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Social Identities in Mexican Statistics

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Statistics, generated by censuses, represent knowledge of society and environment used in the government of complex hierarchical societies. In this article we discuss the changing ways that censuses have reflected and constructed corporeal and cultural difference in Mexico. We show that shifts in conceptualizing and identifying racial and ethnic groups in Mexico are associated with larger social dynamics, and our history of these determinations is organized according to a series of periods—colonial, mercantile; Porfirian; revolutionary; and neoliberal—that chart changes in political economy as well as shifts in census categories and statistical tools. Second, we point out a shift in the representational technologies of statistics from encyclopedic forms to enumerative forms that occurred in Mexico in the last decades of the nineteenth century. We trace categories of difference across the transition from encyclopedic to enumerative statistics and also describe a shifting balance in the content of those categories among linguistic, cultural and corporeal qualities.

Keywords: statistics; Mexico; race; census

During the past few decades social movements organized around social identities based on ethnic and racial categories have surged to the front of national politics in Latin America. Categories such as *blanco*, *negro*, mestizo, *indigena* (to name only a few) are deployed, learned and contested in the context of all kinds of concrete struggles over land, community, autonomy, memory, and more. One key arena in which these cultural battles are played out is the census. Censuses are made by rulers to count people, places and things over which they rule and for arranging the disposition of things (people, objects, social relations) within territories.[1] Knowledge of land tenure, production, able-bodied men and the like is useful to those who hope to collect taxes, raise armies, fight opponents both within the group and without and otherwise take advantage of the human and natural resources of the world. Such knowledge, when public, serves to generate ideas among the very people who are counted. Furthermore, the taking of censuses is a public display of the reach and grasp of government, for a state must already be consolidated enough to deploy a large number of agents in the job of surveying, questioning, describing, and recording. Censuses thus both contribute to, and demonstrate, power.[2] It is no wonder, then, that the categories measured by the census are hotly contested.[3]

In this article we discuss censuses within a larger history of statistics. Statistics is knowledge of society and environment used in the government of complex hierarchical societies: hence the state in statistics. Rulers have always had to know about the people and places they rule, but during the modern period since the sixteenth century, the creation of nation states and representative and bureaucratic forms of government have been accompanied by an ever-increasing production of statistics of a modern kind.[4] Michel

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Foucault stimulated much of the recent historiography of statistics by outlining the connections between statistics and the art of government in modernity.[5] Statistics generates the data, analytical techniques, and terrain of intervention for government, which has gradually permeated the state and its functions since the eighteenth century, and has identified new objects of analysis and new planes of intervention such as the economy and population. Understanding and managing epidemics, commodity flows, or the social groups and tensions generated by capitalism as well as the grand, national and global scales of these new social and environmental facts requires systematic abstract data about individuals, and techniques of analysis that enable aggrupation, comparison, equivalency, and commensuration of data at these scales.[6]

The most important way to generate and present statistics is perhaps the census, and here we discuss the changing ways that censuses have reflected and constructed corporeal and cultural difference in Mexico. We analyze this history using two analytical frameworks. First, we show that shifts in conceptualizing and identifying racial and ethnic groups in Mexico are associated with larger social dynamics, such as the growth of capitalism, national independence in 1821, the Revolution of 1910–1920, postrevolutionary state formation, and the rise of neoliberalism. Our history of these determinations is organized according to a series of periods: colonial, mercantile; porfirian; revolutionary; and neoliberal.[7] This periodization charts changes in political economy, but is also a heuristic tool that highlights shifts in census categories and statistical tools. Second, we point out a simultaneous, yet less recognized, shift in the representational technologies of statistics from encyclopedic forms to enumerative forms. This transition is found in Europe around 1820, but it occurred in Mexico in the last decades of the nineteenth century.[8] Furthermore, the transition was never complete, and for reasons that will be discussed Mexican censuses continue to rely on a mixture of the two forms.

Categories of difference have since colonial times been of key importance to the justification and maintenance of socioeconomic divisions in Mexico and Mexican censuses have delineated difference on shifting combinations of ideas about lineage, place of birth, physical appearance, blood, ideas, material culture, language and other markers that first came together in the *casta* system. When Mexico became an independent nation in 1822, the old social order and classification of its inhabitants was replaced by liberal notions of universal citizenship, private property and nationhood. Legally all *casta* identities were replaced by the figure of the universal citizen, but three dominant categories would persist in everyday practice as well as in statistics: White/European, Indigenous and Mestizo.[9] Indigenous communities lost their legal status as *Repúblicas de Indios* (Republics of Indians) and the mixed and black populations were clumped together as Mestizos. Following Mexico's war with the United States (1846–1848), and the subsequent loss of half of its territory, a strengthened national sentiment grew, especially among Mexican elites, and national symbols were used to create a sense of belonging and unity in a society profoundly divided due to many years of internal conflict.[10] It is in this period when the idea of the universal, mixed, mestizo subject emerged as a positive figure of national identity. *Mestizaje* was also an anti-colonial and anti-imperial discourse that was given a progressive valence to combat ideas of the superiority of purity and 'whiteness' emanating from Europe and the United States.[11]

Another continuity between the colonial and early national period was that most statistical knowledge was encyclopedic; it was descriptive, narrative and pictorial, and sought a broad, integrated understanding of places and the things and people within them. But beginning in the 1880s, economic development and the consolidation of a government bureaucracy under President Porfirio Diaz (1876–1880; 1884–1911) demanded and

99   enabled the production of enumerative statistics that was focused on narrower categories
100   and was much more quantitative. Ian Hacking has shown that the expansion of
101   governments and bureaucracies in the nineteenth century gave rise to a 'vast avalanche' of
102   statistical knowledge in Europe, and a concurrent popularization of statistical concepts
103   such as population, type and normal.[12] This trend was replicated in Latin America, with
104   many of the countries conducting their first modern national census around the 1870s.[13]

105   While the first population census of Mexico was taken in 1790, the first modern,
106   national enumerative census was raised in 1895, about twenty years after the first wave of
107   censuses in Latin America. Historians have begun to explore the histories of the prominent
108   actors and institutions who participated in the constitution and professionalization of
109   enumerative Mexican statistics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, linking this
110   knowledge to the formation of the nation-state, and the development of capitalist social
111   relations.[14] Although population censuses are an example of this new enumerative mode
112   of statistics, they often deploy categories of social identity with roots in the earlier phase of
113   encyclopedic statistics.

114   We trace categories of difference across the transition from encyclopedic to
115   enumerative statistics, and also describe a shifting balance in the content of those
116   categories among linguistic, cultural and corporeal qualities. From the colonial period to
117   1895, physical corporeal difference understood as a result of heredity was a key variable
118   that statistics measured, although the racial categories changed over time from a system of
119   *castas* that identified exponential ramifications of mixture between Spaniards, Blacks
120   (Africans) and Indigenous, to the modern versions of race that perceived the national
121   population to be an emergent dynamic among Europeans, Indians and Mestizos. With the
122   rise of enumerative statistics and the first national census in 1895, markers of indigenous
123   and mestizo were chosen that were easy to count. Language was and is the most widely
124   accepted marker, as it seems to obey a simple Spanish/Indigenous binary. Needless to say,
125   blackness and afrodescendant ethnicity, which was so important in the colonial *casta*
126   system and documentation, disappeared from this equation.

127   *Mestizaje* took on a wider definition after the Revolution, as scholars and state officials
128   such as Jose Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio blamed rebellion on cultural, racial and
129   socioeconomic differences, and imagined the remedy to be a uniform citizenry forged
130   from that diversity. Like Brazil's idea of 'Racial Democracy'[15] the postrevolutionary
131   mestizo project was seen as a model of equality and justice in which the old caste-like
132   system would be erased by a mixing of population that favored whitening processes and a
133   class-based social organization. A concept of unity based on mixture, *mestizaje* exhibited a
134   number of 'paradoxes of hybrid homogeneity', to use Alexandra Stern's apt phrase.[16] It
135   provided a way to forge ideas of equality while maintaining an economy based on
136   dramatic inequality, and justified differentiated development policies for economic
137   regions considered racially and culturally different.[17] And because the project of *mestizaje*
138   was predicated on the existence of the Indian, it gave rise to an indigenous policy
139   (*Indigenismo*) that reinforced ideas about corporeal and cultural difference.[18] For the
140   enumerative statistics of the census, one paradox of hybrid homogeneity was the need to
141   revive encyclopedic categories to enumerate these differences. A related tension existed
142   between those who would allow people to identify themselves with those categories, and
143   the scientific push to devise ways to measure the real character of the population. This
144   latter approach dominated, and language remained the most important marker of racial and
145   ethnic difference in the censuses.

146   Beginning in the 1960s and gaining strength through 1980s, the integrationist policies
147   of the state in Mexico were shaken by a deep economic crisis, the visible resistance of

148 indigenous people, pressure for democratization, and a growing critique of post-
149 revolutionary national ideology and identity.[19] In this context a renewed pluralist
150 recognition of Mexico's cultural and ethnic diversity emerged.[20] In the decade of 1990s,
151 the project of national *mestizaje* was questioned and denounced as hegemonic and
152 totalizing, and debates over the 1992 Quincentennial generated new perspectives on the
153 origins of Mexico, ranging from a diplomatic position that proposed the 'commemoration
154 of the encounter of two worlds' to more radical postures that talked about slavery and
155 genocide or questioned the idea of only two worlds.[21] The eruption of the Zapatista Army
156 in 1994 turned official pluralism on its head. The demands by self-identified indigenous
157 people for autonomy and self-determination were a reminder that the heart of the problem
158 was not the recognition of the country's cultural and linguistic plurality but rather social
159 inequality and the political and economic domination of indigenous people. The censuses,
160 however, continue to use language to identify difference, although there is a tendency to
161 rely increasingly on ethnic self-adscription in the identification of indigenous people.

Colonial Censuses

165 Census procedures and categories found in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in
166 Mexico can trace some origins to the colonial period. Statistics was, for Spain, an imperial
167 undertaking. Between 1530, shortly after the discovery of the Americas, and 1812, on the
168 eve of independence, the Spanish Crown repeatedly ordered Viceroyal governments to
169 collect statistical data on the people, places and resources of the Americas—some thirty
170 times altogether.[22] The Consejo de las Indias created questionnaires (*cuestionarios*) used
171 to generate information, and these were then passed along to local and regional authorities.
172 Sometimes these *cuestionarios* were modeled on ones used in Spain. These *cuestionarios*
173 and the *Relaciones Geográficas* that were based upon the answers to them prioritized
174 information about political economy, but they also generated population lists (*padrones*
175 *poblacionales*) about the population of New Spain.

176 Before conquest indigenous nobles extracted and redistributed labor and resources
177 from their subjects. The Spanish inserted themselves into the apex of power in these
178 situations, maintaining for some time the autonomy of allied indigenous nobility and
179 organizing the indigenous people into Republics of Indians in a form of indirect rule. The
180 massive death of indigenous people during the first decades after contact created serious
181 labor shortages for the Spaniards and they soon turned to importing slaves from Africa.
182 In Mexico, the expansion of commercial sugar agriculture and the opening of silver mines
183 propelled the further importation of African slaves. Alongside Spaniards, Indians and
184 Africans there were children of Spaniards born in Mexico, called *criollos*,[23] who did not
185 enjoy the same social or legal status as those born in Europe, a distinction that, like the
186 distinctions between all these groups, was carefully monitored by the Spanish Viceregal
187 government.

188 The political economy was based on social categories even before the conquest.
189 Tribute was the principal form of economic redistribution in the prehispanic as well as
190 colonial period, and many of the indigenous codices (books of paintings) accounted for
191 tribute from culturally, linguistically and geographically distinct subject groups. The
192 colonial government also had an office that managed tribute, the Contaduría General de
193 Tributos, and it created volumes of statistics including lists of tributaries.[24] Thus, the
194 colonial tributary economy depended on the statistical identification of subjects as
195 indigenous, Spaniard or African. The questionnaire for the *Relación Geográfica* of 1534,
196 for example, asked for descriptions of tribute and tributary relations among indigenous

197 people.[25] These relations were not only economic, and in the sphere of politics the Spanish
198 utilized the existing indigenous social organization to govern, creating in 1521 the
199 Republic of Indians, a political system alongside the Republic of Spaniards. Clearly, this
200 mode of governing, along with the *encomienda* and other labor and tribute systems,
201 required systematic information about subjects. The first line of the 'Instructions' for
202 raising the 1548 *Relación Geográfica of Tlaxcala*, for example, asks colonial officials to
203 'make a list of the Spanish people and Indian people of your jurisdiction'.[26] They were
204 then asked to answer a series of questions concerning territory, inhabitants and resources.
205 The *Relación* takes the form of a long descriptive narrative, including aspects of the
206 history of Tlaxcala, and there is almost no enumerative information presented.

207   Within a few generations of conquest, the categories of Indigenous, African, and
208 Spaniard—each with its own legal and social status—gave way to all the possible mixtures
209 imaginable, condensed and represented in the 16 categories of the *casta* system. The *casta*
210 system was a series of 16 categories (Mestizo, Mulatto, *Castizo*, *Morisco*, *Lobo*, and so
211 on)[27] that were formally based on genealogy, lineage and physical appearance but also
212 connoted the moral qualities of faith, honor and purity at the heart of Iberian notions of
213 *limpieza de sangre*.[28] The categories were ordered hierarchically, with Spaniard at the top
214 and African at the bottom, and there could be mobility across generations. The African
215 ancestry of castas such as mulattos and *moriscos* was considered a hereditary stain that
216 would continue to reassert itself, while Spaniard and Indian were considered more
217 compatible and better. A number of the categories were not used in everyday life and seem
218 to be the capricious fancy of typologizing intellectuals. However the continued existence
219 of the overall typology and its use in colonial government belies a general worry about the
220 maintenance of the unstable socio-economic boundaries of colonial society.

221   By the seventeenth century *casta* paintings became a genre of their own,[29] but it was in
222 the eighteenth century that the penchant to classify and catalogue surged along the lines
223 presented by natural scientists such as Linnaeus and Buffon. The *sistema de castas* was
224 rooted in genealogy, and pictorial representations of the *castas* included information about
225 the bodies, occupations, material culture and regional setting of the different casta groups,
226 as well as commentary about the antagonistic relationships between social groups.[30] That
227 the earliest prototypes of *casta* paintings were produced by Manuel Arrelano in 1711 is
228 evidence that the classification effort and its categories had local as well as peninsular
229 roots. Also, while the *casta* of every person was recorded in the documents of state and
230 church at key moments—baptisms; weddings; funerals—and followed an individual
231 through their life, there is some evidence of categorical flexibility and social mobility.[31]

232   Casta categories became increasingly important in Mexican statistics as the colonial
233 period progressed, a tendency that coincided with the rise of enumerative statistical
234 strategies. The 1790 Census (also referred to as the 1793 Revillagigedo Census) was the
235 first modern census of the region that would become Mexico upon independence in 1821.
236 Five categories appeared in the final elaboration of the census: European, Spaniard, Indio,
237 *mulato*, and 'other *castas*'. However, in a document presented as a model for gathering
238 information in the field (the *padrón*), we find a much wider array of categories: *gachupín*,
239 *lobo, loba*, y *coyote*. Because households of Spaniards (and other elites) usually included
240 servants, the *casta* designations were combined with occupational labels, such as *mulato*
241 *cochero*.[32] Thus in the *padrón* we see a combination of encyclopedic and enumerative
242 statistics. Alexander Von Humboldt utilized the 1790 census, along with his own archival
243 research, to approximate demographic trends and population numbers in the Americas.
244 His 1811 treatise *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain* set the model for
245 subsequent efforts to produce statistics of Mexico.

460   *E. Saldívar and C. Walsh*

Figure 1. Casta Painting, Anonymous. Wikimedia Commons. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e8/Casta_painting_all.jpg Retrieved 14 April 2013.

Mercantile Statistics

With Independence, in April of 1822 the government decreed the creation of a general statistics of the new nation state for the purpose of assigning functionaries to territorial units, but this did not come to pass. The nineteenth century saw a few general censuses published,

including that of Antonio José Valdés in 1831, but these were really collections of local censuses, or approximations not based on a national survey.[33] There were also more specific censuses created; Mexico City's government raised a *padrón* of inhabitants numerous times in the nineteenth century, for example. However, no systematic national population census was achieved until 1895, mostly because the constant conflicts between ruling factions and the instability of the national government in Mexico during the nineteenth century made such an effort impossible. It was simply too difficult to carry out such an exercise on that scale. Nevertheless, scholars continued to produce what Ricardo Salvatore has called 'mercantile' statistics,[34] the kind of wide-ranging information about population and territory characterized by the *Relaciones Geográficas* or Humboldt's *Political Essay*.

After the *casta* system and slavery were officially abolished in 1829, *casta* categories were largely abandoned in registers of births, marriages and deaths. Concepts of bodily, geographical and cultural difference continued to thrive, however, under the rubric of race. The idea of nation was political and geographical, but also corporeal and cultural. In this context, *casta* was folded into, and eclipsed by, race as the register upon which difference was evaluated. And while *casta* was a technology of governing socioeconomic boundaries that was derived from ideas about the history of conquest and the genealogy of families, race was a concept that oriented ideas about the evolution of national populations.

In 1853 the Mexican *Secretaría de Fomento* (Ministry of Development) was created under the tutelage of Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, and between 1861 and 1872 Antonio García Cubas conducted four statistical surveys for Fomento, commissioned in part to determine the effects of the land reform legislation drafted by Lerdo de Tejada. These surveys provided the data for a series of publications on the material riches of Mexico, but the population is the primary subject of *The Republic of Mexico* (1876). In his representation of the people of Mexico, García Cubas integrated geographical, social, corporeal and cultural elements, identifying three racially, culturally and regionally defined groups of Mexicans: 'the white race and more direct descendants of the Spaniards, the mixed race and the Indian race'.[35] The statistically derived concept of type is of central importance to the representations in García Cubas' 1876 book. The types discussed below are portrayals of populations by representative instances of those populations; they are examples of imagined statistical means. Types were also characterized by occupation, a key category in the *cuestionarios* of the *Relaciones Geográficas*, as well as the *casta* paintings and the census of 1790, that remained at the heart of statistical understandings of ethnic and racial diversity. For example, the middle image in Figure 2 is labelled 'Washerwoman and Servants, Guard with bullion from Real del Monte,' a mining area near Pachuca, Hidalgo.

The Republic of Mexico shows how the idea of the mestizo, or mixed race, replaced the baroque classification of the sixteen *castas* used in the colonial period. Most Mexicans in the middle classes were mestizos, García Cubas said, who adopted the civilized 'habits and customs of their white brethren'.[36] This meant that Mexico could assert a decent standing in the global hierarchy of national races, and that the indigenous people and their culture were bound to eventually disappear. However, because of the weakness of state apparatus during most of the nineteenth century, mercantile statisticians did not generate a numerical national census that measured these racial categories. Nevertheless, they continued to discuss and adjust the categories that would be used once such a national census was again possible.

Porfirian Censuses

In 1882 the Mexican government's statistical agency was re-founded as the *Dirección General de Estadística* (General Directorate of Statistics) within the *Ministerio de*

Figure 2.   Mexican Types. Garcia Cubas, Antonio. 1876. *The Republic of Mexico in 1876: A Political and Ethnographic Division of the Population, Character, Habits, Customs and Vocations of Its Inhabitants*. México: La Enseñanza.

Fomento. The encyclopedic kind of statistics gave way to a set of specialized, professional academic disciplines institutionalized in universities, museums, and state agencies. Mexican statisticians, who had previously dedicated themselves to producing general useful knowledge, either continued to produce pictorial and narrative representations in disciplines such as anthropology and geography, or turned to the enumerative style, focusing their attention on discerning social facts of this developing society: production, profit, imports and exports, currency exchange, labor migration, etc. The Porfirian era also witnessed the blossoming of bureaucracies that generated statistical information, and it was again possible to raise a national census. In 1895 the Mexican government raised the first general, national population census since 1790. This began a series of decadal

393 population censuses, which have only been interrupted once since—the 1920 census was
394 deferred to 1921 because of the upheaval of the Mexican Revolution. The censuses of
395 1895, 1900, and 1910 show statistical tendencies we are characterizing as porfirian in this
396 article.
397   The differences between the 1790 census and those beginning in 1895 reflect dramatic
398 differences in statistical practices and categories. As always, the census was a total effort
399 that was meant to count everyone: those who refused to be counted could be fined or
400 sentenced to prison for up to a month. And, as always, the 1895 census located citizens in
401 space—in houses, families, municipalities and states—and determined their occupations.
402 But rather than a long governmental process that originated in Europe and was slowly
403 carried out by increasingly local representatives of the church and crown in the Americas,
404 the 1895 census was to be raised in two moments. The registry of houses and inhabitants
405 was scheduled during a single week: 1–8 August 1895. The data about the population
406 (sex, age, language and so on) was to be raised one day (20 October) by an army of
407 employees working for the national state. Simultaneity was a key feature of the 1895 and
408 subsequent censuses; all the data of all the people was to be counted at once, to freeze the
409 data in time and ensure comparability. The calculus of difference was also dramatically
410 reworked from the colonial period to the eve of the twentieth century. The arcane system
411 of *castas*, instrumental in the colonial political economy if administratively unwieldy, was
412 gone. The sequel concept of race, so important in García Cubas' discussion of the Mexican
413 population, was also absent (except for the 1921 census, discussed below), displaced from
414 the enumerative assessment of the population and reformulated in both folkloric and
415 scientific modes in the disciplines of anthropology and geography.
416   To mark cultural and biological difference in a way that would serve the art of
417 governance of the developmentalist Mexican national state, the censuses of 1895, 1900
418 and 1910 isolated language as the central variable, listing Spanish, indigenous language or
419 other foreign language.[37] Nevertheless, different criteria were used in each census to
420 register indigenous languages, and thus the number of languages varied from census to
421 census.[38] The 1895 questionnaire asked the census-taker to determine the 'habitual
422 language: castilian (Spanish) or indigenous language; mexican o náhuatl, zapotec, otomí,
423 tarascan, maya, huscateco, totonaco, etc. (idioma habitual: Castellano o idioma indigena;
424 mexicano o nahuatl, zapoteco, otomi, tarasco, maya, huscateco, totonaco, etc.)'. The
425 instructions went further, considering the possibility that the 'native tongue that is
426 commonly spoken (lengua nativa que se habla comúnmente)' could be another European
427 language such as French or English. What is particularly interesting about the recording of
428 language by the census is that in the case of bilingual speakers, Spanish (castellano, or
429 Castilian) was to be recorded. Indigenous people with even a smattering of Spanish were
430 recorded as Spanish speakers, resulting in a certain underrepresentation of the indigenous
431 population in Mexico. Regardless, the 1895 census counted approximately 2 million
432 monolingual speakers of indigenous languages; some 16% of all Mexicans (Figure 3;
433 Figure 4).
434   The Mexican state also showed an inordinate eagerness to measure the number of non-
435 Spanish European nationalities and languages in the country. In the results of the census,
436 we find that there was one speaker of Flamenco, one of Catalan, two of Polish, and so on:
437 numbers so small that they would seem inconsequential to the state in its efforts to
438 govern.[39] This detailed assessment of languages was aligned with a broader interest in the
439 census for listing the *nacionalidad* of each inhabitant, which was also aimed at people of
440 foreign origin. Here the idea of nation is based on territory, but goes beyond a legal status
441 to include cultural and biological essence, because the census taker was told to ask 'those
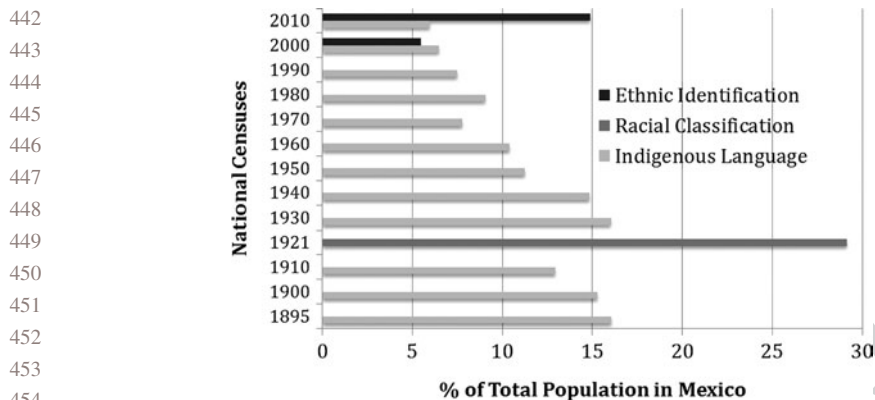
464   *E. Saldívar and C. Walsh*

Figure 3.   Ethnicity, Race and Language in Mexican Censuses, 1895–2010. Source: Estados Unidos Mexicanos. Cien Años de Censos de Población. INEGI. 1996; INEGI.gob.mx, INEGI, 2000, 2010.

who have naturalized which nation they belong to and from which they have obtained the naturalization'.[40] By the 1900 census the idea of nation took a legal connotation, related directly to naturalization rather than territorial or biological origins.

As in the case of language, the questions about foreign nationality generated tiny numbers. The seeming imbalance in the data set can be understood as a product of the statistical effort to count every citizen. But the desire to register foreign nationalities in the census can also be seen as a lingering concern about the social effects of colonization that García Cubas promoted but which, numerically, came to virtually nothing (González, 1960).[41] At the same time, however, the fact that the secession of Texas from Mexico in the 1830s and 1840s was led by Europeans colonists was likely a cause of concern for the Mexican state. Finally, the Census takers were measuring the advance of *mestizaje*,

Census Year	Indigenous language speaker (ILS)	Race/Ethnic identification	ILS that do not selfascribed as member of an Ethnic Group	Ethnic self-adscription that are not ILS
1895	16.06	-----	-----	-----
1900	15.27	-----	-----	-----
1910	12.93	-----	-----	-----
1921	12.7	-----	-----	-----
1930	-----	29.15	-----	-----
1940	14.83	-----	-----	-----
1950	11.24	-----	-----	-----
1960	10.39	-----	-----	-----
1970	7.76	-----	-----	-----
1980	9.04	-----	-----	-----
1990	7.48	-----	-----	-----
2000	7.1	6.2	1.2	1.3
2010	6.6	14.86		9.31

Figure 4.   Percentage of Indigenous Speakers and Race/ Ethnic Identification. Source: Estados Unidos Mexicanos. Cien Años de Censos de Población. INEGI. 1996; INEGI.gob.mx, INEGI, 2000, 2010.

491 assuming that through a process of social evolution people and languages from Europe
492 were gaining ground on the indigenous. But while the 1895 census may have posited the
493 basis of the Mexican nation to be *mestizaje* (a concept that was by 1900 firmly entrenched
494 among Mexican intellectuals such as Garcia Cubas and Andrés Molina Enríquez[42]), it did
495 not measure that mixed category in language. People were either Spanish speakers or not.
496 This was to soften in the 1921 census, which recorded all languages spoken by an
497 individual, but which took care to mention that Spanish was the official language.

498 As the domain of statistical knowledge increasingly came to be expressed through
499 numerical representations, and the discipline of statistics focused on the emergent social
500 facts of managerial capitalism, the analysis of bodies and culture that was found in
501 mercantile statistics was taken on by other disciplines such as anthropology and
502 archaeology. Anthropology in Mexico emerged in the late-nineteenth century as the direct
503 heir of the general, useful knowledge that characterized earlier, mercantile statistics. The
504 separation of different strains of statistical thought in different disciplinary and
505 institutional settings in Mexico became even clearer during the long process of revolution
506 and state formation that began in Mexico around 1910. Nevertheless, anthropologists and
507 others who practiced more encyclopedic social science participated actively in both the
508 generation of statistics through formulating census questionnaires, and by working in the
509 state institutions that carried out the censuses.

Revolutionary Censuses

513 Revolution and state formation became the overarching problematic of government for
514 national elites in twentieth-century Mexico. Mexico was awash in violence from the
515 dissolution of the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz in 1911 until 1920 when the first of a series
516 of strongmen from Northern Mexico slowly reestablished control over the country. During
517 and after the revolution intellectuals studied its causes and debated the best way to assure
518 solidarity, progress and stability.

519 The indigenous population was considered to be the cause of revolution by many—
520 albeit wrongly—and *mestizaje* was proposed as the solution.[43] But the 1921 Census, taken
521 just as hostilities were fading, is the only one in the twentieth century that includes
522 information about the biological race of Mexicans: *blanca* (white), *indigena* (indigenous)
523 and *mezclada* (mixed). Foreigners were placed in a separate category 'regardless of race',
524 and there was a category of 'any other race, or unknown'. But the presence of biological,
525 racial categories in this census was anomalous. While race was a widely accepted idea at
526 the time, and a key element of nation-building in Mexico after the revolution, in the
527 censuses of the period diversity was cast mostly in terms of language, following the
528 precedent of the Porfiriato.

529 After the Revolution, two intellectual tendencies existed concerning indigeneity and
530 its relationship with the nation. One position, more Eurocentric or *hispanicist* was
531 inherited from Porfirian intellectuals like Justo Sierra, who believed that linguistic
532 diversity was an obstacle to the formation of a united nation.[44] For Sierra and those who
533 followed his lead, language unification in Spanish was the only way to ensure social
534 harmony. José Vasconcelos, a writer and pedagogue who joined the revolutionary
535 intellectuals and served as the new government's first minister of education, was a great
536 ideologue of *mestizaje* who fell into this camp. Reacting against imperialist and white
537 supremacist discourses in his book *La raza cósmica*, Vasconcelos elaborated the idea that
538 Mexico's population would and should form the cosmic race, a fusion of all other races
539 with all their best characteristics. He owed some of his perspective to the Mexican

540 eugenics movement that pushed back against white supremacy while promoting
541 sociobiological engineering of a better, stronger national race.[45] His argument was a
542 species of futurism centered on the new Latin American that unfortunately suffered from
543 fascist overtones and the tendency, confirmed in a later edition of the book, to envision
544 Europeans as the dynamic element of *mestizaje*.[46] His strident narrative channeled the
545 *mestizophilia* that circulated in Mexico at the time, essentializing the category of mestizo
546 and strengthening the discourse of race.

547 The other, *indigenista* position toward *mestizaje* is represented by Manuel Gamio and
548 what is known as the school of Mexican Anthropology. Gamio and his colleagues believed
549 that new nations such as Mexico should include their indigenous past and it should be
550 based on a deep understanding of indigenous realities: their culture, their soul and ideals.
551 This position would inform the official position of the state in relation to the indigenous
552 population—known as *indigenismo*—particularly after the 1930s.[47] Manuel Gamio's
553 *Forjando patria*, published in 1916 at the height of the Mexican revolution, is emblematic
554 of the concern for uncovering and remedying the causes of social unrest. Gamio argued
555 that works of Porfirian statistics played a central role in the social upheaval because they
556 were unable to envision the needs and desires of the racially and culturally diverse
557 indigenous and mestizo population in Mexico. Porfirian government failed because it
558 failed to understand, statistically, the population and territory it sought to govern. Gamio
559 intended *Forjando patria* to be a contribution to the effort to build a new state, and called
560 for wide-ranging anthropological knowledge of the sort that characterized the mercantile
561 statistics of the early-nineteenth century. Gamio argued for a more encyclopedic, less
562 enumerative kind of knowledge: an anthropological knowledge that explicitly recognized
563 the existence of the Indian and the Mestizo as social types and actors, and posited their
564 hearts and minds as objects of inquiry and intervention. Gamio thought that statistics
565 should understand the revolutionary nature, address the needs, and ensure the progress of
566 the majority of Mexican people. 'In Mexico,' he wrote, 'statistics has tended to the
567 quantitative understanding of the population, but almost not at all to the qualitative, which
568 has been the cause of eternal governmental failures'.[48] He argued that general, useful
569 anthropological knowledge about race and culture should be brought back into the
570 statistical activities of government.

571 Gamio's ideas formed the basis of *indigenismo*—the effort to understand indigenous
572 people so as to better incorporate them into the nation. Gamio located the root of the
573 revolution in the Mexican Indigenous population, and the inability of mestizos and
574 Europeans to understand the Indians: 'we don't know how the Indian thinks, we ignore his
575 true aspirations, we prejudge him with our criteria, when we should steep ourselves in his
576 to understand him and make him understand us'.[49] In this reconstituted anthropological
577 statistics Gamio placed racial ideology back into state knowledge and thus into the
578 formation of the post-revolutionary state. Gamio worked for the federal government in
579 various capacities. He headed the Office of Anthropology in the Ministry of Agriculture
580 from 1917 of 1924; and in the 1930s he was Director of the *Departamento de Población*, in
581 the *Secretaría de Gobernación* (Population Department, Ministry of the Interior).

582 Gamio found an especially receptive environment for his statistics in the
583 administration of President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–40) and in 1934 he carried out
584 censuses of material culture in the states of Hidalgo (El Valle de Mezquital), Guerrero (la
585 Costa Grande), and Morelos (Cuernavaca). The anthropologist discarded language and
586 physical appearance as too mutable and too difficult to enumerate and argued that the
587 effort to determine the racial composition of the nation was a strictly academic exercise
588 that would carry little benefit to the Indian population and a high risk of 'awakening and

stimulating prejudiced racist concepts'.[50] He opted instead for the statistical analysis of material culture to assess the composition of the mestizo nation and identify those groups that needed development (Figure 5).[51]

In this regional census of material culture, Gamio identified grinding stones, sandals, canoes and corn tortillas as indigenous; phonographs, plows, saddles, machetes and marijuana were identified with Europe. No traits of mestizo material culture were identified, indicating that for *indigenistas* such as Gamio, the mestizo was not a separate group of people, but, rather, a cultural condition of mixture between the two primordial influences: European and Indigenous. The mestizo became a fluid and malleable category, while European and Indigenous tended toward essences. The effects of using these articles was assessed: all the indigenous objects had deficient results, while all the European objects had efficient results, except marijuana, which was said to be damaging (Figure 5). Apart from lingering notions of unilineal evolution, what this typology reflects is the separation of culture from biology and language, an inheritance Gamio owed to his mentor, Franz Boas. His approach to measuring diversity is also genuinely statistical in that it does not require determining the racial or cultural essence of individuals, but, rather, on determining the aggregate presence or absence of cultural elements within the entire population. By identifying material culture as autonomous in this way, Gamio could propose to measure and intervene to correct deficient aspects of Mexican culture, without abetting racist thought and practice.

As a result of the work of Gamio, Alfonso Caso and other intellectuals, material culture was included along with language in the population censuses. Over the next few decades this focus on material culture would shift from questions that clearly marked indigeneity in the eyes of Gamio and others to questions that reflected more economic development, income and social class. In 1940, a section of questions identified key markers of indigeneity and Europeanness: items that were used (or not) 'by custom or

Figure 5.   "Index for the Classification of Characteristics of Material Culture". Gamio, Manuel. 1987 [1935]. *Hacia un México Nuevo: Problemas Sociales*. México: Instituto Nacional Indigenista.

habit', such as wheat bread, sandals or shoes, indigenous dress, sleeping mats, beds or hammocks. In 1950 the questionnaire identified a shorter list of material cultural traits (daily consumption of wheat bread; use of shoes, sandals or going barefoot), with the declared intention of 'researching some regional cultural characteristics.' New to the 1950 census was a section on 'characteristics of the dwelling', which included number of rooms, the dominant material used (adobe, brick, mud, wood, for example), and questions about whether the dwelling had piped water. These categories were previously used in the constructing censuses of 1929 and 1939 and were refunctionalized to reflect ideas about ethnicity and development.

For those who viewed indigenous culture as pre-modern, isolated and backward, the census provided information to gauge the rate of assimilation and integration into the national culture. In the 1950 census around 45% of Mexicans consumed corn more than wheat and over 40% used sandals or went barefoot. Seen as indicators of the level of progress and assimilation, and of the essential identity of individuals rather than shared cultural traits, the data on material culture and custom was rather discouraging to those hoping to move away from indigeneity. On the other hand only 3.65% of Mexicans were monolingual in an indigenous language and 7.57% were bilingual. The numbers on language echoed more the official vision of indigeneity as a condition of a small, and diminishing, minority of the population.

The uncomfortable evidence that indigenous cultural traits lingered at the heart of national society was gradually eliminated. In 1960 the census continued to generate information about material culture, asking the now established questions about footwear and bread, and adding a question about the consumption of protein in the form of meat, eggs, milk and fish. This census focused even more on housing and including questions about the presence of radios and televisions—clearer signs of modernity and development than race and ethnicity.[52] By 1970, the section on customs was reduced to only footwear, with the section on housing incorporating the information about diet. In 1980 customs such as footwear were no longer on the questionnaire, and of food, only proteins were monitored. The earlier anthropological attempt to determine the proportion of indigenous and European cultures through material cultural traits—key to the *indigenista* project— had transformed by mid-century into a developmentalist worry about standard of living and socioeconomic welfare. Language took over as the aspect indigenous culture measured in the national population censuses and the key indicator of the ethnic status of an individual. In 1950 and 1960 it was assumed that illiteracy was related to the persistence of indigenous language and so the census results provided a chart combining language and illiteracy. A decade later this trend had changed and in the census of 1970 illiteracy was not directly linked to speaking an indigenous language.

During the 1970s, shifts in ideas of indigeneity and nation emerged as the state abandoned its integrationist drive and sought, in the glorification of indigenous traditions and culture, to rekindle nationalism in order to regain some legitimacy.[53] The presence of the federal state in indigenous regions increased considerably, with the rapid growth of local offices of the *Instituto Nacional Indigenista* (INI, National Indigenous Institute), the installment of bilingual education in rural indigenous schools between 1972 and 1974, and the creation of the General Office of Indigenous Education in the Ministry of Education in 1978. The increased presence of the state in indigenous communities generated strong criticism of the role that the state and anthropology had played in the integration and disempowerment of indigenous people after the revolution. Critical anthropologists and indigenous organizations denounced the devastating effects of state policies and argued that the project of modernization had endangered the survival of indigenous people.[54]

Critical anthropology opened a new chapter in the ways ethnicity and interethnic relations were understood, and thereafter the process of deindianization—loss of ethnic identity through assimilation—was openly denounced. In this view, the persistence of internal colonialism hinders the possibility of each nation to reach its possibilities as an independent country.[55] This can only be attained if indigenous people are included as political actors and the cultural matrix of their own civilizations becomes part of the national identity.[56] In collaboration with intellectuals, and often on their own, indigenous organizations began to make demands based on their ethnicity, arguing for the need to acknowledge the ethnic and linguistic plurality of the country. They proposed that Indigenous languages be considered national languages and that bilingual education should work to preserve these languages rather than to facilitate the domination of Spanish. During this period the term *indio* was generally abandoned and the phrase ethnic group came into common use. National social, cultural and economic integration was now seen to cause poverty among indigenous people rather than reduce it, while development programs were accused of keeping indigenous population marginal and not taking into account their local knowledge and culture.[57] Despite these criticisms, categories of language and economic marginality remained the only way of understanding indigenous realities through the censuses. The increasing presence of government in indigenous regions during the 1970s facilitated the generation of information concerning linguistic diversity and in the census of 1980 ten new languages were added to the list. There was also a 2% increase over the previous decade in the number of speakers of indigenous languages older than five.

Neoliberal Censuses

During the 1980s, the economic crisis, structural adjustment and the demands for democracy, caused the state's policy towards indigenous people to shift again. The state's social policy reduced social investment in infrastructure, production and welfare and promoted focused programs, such as education aimed at enhancing human capital in order to enhance poor people's possibilities of competing in the labor market. In this context, indigenous people where redefined as a 'vulnerable population', a trend that was consolidated in the 1990s.[58]

If in previous censuses the effort to count indigenous people was aimed at assessing integration and nation building, the censuses after 1990 were guided by a concern about the relationship between being poor and being indigenous. It was a concern that extended throughout multilateral development organizations such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank as they added the protection of indigenous peoples' rights to their operational guidelines and stepped up their effort to incorporate the needs of indigenous communities into the design and implementation of their projects. The international lenders as well as national governments sought to assess the social repercussions of their own structural adjustment policies. Organizations such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) confronted the problem of the identifying vulnerable groups providing new statistical analysis that included the classification of gender inequality, youth pregnancy, older people, indigenous people and so on.[59]

The decade of the nineties was undoubtedly a turning point in ethnic relations in Mexico, and the relationship between the state and indigenous people was deeply transformed by the Indigenous uprising in 1994, which prompted legal reforms and a reconsideration of the relationship between the state and indigenous people.[60] In the

census of 1990 the government counted a new category: children between 0 and 4 years of age with an indigenous language speaker as the head of household. Based on the data generated by the 1990 census, in 1993 the Federal government's INI and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) created three categories to locate indigenous people: 1. all those living in indigenous localities where at least 70% of the inhabitants speak an indigenous language; 2. all those living in somewhat indigenous localities, where between 30 to 69% of the population speak an indigenous language; and 3. all those living in entities with disperse indigenous population where less than 30% of the population speak an indigenous language. The sum of inhabitants in the first two groups amounted to 10% of Mexico's population, 2.5% more than just using linguistic criteria of individuals.[61] Nevertheless, this exercise has not been recognized, and the use of language by individuals prevails as the criteria to identify indigenous people in both in official statistics and studies of poverty.

The preoccupation with gathering information to help the design of social policies for vulnerable groups was accompanied by the passing in 1989 of the U.N. International Labor Organization's (ILO) Convention 169, the only legally binding instrument of international law to deal exclusively with the rights of indigenous peoples. The Convention reset the terms of debate and politics by abandoning the idea that indigenous people should be integrated into the majority and proclaiming instead that their culture and traditions should be respected and protected. Moreover, the Convention changed the focus from indigenous populations to indigenous people and added self-adscription as a criterion for defining indigenous individuals. The definition of indigenous people established in the Convention was based in historical descent from original groups as well as social, economic and cultural conditions in the present.[62] In accordance with the language used by the ILO to define indigenous people, the Mexican National Population Census of 2000 introduced the criteria of self-adscription by introducing the following question to the long form of the survey: 'Is (NAME) *náhuatl*, *maya*, *zapoteco*, *mixteco* or from another indigenous group?'[63]

According to the 2000 census, 7.1% of all Mexicans spoke an indigenous language, and 6.2% considered themselves to be members of an indigenous group. 78.9% of those who identified themselves as members of an indigenous group spoke an indigenous language, and 20.9 % did not. In other words, 1.3% of the total national population considered themselves to be indigenous without speaking an indigenous language, and 1.2% of speakers of an indigenous language did not claim to be members of an indigenous group (Figure 4). The data about self-adscription confirms what ethnographic research tells us: that indigenous identity does not rely only on language, especially among indigenous urban immigrants.[64] Nevertheless, language remained the sole criteria for measuring indigeneity.

In the census of 2010 the linguistic criteria for defining an indigenous person was expanded further, to include children older than 3 (6.6%), and people that understood (but did not speak) an indigenous language (1.5%). The self-adscription question was reformulated in the following way: 'In terms of (NAME)'s culture, does she or he consider her or himself indigenous?'[65] The answers to this question show that 14.8% of Mexicans consider themselves to be part of an indigenous group because of their culture, and among these, 56% do not speak an indigenous language.[66] Accordingly, 9.31% of Mexicans that claim to belong to an indigenous culture do not speak an indigenous of language (see Figure 4), which is a considerable increase from the previous 1.3 percent.

Self-adscription's considerable increase between 2000 and 2010, shows that it is much more common for people to consider themselves carriers of indigenous culture than

785 members of an indigenous group. This change of wording, and the different results, seem
786 to recall in some ways Gamio's concern in the early in the 1930s that census questions
787 about self-ascribed do not accurately capture cultural dynamics in a mestizo society. The
788 2010 question seems to answer more Gamio's quest for the permanence of indigenous
789 traits among mestizos by showing that almost 20 million Mexicans recognize some
790 connection with indigenous culture. This should not surprise, because the recognition of an
791 indigenous past has always being part of the national imaginary. Nevertheless, this
792 phrasing of the question of self adscription does not seem to capture data about
793 membership in an ethnic group, and perhaps makes it even more difficult to measure. Most
794 seriously, by framing the object of analysis as indigenous culture, and not ethnic
795 membership, indigenous self-adscription loses its political and statistical relevance since it
796 can represent both a national cultural trend as well as a group of people that are ethnically
797 distinct from the rest of the nation and, more relevant, entitled to specific rights.

798   Culture, with subjective as well as objective dimensions, and conceived of as more
799 than just language but otherwise undefined, is once again a key category for counting
800 ethnicity and race in the national population. This marks something of a return to
801 encyclopedic statistics and especially to that variant employed by Gamio and others in the
802 anthropological, *indigenista* project to know the hearts and minds of Mexicans. It remains
803 to be seen if the perceived objectivity of language will once again take precedent over the
804 subjective criteria of culture and self-adscription. It also remains to be seen how this data is
805 used for social policies. So far, organizations such as the *Consejo Nacional de Evaluación*
806 *de la Política de Desarrollo Social*, (CONEVAL, National Council for the Evaluation of
807 Social Development Policy)—in charge of creating the index of poverty and evaluating
808 social programs—and the National Commission for the *Consejo Nacional para el*
809 *Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas* (CDI, Development of the Indigenous Peoples),
810 continue to use only the linguistic criteria, either at the level of the household or the
811 individual.[67]

812
Conclusions

815   Pero ante todo, ¿qué es un indio? ¿El que lo parece por sus rasgos corporales, aunque no hable
816   ninguna lengua indígena, ni viva como aborigen, ni se sienta tal? ¿El que habla una lengua
        nativa, aunque no parezca autóctono, ni viva como indígena, ni se sienta indio? ¿El que vive
817   como aborigen, aunque no lo parezca, ni hable una lengua autóctona, ni se sienta indígena? ¿O
818   el que se siente indio, aunque no lo parezca, ni hable una lengua indígena, ni viva como
        nativo?[68]

820 The above quote is taken from the second paragraph of the Introduction of the very first
821 volume and number of the *Memorias* of the INI: *Density of the Indigenous Language-*
822 *Speaking Population in the Mexican Republic*. It was published shortly after the creation
823 of the INI in 1948, and provides an analysis of the indigenous population in Mexico based
824 on the census of 1950. Manuel Germán Parra, an economist who worked in the Secretary
825 of Public Education, and for the famous *indigenista* anthropologist Gonzalo Aguirre
826 Beltrán, posed these questions at a time when *indigenismo* was flourishing both
827 intellectually and politically, and shaping the relation between the Mexican state and the
828 indigenous people that lived within its borders.

829   Despite the specificity of the historical context, Parra's questions present the
830 categories with which governments since the colonial period have grappled in their efforts
831 to understand the diversity of Mexico: race; language; culture; subjective identification.
832 Of all these factors, the one that has steadily dominated statistical understandings of the
833 Indian since 1895 is language. However, to speak an indigenous language indicates

different things to different people at different times. During the first half of the twentieth century language was seen as an indicator to measure the cohesion of the nation, and while most people were eager to see indigenous people speaking, writing and reading Spanish, there were some who considered indigenous language (and other cultural traits) a fundamental and positive element of national culture. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, to speak or understand an indigenous language, or even just grow up in a household where it is spoken, means, in the gaze of the state, to belong to a minority and vulnerable group. To others, however, it is a source of pride and a marker of a social identity that is increasingly valued in a positive way. It is clear that even language does not succumb easily to a strictly enumerative approach to understanding diversity, and that encyclopedic statistical strategies and categories remain useful.

Regardless of how and why indigenous identity is constructed, defined, experienced and valued, it is the identity that attracts the statistical concern of the state. Today's censuses only measure indigenous identity; they do not inquire about black, mestizo or white identities, or other ethnic subcultures. According to recent data generated by the Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America (PERLA) 64% of the Mexican population considers itself mestizo, and 13% identifies as white. This indicates that the binomial Indigenous/Non-indigenous does not reflect the complexities of racial and ethnic identities of the country.[69] Modern statistics have debated, reformulated and expanded the definition of indigenous, but these efforts have not changed the way the state conceives of the dominant majority.

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