupings	Small changes from 1871 census; 'Aborigines' included as a category

(continued)

Census	Word(s) used to capture ethnicity	Total number of groups identified	Sub groupings	Remarks
1891				
Straits Settlements	Nationality	50	Identification of 6 major categories.	Aborigines, Filipinos ('Manilamen') and Indonesians (eg. 'Javanese') categorized under 'Malays and Other Natives';
			Four additional primary sub-groupings to previous census:	Burmese categorized as 'Indians'
Borneo		15	'Malays and other natives of the Archipelago' 9 sub-groupings; 'Tamils and other natives of India', 4 sub-groupings; 'Other Nationalities', 10 sub-groupings	Sinhalese and Jews categorized as 'Others'
			7 major groups, 'European', 'Dusun', 'Murut', 'Bajau', 'Other Indigenous', 'Chinese', 'Others'	
1901				
Straits Settlements	Nationality	55	Major sub groupings (6) as for 1891 census	Some differences in the sub groupings between the two censuses, but otherwise essentially similar to that of 1891
Borneo	Nationality	7		
1911				
Straits Settlements	Race	79	For Straits Settlements, no sub groupings except for 'European and Allied Races', 31 sub groups and 'Malays and Allied Races, 22 sub groups	Major groupings introduced in 1891 census dropped;
				Groupings removed in Straits Settlements list;
				Groupings renamed in Federated Malay States list where 'Aborigines' replaced by derogatory 'Sakai'

Federated Malay States	Race	60	For Federated Malay States, 6 sub groupings are 'European Pop. by Race', 17 groups; 'Malay Pop. by Race', 11 groups; 'Chinese Pop. by Tribe', 10 groups; 'Indian Pop. by Race', 11 groups; and 'Other Pop. by Race', 10 groups
Borneo	Nationality	25	7 major groups, 'European', 'Dusun', 'Murut', 'Bajau', 'Other Indigenous', 'Chinese', 'Others'
1921			
British Malaya	Race	60	Sub groupings as for 1911 Federated Malay States census
Borneo	Nationality	25	7 major groups
1931			
British Malaya	Race	74	'The Malay Pop. by Race' grouping replaced by 'Malaysians by Race'. Confusion between ethnicity and nationality still present: now 'Nepal' is listed under 'Indians by Race'
Borneo	Nationality	25	7 major groups

(continued)

Census	Word(s) used to capture ethnicity	Total number of groups identified	Sub groupings	Remarks
1947				
British Malaya	Community	78	Still 6 sub groupings but the 'Malaysians' now further categorized into 'Malays', 2 groups and 'Other Malaysians', 15 groups. 'Malays' include 'Aborigines' which is further subdivided into 3 subgroups.	'by Race' replaced by 'by Specific Community' 'Aborigines' replaces 'Sakai' 'Ceylon Tamils' a new category under 'Others' and 'Other Ceylonese' replaces 'Sinhalese'
Sarawak	Race	129	8 major groups. 'Indigenous' including Malays and Dayaks, 100 categories; 'Non-Indigenous', 129 sub-groupings, including Europeans and other Asians.	
1951				
Borneo	Race	39	7 major groups. 'European', 10 sub-groupings; 'Dusun', 2 sub-groupings; 'Murut', 'Bajau', 2 sub-groupings; 'Other Indigenous', 6 sub-groupings; 'Chinese', 6 sub-groupings; 'Others', 12 sub-groupings	

1957					
Federation of Malaya	Race	31	4 broad categories: 'Malaysians' comprise 'Malays', 'Indonesian' and 'All Aborigines', 6 subgroups;	Category 'Indonesian' under 'Malay'. 'Chinese by Tribe' replaced by 'Chinese'.	
			'Chinese', 10 subgroups,	'Eurasians' now under 'Others'	
			'Indians', 4 subgroups;	New category 'Pakistani' under 'Others'	
			'Others', 9 subgroups		
1960					
Borneo	Race	26	7 major groups. 'European', 2 sub-groups; 'Dusun', 'Murut', 'Bajau', 2 sub-groups; 'Other Indigenous', 7 sub-groups; 'Chinese', 5 sub-groups; 'Others', 7 sub-groupings		
			7 major groups. 'European', 2 sub-groups; 'Malay', 'Melanau', 'Land Dayak', 'Sea Dayak'; 'Other Indigenous', 6 sub-groups; 'Chinese', 7 sub-groups; 'Others', 5 sub-groupings		
Sarawak		26			

(continued)

Census	Word(s) used to capture ethnicity	Total number of groups identified	Sub groupings	Remarks
<b>1970</b>				
Malaysia	Community		4 broad categories as for 1957 census	Subgroups differ across Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak to reflect the different groupings in these three areas
Peninsular Malaysia		32		'Malaysians' replaced by 'Malay'.
Sabah		38		'Indian' now includes 'Pakistani', 'Ceylon Tamil' and 'Other Ceylonese'
Sarawak		25		
<b>1980</b>				
Malaysia	Ethnic group/ community/ dialect		4 broad categories as for 1957 census	Subgroups differ across Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak to reflect the different groupings in these three areas
Peninsular Malaysia		35		'Indian' now includes 'Bangladeshi' . 'Ceylon'
Sabah		16		replaced by 'Sri Lankan'
Sarawak		30		

1991	Malaysia	Ethnic group/ community/ dialect;  Combined with information on citizenship	66	Two broad categories: Malaysian citizens, Non-Malaysian Citizens  Under Malaysian Citizens, 4 categories, 'Bumiputera', 'Chinese', 10 subgroups, 'Indian', 9 subgroups, 'Others', 9 subgroups. 'Bumiputera' further divided into 'Malay' and 'Other Bumiputera'. Latter provides for aboriginal groups as well as the many communities in Sabah and Sarawak	Ethnic group classifications standardized to produce a common set at the national level  Two new classifications: citizenship and <i>Bumiputera</i> status
2000	Malaysia	Ethnic group/ community/ dialect;  Combined with information on citizenship	67		'Malaysian Citizens Others' now includes 'Myanmar'  Other bumi (sabah) and other bumi (Sarawak);  <i>De jure</i> (usual place of residence) approach to compilation as opposed to <i>de facto</i> (place of residence on Census Night) approach of earlier censuses

Sources: Hirschman (1987), Chander (1972), Fell (1960), Hare (1902), Jones (1953, 1961, 1962), Noakes (1948), Merewether (1892)



## ***Appendix 8.2: Constitution of Malaysia: Definitions of Ethnicity***

### **Article 160**

(2) In this Constitution, unless the context otherwise requires, the following expressions have the meanings hereby respectively assigned to them, that is to say -

‘Aborigine’ means an aborigine of the Malay Peninsula;

‘Malay’ means a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom and -

- (a) was before Merdeka Day born in the Federation or in Singapore or born of parents one of whom was born in the Federation or in Singapore, or is on that day domiciled in the Federation or in Singapore; or
- (b) is the issue of such a person;

### **Article 161**

(6) In this Article ‘native’ means-

(a) in relation to Sarawak, a person who is a citizen and either belongs to one of the races specified in Clause (7) as indigenous to the State or is of mixed blood deriving exclusively from those races; and

(b) in relation to Sabah, a person who is a citizen, is the child or grandchild of a person of a race indigenous to Sabah, and was born (whether on or after Malaysia Day or not) either in Sabah or to a father domiciled in Sabah at the time of the birth.

(7) The races to be treated for the purposes of the definition of ‘native’ in Clause (6) as indigenous to Sarawak are the Bukitans, Bisayahs, Dusuns, Sea Dayaks, Land Dayaks, Kadayans, Kalabit, Kayans, Kenyags (Including Sabups and Sipengs), Kajangs (including Sekapans,. Kejamans, Lahanans, Punans, Tanjongs dan Kanowits), Lugats, Lisums, Malays, Melanos, Muruts, Penans, Sians, Tagals, Tabuns and Ukits.

Selected from <http://www.helpline.law.com/law/constitution/malaysia/malaysia01.php>

### ***Appendix 8.3: Areas in Which Special Privileges May be Provided***

#### **Article 153 of the Constitution**

- (1) It shall be the responsibility of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to safeguard the special position of the Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and Sarawak and the legitimate interests of other communities in accordance with the provisions of this Article.
- (2) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, but subject to the provisions of Article 40 and of this Article, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong shall exercise his functions under this Constitution and federal law in such manner as may be necessary to safeguard the special provision of the Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and Sarawak and to ensure the reservation for Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and Sarawak of such proportion as he may deem reasonable of positions in the public service (other than the public service of a State) and of scholarships, exhibitions and other similar educational or training privileges or special facilities given or accorded by the Federal Government and, when any permit or licence for the operation of any trade or business is required by federal law, then, subject to the provisions of that law and this Article, of such permits and licences.
- (4) In exercising his functions under this Constitution and federal law in accordance with Clauses (1) to (3) the Yang di-Pertuan Agong shall not deprive any person of any public office held by him or of the continuance of any scholarship, exhibition or other educational or training privileges or special facilities enjoyed by him.

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# Chapter 9

## The Growth of Ethnic Minorities in Uruguay: Ethnic Renewal or Measurement Problems?

Wanda Cabella and Rafael Porzecanski

### 9.1 Introduction

Racial and ethnic identities constitute one of the most important sources of inequality and social solidarity in the Americas. Although race and ethnicity have a notable social impact, it is not easy to produce reliable ethno-racial statistics. This is especially true for the Latin American region, where ethnic and racial identities are more fluid, contextual and unstable than in the U.S. Several studies show that racial statistics vary substantially according to the specific methodological devices used to measure race. In Brazil, for instance, Telles and Lim (1998) show that racial inequality is higher when the race variable is constructed according to the interviewers' perceptions of the respondents' race than when race is measured through respondents' self-classification. In Colombia, in turn, while Afro-descendants were 1.5 % of the total population according to the 1993 Census, they were 9.8 % according to the National Household Survey of 2004 (Urrea 2005). This substantial difference is probably explained by the different dimensions of race captured by each survey question. While the 1993 census asked individuals if they were members of an Afro-descendant community, the 2004 survey asked them if according to their physical characteristics they were black, white, mestizos or mulattos.

This chapter presents an analysis of racial classification in Uruguay, a South American country that has been rarely mentioned in studies of ethnic and race relations. The main goal of the chapter is to analyze the statistical growth of the Afro-descendant and indigenous populations during the last decade. According to

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the Encuesta Continua de Hogares of 1996–1997 (hereafter ECH) and the Encuesta Nacional de Hogares Ampliada of 2006 (hereafter ENHA) carried out by the National Institute of Statistics (INE), the Afro-descendant population increased 7.4 points (from 1.7 to 9.1 %) while the indigenous population jumped from 0.8 to 3.8 %.<sup>1</sup>

The chapter discusses two major possible interpretations of this remarkable trend. First, we suggest that this growth reflects the effects of the different methodological devices used to measure race in each of these surveys. Another plausible explanation points to the increasing social legitimacy of non-white identities, as the consequence of higher levels of mobilization of local and regional indigenous and Afro-descendant organizations. The chapter ends with a discussion of the extent to which changes of racial classification and measurement have affected the indices of racial inequality in the country.

## 9.2 Ethnic and Race Relations in Uruguay

In contrast to the majority of its Latin American neighbours, the Uruguayan population is mainly composed of European descendants from Spain and Italy. In 1860 the national population barely exceeded 200,000 persons and the proportion of foreign born residents was 34 % (mainly Spanish settlers). During the last decades of the nineteenth century, Uruguay became an important destiny of overseas migration. The 1908 census counted more than one million people. The remarkable population growth reflected in that census was mainly explained by the above-mentioned arrival of significant numbers of immigrants (Pellegrino 2003). The arrival of large numbers of Europeans continued until the 1940s. Since then, Uruguay has not received significant numbers of immigrants and, in contrast, thousands of Uruguayans have left the country in search for better economic opportunities.

Although the majority of Uruguayans are European descendants (especially Spaniards and Italians), there is a non-negligible percentage of the population who is of African descent. The origins of the Afro-Uruguayan population date back to the first decades of the seventeenth century when the first waves of slave labour were smuggled into the country (by then called the ‘Banda Oriental’) through contraband.<sup>2</sup> Most of the African population, however, was imported legally between 1742 and 1810 under Spanish rule (Rodríguez 2006). During that period, recent

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<sup>1</sup>The Permanent Household Survey is the country’s main source of annual information on labour market indicators. It is conducted all over the year and based on big samples. The 2006 version constitutes a special case, for it was implemented among a particularly big sample size (approximately 257,000 individuals), collected data on a multiplicity of topics (such as health and migration) and reached the population living in cities of less than 5,000 residents and rural areas.

<sup>2</sup>Although significant numbers of Afro-descendants were brought to the country as slaves during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the importation of slaves was less important than in countries such as Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador, where high numbers of labourers were required for large-scale plantations and mining.

historiography estimates that an average of four ships of slaves arrived to the port of Montevideo annually and that between 33,000 and 45,000 slaves entered the country (Montaño 2001; Frega et al. 2005).<sup>3</sup> In 1819, slaves constituted approximately 25 % of the total population of Montevideo. The proportion of Afro-descendants would diminish throughout the country's history as the combined result of large immigrant flows from Europe, wars, diseases and miscegenation.<sup>4</sup>

With reference to indigenous groups, before the Spanish conquest, demographically small indigenous communities such as the Charruas, Chanas and Guaranies populated the Uruguayan territory. These groups gradually disappeared as a consequence of a variety of diseases, wars and extermination campaigns (Bracco 2004). Thus, today Uruguay does not have indigenous communities with their own language, cultural traits and organizational apparatus. However, as we will show below, 3.8 % of Uruguayans declared being of indigenous descent in the ENHA of 2006. In addition, there are a growing number of local indigenous organizations that fight for the official acknowledgment of the indigenous contributions to the country's history and culture.

The predominance of a population of European descent and the national state efforts of constructing a highly integrated society helped foster the national myths of racial democracy, homogeneity and equality of opportunities (Arocena and Aguiar 2007).<sup>5</sup> These myths have been largely accepted by the majority of Uruguayans throughout the country's modern history. Only at the end of the twentieth century, research contributions from disciplines such as history, anthropology and archaeology will question these myths by showing that ethnic minorities played a higher role in Uruguayan history than that attributed by the dominant intellectual and political perspectives (Cabrera and Curbelo 1988; Sans et al. 1997).

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<sup>3</sup>Not all these slaves, however, remained in the Uruguayan territory. Some of them were sent to other regional domains of the Spanish Empire.

<sup>4</sup>The first steps towards the abolition of slavery were taken in 1814 by the independentist government of Jose Artigas through the declaration of 'freedom of wombs' (children of slave descent). The Portuguese Empire, however, revoked this measure when it defeated the Artiguista government in 1817 and governed the country for more than a decade. After the achievement of independence in 1828, slavery was gradually eliminated, first by decreeing the 'freedom of wombs' and declaring slave traffic illegal, later by abolishing slavery and finally by eliminating the juridical figure of 'patronato' in 1853. In congruence with the historical absence of overt forms of official segregation and discrimination, the evolution of the Afro-Uruguayan community is characterized by increasing degrees of integration or assimilation in multiple dimensions.

<sup>5</sup>After the abolition of slavery in 1852, all Uruguayan citizens have been considered equal under the law and the only requisites to obtain full Uruguayan citizenship rights have been to be born in the country's territory or, alternatively, to have a Uruguayan father or mother (voting rights, however, remained limited for a significant sector of the population, especially women, until 1932). Like in the vast majority of Latin American countries, thus, in modern Uruguay race has not constituted a criterion for the distribution and allocation of state resources, rights and obligations among the population.

## 9.3 Ethnic and Racial Identifications According to the Encuesta Continua de Hogares

### 9.3.1 *The ECH of 1996–1997*

Unlike regional cases such as Colombia, Brazil, Peru or Bolivia, studies on the socio-economic and demographic situation of the Uruguayan population have rarely taken into account ethnic or racial variables. Indeed, a comprehensive literature review reveals that among the thousands of anthropological, sociological or historical works published on the Uruguayan population, only a very small minority focuses on ethnic or racial topics. The fact that official surveys or censuses did not collect data on race or ethnicity until the end of the twentieth century, together with the abovementioned national myths of racial homogeneity and democracy, probably explains the remarkable dearth of social scientific analysis of ethno-racial minorities.

Responding to the pressure exerted by Afro-Uruguayan organizations and international agencies, the National Institute of Statistics (INE) included a race question in the Permanent Household Surveys of 1996 and 1997 for the first time in the country's history<sup>6</sup>. The ECH of 1996–1997 collected data on race through the following question: 'What race do you think you belong to?' Respondents were permitted to classify into only one of the following categories: 'Amarilla' (Yellow); 'Negra' (Black); 'Blanca' (White); 'Indígena' (Indigenous) and 'Mestiza' (Mixed).<sup>7</sup> To those who responded 'Mestiza' the following question was also asked: 'Of what races do you think you have blood?' enabling the respondent to choose more than one racial category but only among the abovementioned options. The 1996 survey also asked about parental race to those household members who were interviewed, using again the abovementioned five racial categories (this question, however, was not applied in the 1997 questionnaire).

As we can observe in Table 9.1, the great majority of the population chose the white category, followed by the mestizo, black, yellow and indigenous categories respectively. The significant percentage of missing data responds to two factors. First, due to processing problems, INE lost the information on race for 6,392 cases. Also, there were 12,248 interviewees who refused to answer the racial question or did not choose any of the categories available.

As abovementioned, those who chose the mestizo category were asked if they had black, white, yellow, indigenous or simply mestizo blood. In Table 9.2 we show that approximately 40 % of mestizos indicated that they had white blood, 19 % that they had black blood, 12 % that they had indigenous blood and a negligible proportion self-identified as mestizos with yellow blood. It is interesting to observe that a high

<sup>6</sup>Originally, INE planned to collect data on race only in 1996. However, the number of respondents who self-classified as non-white was too small to obtain reliable estimates. INE therefore decided to apply the race question in 1997 too.

<sup>7</sup>It is worth noting that, like most regional surveys, the ECH captures racial identity through a combination of self and external classification, for those household members who respond the questionnaire (the household head or another adult member) are asked to classify the rest of non-interviewed members.



**Table 9.1** Racial classification in Uruguay (1996–1997)

What race do you think you belong to?	%	% <sup>a</sup>
White	80.8	94.2
Black	0.8	0.9
Indigenous	0.2	0.2
Yellow	0.3	0.4
Mestizo	3.6	4.3
Missing data	14.3	
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: ECH 1996–1997 (N = 128,722)

<sup>a</sup>Without missing data**Table 9.2** Ethnic – racial identification of Uruguayan Mestizos (1996–1997)

“Of what races do you think you have blood?”	Yes	No	Total
White blood?	42.6	57.4	100
Black blood?	18.6	81.4	100
Indigenous blood?	12.4	87.6	100
Yellow blood?	0.6	99.4	100

Source: ECH 1996–1997

percentage of mestizos (51 %) did not recognize having black, indigenous, yellow or white blood. This finding is somewhat puzzling if we bear in mind that there are no other significant racial groups in the country. It seems sound to hypothesize that these mestizos do not perceive themselves as strictly whites (based on physical traits) but that, at the same time, they cannot specify the racial components of their mestizo condition. This is not surprising if we take into account that, in congruence with the wide acceptance of the national myths of racial homogeneity and democracy, racial identities are not frequently activated in Uruguayan everyday life.

It must also be noted that our classification differs substantially from that elaborated by INE. While INE estimated that there were 5.9 % of Afro-descendants in 1996–1997 (Beltrami 1998), we estimate that Afro-descendants were 1.7 % of the population (0.9 % of subjects who identified as racially black and another 0.8 % who chose the mestizo category and declared having black blood).<sup>8</sup> The main factor that explains the substantial differences between INE and the authors’ data is the differential treatment of mestizos for which no additional racial data was available. Unlike the authors, INE decided to classify the population identified as ‘mestiza’ into one of the other racial categories based on additional information such as parental race. Also, INE imputed the race of the population with missing data based on a number of statistical procedures (INE 1998). As a result of this, INE ended up

<sup>8</sup>The only official publication that discusses the racial composition of the Uruguayan population using the 1996 survey does not provide details on the processes through which INE re-classified the race of mestizos and imputed the race of those cases with missing data (Beltrami 1998). INE provides these details in an unpublished manuscript which is available at request.

**Table 9.3** Main descent of Uruguayan Mestizos (1996–1997)

Descent	%
White & Mestizo	15.7
White & Black	14.5
White & Indigenous	10.7
Black & Mestizo	2.6
Black & Indigenous	0.2
Indigenous & Mestizo	0.6
Mestizo <sup>a</sup>	50.9
Other combinations	4.8
Total	100

Source: ECH 1996–1997

<sup>a</sup>Mestizos who declared not having white, black, indigenous or yellow blood

**Table 9.4** Racial classification in Uruguay (2006)

Do you think you are of...?:	Yes	No	Total
White descent	96.9	3.1	100
Black descent	9.1	90.9	100
Indigenous descent	3.8	96.2	100
Yellow descent	0.3	99.7	100

Source: ENHA 2006

treating the overwhelming majority of these mestizos as ‘blacks’, probably based on the assumption that the Afro-Uruguayan population is more significant than the Indigenous and Asian population. We, however, did not adopt this decision and preferred to treat this subgroup simply as mestizos (Table 9.3).<sup>9</sup>

### 9.3.2 *The ENHA of 2006*

In 2006, the race question changed significantly and respondents were asked if they believed to be of Afro/black, white, yellow or indigenous descent in separate questions. All respondents thus, were given the possibility of selecting more than one option. No questions on parental race, in turn, were asked in this occasion even though it is possible to know parental race for subjects who reside in the same household than their parents. As we can observe in Table 9.4, the great majority of

<sup>9</sup>In the majority of Latin American countries, the mestizo term is associated with the possession of both white and indigenous ancestors or phenotypic markers. In accordance with the small weight of indigenous groups this term is not popular in Uruguay. Therefore, it is not straightforward to infer who picked up the mestizo category in the ECH of 1996. Were mestizo respondents mainly subjects who believed being of indigenous and white descent or, alternatively, subjects who believed being of African or other types of descent? Although INE decided to treat mestizos with no additional information as blacks, we believe that the safest methodological procedure is to treat them simply as mestizos until further evidence suggests the implementation of alternative criteria.

**Table 9.5** Main combinations of ethnic-racial descent in Uruguay (2006)

Descent	%
Only White descent	87.4
White – Black descent	6.3
White – Indigenous descent	2.5
White – Yellow descent	0.1
Only Black descent	2.0
Black – Indigenous descent	0.2
Only Indigenous descent	0.4
Only Yellow descent	0.1
Other combinations	1.2
Total	100

Source: ENHA 2006; N=256,866

the population declared being of white descent, in accordance with the predominance of Uruguayans of European background. Also, as we see in Table 9.5, around 87 % of the population declared being of white descent exclusively. This suggests that the great majority of Uruguayans believes that all their significant ancestors are from European countries.

A significant proportion of the population, however, declared having black and/or indigenous ancestry (9.1 % and 3.8 % respectively). It is interesting to observe that most of those who recognized having these racial backgrounds also declared being of white descent. For instance, 6.3 % of the population declared being of white and black descent, while 2.0 % declared being of black descent only. Similarly, 0.4 % of the population identified as indigenous only while 2.5 % declared having indigenous and white ancestry. Thus, the data indicate that the process of ethno-racial miscegenation has been important in the country and that only small proportions of the country's ethno-racial minorities did not mix with the dominant Euro-descendant population.

Finally, unlike the ECH of 1996, a very small number of interviewees refused to answer the racial question in 2006. This suggests that the classification criteria used in the last survey was much better understood and provoked lesser degrees of resistance than that applied in the 1996 edition.

#### 9.4 Comparing the Household Surveys of 1996 and 2006: Changes and Continuities

There are some important coincidences but also a number of significant differences between the results obtained in the surveys of 1996–1997 and 2006. With reference to the coincidences, the overall ethno-racial distribution of the Uruguayan population is similar in both surveys. In particular, we observe that: (a) whites are the overwhelming majority of the population; (b) Afro-descendants are the main ethno-racial minority; (c) there is a small percentage of Uruguayans with indigenous ancestry; and (d) people of Asian descent are a negligible minority. Second, most of those who acknowledged having black or indigenous ancestry also declared being of

**Table 9.6** Racial identification in Uruguay in 1996–1997 and 2006<sup>a</sup>

	1996	2006
<i>Non-Mestizos</i>		
White	94.3	87.4
Black	0.9	2.0
Indigenous	0.2	0.4
Yellow	0.4	0.1
<i>Mestizos</i>		
White – Black	0.5	6.3
White – Indigenous	0.4	2.5
White – Other	0.6	n/a
Black – Indigenous	0.0	0.2
Black – Other	0.1	n/a
Other combinations	2.0	1.3
Total	100	100

Source: ECH 1996–1997 and ENHA 2006

<sup>a</sup>Missing data excluded from the sample

white descent. According to both surveys, thus, Uruguayan members of ethno-racial minorities seem to have been highly exposed to the process of racial mixing without, however, assimilating completely into the dominant Euro-descendant mainstream.

With reference to the disparities between both surveys, the 2006 survey indicates a much higher presence of ethnic minorities than the 1996 survey. First, the population identified as white only is 7 points lower in 2006 than in 1996 (94.3 % versus 87.4 %). In contrast, while in the ECH of 1996 less than 2 % of the population identified as Afro-descendant, in 2006 this percentage was 9.1 %. The increase of the indigenous population was even more dramatic. While in 1996 only 0.8 % of the population self-classified as indigenous (including mestizos with indigenous blood), 3.8 % of Uruguayans declared being of indigenous descent in 2006 (Table 9.6).

It is interesting to note that the proportion of the population who identified as black or indigenous only did not change dramatically between 1996 and 2006. While 0.9 % and 0.2 % self-identified as blacks and indigenous in 1996, 2.0 % and 0.4 % declared being of black and indigenous descent only in 2006. Thus, it is sound to argue that the growth of Uruguayan ethnic minorities is mainly explained by the fact that the 2006 survey permitted subjects who would have self-classified as white in 1996 to indicate the possession of other ethno-racial backgrounds (Table 9.7).

## 9.5 Searching for Explanations: Ethnic Revival, or Measurement Problems?

How can we account for the huge increase of Uruguayan ethnic minorities in such a small period of time? Clearly, demographic factors cannot account for this trend. First, although Afro and indigenous descendants have higher fertility rates than

**Table 9.7** Percentage of Uruguayan Non-whites in 1996–1997 and 2006

	1996	2006	Dif.
Mixed Blacks	0.8	7.1	6.3
Unmixed Blacks	0.9	2.0	1.1
Mixed Indians	0.6	3.4	2.8
Unmixed Indians	0.2	0.4	0.2
Mestizos	3.0	n/a	n/a
Other	0.4	n/a	n/a
Total % of Non-Whites	5.7	12.6	7.3

Sources: ECH 1996–1997 and ENHA 2006

whites, by no means these differences can account for the abovementioned growth of ethnic minorities during such a small period of time. Similarly, although it is possible that Uruguayans of white descent have had a higher predisposition to leave the country during the last three or four decades (in accordance with their higher levels of human and financial capital), it is possible to affirm that ethno-racial differences in migration rates were not that dramatic to explain the growth of ethnic minorities.

Our chapter proposes two alternative but complementary explanations that should be tested by future studies. Our main hypothesis is that the increase of ethnic minorities reflects the effects of having used two different race questions. In addition, the statistical growth of racial minorities might be partially explained by the revival of indigenous and Afro-descendant identities in recent times due to a variety of social processes.

### 9.5.1 *Questionnaire Design and Wording Effects*

While in the ECH of 1996 respondents were not allowed to choose more than one racial category (except those who self-classified as mestizos), in 2006 they were permitted to do so. As abovementioned, the ECH of 1996–1997 implemented a relatively rigid racial question: subjects were imposed to classify into only one racial category and only those who chose the ‘mestizo’ category (which is not a very popular term in the country) were offered the chance to indicate if they were of black, white, indigenous or yellow descent. Thus, it is reasonable to argue that many subjects who actually believed being of black or indigenous descent (and that might even identify as Afro or indigenous descendants in a variety of social instances) ended up classifying themselves as whites, in accordance with the belief that their main racial origin was white, the greater social legitimacy of the white category and/or the perception of being predominantly white from a phenotypic point of view.

In contrast, the 2006 questionnaire permitted to choose more than one category. Thus, it is plausible to argue that a significant number of those who declared being of Afro or indigenous descent in 2006: (a) only have remote black or indigenous ancestry (such as one great grandfather or grandfather); (b) would not self-classify as black

or indigenous for other purposes or through other classificatory devices and/or (c) are not categorized as 'black' or 'indigenous' by others. In sum, it seems logical to hypothesize that many subjects who acknowledged being of indigenous or Afro descent in 2006 would have self-classified as whites in the 1996–1997 survey.

In second place, although both surveys collected racial data thorough self-classificatory procedures, race was the central concept in the ECH of 1996 while descent was the key term used in the 2006 survey. Although the effects of these two terms on the process of racial classification have not been studied in the country yet, it seems sound to think that the 1996 question on race induced more individuals to classify as white, while the 2006 question on descent generated greater opportunities for acknowledging other ethnic backgrounds. Taking into account that whites constitute the dominant ethno-racial group in the country, it is logical to expect that only respondents who are constantly typified as non-whites in everyday life or that firmly identify themselves as such, picked up non-white categories in the ECH of 1996–1997. In other words, when forced to choose only one racial category, many subjects of mixed descent who might 'pass' as whites probably preferred to choose the white option over other categories.

The 2006 question, in contrast, simply asked about beliefs of descent. The term descent is more ambiguous than race and probably opens up greater possibilities of identifying as non-white. Specifically, taking into account the greater social status of the white category, it seems reasonable to argue that respondents will show greater resistance to identify as racially non-white than to acknowledge being of non-white descent partially. In addition, while the term race is usually associated with physical attributes such as skin colour and type of hair, the term descent does not necessarily imply this and is more associated with the ethnic characteristics of the family of origin. Thus, it might be the case that many respondents who see themselves as phenotypically white (and who, therefore, would have chosen the white category in 1996–1997), are also aware of having non-white members among their parents, grandparents or more distant ancestors.

### ***9.5.2 The Revitalization of Racial and Ethnic Roots in Uruguay***

Throughout the twentieth century, Uruguayan political and intellectual elites proudly distinguished the country from its Latin American neighbours for its presumed high levels of cultural homogeneity, its strong welfare state and the remarkable predominance of a European style of life. The 'Switzerland of America' (a metaphor invented by Luis Battle Berres during his presidency in the early 1950s) perfectly synthesizes the way through which most Uruguayans have seen and compared themselves with other Latin Americans. It is not surprising, thus, that there exists a quite extended self-portrait of Uruguay as a racially homogenous country whose overwhelming majority is exclusively of European origin (Rodríguez 2006; Arocena and Aguiar 2007).

However, since the last two decades the myths of racial homogeneity and equality of opportunities have been increasingly questioned by a variety of social movements, ethnic leaders, intellectuals and artists. First, the country witnessed the emergence of a variety of organizations whose members self-identified as indigenous descendants and questioned the traditional image of Uruguay as a society exclusively built by successive generations of European immigrants and descendants. At the same time, research done by local ethno-historians and biological anthropologists during the 1990s suggested that Uruguayans have a larger proportion of indigenous ancestry (especially from the Guaraní communities) than that attributed by the dominant discourse (Sans et al. 1997; Bracco 2004). Finally, there are a growing number of literary and artistic works on indigenous topics (such as the genocide of the last indigenous communities that resided in the country or the indigenous influence on the Uruguayan nationality) and a greater debate on these topics in the media. As Teresa Porzecanski (2005) claims, the most remarkable consequence of these social phenomena has been the construction of a new national myth that questions the hegemonic discourses on Uruguayan identity, re-defines the country as a multicultural nation and puts a stronger emphasis on the similarities (rather than the differences) between the country and its Latin American neighbours.

In this new social atmosphere, there has also been an increasing recognition of the Afro-Uruguayan influence on the national culture and identity. Just to mention one example, the main subject of 2007 celebrations of the ‘Day of the Patrimony’ (which constitutes one of the most important rites of celebration of Uruguayan national identity), was the contributions of Afro-Uruguayan art and folklore to the country’s identity. This remarkable political decision would hardly have occurred some decades ago.

The country has also witnessed an increasing academic interest in the past and contemporary situation of Afro-Uruguayans, probably as the combined result of the development of the social sciences in the country, the greater pressure exerted by Afro-Uruguayan organizations, the increasing concern on racial topics shown by international agencies such as the World Bank and the United Nations and the consolidation of a small but significant elite of black intellectuals and activists. Consequently, recent historiography has notably improved the knowledge on the main patterns of race relations during the slavery period (Frega et al. 2005; Montaña 2001; Bentancur and Aparicio 2006) and a number of works have illuminated a variety of critical aspects of contemporary Afro-Uruguayan identity (Porzecanski and Santos 2006; Rudolf and Maresca 2005) and racial inequality in the country (Beltrami 1998; Foster 2001; Bucheli and Cabella 2007). Finally, like its indigenous counterparts, Afro-descendant organizations have gained an increasing visibility among Uruguayans and exerted a greater pressure on state elites. In this sense, unlike local indigenous leaders (who principally fight for the acknowledgement of the indigenous contributions to the national identity), the main concern of Afro-Uruguayan leaders is the official recognition of the existence of significant levels of racial inequality and the implementation of a number of public policies that alleviate this situation.

In sum, the increasing social legitimacy of the neo-indigenous myths and the greater visibility and pressure exerted by Afro-descendant organizations have contributed to the redefinition of the Uruguayan collective identity. Our hypothesis is that although this redefinition has not abolished the myths of racial homogeneity and equality, they have generated greater incentives to identify as non-white in surveys and other social instances. Thus, it is possible that the statistical growth of ethnic minorities between 1996 and 2006 not only responds to technical issues such as the abovementioned ‘wording effects’ but also to this general and significant social process.

## 9.6 Discussion: Racial Inequality and Racial Classification

To conclude this chapter, we would like to analyze a variety of socioeconomic indicators by race, based again on the Permanent Household Surveys of 1996–1997 and 2006. The main goal is to show the existence of a significant socioeconomic gap between Afro-descendants and whites, regardless of the particular method of racial classification used.<sup>10</sup> The evidence, thus, strongly questions the national myths of racial democracy and equality of opportunities that still prevail among Uruguayans.

Although between 1996 and 2006, both Afro-descendants and whites improved their educational levels, both surveys show that Afro-descendants have remarkably lower degrees of educational attainment (see Table 9.8). Afro-descendants have fewer years of schooling and much lower enrolment rates at the secondary and tertiary levels. The small proportion of Afro-descendant students in tertiary organizations is particularly remarkable. Both in 1996–1997 and 2006, the proportion of whites who were enrolled at these organizations almost doubled up that of Afro-descendants.

Regarding labour market indicators, Afro-descendants have greater participation and employment rates but they are also more likely to be unemployed. Afro-descendants’ greater participation rates are explained by the fact that they usually enter the labour market before and exit it after their white counterparts do so. This trend is in line with Afro-descendants’ greater secondary dropout rates and their greater difficulties to live from retirement funds. This, in turn, is associated with the fact that Afro-descendants are less likely to be formally employed (Bucheli and Cabella 2007). Finally, it must be noted that Afro-descendants are more likely to work at blue collar occupations. In particular, Afro-descendant men and women are overrepresented among construction workers and domestic employees respectively.

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<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, the small proportion of subjects who identified as Indigenous in 1996 impedes to analyze the socio-economic profile of this ethnic minority for that year. According to the 2006 survey, those who declared being of indigenous descent are in between Afro-descendants and whites in terms of socio-economic well-being, but closer to the latter group (Bucheli and Cabella 2007).



**Table 9.8** Basic socioeconomic indicators of the Uruguayan population by race (1996 and 2006)

	<i>Afro-descendants</i>		<i>Whites</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	1996	2006	1996	2006	1996	2006
<i>Education</i>						
Mean years of schooling (25 years or more)	6.8	7.3	8.1	8.8	8.0	8.7
Enrolled students at secondary stage (14–17 years)	57.6	68.4	75.0	80.5	73.7	79.1
Enrolled students at tertiary stage (18–24 years)	14.1	22.3	31.9	40.7	30.9	38.9
<i>Labour market</i>						
Participation rate	65.9	66.1	57.5	60.1	57.9	60.8
Employment rate	54.7	56.8	50.9	53.8	51.1	54.1
Unemployment rate	17.0	14.1	11.4	10.5	11.7	10.9
Economic well-being						
Poverty rate	44.1	50.1	21.9	24.4	23.5	27.0

Source: ECH 1996–1997. ENHA 2006

Overall, the different performance of Afro-descendants and whites at the educational and labour markets leads to significant racial disparities in a variety of indicators of material welfare. For instance, we can observe in Table 9.8 that in 1996 and 2006 the proportion of Afro-descendants living below the poverty line doubled up that of whites.

Although we do not dispute that racial inequality is severe in the country, we believe that the questions on race implemented by the 1996 and 2006 surveys (which are based exclusively on self-classificatory procedures) do not permit to estimate the degrees of racial inequality with complete accuracy. People are not usually discriminated because of their perceived descent or race but mainly because of their skin colour and other physical markers. In terms of discrimination, thus, it seems more important to ‘look like’ than to ‘identify as’ Afro-descendant. Therefore, the use of racial data based exclusively on self-classificatory procedures impedes the analyst to know whether those who self-identify as Afro or indigenous descendants are seen as members of these groups by others.

Another potential problem of analyzing racial inequality in Uruguay based on self-classification is that upper or middle-class members of unprivileged minorities could have a greater tendency to ‘whiten’ themselves than those who remain at the bottom of the social pyramid, in accordance with the trend observed for other Latin American countries (Harris 1964; Wade 1995; Wood 1991). If this was the case, analysts are exposed to the risk of confounding the true effects of racial membership on socioeconomic status with those of socioeconomic status on race (i.e., racial classification).

Taking into account these considerations and following Telles and Lim’s seminal work on Brazil (1998), we believe that it is sound to measure racial inequality in Uruguay through a race variable that reflects the pollsters’ rather than the interviewees’ classifications or, alternatively, through a combination of both methods of clas-

sification. Questions based on self-classificatory procedures, in turn, might be more effective to analyze phenomena related to identificational matters such as ethnic revival/assimilation.

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# Chapter 10

## The Objective Approaches of Ethnic Origins in Belgium: Methodological Alternatives and Statistical Implications

Nicolas Perrin, Luc Dal, and Michel Poulain

### 10.1 Introduction

Massive twentieth century immigration in Belgium led to the emergence of a profoundly diverse society. However, until the 1980s, since a particularly restrictive nationality law was in force, it was believed that nationality-based distinctions adequately addressed the issue. But since 1984, the many reforms to the Code of Belgian citizenship have strongly challenged the consensus. In fact, Belgian nationality became one of the simplest national statuses to acquire in Europe, and nationality-based statistics reflect the action for nationality law and the consequences of the waves of immigration. Wedged between France and the Netherlands – two countries with radically different approaches to understanding diversity – Belgium has made the ethnic reference a taboo, especially in French-speaking regions. However, the need to grasp the situation of foreign-born populations seems to be slowly gaining momentum from a scientific and political perspective, especially with regards to the nation's response to discrimination. Despite the marked divergences that still exist, the nation seems to be developing statistics on national origin based on objective criteria such as the place of birth and nationality of an individual and his/her ascendants, and, even though it is not

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used, this information is recorded by the extended administrative records system. This chapter presents the methodological choices that are emerging despite continuing opposition and their implications.

## 10.2 Nationality-Based Statistics Assessment and Contemporary Issues

### 10.2.1 *The Paradox of Foreigners' Demography: More Immigration, Fewer Foreigners*

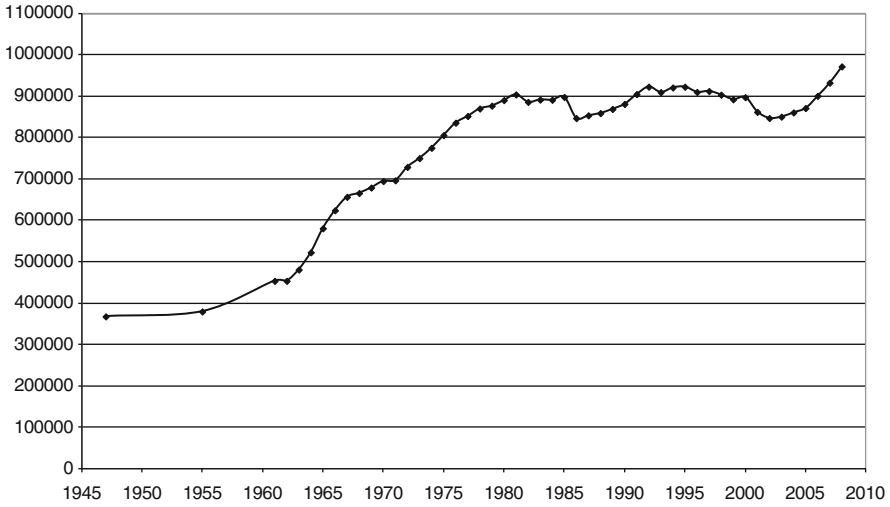
At first glance, the change in the number of foreigners – people who do not hold Belgian nationality – seems paradoxical in Belgium. In fact, the past 25 years constitute the longest and most intense period of foreign immigration, which reached heights that were previously unseen even during active foreign labour recruitment phases. However, until very recently, the non-national population was apparently suffering from a stagnation of unprecedented proportions (Figs. 10.1 and 10.2). Officially, there were 903,736 foreigners in Belgium in 1981. On January 1, 2006, the number had dropped slightly to 900,473, even though, in the meantime, net immigration had increased. It is only in recent years (2007–2008) that the rise in the number of foreigners has stabilized in the long term, surpassing historical figures.

Demographers will agree that if net foreigner immigration does not explain the stagnation in non-national population figures, neither will the population's birth and death figures. The number of deaths among foreigners continues to increase slightly as the immigrant population ages, but it remains lower than the number of births among foreigners, even in spite of a drastic reduction (Fig. 10.3).

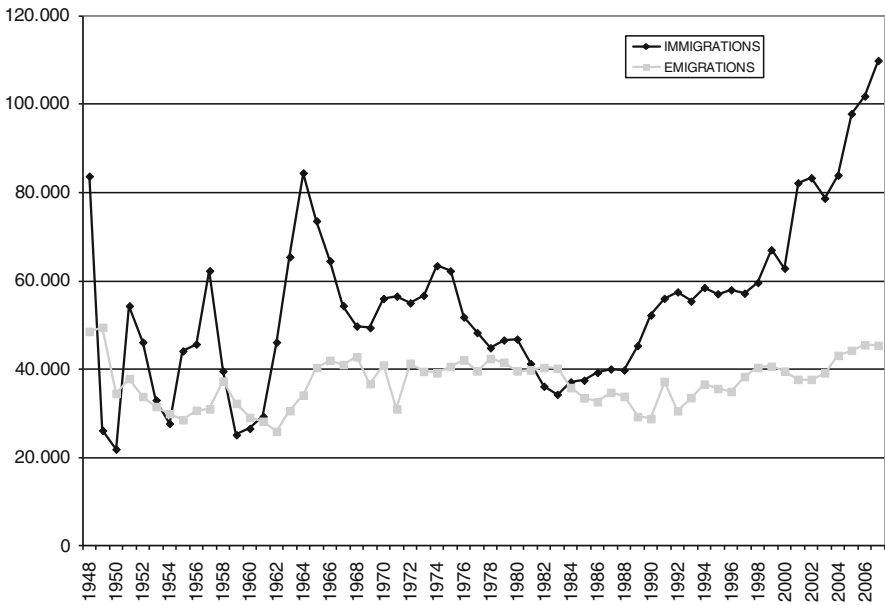
The liberalization of the nationality law led to a stagnation in foreigner numbers. Until 1984, Belgium had a right to nationality inherited from the World War I period that made it difficult to acquire nationality, but successive reforms (notably 1984, 1991 and 1999) made Belgian nationality one of the simplest to obtain (Bauböck et al. 2006). Today in Belgium, the length of residence required for naturalization is 3 years, which is the minimum time required in Europe. In addition, nationality can be easily obtained in many cases through a simple declaration (after seven continuous years of residence, for example). Children born in Belgium of parents who were also born in Belgium easily acquire Belgian nationality at birth, as do the children whose parents have resided in the country for the past 10 years.<sup>1</sup>

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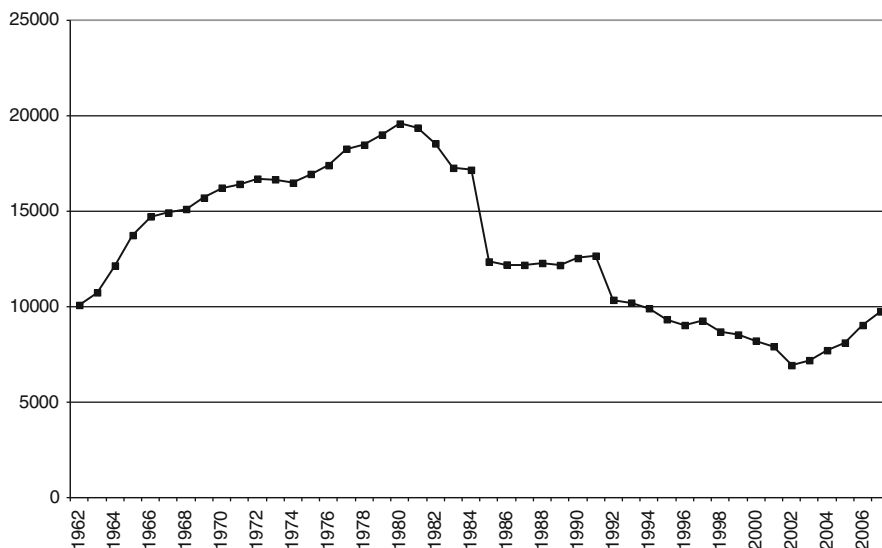
<sup>1</sup>The liberalization of the Code of Belgian nationality is currently a subject of debate, especially in the Dutch-speaking region. Given the sensitivity of the issue, the legal changes that could have an impact in the short term are difficult to predict. However, preliminary accords seem to indicate that more rigorous nationality acquisition requirements, including changing the length of residency in view of naturalization from 3 to 5 years and the addition of a requirement pertaining to the knowledge of at least one of the nation's official languages, will come into effect.



**Fig. 10.1** Change in the number of foreigners in Belgium, 1948–2008 (Source: Population censuses and registers/Statistics Belgium)



**Fig. 10.2** Change in the number of foreign immigrations and emigrations, 1948–2007 (Source: Population registers/Statistics Belgium)

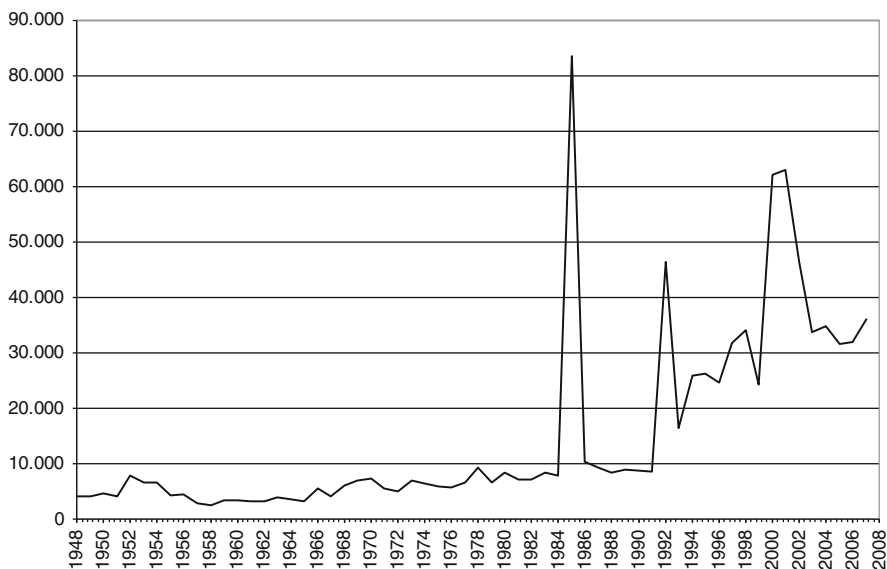


**Fig. 10.3** Change in the number of births of foreigners, 1970–2007. Births of foreigners is the number of foreign children born in Belgium regardless of their parents' nationality (Source: Vital statistics/Statistics Belgium)

As reforms were implemented, the number of changes in nationality exploded – a catch up effect that became the main factor in the evolution of non-national population figures (Fig. 10.4). The nationality law chiefly explains the decline in the number of foreigner births and the lesser natural dynamic of the non-national population. Though the fertility rate of non-national populations resembles that of Belgians, more than half of the decline in the number of foreigner births occurs in 2 years (1985 and 1992), when the number of foreigner births collapsed due to changes in at-birth nationality attribution regulations. Beginning in 1985, children born of a foreign father and Belgian mother were given Belgian nationality at birth while, in previous years, only children born of Belgian fathers obtained nationality. In 1992, children born in Belgium of non-national parents born in Belgium or residing in Belgium for at least 10 years could obtain Belgian nationality (Fig. 10.3<sup>2</sup>).

The nationality law therefore impacts the demographic evolution of the non-national population, which does not translate the demographic consequences of foreign immigration but rather the interactions between immigration and the nationality law. When the Code of nationality is stringent, the difference is negligible, but when the right to nationality is liberalized, the difference becomes more difficult to ignore, especially in transition periods.

<sup>2</sup> Births of foreigners is the number of foreign children born in Belgium regardless of their parents' nationality.



**Fig. 10.4** Change in the number of foreigners who obtained Belgian nationality, 1948-2007 (Source: Statistical yearbooks and National Register (NR)/Statistics Belgium)

### 10.2.2 Statistical Analysis and Reverse Conclusions

Though non-national population development patterns may seem contradictory, accounting for all of the factors that impact their evolution (i.e. births and deaths, migrations and the particular dynamic of the nationality variable) explains these apparent incongruities. Disregarding the specificities of the nationality dynamic when studying nationality-based data could lead to reverse conclusions when analysing the non-national population.

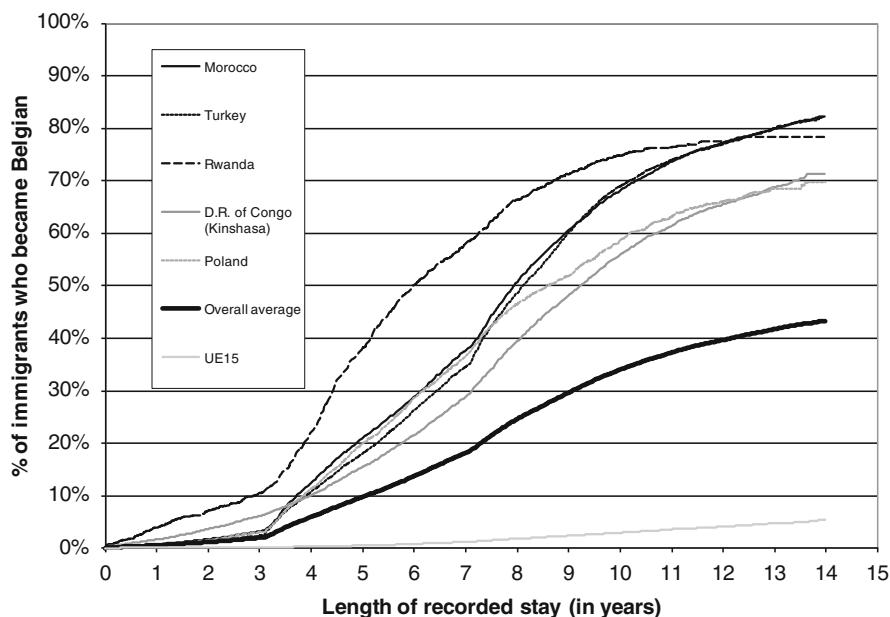
The first challenge to assessing non-national population data lies in the extreme variability of the nationality law from one nation to another. Given the different legislation, comparing the nationality-based statistics of states sheds light on the differences in migratory histories and the intensity of these migrations but also (and perhaps even more so) on the differences in the nationality law. Small countries such as Luxembourg and Cyprus are among the European nations with the largest non-national populations, but so are nations with more restrictive nationality laws such as Latvia, Estonia, Germany and Austria. However, non-national populations are smaller in France and the United Kingdom, which both have more liberal nationality law.

In addition, since a nation's nationality law can change quickly, the evolution of an indicator may actually translate the evolution of the law rather than the phenomenon itself. Therefore, the evolution in the number of foreigners or foreigner births in Belgium is chiefly a sign of the changes brought to the Code of nationality in 1985, 1992 and 1999 (Figs. 10.1 and 10.3).



The third difficulty in relying on nationality stems from the means of individuals to change nationality in their lifetimes. Because nationality is acquired differently according to variables such as age, length of residence, knowledge of the national language, nationality of a spouse, etc., simply analyzing population structures based on the nationality of individuals at a given time can be highly biased. The simple assessment of immigrant biographies highlights the fact that nationality acquisition varies significantly based on an immigrant's nationality of origin. With regards to EU-15 nationals with total settlement rights, the rate of nationality acquisition after 14 years is only 5 %. However, when examining the figures for the Turkish, Moroccan and Rwandan populations, the rate is 80 %. For the Congolese and Polish groups, the rate is 70 % (Fig. 10.5). The demographic contribution of non-EU populations is most often underestimated when it is based on nationality alone. Generally, the non-national population represents a relatively biased subset as compared to the immigrant population. The probability of remaining in the country without becoming Belgian therefore significantly decreases over time, and recently-landed immigrants are strongly over-represented. The risk of bias when measuring themes such as entrance into the labour force is obvious since newly-landed immigrants are not representative of the entire immigrant population.

Just as the people who become Belgian have life stories and characteristics that are different from those of people who remain foreigners before acquiring their nationality, new Belgians may also have different destinies from those of the people



**Fig. 10.5** Belgian nationality acquisition according to nationality of origin and length of stay (immigrants who arrived between 1991 and 2001) (Source: NR – Statistics Belgium/Authors' calculations)

who remain foreigners after changing nationality. There is therefore a risk of not correctly capturing the situation. The circumstances of foreigners in the labour force is therefore very difficult to understand given the relatively transitory nature of the foreigner status and the greater number of job opportunities available to nationals (Vertommen et al. 2006).

Another obstacle to the use of nationality rests in the fact that Belgian nationality is not exclusive. Since 1999, new Belgians may hold more than one nationality, and the perception of this nationality may vary based on the perspective. When a Belgian person holds several nationalities, he/she is considered only as Belgian in Belgian statistics.

Finally, the most complex aspect of nationality to account for is the parent-child transmission of nationality, since the children of foreigners are not necessarily foreigners. They may be Belgian if one of their parents is Belgian, if one of their parents becomes Belgian before the child is born, if one of their parents was born in Belgium, if one of their parents has resided in Belgium for at least 10 years, etc. However, children will not benefit from these measures if their parents do not take the necessary steps. Since all of the legal elements were significantly modified recently, the probability of being born Belgian greatly depends on a child's year of birth. With regards to foreign children born in Belgium, an exceptional situation arises since age is completely ignored as a determining factor in nationality acquisition in favour of the circumstances when the successive changes to the Code of nationality were implemented. For children born in Belgium who obtain Belgian nationality, the main element that determines the probability of becoming Belgian is clearly circumstances since there is a net increase in the probability of becoming Belgian, irrespective of the child's age, around the time that the right to nationality reforms were implemented (primarily 1992 and 2000).

### ***10.2.3 A Necessary Reflection on the Analysis Categories***

Because nationality-based statistics do not make it possible to appreciate the true medium-term impacts of migrations and the characteristics of immigrant populations, it is necessary to assess the meanings of these statistics, their possible uses, their limitations and the possibility of developing better origin indicators.

In certain cases, nationality remains relevant, at the heart of the fundamental differences between citizens' and foreigners' rights (right vote, residence rights, right to hold certain professions or positions, etc.). A crucial part of the migration policies relies on increased control over foreigners who enter into the country and take up residence. For many reasons, it is useful for the state to be able to follow the changes and characteristics of the non-national population.

However, the use of non-national population statistics to better understand immigrant populations is no longer suitable because of the strong impact of the nationality law and the history of migration in Belgium.

The integration and discrimination of the immigration population must be thoroughly assessed, but nationality does not make it possible to correctly understand the target-populations of these laws because the nationality prism is too distorting. Firstly, nationality does not determine whether or not a person will suffer from origin-based discrimination, since many of the people who are discriminated against because of their origin are, in fact, Belgian citizens. Also, integration policies are explicitly aimed at the broad immigration population and not the foreigner population because the foreigner status mainly impacts people who remain for illegal stays, legal immigrants during their first years in the country and nationals from developed nations (European Union, United States, Japan, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, etc.). Continuing to capture the origin of the population based on nationality and refusing to develop new origin indicators are therefore not neutral choices.

### **10.3 Possible Alternative Definitions for Immigration Populations**

#### ***10.3.1 Foreign Examples***

Nationality is a variable for which statistics are most widely collected in Europe and, until recently, was the central variable for many analyses examining the impacts of migrations. But there are many alternatives that provide a better idea of origin.

The best way of knowing a person's origin is to ask the person to declare it. Identifying individuals based on their ethnic or racial origin is a prevalent solution in Anglo-Saxon nations. Though, theoretically, self-identification (an individual declares his/her own origin) makes it possible to grasp the identity components, the practice may be rejected by certain groups concerned about misuse. Alternatively, people may falsely identify themselves as being part of more privileged groups. However, the hetero-identification of the ethnic or racial origin of individuals based on external opinion is also problematic since it supposes an outside judgement about the person that could be questionable or suspected of reinforcing discrimination. In sum, it is very difficult to determine a simple solution to the ethnic and racial identity issue.

Linguistic practices may also constitute a basis on which to categorize individuals according to their presumed ethnicity, as is the case in several European nations (essentially Eastern and Central European nations). However, multilingualism could pose a problem.

Eastern and Central Europe also developed cross-classifications for these indicators. Distinctions are made based on (1) nationality, (2) ethnic nationality or ethnicity, which is declared on a voluntary basis, and (3) mother tongue.

From a perspective that is more focussed on measuring the impacts of migrations rather than the ethnic origin of individuals, certain nations have developed origin

categories based on objective data such as the place of the birth of individuals and their ascendants. Accounting only for foreign-born people makes sense in countries that consider themselves to be immigrant-receiving nations. However, the drive to rely on the situations of the second and third generations (people born of immigration who are not immigrants themselves) often leads back several generations in a person's genealogy. Therefore, in the Netherlands and Norway, status is based on the country of birth of the person's parents. In more detailed investigations, the country of birth of grandparents may be considered. This type of classification is problematic in countries where a large part of the population of nationals was born abroad (former colonies or temporarily expatriated populations). Based on their places of birth, these people will be considered as part of the immigrant population.

### ***10.3.2 Operationalization Limitations in Belgium***

Using data that is more precise than simple nationality information is necessary for experts seeking to understand discrimination and integration, but the idea of developing alternative indicators was not politically feasible until recently given the limited uses of the statistics in integration and anti-discrimination policy follow ups, the lack of knowledge of the limitations of the available statistics, opposition on part of the scientific community, decision-makers' choices regarding the use of ethnic statistics, certain statutory bans with regards to data collection, and other factors.

#### **10.3.2.1 Statutory Bans**

Public statistics have long hid behind the public statistics act to only publish nationality-based data: 'En aucun cas, les investigations et études statistiques de l'Institut national de Statistique ne peuvent concerner la vie privée, les opinions ou activités politiques, philosophiques ou religieuses, la race ou l'origine ethnique.' [Under no circumstances should the statistical studies and investigations of the National Statistical Institute comprise privacy, political, philosophical or religious opinions or activities, race or ethnic origin' (article 24 § 5 of the July 4, 1962 act, modified on August 1, 1985)]. The act is also clear on privacy protection: 'Le traitement de données à caractère personnel qui révèlent l'origine raciale ou ethnique, les opinions politiques, les convictions religieuses ou philosophiques, l'appartenance syndicale, ainsi que le traitement des données relatives à la vie sexuelle, est interdit.' [It is prohibited to process personal data on racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical convictions and union membership as well as data on sexual life].<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The act also stipulates that this type of data may be processed in certain specific cases when it applies to scientific research in support of anti-discrimination policies.

Though ethnic and racial origin research is prohibited, collecting data on places of birth and the nationality at birth of individuals and their ascendants is not. This interpretation has been confirmed since the Privacy Commission has authorized access to nationality at birth data several times, and it also seems as though data on parents' birthplaces could also be allowed.

### 10.3.2.2 Ethical Ethnic Statistics?

Those who seek the development of new origin-based statistics are of the opinion that current information does not provide an adequate portrait of the immigrant populations. Those who oppose this development believe that ethnic statistics could bolster discrimination and the ethnicization of society.

In Belgium, a nation divided on the subject between the Dutch-speaking north and the French-speaking south, the issue remains unresolved. The Dutch region quickly showed interest in the development of statistical follow ups on the discrimination suffered by immigrant populations, as is the practice in the Netherlands. However, like the French, Francophones are strongly opposed to ethnic statistics, and statistical distinctions based on origin remain taboo. Ethnic references are common in northern regions, where immigrant populations are most commonly referred to as non-natives (people from elsewhere or *allochtone*<sup>4</sup>) – a term clearly based on ethnicity and used to describe people of foreign origin, whether they are Belgian nationals or foreigners. In the southern region, the main reference is to nationality, and ethnic references are rare, even inappropriate (Jacobs and Rea 2005). Even the term ethnic statistics is viewed as out of place by those who oppose new origin-based statistics. Francophone partisans of the development of this type of data avoid the term in favour of more neutral concepts such as statistics on origin, immigrant population or populations of foreign origin. But by the end of the 1990s, the impacts of this non-choice soon emerged.

In Flanders, despite a lack of data on the subject, integration policies were explicitly focussed on non-native populations, forsaking any reference to nationality (Carlier and Rea 2001), and quickly followed by the development of an origin-based record through self-identification and patronymic analysis by specific administrations.

At the same time and on both sides of the linguistic divide, while public instances refused to generate ethnic statistics, academics were publishing studies to demonstrate the need for a new approach, releasing data on nationality at birth and drawing attention to the extent of the discrimination. While the debate on ethnic statistics stagnated, new origin-based statistics began to appear.

At the same time, in the political sphere, European anti-discrimination initiatives (Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin and Council

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<sup>4</sup>From the Greek *allos* [other] and *khthôn* [land], as opposed to *autochtone* [native] (Dictionnaire Robert).

Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation) called for the development of more active policies and underscored the need to measure the phenomenon.

The Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism (CEOOR) therefore launched an initiative to examine the necessity and legitimacy of establishing socio-economic labour market monitoring to identify people based on their national origin. The basic conclusion of the preparatory work rested on a single question and answer: Because discrimination is based on ethnicity, why not implement an information tool to measure and remedy it? With a guarantee of privacy protection and controlled data collection and use conditions, it was impossible to oppose the development of such indicators in a society, which, despite a certain amount of denial, was marked by the ethnicization of social relationships leading to discrimination against the population of foreign origin. Given the methodological, legal and especially ethical and ideological constraints, it was decided to identify origin based on objective, anonymous and aggregated data from existing administrative databases. To reach the widest possible consensus, the patronymic, mandatory disclosure and voluntary self-identification approaches were rejected in favour of more neutral and objective data such as place of birth and the nationality at birth of individuals and their ascendants (Vanderkam 2006). Though ethnic statistics remained a sensitive issue, more neutral and objective origin-based data seemed to have gained political and ethical acceptance. With government support (interdepartmental meeting, May 2, 2006), the conclusions of the preliminary study led to the implementation of a new working group to develop a concrete monitoring project. Not only did origin-based statistics become more accepted, they were legitimized and sparked a methodological debate on how to best understand immigrant populations.

In September 2007, using the same arguments on the need to possess tools to better understand immigrant populations and the discrimination they suffered, the Statistical Office announced (DG-SIE 2007) that in light of the propositions formulated by the High Council for Statistics, it would publish data distinguishing native from foreign-born Belgians by identifying people born as foreigners and Belgian nationals at birth.

### ***10.3.3 Data Availability and Accessibility***

Given the legal limitations and intense ideological debate, ethnic and racial data, per se, does not exist. However, despite the strong opposition to the use of objective data, it should be noted that all such information, if it is not used for statistical purposes, is now available (or at least recorded) by administrative instances. Like most European nations, Belgium has population registers in which all legal residents, Belgians and foreigners are listed (Perrin and Poulain 2006). These registers contain data on the origins of individuals including their place of birth and nationality including its possible changes (Eggerickx et al. 2007). The files are organized in a way that makes it possible to identify members of a same household and their

parentage, enabling experts to determine the place of birth and nationality at birth of parents. Today, the population registers are centralized in the National Register (NR), which is directly linked to certain administrative databases that include information on discrimination, especially in the workforce (CEOOR 2007). The most extensive of these databases is the Crossroads Bank for Social Security, which defines itself as the motor and coordinator of e-government in the social sector, and therefore receives information from all sector stakeholders and makes it possible to follow the activity of individuals.

Until now, the main challenge to the further use of the NR lies in the limitations of the use of the variable to establish parentage between individuals for statistical purposes. Parentage remains a particular variable to which, despite the centralization, kingdom communes must consent to providing access. In addition, communes are not obligated to collect information and enter it into the central database, though 95 % of the population is accounted for.

This obstacle could be overcome by using the familial ties of household reference persons and all of the members of the household. Based on household makeup histories, it is possible to reconstitute the parentage of most Belgians. However, people who have never lived with their parents or who decohobitated from their parents before the NR was implemented (created in 1985 but communes recorded information from as far back as 1971) would not be identified. It may also be impossible to establish parentage in complex households in which several family nuclei cohabit. However, in the future, the status of the parentage variable could be changed in order to directly identify family members based on parentage, even though this supposes strong political involvement.

## **10.4 Alternative Statistics and the Impacts of the Definitions**

### ***10.4.1 Development and Criticism of Statistics on Nationality at Birth***

Though the dominant ideological position opposed any origin-based statistics beyond nationality, the first statistical data on immigrant populations based on variables other than nationality appeared in the 1990s and stemmed from the question on nationality at birth on the 1991 census and NR information.

The need to examine the distortions caused by the changes to the nationality law were originally born of demographic issues in light of the wild evolution in the number of births after the changes to the Code of Belgian citizenship (Van der Haegen 1990) and, more generally, of the biases impacting all nationality-based population indicators. Interactions between the nationality law and non-national population demography were quickly detailed by demographers. A draft solution

was proposed (Debuissson and Poulain 1992) and led to a series of publications elucidating the evolution of the immigrant populations (Eggerickx et al. 1999; Poulain and Perrin 2002; Perrin 2008). NR historical records on nationality make it possible to identify nationals and foreigners and distinguish nationals who were Belgian nationals at birth from nationals who were not. Information on place of birth makes a distinction between true immigrants (born abroad) from people born in Belgium (third and second immigrant generations). The first year of registration in the NR makes it possible to determine a person's year of arrival and assess who arrived more or less recently.

At the same time, economists began to look at the job market for immigrant populations using coupled NR data to distinguish those who received Belgian nationality from those who were born with it and data from the Crossroads Bank for Social Security on job market activity (Vertommen et al. 2006).

From a demographic perspective, the first finding was the significant size difference between the non-national and population of foreign origin when looking at nationality at birth. On January 1, 2006, of the 1,625,362 people born abroad, 900,473 were foreigners and 724,889 were people who had obtained Belgian nationality (Fig. 10.6).

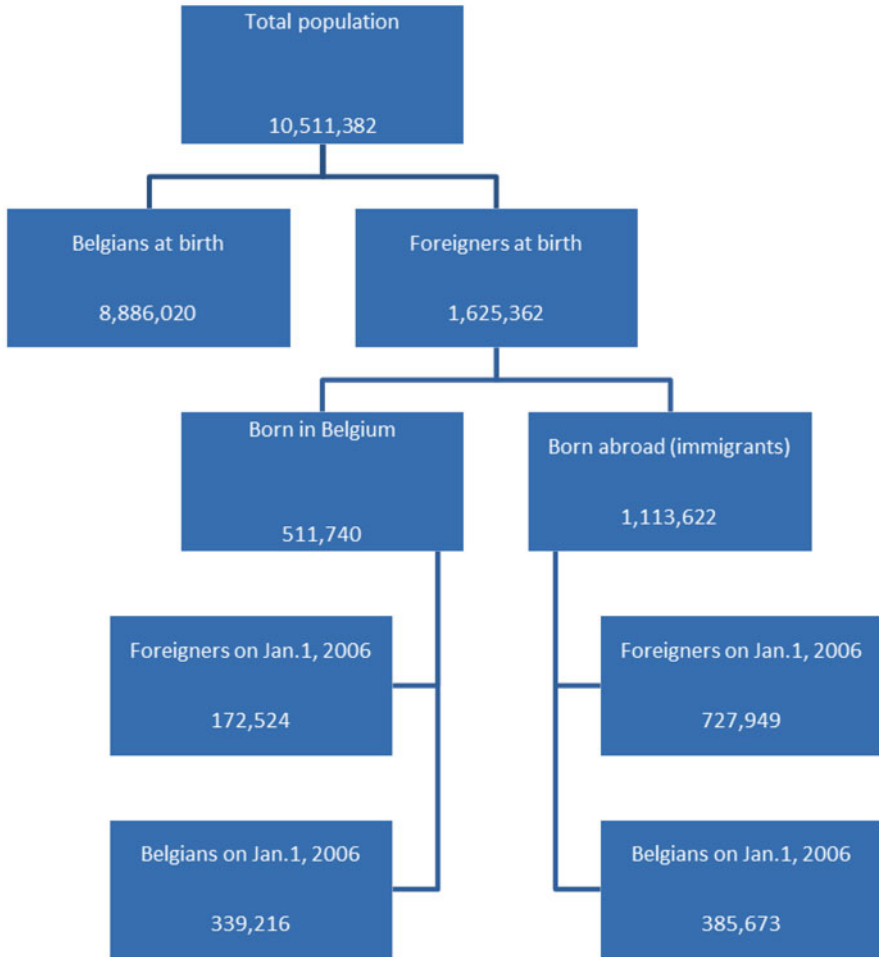
While the number of people with foreign nationality has remained stable, the number of people born as foreigners who did not receive Belgian nationality at birth increased significantly. In 1991, there were 1,189,836 people born as foreigners. In 2006, this figure grew to 1,625,362 given the net increase in the number of people who acquired Belgian nationality.

In addition, the characteristics of people born as foreigners are very different from those of actual foreigners. Among foreigners, EU nationals account for 68 % of foreigners and only 55 % of people born as foreigners. Since third country nationals have a higher rate of nationality changes, the bias created when using nationality as a proxy of origin is greater among these groups. In fact, the same demonstration applies to most characteristics.

With regards to activity, the unemployment rate is overestimated because the employment rate of foreigners does not account for new Belgians but only foreigners who hold lower positions in the job market. However, though job market insertion is better for new Belgians, discrimination is manifest in terms of unemployment and level of position (Vertommen et al. 2006).

The final conclusion of the study is the need for further research. Nationality at birth enables researchers to appreciate a certain number of immigrant population characteristics but does not make it possible to perfectly understand all of the categories. For example, by including information on the ages of people born as foreigners, it becomes impossible to understand the young immigrant populations. There are fewer minors among those born as foreigners than in the Belgian-born population even though young people are an essential component of the immigration populations. In fact, in keeping with the nationality law, the children of immigrant populations are, most often, Belgian nationals at birth.





**Fig. 10.6** Belgian population on January 1, 2006, based on nationality at birth, country of birth and current nationality (Source: NR-Statistics Belgium/Authors’ calculations)

### 10.4.2 Emergence of the First Estimations Based on Parent Characteristics

The characteristics of children and parents must be linked in order to account for the Belgian-born children of immigration populations. In light of its sensitive nature, the parentage variable was first reconstructed based on household composition history. Despite the method’s aforementioned flaws,<sup>5</sup> the first estimates based on birth nationality of parents were released in 2007 (Poulain and Perrin 2008).

<sup>5</sup> See Debuissou and Perrin (2004).

Based on these studies, as of January 1, 2006, it was estimated that 2,101,914<sup>6</sup> people had been born as foreigners or had at least one foreigner parent – 20 % of the total population (vs. 15.5 % when based on birth nationality). This group is therefore significantly larger than the non-national population and the population of people born as foreigners. It also appears that the total number of people with at least one foreign parent is increasing rapidly, even slightly faster than the number of people born as foreigners (Fig. 10.7).

By investigating a person's genealogy, certain cases of mixes that could not be identified when assessing only individual characteristics, including people who have a foreigner-born parent and a Belgian-born parent, began to appear. Among the Belgians born with at least one foreigner-born parent, there are only 23 % with two foreigner-born parents. In 77 % of cases, one parent is therefore Belgian-born.

These cases may be considered false since the grandparents of the Belgian-born parents may be foreigner-born. However, there is no source that traces grandparents<sup>7</sup> to provide a clear solution. In addition, relating back to grandparents supposes a hypothesis that is difficult to formulate on the influence that a grandparent's origin may have on a grandchild. Furthermore, going back three generations brings researchers to a period in which there was less immigration, and it is therefore important not to overestimate the significance of the third generation of immigration that does not appear in the statistics.

The methodological difficulties in the treatment of the data pertaining to the mixed origins of parents lead experts to question the idea of collecting information on grandparents despite the interest in the third generation. Because the rate of mixed origins in parents seems high, then the rate of mixed origins of grandparents could be remarkably high. What is the best way to consider a Belgian-born individual with three Belgian-born and one foreigner-born grandparent?

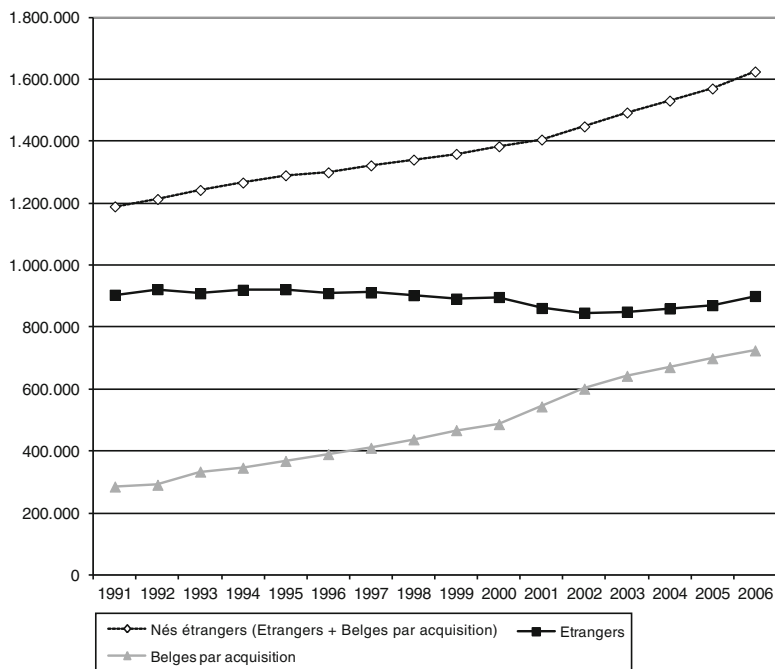
However, observing the mixed origins of parents is of sociological importance and should therefore incite experts to take great precaution when treating data on Belgian-born people of foreigner-born parents. There is no simple way to categorize people who have one parent of Belgian origin and another from abroad, and people may be discriminated against based on their origins. It could therefore be constructive to assess the extent of the discrimination. On the other hand, if a person is considered to be of Belgian origin in his or her everyday life, categorizing this person as being from an immigration population may be abusive.

From a methodological perspective, the proposals of the CEOOR workgroup are fairly similar to the first estimates, and the idea is to combine the information on nationality, birth nationality and countries of birth of individuals and their parents. However, the government should be involved in the publication of such data, which would lead to the generalized use of the information and better developed indicators.

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<sup>6</sup>In light of the biases raised, the exactitude of the figure is deceptive.

<sup>7</sup>Because the National Register is a recent source, the genealogical information is not extensive enough to retrace more than two generations.



**Fig. 10.7** Change in the foreigner and foreign-born populations according to the definition, 1991–2006 (Source: NR – Statistics Belgium/Authors' calculations)

## 10.5 Conclusion

Given the extensive liberalization of the Code of nationality in Belgium, it is no longer possible to use nationality-based data to understand immigrant populations. Nationality-based statistics are useful to understand the populations affected by the limitations of foreigner rights but do not provide any information on the impacts of migration because of the interactions between migration and nationality dynamics (the dynamics of acquiring a nationality and attributing nationality at birth in the case of newborns).

For many years, the development of new origin-based statistics was curbed by the dominant and open opposition to ethnic statistics, especially among the French-speaking population. But opposition to the development of tools to better understand immigrant populations subsided as Belgian society progressively recognized its ethnicization and especially as it became impossible to deny origin-based discrimination and the need to strengthen the policies to counter it. Generating truly ethnic statistics remains controversial, but the development of origin-based indicators from objective data such as nationality at birth or the country of birth of parents seems to be widely accepted.

Though these statistics are not officially available, the data on which they will be based is already recorded and available via the administrative registration system. For many years, academics have been creating indicators that make it possible to go beyond the biased vision that official statistics provide.

Generalizing these statistics should make it possible to better understand discrimination. If the criteria chosen to define origin are considered to be objective, it is best to insist on the close relationship between the choice of criteria, their scheme and their results/analysis. In light of previous studies, the resulting biases are far from negligible. Choosing to use only nationality to measure diversity creates a bias in the analysis. Examining nationality at birth overcomes certain challenges but yields a flawed picture of population origins. Referring to parental characteristics, which should be possible, will help overcome these obstacles and underscore the importance of the mixed origins of immigrant populations. Some would like even more information to understand the third immigrant generation in spite of the lack of data and the characterisation difficulties that arise when going so far back in time.

Progress has been made, but it is necessary to acknowledge the intrinsic limitations of objective categorisation and the preference for non-categorization. Though these choices may seem consensual, they are not neutral and largely determine the analysis. Therefore, even if objective data makes it possible to better understand immigrant populations, the possibility of collecting data on the ethnicity declared by individuals would help experts better understand the discrimination process and better appreciate the limitations and biases that impact the official statistics that objective elements yield.

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# Chapter 11

## Social Inequalities and Indigenous Populations in Mexico: A Plural Approach

Olivier Barbary

### 11.1 Introduction

The 2000 census of the Mexican population clearly marks a turning point in the history of statistical identification of the country's indigenous population. After categorization by race or customs related to dress, food, etc. was abolished in 1895, the census of indigenous Mexicans was exclusively based on a linguistic criterion throughout the entire twentieth century. In 2000, the National Institute of Statistics and Geography<sup>1</sup> introduced a second criterion with a question for self-reporting ethnicity asked to every individual age five and older. This innovation creates a significant gap between the estimated sizes of the indigenous population based on the two criteria just when, after the neo-Zapatista uprising, the political and social issues related to the Indian question and measuring discrimination have increased, as in most Latin American countries (Barbary and Urrea 2004; Barbary (ed.) 2006; Gros 1998; Wade 1997). This was followed by a revival of the worldwide and rich debate on 'indigenous statistics' categories, their legitimacy, their relevance (definitions, question formulation, etc.), and their demographic, sociological and anthropological significance (Beaucage 1987; Cifuentes 1998; Dauzier 1997; Fernández Ham 2000; Florescano 1997; Gros 1999; Lartigue and A. Quesnel (coords.) 2003; Lavaud and Lestage 2005; Stavenhagen 1992; Varios authors 1985).

From a linguistic point of view, changes in indigenous populations are based on the transmission of languages (through generations) that were historically dominated by Spanish. This transmission is rapidly eroding for many indigenous groups due to migration from areas of origin and urbanization, situations where speakers of

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<sup>1</sup>INEGI: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática; The national statistics and geographical institute of Mexico (<http://www.inegi.org.mx/>).

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indigenous languages are often stigmatized. The number of people who report as ‘*hablantes*’<sup>2</sup> has sharply decreased over several decades,<sup>3</sup> even though many specific cultural, economic and social characteristics that are just as important as language prevail among non-speakers. This persistence, confirmed by anthropological studies, including those conducted in large cities, has led Martínez Casas (2002) and De la Peña (2005) to speak of moral communities (*comunidades morales*). For many analysts, the linguistic criterion causes an underestimation of contemporary indigenous population—and reality—particularly outside regions historically populated by Indians. Self-reporting allows for inclusion in an ethnic group without any reference to a particular ‘objective’ characteristic. Detractors criticize this; however, as Fernández Ham (2000) points out, this involves a ‘statistical approach to perceived indigenous identity.’ By authorizing this expression of identity in the census, the government only recognizes the emergence of new manifestations of ethnicity in Mexico where the numerical impact is far from negligible.

To move beyond the issue of numbers and better guide these new problems, we will argue in favour of an approach comparing several possible statistical definitions that combine two ways—individual and collective—of understanding ‘indigenous identity’ using census information. Combining the two criteria produces 17 types of households (including non-indigenous households) that we present in the first section. The final meaning and true significance of this categorization is disclosed by a multivariate analysis of demographic and socio-economic profiles of the various segments of the country’s population and particularly in highlighting the high heterogeneity of the indigenous universe (second section). In the contemporary dynamics marked by emigration, urbanization and linguistic acculturation, the variety of ‘Indian conditions’ can no longer be reduced to ‘traditional’ cultural and linguistic differences. It is mainly based on, perpetuated by, or changed by its relationship to differences in access to resources and modern mechanisms for socio-economic organization. The ‘Indian condition’ is differentiated and even segregated according to a set of demographic, spatial, economic and cultural processes.<sup>4</sup>

## 11.2 Indigenous Individuals and Households: Possible Definitions

### 11.2.1 *Three Separate Criteria: Speakers, Mono- or Bilingualism and Self-Identified Ethnicity*

The two questions concerning linguistic and ethnic identification for the population age five and older resulted in the following figures for total indigenous population published by the INEGI in 2000: the total number of speakers of indigenous languages was

<sup>2</sup>The word ‘*hablante*’ means ‘speaker’ in Spanish.

<sup>3</sup>Hence, Delaunay (2005: 9) notes a decrease of about 6–10 % according to generations when comparing the percentages of speakers from the 1990 and 2000 censuses.

<sup>4</sup>The thesis developed here should be supported in an upcoming article by determining models (logistic regression) of social and economic household differences by linguistic and ethnic identity, all other things being equal.

6,320,250 persons (7.33 % of the total population age five and older), to which is added 1,109,990 non-speakers who self-identify as belonging to an indigenous ethnic group,<sup>5</sup> amounting to an indigenous population (IP) of 7,430,240, or 8.62 % of the population age five and older. However, a more systematic approach can be applied to the responses to the two questions by distinguishing at an individual level: (1) monolingual speakers (speaking one indigenous language, non-Spanish speaking, 1,068,654 individuals), for whom the vast majority (86 %) self-identify, (2) self-identified and bilingual speakers (3,265,966), (3) non-self-identified and bilingual speakers (1,985,630), (4) self-identified and non-speakers (1,109,990) and lastly (5) non-speakers and non-self-identified persons who will be considered non-indigenous (78,793,234).

Linguistic and ethnic identity for individuals can be classified based on these relatively balanced numbers (none of these categories is statistically marginal), and allows for an immediate quick interpretation. But further analysis is needed to confirm this interpretation and should enable qualifying and specifying it. On one extreme, 14.4 % of the IP who are **monolingual speakers**, almost all of who identified as indigenous, constitute a kind of solid core of ‘traditional’ indigenous identity, based on homogeneity in terms of language and settlement concentration in historically Indian territories. Its demographic erosion is not only due to the lack of inter-generational transmission of language mentioned above, but also to migrations resulting in inter-penetration of indigenous and non-indigenous living spaces. This leads to generalized bilingualism and the relativisation and relaxation of ethnic identity according to contexts involving residence and inter-community interaction. This is evidenced by the two groups of **bilingual speakers**, now the majority: those who self-report their ethnic identity (44 % of the IP) and those who do not (26.7 % of the IP). Lastly, unlike the first group living in contexts that are much more racially mixed (*mestizo*) and in light of recent political and social issues concerning ethnicity, one notes the emergence of a new identity based on ethnic identification within the indigenous population of **non-speakers** (at least self-reporting as such). For the first time, the 2000 census conducted a countrywide assessment of this group: 14.9 % of the IP.

However, based on the standard critique made in Mexico and elsewhere until now, this individual-level approach to identities is insufficient: demographic, socio-economic and anthropological dynamics influence collective units (households, families and communities) and the various types of indigenous identity are shaped within them. Yet, the census data naturally lend themselves to an approach at the household level.

### ***11.2.2 Household Structure and Collective Identity: A Criterion of Linguistic and Ethnic Homogeneity***

Many studies in Mexico have used a statistical approach to the ethno-linguistic identity of households.<sup>6</sup> When figures and socio-economic characterization are important political issues, the debate easily focuses on the question of the ‘correct

<sup>5</sup>We will use the term ‘self-identified’ persons from here on in to simplify complex terminology.

<sup>6</sup>Serrano Carreto et al. 2002. This work certainly constitutes the most complete and serious data analysis to date on the indigenous population from the 2000 census. See also: CONAPO 2001; Fernández Ham 1998, 2000; Janssen and Martínez Casas 2004; Valdés 1998.



definition' of indigenous population and the justification of various strategies to reach households. Until now, the favoured options oscillate between two approaches: (1) a maximalist choice that consists of counting any household where at least one individual of 5 years or older, regardless of his/her kinship tie to the head of household (HoH), is a speaker or self-identifies (CONAPO 2001)<sup>7</sup>; and (2) a definition restricted to the household's main adult nucleus, constituted by the HoH and his/her partner (Janssen and Martinez Casas 2004). The first results in a total population of indigenous households of 12,658,899 persons; the second totals 11,361,634 persons.<sup>8</sup> Beyond these very different estimations,<sup>9</sup> sticking with one single definition (one or the other) does not allow for studying and comparing the different types of ethno-linguistic composition of indigenous households and the characteristics of the population groups. This is why this paper proposes a more systematic approach.

Using census information, a statistical understanding of 'collective indigenous' identity of households can be constructed and justified by considering both the linguistic and ethnic attributes of individuals and their kinship links. To this end, we have distinguished four situations:

- (1) The HoH and his/her partner share the same linguistic characteristics (mono- or bilingual speakers or non-speakers) and report the same ethnic identity (indigenous or not). By combining these two criteria, four types of households are obtained around a main adult homogenous nucleus where a strong 'identity coherence' can be expected for all members of the household. This situation concerns a total of 995,766 households, or 38.6 % of indigenous households (IHs).
- (2) The HoH and his or her partner have different characteristics (at least one of the two is a speaker or self-identified).<sup>10</sup> Hence, the household characteristic is then based—arbitrarily—on the 'most indigenous' person, in the following order: monolingual speaker self-identifying his/her indigenous identity, self-identified bilingual speaker, non-self-identifying speaker and self-identifying non-speaker. Thus, taken together they amount to 1,369,431 households, or 53.1 % of IHs.

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<sup>7</sup> Consejo Nacional de Población: the National Population Council of Mexico is in charge of demographic studies and population policies.

<sup>8</sup> To make comparisons with our own estimations, we have used results from our own calculations, based on data from the 10 % ordinary household sample of the 2000 census (cf. Barbary O. and Muller L. 2006). According to the CONAPO definition, the total indigenous population was projected to amount to 13,851,503 on 1 June 2008. URL: <http://www.conapo.gob.mx/00cifras/indigenas/repMexicana.xls>

<sup>9</sup> Serrano Carreto et al. (2002) have adopted an intermediary option by only regarding indigenous households as those where they consider that: 'the persons having indigenous characteristics have a determining kinship link in lifestyle choices and the intergenerational transmission of socialization, in other words the HoH, his or her partner and their parents.' The total population of these households amounts to 11,639,778 persons.

<sup>10</sup> The single-parent households where the HoH is a speaker or self-identified have been incorporated into this group.

- (3) The adult couple at the head of the family has no indigenous characteristics. This case will first concern the household adults from collateral or ascendant generations of the HoH or his/her partner: brothers and sisters, cousins, parents, uncles and aunts, grandparents, etc. Again, among these household members, those who have the most indigenous attributes determine the ethno-linguistic status of the household. These households number 48,703, or 1.9 % of the IHs.
- (4) Finally, when the HoH, his/her partner or their relatives in the collateral or ascendant generations are not speakers and do not self-identify, the household's indigenous status could stem from speakers or self-identified persons from descendant generations (if they exist): children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews, etc. of the HoH or partner. Thus, we obtained the four last types, transmitted to the household by the 'most indigenous' person among these generations. These count for 164,528 households or 6.4 % of the IHs.

### ***11.2.3 Population Size: A Statistical Partition of the Indigenous World***

Finally, crossing individual linguistic and ethnic attributes with the position of these individuals in the household family structure makes it possible to assign all households having speakers or those who self-identify (except for missing information) into 16 distinct ethno-linguistic types (Table 11.1). Beyond taking into account the household's collective identity, we thus respond to criticism frequently aimed at the overall indigenous category that was created and analyzed following the 2000 census: 'it mixes together the fact of being indigenous through language and the desire, or not, to demonstrate this origin' (Delaunay 2005: 28).

This construction stems from ethno-linguistics and indigenous anthropology in Mexico, although it could never totally replace or guarantee them; it has a different goal. It is a statistical construction of the aggregate population living in indigenous households that we want to be as complete and detailed as possible using the census information. Following Mexican demographers, we will call it the 'indigenous household population' (IHP). It is focused on a socio-demographic analysis of the various population groups, while highlighting their common points and specificities. Thus, we are interested in what the 16 types demonstrate about the continuum of identity situations in the contemporary indigenous world. However, the different analyses must not be confused: statistical conclusions are not based on anthropology and the interpretation of underlying social facts must use ethnographic data too.

Despite using a slightly more restrictive definition, the total for IHP that we obtain is quite close to the one published by the CONAPO for all households where at least one individual of 5 years and over is a speaker and self-identified (12,658,899). More important is the impact of including indigenous individuals in the HoH's or partner's descendant generations, which increases the total IHP by nearly one million people compared with the number calculated by Serrano, Embriz and Fernández Ham (11,639,778). Yet, this definition especially reveals a recent trend in re-

**Table 11.1** Population in households according to their ethno-linguistic category

Ethno-linguistic type of household	Population	%	Cumulative	%
HoH and partner: monolingual speakers	564,538	0.58	564,538	0.58
HoH and partner: self-identified/bilingual speakers	2,756,043	2.84	3,320,581	3.42
HoH and partner: non-self-identified/bilingual speakers	1,525,700	1.57	4,846,281	5.00
HoH and partner: self-identified/non-speakers	471,592	0.49	5,317,873	5.48
HoH or partner: monolingual speakers	1,434,334	1.48	6,752,207	6.96
HoH or partner: self-identified/bilingual speakers	1,727,981	1.78	8,480,188	8.74
HoH or partner: non-self-identified/bilingual speakers	2,388,588	2.46	10,868,776	11.20
HoH or partner: self-identified/non-speakers	492,858	0.51	11,361,634	11.71
Collaterals or ascendants: monolingual speakers	3,337	0.00	11,364,971	11.71
Collaterals or ascendants: self-identified/bilingual speakers	48,563	0.05	11,413,534	11.76
Collaterals or ascendants: non-self-identified/bilingual speakers	207,145	0.21	11,620,679	11.98
Collaterals or ascendants: self-identified/non-speakers	19,099	0.02	11,639,778	12.00
Descendants: monolingual speakers	44,239	0.05	11,644,017	12.05
Descendants: self-identified/bilingual speakers	3,71	0.00	11,687,727	12.05

(continued)

**Table 11.1** (continued)

Ethno-linguistic type of household	Population	%	Cumulative	%
Descendants: non-self-identified/ bilingual speakers	176,354	0.18	11,864,081	12.23
Descendants: self-identified/ non-speakers	731,793	0.75	12,595,874	12.98
Total indigenous households	12,595,874	12.98		
Total non-indigenous households	84,418,993	87.02	97,014,867	100.00
Population of speakers or self-identified persons outside of indigenous households	68,602	0.07		
Total indigenous population	12,664,476	13.05		

Source: INEGI 2000, micro data of population and households census 2000 processed by the author

appropriating the language and self-identification of ethnic identity among young generations; as indicated below, the concerned households occupy a very specific socio-economic position within the indigenous population. By comparison, the role of the HoH's or partner's collateral or ascendant generations is less significant: less than 300,000 individuals belong to households for which the indigenous identity stems from collateral and ascendant generations. In fact, the greater majority of the IHP lives in households where the 'indigenous attributes' prevail in the main conjugal nucleus: 11,361,634 persons or 90.2 % of the IHP.

These initial results relativise the statistical stakes in the controversies surrounding the definition of IHP. When taking into account the indigenous population outside of indigenous households—which increases as the definition is restricted—the gap between the more restrictive definition (HoH or partner) and the broader one (at least one individual related to the HoH or his/her partner) does not exceed one million. This amounts to knowing whether the entire indigenous population is 12 % or 13 % of the national total; this is not the main issue. What is most important in this exercise is that it provides a statistical baseline to divide up the universe of indigenous households into nine main categories: the eight types of households where identity is assigned by the HoH or his/her partner and the households where it stems from the HoH's or partner's descendants who are bilingual speakers and non-self-identified. These nine categories with significantly varied weights (between 4.5 and 21.9 % of the IHP) combine to total 96 % of the indigenous population. The seven

remaining categories describe the other types of households where persons outside of the main conjugal nucleus assign indigenous identity. Despite their low weights, they can reveal noteworthy linguistic and ethnic identity reconstruction processes. Detailed analysis of the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of these households will demonstrate the true significance of these categories.

### 11.3 Indigenous Specificity and Heterogeneity: Multivariate Analysis of Household Characteristics

During the 2000 census, linguistic and ethnic identification did not involve all Mexican households; only a sample of 10 %—representative on a national scale—responded to the ‘extended’ questionnaire. As compensation for this restriction—with no statistical consequences on our level of analysis—we have more thorough data at our disposal than in the exhaustive database. It covers the following topics: (1) geographic localization of the households’ place of residence, (2) occupancy status and physical characteristics of housing, (3) access to public services and household consumer goods, (4) household composition and demographic characteristics of individuals, (5) fertility for females age 12 and over, (6) educational capital of individuals age 5 and over, (7) social security and health, (8) economic activity of individuals age 12 and over, (9) individuals’ incomes and (10) lifetime migration, migration since 1995 and international migration since 1995. We carried out a multi-dimensional factorial analysis (Multiple Correspondence Factorial Analysis (MCFA), Benzécri 1973, 1980) to observe how various types of indigenous households are placed within the main structures of socio-demographic differentiation for all Mexican households.<sup>11</sup> The introduction of supplementary elements makes it possible to project variables relative to the linguistic and ethnic characteristics and the description of households’ residence contexts using census data onto the factorial planes. The supplementary elements do not contribute to determining the axes. The first supplementary variable is the households’ linguistic and ethnic classification into 17 categories. For indigenous households where at least one person is a speaker, we also know what language was spoken according to the nomenclature for 79 linguistic groups developed by the INEGI and INALI<sup>12</sup> in 2005, from which we have kept the 16 main ones (each one spoken in more than 30,000 households).<sup>13</sup> The third supplementary variable is the household’s place of residence at time of the census (*‘entidad federal’*: the 32 states of Mexico).

<sup>11</sup> All of the information was first summarized into 37 household variables (a total of 205 modalities after discretization of quantitative variables), to account for their demographic, socio-economic, migratory, etc. characteristics. These are the active variables for the multiple correspondence factorial analysis.

<sup>12</sup> Instituto nacional de lenguas indígenas: The national linguistic institute of Mexico.

<sup>13</sup> The other languages form a single modality to simplify the analysis.

Lastly, five modalities of the size of the locality of residence were projected onto factorial planes. The interpretation of the following results is based on graphic outputs from the first factorial plane ( $1 \times 2$ ); unfortunately, they are too complex to be shown here.<sup>14</sup>

### ***11.3.1 A Strong Relationship Between Social Position and Ethno-Linguistic Characteristics***

Not surprisingly, the socio-economic differentiation largely dominates the hierarchy of the structures present in the data. The first factor indicates the households' social positioning (and accounts for 54 % of total inertia), whether the contributing variables are directly related (household's index of social position, socio-professional category of the HoHs, income, household equipment) or that they have a strong correlation (illiteracy; household's educational climate<sup>15</sup> and educational capital of the HoHs and their partners, housing conditions and overcrowding, access to public services, etc.).

The second factor is correlated to the households' demographic composition and differentiation (and accounts for 21 % of total inertia). It separates single-person or incomplete (headed by only one person) households or those headed by women from complete nuclear households that have the highest fertility and juvenile dependency rates. Thus, we could construe the analysis of both socio-economic and demographic differentiations of indigenous households. However, in conforming to the title and length of this article, we will only comment on the first and most important factor of heterogeneity across households: socio-economic inequality.

We now consider the projection of ethno-linguistic types of households. Since ethnic identity did not contribute to defining the axes, their position on the plane is significant of the gap between their socioeconomic profile and the average profile of all households located at the origin of the plane. The non-indigenous households comprise the greater majority and deviate very little from the origin, yet with socio-economic positioning that is slightly higher than the mean. In contrast, the indigenous household mean and nearly all the categories for indigenous households are situated to the far right; this attests to the socio-economic inequality that affects them as a whole. The highly contrasted household distribution by monthly per capita income (Table 11.2) summarizes this situation. Poverty (less than 400 pesos per month per person, or approximately 40 US dollars) affects more than 52 % of indigenous households versus less than 24 % among non-indigenous ones; in the population of monolingual indigenous households, it reaches 83 % while only 3.2 % of the households have an income greater than 800 pesos.

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<sup>14</sup> Interested readers can see a more detailed version of this article on the following url: [www.ciqss.umontreal.ca/Docs/SSDE/pdf/Barbary.pdf](http://www.ciqss.umontreal.ca/Docs/SSDE/pdf/Barbary.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> This is the mean number of years of education for all adults in the household.

**Table 11.2** Monthly per capita income by ethno-linguistic types of households

Ethno-linguistic type of household	Monthly household per capita income (pesos)										Total	
	Not declared	0	0-400	400-800	800-1600	1600-3200	3200 +	%	% line	No. of households		
Monolingual speakers	2.8	16.6	66.5	10.5	2.5	0.4	0.3	100	1.7	38,569		
Self-identified and bilingual speakers	2.0	10.4	50.1	19.7	11.5	4.4	1.5	100	4.1	92,948		
Non-self-identified and bilingual speakers	2.5	6.7	31.6	25.7	19.1	8.9	5.1	100	4.4	100,651		
Self-identified and non-speakers	2.0	7.2	24.9	23.9	23.4	11.6	6.8	100	1.1	26,036		
Indigenous households	2.3	9.6	42.8	21.1	14.3	6.3	3.3	100	11.3	258,204		
Non-indigenous households	2.6	5.9	17.7	23.8	24.8	15.0	9.8	100	88.6	2,007,402		
Total households	2.6	6.4	20.5	23.5	23.6	14.0	9.1	100	100	2,265,606		

Source: INEGI 2000, micro data of population and households census 2000 processed by the author

As seen, the indigenous population is not a homogeneous block. The multivariate approach can articulate several differentiation factors to characterize its socio-economic segmentation.

What is most striking about the analysis, beyond the significant disadvantage that affects the Indian population overall, is its heterogeneity throughout the socio-economic range of the middle, working and poorest classes. This is all the more so given that this variability in social conditions proves to be strongly linked to the households' linguistic characteristics and self-reporting of ethnic identity. To demonstrate this, we have separated all of the indigenous households into four main groups.

The first group on the extreme right of the plane is in a situation of extreme poverty marked by unreliable construction materials for housing, exclusion from basic services (water, electricity, sanitation and sewers and waste management), the lack of monetary income and household goods and social marginality (illiteracy, no access to education and health services). It is formed from two household categories that are demographically significant and where the conjugal nucleus (HoH and/or partner) are monolingual speakers who—in most cases—self-report their ethnic identity (104,882 and 278,713 households, respectively). Therefore, the most traditional and homogeneous collective indigenous identity within the households is clearly associated with the greatest socio-economic disadvantage.

The second group is distributed along the entire range of the working class segment, centred around: low incomes—monthly per capita income (MPCI) lower than 400 pesos per month—; difficulties in access to services (water and sanitation), education and health; agricultural socio-professional categories and overcrowding in dwelling units varying between 2 to over 3.5 persons per room. It includes the four categories of households containing the bilingual speakers who self-report their ethnic identity. The two most numerous correspond to households where the HoH and his/her partner are bilingual and self-identified—506,274 households—and those where only one of the two has these attributes—407,709 households. This also includes the households where the two partners of the main nucleus are bilingual speakers but do not self-identify as indigenous (284,545 households). Therefore, compared to the first group, bilingualism slightly alleviates socio-economic segregation.

The third group, relatively better off socio-economically and within the lower middle class, is organized around the category with the largest number of households: those where only one of the two partners is a bilingual speaker who has not reported ethnic identity (554,308 households). The living conditions, access to goods and services, the professional and financial situation for these households, etc., are very homogenous for this category and close to those for the household average. However, a significant disadvantage is noted relative to educational capital; quite frequently, the partner of the HoH has only completed a primary education. This group includes some households of non-self-identified and bilingual speakers (those where only one of the two partners has these characteristics and households involving the members from the HoH's or partner's collateral or ascendant generations) and some self-identified and non-speaker households (those for which



self-identification occurred for only one of the two partners or members of HoH's or partner's descendent generations). Households where the two partners are non-self-identified and speakers that hold an intermediate social position between the lower middle class and the working class can also be included here. Again, compared to the previous group, the absence of self-identified ethnicity in the households of speakers or the opposite, self-identified ethnicity in the households that report no longer speaking an indigenous language, is accompanied by a clear improvement in their average social conditions, which is no longer significantly below the average for non-indigenous households.

The last group, which accounts for just over 5 % of indigenous households, is the only one to occupy a negative position on the axis (halfway left of the plane). The households for whom indigenous identity is determined by descendants of the HoH or partner who are bilingual speakers but who do not self-report their ethnic identity make up the largest proportion (126,997 households) with a socio-economic profile nearly identical to the mean profile for all households. The only category clearly located within the upper middle class is the one for whom indigenous identity is due to self-identification by HoHs' or partners' ascendants or collaterals who are non-speakers; in fact, this is one of the smallest groups (3,568 households). In the universe of indigenous households, it stands out as much for its satisfactory social and economic integration—good housing conditions and access to public services, overcrowding lower than one person per room, secondary education level for the partner, etc.—as for an ethnic identity, often linked to previous migrations outside of areas traditionally populated by indigenous peoples. This could be qualified as 'peripheral': individuals outside of the conjugal nucleus that have ceased to speak their indigenous language but who self-identify as indigenous.

Thus, a very coherent pattern appears within the heterogeneous universe of indigenous households that links their social positions to their linguistic characteristics and their self-perception of ethnicity. We used two concepts to classify the households: the actual ethno-linguistic dimension—ranging from self-identified and monolingual speakers to non-speakers who only self-identified—and the collective dimension—graduated according to the homogeneity of ethno-linguistic attributes and the approximate 'central' position of individuals who possess these attributes. These two concepts produce two 'orders' of identity that can be translated almost systematically in the social hierarchy. Thus, we can identify two socioeconomic gradients within the indigenous population: the first one linked to the ethno-linguistic dimension and the second one to the household's collective identity configuration.

The first gradient covers nearly all of the social space where indigenous populations have been confined. Nearly all households with the most 'traditional' ethno-linguistic identity (self-identified and monolingual speakers) experience extreme poverty due to their economic exclusion and marginalization by institutional apparatus. The households of self-identified and bilingual speakers clearly stand apart from this extreme situation through their 'integration' into what we have termed the working class. There is a correspondence between the identity of households of bilingual speakers who do not report their ethnic identity—more marked by biologi-

cal and cultural mixing (and probably also by racial stigmatization)—and more heterogeneous positions in the social scale from the ‘centre’ of the working class through the lower middle class to the beginning of the upper middle class. Finally, the social space that characterizes the self-identified and non-speaker households is spread throughout the middle class up to the upper-class boundary.

Within the four large ethno-linguistic groups, the second gradient functions identically, yet while producing a lesser degree of social heterogeneity. The relationship between the socio-economic status and the ‘identity configuration’ of the households is once again obvious. Households with a homogenous conjugal nucleus through their ethno-linguistic attributes face the most difficult socio-economic situation, followed by those where the HoH and his/her partner have different attributes, then those where the linguistic or ethnic identity is determined by individuals outside of the conjugal nucleus.

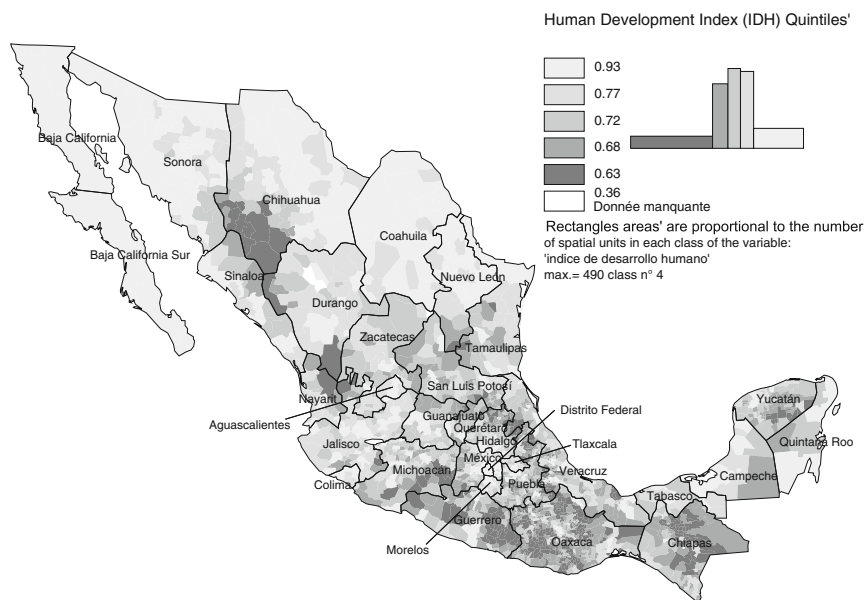
### ***11.3.2 Social Differentiation, Economic Geography and Segregation of Ethnic Groups***

Thus, we just have displayed the extent of the overall socio-economic disadvantage of indigenous households and the range of differences between them. However, these inequalities do not only affect the indigenous world. They must be placed in the economic and social segmentation for the entire Mexican population while specifically considering one of its main determinants: heterogeneity of development in the national territory. The projection on MCFA planes of geographical variables (state and locality size) enables an evaluation of the impact on the socio-economic conditions of indigenous and non-indigenous households from a context of their shared place of residence. By observing the distribution of states along the first axis, the country’s very unequal socio-economic geography is evident and summarized by mapping the Human Development Index (HDI) at the municipal level (cf. Fig. 11.1).<sup>16</sup> We have outlined its broad features here by linking them to household living conditions.

On the right of the plane, clearly isolated from the rest of the national socio-economic space, the states of Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero form an enclave of poverty where the greater majority of households experience economic insecurity (housing conditions, income and household goods) and exclusion from access to public services (water, electricity and sanitation), education, health, etc. Thus, for example, households where the MPCÍ is below 400 pesos are 60 % of the total in Chiapas, 55 % in Oaxaca and 47 % in Guerrero (versus a national average of 27 %). Viewed overall, this is even more so for the entire rural areas of these three states. The mean socio-economic profiles for all of the country’s other states are distributed

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<sup>16</sup>This geography has been fully analyzed by the social sciences in Mexico. For the case of the indigenous population, see for example: Delaunay 1995; De la Vega Estrada 2001.



**Fig. 11.1** Human Development Index at municipal (*Municipes*) level (Source: INEGI 2000, Sistema Estatal y Municipal de Bases de Datos (<http://www.inegi.org.mx/>))

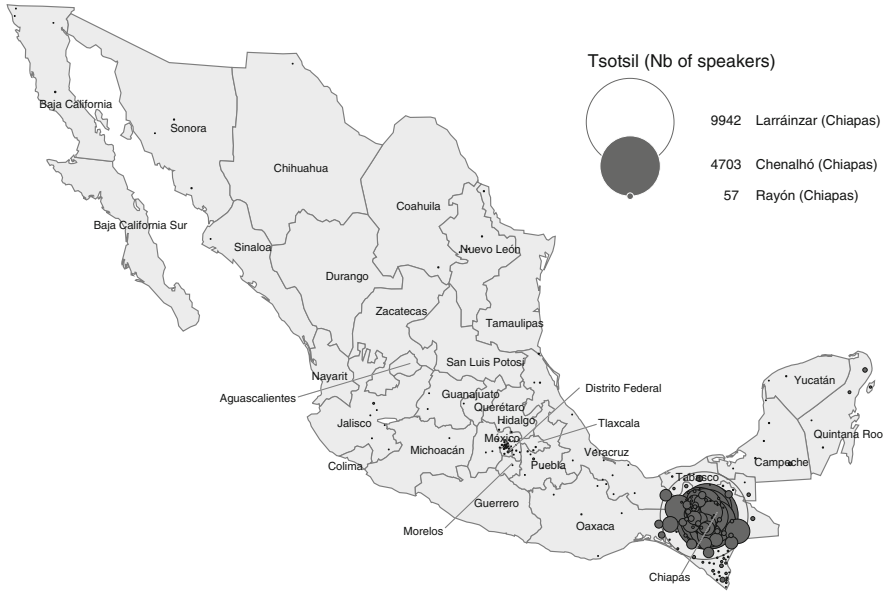
fairly equally around the national average. Four geographic patterns have been distinguished (ellipses drawn in dotted red lines).

The first pattern is made up of the predominantly rural central and southern states: Veracruz, Hidalgo, Tabasco, Puebla, Campeche, Yucatán, San Luis Potosí and Michoacán in increasing order of mean social conditions. For all of these states, this is definitely below the national average; it corresponds to the bottom third of the middle class and to a locality profile where population numbers between 2500 and 15,000 inhabitants. The second pattern includes Zacatecas, Nayarit, Tlaxcala, Guanajuato, Durango, Morelos, Sinaloa, Querétaro and Quintana Roo, where intense agriculture and the development of the service industry within the urban economy has replaced traditional agriculture and the failing industry, not without serious social impacts. The mean socio-economic level of households gradually increases (in the order listed), and overall, the profiles are homogeneous and concentrated around the national average. The third group brings together most of the western and northern states: Tamaulipas, Sonora, México, Colima, Chihuahua, Baja California Sur, Baja California, Coahuila, Jalisco and Aguascalientes, which are further along than the preceding group in the same economic transition process (urbanization, development of the service industry and agricultural and industrial modernization). The socio-economic profiles of the households, included between the two points that represent the populations of medium cities (15,000–100,000

inhabitants) and large cities (100,000–500,000 inhabitants), are therefore distinguished by the importance of the middle and even upper urban classes in the case of Baja California, Coahuila, Jalisco and Aguascalientes. However, pockets of great poverty at the municipality level still remain within the area of agro-industrial development and expansion of the tertiary sector in the northern states. The main ones, clearly visible on the map, are located in the Tarahumara country (in the southern part of Chihuahua and northern part of Durango) and in the Huichol area (situated in the south of Durango and north-east of Nayarit). Lastly, unlike the situation of extreme poverty in the three southwest states, the average social conditions for households in the state of Nuevo León (metropolis of Monterey) and certainly Mexico City (Federal District) appear to be strongly pushed upwards due to high incomes generated by accumulated capital in modern industry and specialized services.

For households with indigenous speakers, the investigation of socio-economic heterogeneity can be deepened using the projection of the country's main ethnic groups onto the factorial plane. As expected by the distribution of types of households on the social scale, all the mean socio-economic profiles for households of indigenous language speakers are concentrated in the working and poorest class; this attests to the socio-economic boundary that separates them from indigenous households that no longer use their indigenous language. Within the population of indigenous-language speakers, three subsets have been distinguished. The first one, composed of Chol, Tzotzil and Tzeltal households (the largest ethnic groups in Chiapas), is the most entrenched in terms of poverty and marginalization due to their exclusion from access to resources: housing, education, employment, public and social services, household goods, etc. As we have seen, this is a common trait for the entire population of Chiapas. Yet, in this already depressed local context, the indigenous ethnic groups are even more disadvantaged: within these communities, the percentages of households for whom the MPCÍ is below 400 pesos are 80 % for the Tzotzils and the Chols and 77 % among the Tzeltals (versus 60 % for the state average) and for whom illiteracy rates are 70 %, 62 % and 67 % respectively (versus 44 % for the state average). We cannot help considering these important gaps as one of the key factors for the start of the neo-Zapatista uprising; its leaders regularly point out this situation in public speeches and statements through the press or the Internet. The second subset, the largest, is concentrated in the lower half of the working class where, very likely, a high percentage of households fall below the threshold of 400 pesos per capita. Located here are the largest ethno-linguistic groups of the country's centre and north—Nahuatl, Huasteco, Mixteco, Chinanteco, Mixe, Mazateco, Totonaca and Tarahumara—as well as all the households of speakers of other indigenous languages. The last group, composed of Mayan, Zapotecos, Purepecha, Otomi and Mazahua households, occupies a relatively better socio-economic position in the upper half of the working class.

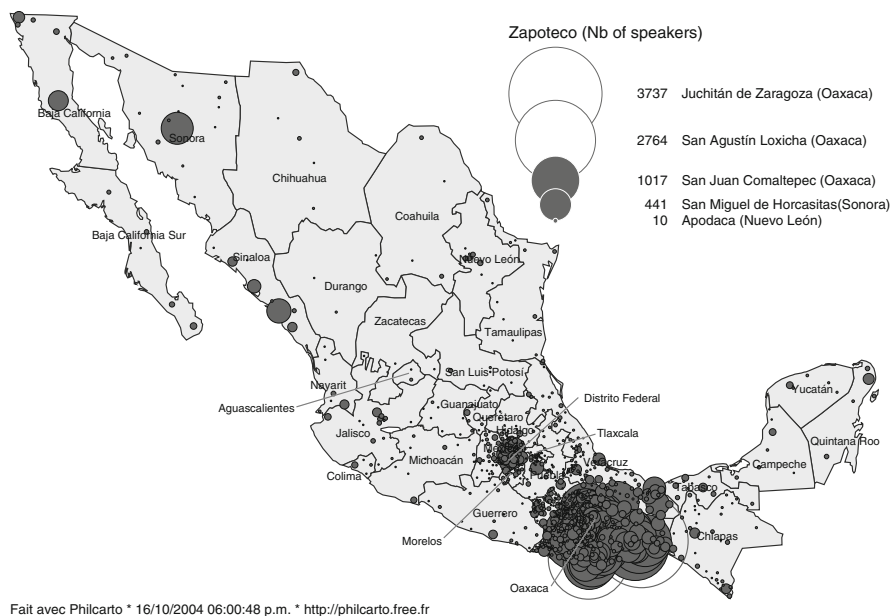
These socio-economic inequalities result from multiple causes interacting within a space that has been extremely divided up in terms of local and regional development, which characterizes the Mexican territory. Therefore, migrations play a large



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**Fig. 11.2** Place of residence of Tsotsil speakers at municipal (Municipes) level (Source: INEGI 2000, Micro datos—censo de población y vivienda 2000 <http://www.inegi.org.mx/sistemas/micro-datos2/default.aspx?c=14061&s=est>)

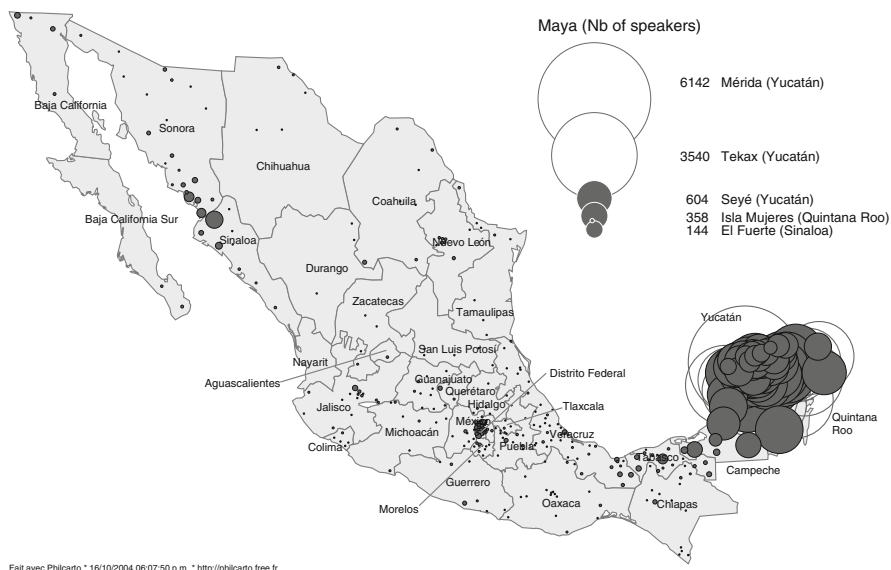
role in socio-ethnic differentiation. ‘Regions of refuge’ (Aguirre Beltrán 1973) is the most frequently used—but also discussed—explanatory model in Mexico. The indigenous populations that are the most isolated geographically and in terms of access to technology and infrastructure (roads, electricity, telephone, etc.) have been excluded the most from national development. This is typically the case for the Indians of Chiapas who, for the great majority, without any migratory dynamics outside of the state (cf. Fig. 11.2) are still assigned residence in completely insulated territories. The same isolation characterizes the Sierra Tarahumara but with older and more marked emigration. Clearly, intensive migrations toward cities and the agro-industrial regions of Mexico and the United States do explain the greatest part of socio-economic progression, limited yet global, of large ethnic groups from northern and central Mexico (Nahuatl, Huasteco and Mixteco) and their integration into the working class. Finally, for the third group, the best socially and economically ‘integrated’ one, the articulation of two major factors can be advanced: access to education is combined with migration toward cities to allow for massive professional integration in the service sector. This has been the case for a long time among the Zapotecs (cf. Fig. 11.3) and the Purepechas whose long tradition of education has enabled their penetration into civil service and more recently, trade. With the development of tourism in the Yucatan and Quintana Roo, the Mayans have valorised their educational and cultural capital in this sector for about 20 years now. However, despite relatively high salaries in the national context, the parallel rise in the cost of living in tourist areas hinders their social mobility in the regional context,



**Fig. 11.3** Place of residence of zapoteco speakers at municipal (Municipes) level (Source: INEGI 2000, Micro datos—censo de población y vivienda 2000 <http://www.inegi.org.mx/sistemas/micro-datos2/default.aspx?c=14061&s=est>)

leading to migrations of greater distances (cf. Fig. 11.4). The Otomis and the Mazahuas, who generally do not have as much educational capital as the two previous groups, have been pioneers, following the Mixtecos and several Nahuatl groups, in the massive migration toward the country's large cities—Mexico City, Monterrey and Guadalajara—, then toward the border cities (Tijuana, Mexicali, Ciudad Juárez, etc.), where they work in artisan activities, industry and informal business, and more recently to the United States.

Therefore, overall, social and economic integration of the various indigenous groups of Mexico is to a large extent dependant on their mobility and capacity to interact with regions and social sectors that are better positioned in terms of technology, business, industry or access to infrastructure. However, despite these factors of social heterogeneity common to the indigenous and non-indigenous populations, it must be noted that with just nearly one exception, all the ethnic groups occupy an average socio-economic position below the average for the population of their state of origin. The only case where this relationship is the opposite is for the Zapotecs who are on average less marginalized than Oaxaca's population overall. The explanation is paradigmatic of the relationships between social differentiation, economic geography and ethnic segregation because it depends on a combination of three factors: their tradition for improved education going back further than any other groups; their position within the Mexican institutional apparatus since the nineteenth century (with the symbolic image of President Benito Juárez); their mobility toward cities and integration into the bureaucracy and teaching profession.



**Fig. 11.4** Place of residence of Maya speakers at municipal (Municipes) level (*Source*: INEGI 2000, Micro datos—censo de población y vivienda 2000 <http://www.inegi.org.mx/sistemas/micro-datos2/default.aspx?c=14061&s=est>)

## 11.4 Conclusion

The high level of segregation for the Mexican indigenous population has been verified by many anthropological and socio-demographic studies; the latter are most often based on synthetic demographic and poverty indexes (Fernández Ham 1993; Serrano Carreto et al. 2002; Lartigue and Quesnel (coords.) 2003). Our analysis enables a better understanding of the diversity and accumulation of factors related to economy, place of residence and migration, access to education and employment, etc., which determine the level of poverty of the indigenous population.

The sheer range of socio-economic inequalities between households involves the three dimensions that we have analyzed: (1) linguistic characteristics and household composition; (2) spatial segmentation of economic development; and (3) ethnic identity. Taken independently, each one produces considerable differentiation where the amplitude, nearly equal for the three, covers approximately two-thirds of the socio-economic scale conveyed by the first axis. However, the centres of gravity for the three clouds of points have clearly shifted. In increasing order of social conditions, the mean point for ethnic groups (all indigenous households based on speakers) is followed by the one for indigenous households (with or without speakers) and lastly the one for all Mexican households. This gap provides a measurement for the gross socio-economic

disadvantage for the different categories of indigenous households. Yet, the analysis also clearly reveals that ethnic identity does not act independently of other social differentiation factors. On the contrary, strong statistical relationships exist between the various gradients in the study. At the bottom of the social scale, the most traditional and homogeneous linguistic identity on the household level coincides with belonging to most underprivileged ethnic groups and living in territorial contexts that have experienced the most marginalization in terms of economic and social development. At the other extreme of the hierarchy are the most biologically and culturally mixed households and the most mobile or best integrated due to their migratory dynamics toward central and reticular spaces of economic activity and the most developed territories. Specifically how much does each factor (net differences) contribute in explaining the gross differences observed within and between all indigenous households?

Once again, the recurring question in sociological or anthropological studies regarding ethnic discrimination has been approached through descriptive statistics—and in concrete terms with the example of the Zapotecs. Is there an ethnic dimension—or even a ‘racial’ one as in the concept of racial domination developed by L. Wacquant (1997)—in the explanation of socio-economic segregation faced by the indigenous population? And if so, to what extent does ethnic discrimination plays a role in the process of segregation? When interpreting the differentials observed, careful consideration must be given to the interplay between spatial, historical, social and ethnic or racial factors. The statistical response implies to reason, all other things being equal, by controlling for all households the main variables that determine their social conditions: ‘individual’ variables (household composition, age and sex of HoH, educational level and type of employment for working population, migration, etc.) and contextual factors (geographic location of the place of residence, size of the locality, local socio-economic development indicator, ethnic context, social and political public movements, etc.). This approach consists of making inferences on explanatory factors by using linear or logistic models; however, this falls outside of this chapter’s framework.

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# Chapter 12

## Fuzzy Definitions and Demographic Explosion of Aboriginal Populations in Canada from 1986 to 2006

Éric Guimond, Norbert Robitaille, and Sacha Senecal

### 12.1 Introduction

In their common desire to conduct research and gather information on Aboriginal social issues, demographers and other specialists in populations, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, have often neglected two basic questions: Why is it so hard to define Aboriginal populations in Canada? How can the recent demographic explosion be explained? The answer to these questions is essential, since they play a significant role in the enumeration of Aboriginal populations (Which definition shall be used?), in the monitoring of their socio-economic characteristics (How shall recent trends be interpreted?) and in the development of policies and programs aimed at improving the living conditions of Aboriginal populations (Who are the recipients?). The purpose of this article is to examine these two fundamental questions using a demographic perspective.

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## 12.2 Fuzzy Definitions

Who are the Aboriginal people of Canada? Many definitions of the concept of ‘Aboriginality’ have been proposed over the years, and more so since the early 1980s, mirroring the growing awareness of Canadian society towards Aboriginal issues. However, to date, no definition has fully imposed itself. The Census of Canada, the only source of demographic and socio-economic data covering all Aboriginal groups in Canada, gathers information on four concepts: ethnic origin, self-identification as an Aboriginal person, Registered Indian status and membership to a First Nation. Such data serves to estimate the size and characteristics of Aboriginal populations in Canada, in whole or in part. The first three concepts, i.e. those appearing most often in definitions, are detailed below.

For the longest time, ethnic origin was the ethnocultural characteristic most widely used in Canada to establish Aboriginal affiliation. With the exception of 1891, all Canadian censuses since 1871 have enumerated Aboriginal populations by means of a question on ethnic origin. The concept of origin refers to the ethnic or cultural group to which a person’s ancestors belonged. In theory, this concept could serve to identify the descendants of populations who lived in America when Europeans arrived, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Robitaille and Choinière 1987). In reality however, since very few people have thorough knowledge of their ethnocultural genealogy, only a fraction of true descendants from pre-colonial Aboriginal peoples report an Aboriginal origin during a census. In addition to genealogy, census data on ethnic origin varies according to societal concerns in general<sup>1</sup> and the nature of the socio-political relations the Canadian society maintains (or not) with Aboriginal populations.<sup>2</sup> The Census of Canada shows that 1.678 million persons reported at least one Aboriginal origin in 2006.

Currently, the concept of Aboriginal identity is increasingly used to define affiliation to an Aboriginal group. Ethnic identity is a subjective indicator of a person’s affiliation to an ethnic group. Considering the growing ineffectiveness of objective indicators of ethnic affiliation (such as ‘real’ ethnic origins and mother tongue) for reasons of acculturation and exogamy, ethnic identity is one of the best ethnicity indicators available. The concept of Aboriginal identity emerged in 1986<sup>3</sup> with the goal of improving the enumeration of Aboriginal populations (Statistics Canada 1989). According to the Census of Canada, about 1.146 million persons self-identified as Aboriginal in 2006.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>As shown in the evolution of terms used to represent Aboriginal populations. See Goldmann (1993) and Guimond (2009a).

<sup>2</sup>As indicated by the absence of Métis in most censuses before 1981.

<sup>3</sup>The 1986 Census data on Aboriginal identity were never officially disseminated, partly because of reporting errors detected within the non-Aboriginal population (Créghneur 1988). The data on the Aboriginal identity of populations of Aboriginal origin are considered reliable (Guimond 1999).

<sup>4</sup>The official number of people of Aboriginal identity in the 2006 census published by Statistics Canada totalled 1,172,790 people. This number is based on the hybrid definition of Aboriginal

In Canada, like in many other countries with an Aboriginal population, there are legal definitions of Aboriginality (Lee 1990). The *Indian Act* is the main Canadian legislative document explicitly defining a specific subset of Aboriginal populations: Registered Indians (or Status Indians). The concept of Registered Indian was established to determine the right of residency on Indian reserves (Savard and Proulx 1982). The first version of the *Indian Act* in the confederative era dates back to 1876. Since then, the federal government has made several amendments to it. The latest amendments to the *Indian Act* were made in 1985. According to the Census of Canada, the population self-reporting as Registered Indian, as defined by the *Indian Act*, came to 623,780 persons in 2006.

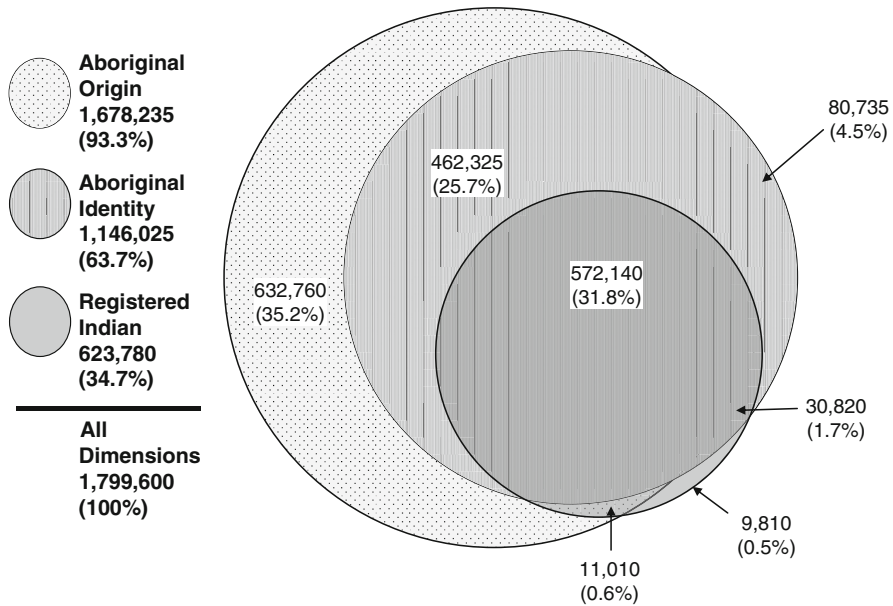
Intuitively, one would be led to believe that there is a ‘hierarchical structure’ to these three concepts of Aboriginality: the Registered Indian population could be a subset of the population with Aboriginal identity, which in turn could be a subset of the population with Aboriginal origin. However practical or logical this worldview may appear, the actual data shows a much more complex reality. Indeed, the populations as defined by these three concepts overlap in part (Fig. 12.1). Together, the concepts of Aboriginal origin, Aboriginal identity and Registered Indian define seven subsets of different sizes, the total of which comes to 1.8 million persons. The two largest subsets are composed of people self-reporting Aboriginal origin, Aboriginal identity and Indian legal status (572,140) and people reporting Aboriginal origin only (632,760). The other two ‘one-dimensional’ subsets—Aboriginal identity and Indian legal status only—respectively include 80,735 and 9,810 persons.

Admittedly complex for the layperson, this illustration of the fuzziness of ‘Aboriginal group boundaries’ between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations still hugely simplifies the reality. To further illustrate these ‘fuzzy group boundaries,’ Table 12.1 shows the Canadian population by Aboriginal origin and Aboriginal identity according to the 2006 Census. This table shows 15 different possible responses related to origin, covering single (e.g., North American Indian) and multiple (e.g., North American Indian and non-Aboriginal) responses. As for Aboriginal identity, the census question provided eight possibilities: North American Indian, Métis, Inuit, non-Aboriginal and four multiple Aboriginal responses (e.g., North American Indian and Métis). According to this ‘two-dimensional’ representation of Aboriginality, there would be 119 different ways to be an Aboriginal person in Canada, 17 times more than in the previous illustration of the fuzziness of ‘Aboriginal group boundaries.’ If we try to specify this representation by adding other dimensions, like Indian Status (Status or non-status) and membership to a First Nation (member or non-member), we arrive at a definition including 479 ‘types’ of Aboriginal people.

From this brief analysis of concepts and definitions, it is clear that there is no simple and single answer to this question: ‘Who is an Aboriginal person in Canada?’ Evidently, the concept of Aboriginality in Canada is multidimensional, with each

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identity that also includes people who did not declare an affiliation with an Aboriginal group but who were registered Indians under the Indian Act or who declared being a member of an Indian band or First Nation (Statistics Canada 2007).



**Fig. 12.1** Three dimensions of Aboriginality in Canada, 2006 (Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Canada, custom tabulations prepared by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada)

dimension showing a different population count and its own level of complexity. In other words, ‘Aboriginal group boundaries’ are fuzzy in Canada. But it was not always the case. At the time of ‘first contact’ between Aboriginal populations and European explorers, these ‘group boundaries’ were clearly defined. Why is it harder to define and enumerate Aboriginal populations today? The answer to this question is to be found in the concept of ethnic mobility, which we will develop further on.

### 12.3 Demographic Explosion

Another interesting observation resulting from the analysis of Census data is that, independently of the concept used to define Aboriginality, Aboriginal populations experienced a demographic explosion during the 1980s and 1990s. From 1986 to 2006, the size of the population with Aboriginal origin (Table 12.2) went from about 712,000 to 1.678 million people, an overall relative increase of 136 %, which is more than six times the relative increase observed for the population with non-Aboriginal origin (22 %). At this rate, the population with Aboriginal origin will easily total over two million people in 2011.

Growth varies significantly from one Aboriginal identity group to another. First, the North American Indian population, which accounts for nearly two-thirds of the population with Aboriginal identity, rose from 329,730 persons to 647,020 persons

**Table 12.1** Population by Aboriginal origin and Aboriginal identity, Canada, 2006

Aboriginal origin	Aboriginal identity							Non-Aboriginal identity
	Total	Total	North American Indian	Métis	Inuit	Multiple Aboriginal identities <sup>a</sup>		
Total	31,241,030	1,146,025	698,020	389,780	50,480	7,740	30,095,005	
Aboriginal/Total	1,678,235	1,034,470	647,020	330,735	49,635	7,080	643,760	
Aboriginal/Total single responses	630,425	563,895	443,785	80,345	38,855	905	66,530	
North American Indian	512,150	456,775	441,490	14,595	125	565	55,370	
Métis	77,295	67,910	2,005	65,595	10	300	9,385	
Inuit	40,975	39,205	290	155	38,720	35	1,770	
Aboriginal/Total multiple responses	1,047,810	470,580	203,235	250,385	10,780	6,175	577,235	
North American Indian and non-Aboriginal	693,355	258,065	188,545	67,385	60	2,070	435,290	
Métis and non-Aboriginal	285,755	161,725	3,045	157,740	10	940	124,020	
Inuit and non-Aboriginal	18,610	10,070	135	680	9,175	75	8,540	
Multiple Aboriginal/Total	50,090	40,715	11,510	24,580	1,535	3,090	9,375	

(continued)

Table 12.1 (continued)

Aboriginal origin	Total	Aboriginal identity						Non-Aboriginal identity
		Total	North American Indian	Métis	Inuit	Multiple Aboriginal identities <sup>a</sup>		
North American Indian and Métis	12,505	11,510	5,485	5,105	0	915	995	
North American Indian and Inuit	1,570	1,430	695	25	610	100	140	
Métis and Inuit	535	475	10	205	165	105	55	
North American Indian, Métis and Inuit	80	70	10	25	15	25	0	
North American Indian, Métis and non-Aboriginal	31,290	24,370	4,745	18,195	0	1,430	6,915	
North American Indian, Inuit and non-Aboriginal	2,505	1,770	555	325	570	325	730	
Métis, Inuit and non-Aboriginal	1,450	945	0	615	160	170	505	
North American Indian, Métis, Inuit and non-Aboriginal	165	140	10	85	25	20	20	
Non-Aboriginal/ Total	29,562,795	111,555	51,005	59,045	845	660	29,451,240	

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Canada, custom tabulations prepared by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

Note: <sup>a</sup>Includes the following multiple identities: North American Indian and Métis, North American Indian and Inuit, Métis and Inuit, and North American Indian, Métis and Inuit

**Table 12.2** Size and growth rate<sup>a</sup> for the Aboriginal origin population by Aboriginal identity, Canada, 1986–2006

Aboriginal origin/Aboriginal identity	Size						Average annual growth rate <sup>a</sup> (%)				
	1986	1991 <sup>b</sup>	1996	2001	2006		1986–91	1991–96	1996–01	2001–06	
Aboriginal origin/ Total	711,720	973,710	1,101,960	1,319,890	1,678,235		7.0	1.9	3.6	4.9	
Aboriginal identity/Total	464,455	613,870	718,950	867,415	1,034,470		6.6	2.3	3.7	3.6	
North American Indian	<b>329,730</b>	443,285	494,835	566,555	<b>647,020</b>		<b>7.1</b>	<b>0.9</b>	2.3	2.7	
Métis	<b>103,085</b>	128,700	178,525	250,140	<b>330,735</b>		5.1	6.7	7.0	5.7	
Inuit	30,105	35,495	39,705	44,625	<b>49,635</b>		3.4	2.3	2.4	2.2	
Multiple Aboriginal identity	1,540	6,385	5,880	6,095	7,080		33.4	-1.5	0.7	3.0	
Non-Aboriginal origin (in thousands)	24,310.3	25,991.4	27,426.2	28,319.1	29,562.8		7.8	1.2	3.4	7.3	
							1.2	1.1	0.8	0.9	

Sources: Statistics Canada, 1986, 1991, 2001 and 2006 censuses of Canada, custom tabulations prepared by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

Statistique Canada, 1991 Aboriginal People Survey, custom tabulations prepared by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

Note: <sup>a</sup>Adjusted Rates for partially enumerated Indian reserves and settlements. The rates shown differ from those calculated from official population counts

<sup>b</sup>The 1991 Census of Canada did not collect information on Aboriginal identity. Aboriginal identity data was collected through the 1991 Aboriginal People post-censal Survey (APS). According to the Census, the Aboriginal origin population totalled 1,002,675 persons in 1991



from 1986 to 2006, literally exploding during the first intercensal period (7.1 %). After 1991, growth (0.9 %) first dropped below that of the non-Aboriginal population (1.1 %), before returning to rapid growth for the last two periods (>2 %). The number of Métis more than tripled from 1986 (103,085) to 2006 (330,735) and the growth rate has accelerated from period to period. The Inuit population, with 49,635 persons in 2006, is not increasing as fast as the other two Aboriginal populations, but its growth rate is still two to three times higher than that of the non-Aboriginal population. Finally, for the population of Aboriginal origin without Aboriginal identity (i.e. descendents of Aboriginal people) from whom we expected a growth somewhere between that of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, given the mixed origins of a great majority of them, the rates posted during the first two intercensal periods are comparable to those of the Indian identity population.

The Aboriginal populations' growth rate approaches and sometimes largely exceeds the theoretical maximum of 5.5 % per year<sup>5</sup> for a population that is only subject to the natural movement of births and deaths which, in practice, is the case for these populations on the national scale.<sup>6</sup> A natural growth of 5.5 % per year involves a fertility of about 10 children per woman. The fertility of Indian, Métis and Inuit women varies from two to four children per woman (Norris et al. 1996). A population maintaining a growth rate of 5.5 % per year doubles every 13 years. After a hundred years, that population would be more than 200 times larger than at the outset.

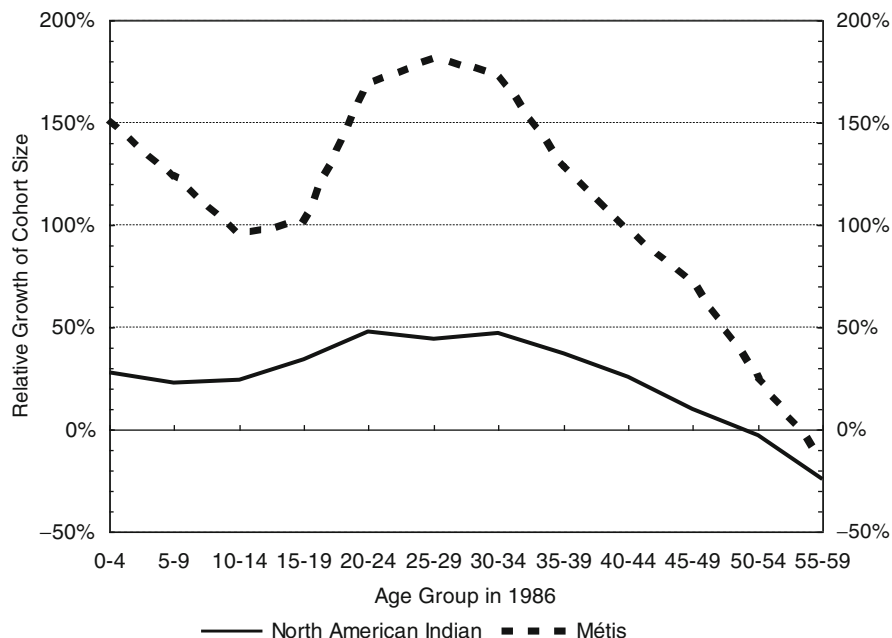
For North American Indian and Métis populations, which growth rate has exceeded 5.5 % per year, the longitudinal analysis of the size of cohorts from 1986 to 2006 shows increases that are impossible to explain just by the effect of natural increase and migration (Fig. 12.2). For a population that is practically closed to migration, the size of cohorts should decline year after year as a result mortality (<0 %). Yet for most cohorts of Indian and Métis identity, the complete opposite happens. Between 1986 and 2006, the relative growth of cohorts aged less than 55 is positive (>0 %), meaning that the number of individuals born the same year is increasing rather than decreasing! Among the Métis, cohorts aged from 15 to 44 in 1986 doubled (>100 %) during this period. Evidently, phenomena other than fertility, mortality and migration are at play here.

Every census a certain number of individuals are missed (undercoverage), while others are counted by mistake or more than once (overcoverage). The difference between these two quantities is called net undercoverage. If the net undercoverage rate varies, the growth measure derived from the comparison of a population's size

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<sup>5</sup>This rate is obtained from the highest gross birth rate (60 per 1,000 people; Pressat 1985, 246–247; Tapinos 1985, 227) observable in exceptional conditions—young population, married young and using no form of contraception—from which the lowest gross mortality rate is subtracted (5 per 1,000 people; United Nations 1997). Such a combination of high fertility and low mortality has probably never been observed.

<sup>6</sup>In practical terms, the contribution of international migration may be considered to be nil. In the Censuses of 1991 and 1996, less than 5,000 people of Aboriginal origin reported to be living outside the country 5 years before (Statistics Canada, special tabulations).



**Fig. 12.2** Relative growth (%) in the size of cohorts<sup>a</sup> of North American Indian and Métis identity populations, Canada, 1986–2006. Note: <sup>a</sup>Relative growth is calculated by dividing the size of a cohort aged  $x+20$  in 2006 by the size of a cohort aged  $x$  in 1986, minus 1. Relative growths are adjusted for partially enumerated Indian reserves and settlements (Source: Statistics Canada, 1986 and 2006 censuses of Canada, custom tabulations prepared by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada)

in two successive censuses is distorted.<sup>7</sup> If the net undercoverage rate is constant, we then have a ‘true’ measure of relative growth. On the basis of information available on the undercoverage of the population living on *fully enumerated* Indian reserves and settlements, there is no spectacular variation in count quality from 1991 to 2001: 12.6 % in 1991, 13.4 % in 1996, 10.4 % in 2001, and 10.6 % in 2006 (Guimond 2009a; Statistics Canada 2005, 2009a, b;). It may therefore be found that the demographic explosion of Aboriginal populations is not a statistical artefact resulting from variations in this type of coverage issue.

In addition to the undercoverage of the population, there is another type of coverage error, which is specific to Indian reserves and settlements. Since 1981, enumeration is not authorized, is interrupted or is simply incomplete in some Indian reserves and settlements. No census data is available for such Indian reserves and settlements. From one census to the next, the number of such Indian reserves and settlements varies, hence a problem of data comparability over time: eight communities during the 1981 Census, 136 in 1986, 78 in 1991, 77 in 1996, 30 in 2001, and 22 in

<sup>7</sup>If the net undercoverage rate varies, the error of estimates in population growth rates is proportional, but of the opposite sign of such a variation. An increase in undercoverage results in an under-estimate of growth, while a decrease in undercoverage results in an over-estimate of growth.

2006 (Guimond 2009a; Statistics Canada 2009a). This type of coverage error specifically affects data comparability for Aboriginal populations living on Indian reserves and settlements and as well, but to a lesser degree, data for all Aboriginal populations. The relative growth measures shown here (average annual growth rate, relative growth of cohorts) are adjusted to take this coverage issue into account.

Evidently, the observed growth of Aboriginal populations is not limited to fertility, mortality and migration, and is not simply the result of coverage errors. What is the cause of such extraordinary growth?

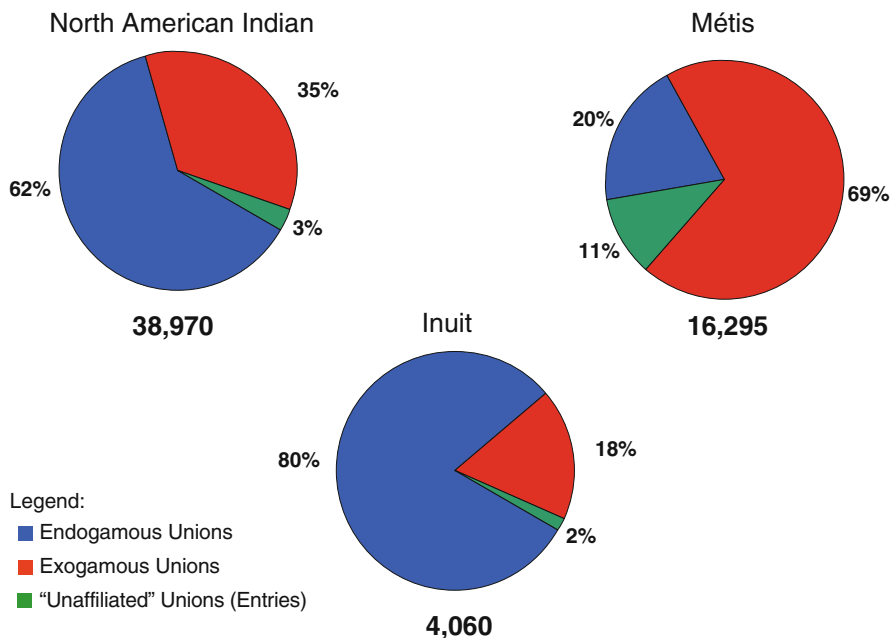
## 12.4 Ethnic Mobility

*Ethnic mobility* is the phenomenon by which changes in ethnic affiliation happen among individuals and families. Relative to a group, ethnic mobility is a multidirectional phenomenon, composed of entries and exits that supply or tap the group. Such changes in ethnic affiliation, or ethnic transfers, affect the size and characteristics of ethnic groups. Different terms are used in the scientific literature to designate that phenomenon: ethnic switching, passing, changing identities and changes in self-reporting of ethnic identity.

Two types of ethnic mobility are to be distinguished. The first, intergenerational ethnic mobility refers to the universe of families and may happen when a child's ethnic affiliation is reported for the first time. Parents and children do not necessarily have the same affiliation, especially when the parents themselves do not belong to the same ethnic group. Intergenerational ethnic mobility has long been a component of the demographic growth of Aboriginal populations in Canada. The Métis, the second largest Aboriginal population, are a 'product' of this type of ethnic mobility. Historical, geopolitical, commercial and cultural circumstances related to colonization of Western Canada led to the emergence of this third Aboriginal cultural entity, originally uniting descendents of North American Indians women and Europeans men, very often fur traders. By fostering the emergence of 'new types of Aboriginal people,' intergenerational ethnic mobility contributes to the imprecision of 'Aboriginal group boundaries' previously noted (Fig. 12.1, Table 12.1). If intergenerational ethnic mobility had not contributed to the demographic growth of Aboriginal populations there would be only two "types of Aboriginal people" and one "type of non-Aboriginal people", people which origin and identity are: (1) North American Indians, (2) Inuit or (3) non-Aboriginal. Moreover, the intergenerational ethnic mobility, is an ethnic mobility cumulated over several generations. In essence, such phenomenon reflects intergenerational ethnic mobility between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations since the initial contact,<sup>8</sup> wherefrom the presence of the Métis.

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<sup>8</sup>By simplifying a little, since there were undoubtedly multiple Aboriginal identities before Europeans arrived.

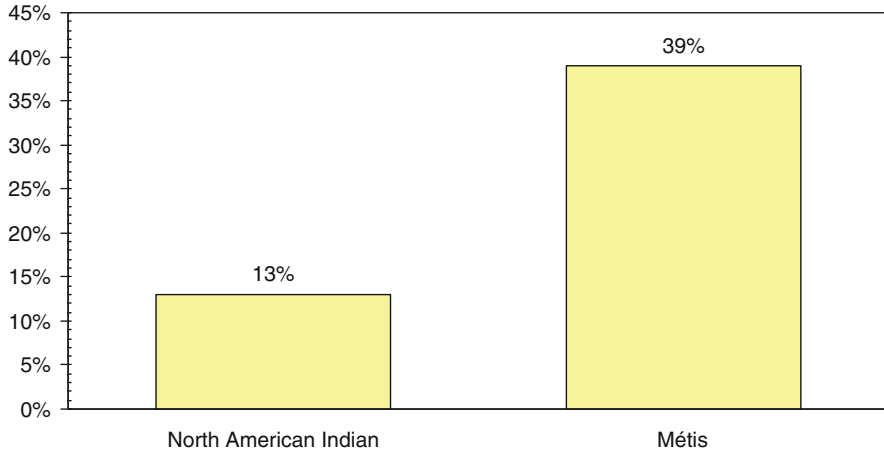


**Fig. 12.3** Distribution of children under age five according to the Type Union of Parents, by Aboriginal identity of the child, Canada, 2001 (Source: Robitaille et al. 2005)

On the basis of an analysis of 2001 Census data on children aged less than five in a census family<sup>9</sup> according to the Aboriginal identity of parents, Robitaille et al. (2005) further exemplified this specificity of the Métis group in two respects (Fig. 12.3). First, children of Métis identity are mainly from exogamous unions (i.e. only one parent belonging to the group) whereas North American Indian and Inuit children are mostly from endogamous unions (i.e. both parents belonging to the group). Secondly, one Métis child in nine is from a union where no parent has Métis identity ('unaffiliated' union). This specificity is part of the continuity of the Métis group's history, which is a blend of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people who, in the nineteenth century, developed a truly autonomous culture. In underscoring the significance of intergenerational ethnic mobility in the demographic reproduction of the Métis population, it has been shown that this population continues to benefit from a significant contribution due to intergenerational ethnic mobility.

The second type, intragenerational ethnic mobility, results from a change in the ethnic affiliation of a person over time. This type of ethnic mobility is responsible for the exceptional growth of Aboriginal populations from 1986 to 2006. Using the residual method, Guimond (2009a) estimated that close to 42,000 (13 %) Indians living outside the reserves in 2001 did not declare themselves to be Indian in 1986 and that over 101,000 Métis (39 %) in 2001 had not declared their Métis status in

<sup>9</sup>Corresponds to a married or common-law couple, with or without children, or a single parent living with at least one child in the same dwelling.



**Fig. 12.4** Proportion of the Aboriginal population in 2001 that did not self-identify as Aboriginal in 1986, Canada (Source: Guimond 2009a)

1986 (Fig. 12.4). A preliminary analysis of 2006 census data revealed a net ethnic mobility towards the Indian and Métis groups of 45,000 and 78,000 people, respectively, for the 2001–2006 intercensal period (Guimond 2009b). Among the Inuit, whose growth rate is much more modest, the contribution of intragenerational ethnic mobility appears to be negligible. Moreover, this type of mobility seems to occur almost exclusively (90 %) in urban areas.

The phenomenon of intragenerational ethnic mobility was also recognized among Aboriginal populations in the United States and Australia. In the United States, several researchers became interested in the exceptional demographic growth of the American Indian population observed between 1960 and 1990 (Passel 1996; Eschbach 1993; Eschbach et al. 1998). They unanimously found that changes in self-reporting of ethnic and racial affiliations are a significant component, sometimes the most significant, of the demographic growth observed in the American Indian population of the United States during this period. In Australia, it was observed that over half (51 %) of the total Aboriginal population growth during the 1991–1996 period is explained by variations in data quality (undercoverage and refusal to participate) combined with changes in ethnic affiliation reporting (Ross 1996).

Intragenerational ethnic mobility affected both the size and characteristics of Aboriginal populations. To fully appreciate the statistics on the living conditions of Aboriginal populations and communities, one must consider the possibility that intragenerational ethnic mobility is in part responsible for observed improvements. To illustrate this point, we rely on statistics pertaining to the highest level of education taken from the Canadian census. From 1996 to 2006, the number of Aboriginals aged 15 or over with a university degree increased by 177 %, from 17,235 to 48,015 people. As a result, the proportion of university graduates among the Aboriginal

**Table 12.3** Proportion and increase in the number of university graduates among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, Canada, 1996–2006

	Proportion (%) of the number of university graduates		Increase <sup>a</sup> (%) in the number of university graduates
	1996	2006	1996–2006
Population aged 15 and over			
Aboriginal	3.3 %	5.8 %	177.1 %
Non-Aboriginal	13.4 %	18.5 %	54.4 %
Cohort of people aged 35 and over in 1986			
Aboriginal	4.4 %	7.0 %	76.8 %
Non-Aboriginal	13.5 %	18.8 %	1.1 %

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 and 2006 censuses of Canada, custom tabulations prepared by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

Note: <sup>a</sup>Adjusted Rates for partially enumerated Indian reserves and settlements. The rates shown differ from those calculated from official population counts

population went from 3.3 to 5.8 %. By comparison, the number of non-Aboriginal graduates increased by 54 % during this period, while the proportion of university graduates (18.5 %) was three times greater than that observed among Aboriginals. These census statistics seem to indicate that more and more Aboriginal people successfully reach the upper levels of Canada's educational system.

Few people would question the beneficial effect of post-secondary education policies and programs, as well as its fostering educational success among Aboriginal people. However, the explanation for the increase observed in the number and proportion of university graduates is not limited to those two factors alone. Intragenerational ethnic mobility also contributed to this increase. In this regard, let us focus the analysis solely on cohorts who are at an age where, for all practical purposes, their schooling is completed, i.e. people aged 35 or over in 1996 (45 or over in 2006). If intragenerational ethnic mobility has no effect on the educational level of an ethnic group, then the number of university graduates within that cohort will remain virtually constant. That is the case for the non-Aboriginal population (Table 12.3): from 1996 to 2006, the number of non-Aboriginal university graduates among the cohort aged 35 or over in 1986 only increased by 1.1 %. Among Aboriginal populations, the number of university graduates rose by 77 % during this period, from 10,520 to 18,600 graduates, while the school attendance rate of Aboriginal people 35 and over in 1996 was only slightly higher than that of the non-Aboriginal population (7.8 % vs. 5.1 %). On the basis of this brief analysis, it is clear that people experiencing ethnic mobility toward Aboriginal populations in 1996 were more educated than people reporting an Aboriginal affiliation in 1996 and in 2006. A similar effect of intragenerational ethnic mobility was observed among American Indians in the United States (Eschbach et al. 1998).

Though there is no definitive explanation for ethnic mobility among North American Indian, Métis, Inuit and non-Aboriginal populations in Canada, three types of factors may be considered (Guimond 2009a). First, there are *predisposing demographic factors*. In Canada's main urban centres, people of various ethnocultural affiliations meet, form couples and have children. Given their mixed ethnocultural origins, once they are adults those children may 'choose' their ethnic affiliation, and such a choice may vary depending on the circumstances. In a nutshell, mixed origins could favour intragenerational ethnic mobility.

*Social factors* could also foster intragenerational ethnic mobility toward Aboriginal populations. Different socio-political events—spontaneous like the Oka crisis in the summer of 1990 or organized like the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples from 1991 to 1996—as well as their media coverage raised public awareness and contributed to restoring Aboriginal people's pride. Increased public attention and an improved overall perception Aboriginal people have of themselves could therefore have induced some people to report to be Aboriginal people.

Finally, *political and legal decisions* could also further foster ethnic mobility toward Aboriginal populations, especially if such decisions have spin-offs considered to be favourable. For example, the 1985 amendments to the *Indian Act* had a considerable demographic impact on the size and growth of the Registered Indian population: on December 31, 2000, 114,512 people had acquired (or reacquired) Indian status under the 1985 amendments (INAC 2002). In addition to those amendments to the *Indian Act*, territorial claim settlements and employment equity policies are also likely to generate ethnic mobility.

## 12.5 Concluding Remarks

Aboriginal affiliation is not necessarily permanent and is not automatically transferred to the next generation. As a consequence, 'group boundaries' are becoming increasingly fuzzy, and statistical definitions of Aboriginal populations in Canada are increasingly divergent with respect to the related population counts. Ethnic mobility is also the main component of the recent demographic explosion of North American Indian and Métis populations. Excluding ethnic mobility from the analytical framework of the demography of Aboriginal populations prevents an accurate understanding of the imprecision of definitions, the increase in estimates and the recent population growth. The very existence of the Métis, born of the contact between North American Indians and European colonizers, justifies a four-component analysis of the demographic reproduction of Aboriginal populations in Canada: (1) natural increase, (2) migration, (3) variation in the quality of population counts, and (4) ethnic mobility.

Could we experience another episode of spectacular growth among Aboriginal populations triggered by ethnic mobility? Because of the limited knowledge of this phenomenon, it is impossible to predict. Nobody foresaw the demographic boom of the 1980s and 1990s. With hindsight, it is observable that large-scale events

with much media coverage unfolded at the same time. If such events triggered the demographic explosion, then future events, especially legal decisions that would grant special rights to certain people, may generate a new wave of ethnic transfers within the population. In this regard, it will be interesting to see how the Métis, an Aboriginal group born of intergenerational ethnic mobility, whose growth continues to amply benefit from this phenomenon, will evolve demographically over the coming years. If the experience of the American Indians of the United States is a sign of what is yet to come—positive contribution of intragenerational ethnic mobility to population growth between 1960 and 1990—it can be expected that ethnic mobility will contribute significantly to the growth of Aboriginal populations in Canada long into the new millennium. More generally, the multicultural composition of Canadian cities will without a doubt be fertile ground for future ethnic mobility and for the growing fuzziness of ‘group boundaries.’ In all likelihood, a growing number of urbanites with different ethnocultural affiliations, including Aboriginal people, will form couples and raise children in a multicultural family setting. How children from ‘mixed’ families consider their ethnic affiliation once they are adults will have a considerable impact on the ethnic composition of our cities and more generally Canadian society.

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