It’s all about them: Ethnicity/Aboriginality in the Americas

By
Claire Durand
Yves-Emmanuel Massé-François
Luis Patricio Pena Ibarra
Michael Smith

Presented at the WAPOR 68th Conference
May 14-17, Buenos Aires, Argentina
Outline

- Historical reminder
- The measurement of aboriginality in the Censuses
  - Indicators
  - Estimates
- The measurement of aboriginality in the Latino Barometro
  - Methodology, indicators
  - Estimates
- Why are estimates so variables? Canada as a case study.
  - Methodology, indicators
  - Estimates of variability
  - Who are they?
- Conclusion
When it all started

A reminder

As Europeans – Spanish, Portuguese, French, British, Dutch, etc. – settled in the Americas, it was the start of:

- To a greater or lesser extent,
  - The emergence of “us” --Whites--and “them” --“Indians”, Inuit, etc.
  - In the same way as “we” --French, British, Spanish, etc. – were all whites, they – Cree, Aymara, Quechua, Inca, Sioux – were all Indians (or Red).

- To a greater or lesser extent,
  - “We” were almost oingly men and therefore, intermixing took place and Métis/Meztizos/half-blood were born.

- A question arose with the “classification era”: How do we classify the Métis? Are they White or Indian?
  - One answer was to classify according to the way people live.
  - In Canada, a specific “nation” emerged with its own invented language “mischief”.
  - In some Latin American countries, the term Mestizo is used to speak of people whose skin colour is white.
18th-19th Century: White people brought African people as slaves. They became the “Black people”.

20th Century: wars, political and economic problems brought people from all over the World to immigrate into the Americas.

And the Censuses needed answers to specific questions:
- Who do we count?
- How do we count?
- Which categories do we use?
Why do we want to classify?

- Reason no. 1:
  - We want to measure inequalities according to ethnicity in order to fight them.

- Reason no. 2:
  - Governments want to count the number of people they are indebted to, i.e., Aboriginals.

- Reason no. 3:
  - Opinions, voting preferences, attitudes may vary according to ethnicity.

We end up asking:
- What is ethnicity?
- How should we measure it,... or should we?
Who are “they”? Who are “we”? 

Opening of the fourteenth session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Aboriginal 

French Canadian 

American
Who are they?

Evo Morales, president Bolivia

Alexandre Dumas, mulato/Black

Alexandre Pushkin, mulato/Black

Carey Price, Métis, goaltender (hockey)

An Indian, a Métis, a Mulato may not look much different from any other citizen. Therefore, he/she may choose to reveal – or not – his/her identity. And...Indigenous in Peru, you become Hispanic in North America.
The measurement of aboriginality in the Censuses

Indicators

- **Self-identification**: All countries, except U.S.A., Cuba, Peru & Uruguay.
  - Are you...(4)?
  - Se considera, se reconoce? Do you consider yourself? (8)
  - Perteneces? Do you belong? To a nation, grupo poblacional,... (11)

- **Physical traits** (7):
  - Four countries use “race”: U.S., Brazil, Jamaica & El Salvador.

- **Origins**:
  - Canada, Uruguay, Argentina.

- **Residence in a Native territory**:
  - Canada, Columbia, Panama, Paraguay.

- **Culture**:
  - Language (11): In Peru, sole indicator
  - **Legal status**: Canada, Brazil (?)
Six (6) Latin American countries propose a “métis” category: Costa Rica, Cuba, Equador, El Salvador, Jamaica, Nicaragua.

- In Costa Rica, Métis and White are in same category.
- In Cuba, Métis and Mulatto are in same category.
- In Nicaragua, “Métis of the Caribbean Coast” is considered an Indigenous group.

In Canada, the Métis category – the French term is used – appeared in the Census in 1981; it has two meanings:

- Métis Nation of the Red River
- Any mixed-blood person.

In a number of Censuses, the possibility to identifying with multiple categories appeared recently (but no “mixed” cat.).
First Observations

- It is impossible to compare the countries’ ethnic composition using their Censuses because it is not measured in the same way in the different countries.

- CEPAL (2014) shows that:
  - The proportion of Indigenous people – excluding Mestizos – varies from close to zero (El Salvador) to 60% (Bolivia).
  - Three countries (Peru, Guatemala & Bolivia) have more than 20% who self-identify as indigenous, excluding Mestizos.
  - In Peru, the only indicator is mother tongue.
Does Latino Barometro give more reliable information?

Indicators: Self-Identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2007-2011: ¿A qué raza se considera perteneciente Ud.?</th>
<th>2001: Con qué etnia o raza Ud. se identifica mejor?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(ESPERE RESPUESTA Y MARQUE UNA SOLA)</td>
<td>(+cat “ninguna”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Asiático(a)</td>
<td>1 Blanco(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Negro(a)</td>
<td>2 Otra raza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Indígena</td>
<td>3 No sabe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Mestizo(a)</td>
<td>4 No responde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Mulato(a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Blanco(a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Otra raza</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 No sabe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 No responde</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Does Latino Barometro give more reliable information?

Indicators: Mother tongue

- 2002-2011 ¿Cuál es su idioma materno? (LEA ALTERNATIVAS, ESPERE RESPUESTA Y MARQUE UNA SOLA)
- Espanol ........................................ 1
- Portugues ...................................... 2
- Lengua autoctona/indigena..... 3
- Otra .................................................. 4

- What is your mother tongue?
  - Read, wait for answer and mark only one.
  - Spanish, Portuguese, an indigenous language, Other.
What are the estimates?

The proportion of non response varies greatly with time, with wording (2001 vs others), and between countries.

And it can be as high as 34% (Paraguay 2008)
Example of variability: Bolivia
Example of variability: Ecuador
Example of variability: Paraguay

Proportion of white/métis/indígena and indigenous mother tongue per year
LatinoBarómetro PARAGUAY

- White
- Métis
- Indígena
- Indigenous mother tongue
Example of variability: Guatemala
The proportion of respondents who do not answer the question on “race” is high in some countries.

The proportion of each group varies over time in many countries.

Proportions also vary according to question wording and category options that are offered.

It is the only socio-demographic impressionistic indicator, based on “feelings”.

Even the answers to mother tongue vary more than what would be expected given the sampling method and size.

LatinoBarometro does not allow for multiple identities.
Overall,
- the proportion of respondents identifying as Indigenous slightly decreases over time and
- The proportion identifying as Meztizo slightly increases.
- Those identifying as Indigenous tend to be less educated and wealthy than Whites.
- While Mestizos do not differ that much from Whites.

Perhaps people tend to identify more as Mestizo when their way of life, living conditions, are more similar to those who identify as Whites.

Therefore, the difference between Indigenous people and “White” people tends to be inflated, thus presenting an image of Aboriginals as all poor, not educated, etc.

What about inequalities?
Canada’s Census - long form (1/5 HH in 2006)-National HH Study (1/3 HH in 2012) have 4 questions related to Aboriginality:

**Origins**: What were the ethnic or cultural origins of this person’s ancestors? An ancestor is usually more distant than a grandparent.

– For example, Canadian, English, French, Chinese, Italian, German, Scottish, East Indian, Irish, Cree, Mi’kmaq (Micmac), Métis, Inuit (Eskimo), Ukrainian, Dutch, Filipino, Polish, Portuguese, Jewish, Greek, Jamaican, Vietnamese, Lebanese, Chilean, Salvadorean, Somali, etc

**“Identity”**: Is this person an Aboriginal Person, that is North American Indian, Métis or Inuit (Eskimo)? (If yes go to...)

**Group Membership**: Is this person a member of an Indian Band/First Nation?

**Legal Status**: Is this person a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian as defined by the *Indian Act* of Canada.

The number of persons identifying as Aboriginal has increased by around 20% every Census since 1981.
Canada, a case study
Aboriginal People Survey (APS)

- APS is a post-Census survey
  - Conducted about six months after the Census,
  - Among all people who have declared having either aboriginal ancestors, an aboriginal identity, an Indian legal status or being member of an Indian Band (tribe).

- The indicators are similar to those asked in the Census but,
  - Two major differences (2006):
    - Origins: Do you have ancestors who belong to one of the following aboriginal group? NA Indian, Métis, Inuit.
    - Question on status asked before Band membership (reverse of Census).
  - Major difference 2012 vs 2006: question on origins not asked, those who did not identify as Aboriginal were dropped.

- Note that NA Indian people living on reservations are excluded. They represent about 50% of all the NA Indian.
Canada, a case study
Census long form and Aboriginal People Survey (APS)

Therefore, we have panel data (twice the same measure)
- For 2006, with 4 indicators
- For 2012, with 3 indicators.

And we can examine the level of variability, i.e., the proportion of people who change their answers from one survey to the next
- According to indicator: origin (2006), identity, legal status, membership
- According to category: NA Indian, Métis, Inuk

We can examine who, in which context, is more likely to change answers.

We can examine the impact of the variability on the conclusions of studies on socio-economic inequalities.
Canada, a case study

Estimates of populations 15 years & older in the APS

2006 (N: 29523): N Aboriginals:
- according to answer in the Census: 634,140;
- according to answer in the APS: 749,200 (+18.1%)

2012 (N 20716): N Aboriginals:
- according to answer in the Census: 652,300;
- according to answer in the APS: 795,178 (+21.9%)

Increase 2012 vs 2006: APS: 6.1%; Census: 2.9%
The level of variability in answers to 4 indicators - 2006

LABILITY OF DECLARATIONS - CENSUS - APS 2006

Only 42% give the same answer on all 4 questions.
The level of variability in answers to 3 indicators -2012

61% give the same answer on all indicators
Therefore,

In 2006...

- Variability in answers
  - To origins is very high (38.8% in 2006)
  - To self-identification is very high (28.2%),
- Variability is substantial even on more precise questions like:
  - Legal status (8.2%)
  - Membership in Band (7.5%).

In 2012, variability is also high despite changes in the methodology.

- Identity: 26.5%
- Status: 9.8%
- Membership in Band: 10.4%
The level of variability according to “category” -- 2006

32% are either
- Shifters -- from Métis to Indian or reverse.
- Multiple identities -- Métis, Indian & no aboriginal identity -- with stable answers on origin.
The level of variability according to “category” -- 2012

- 19% are Shifters
- from Métis to Indian
- or reverse.
Who are they?

Total variance explained by predictors - 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>According</th>
<th>to</th>
<th>indicator</th>
<th>According</th>
<th>to</th>
<th>category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nord</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20-59 only</td>
<td>without Inuit&gt;</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20-59 only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age &amp; sex</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Schooling</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Income</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ rural-urban</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Region</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The main predictors of category variability are related to where you live: More or less urban, and above all, region of the country,
- Related to history of intermixing between populations.
- Much more variance explained in variability according to categories than indicators.
- Inuit’s stability has to be taken into account.
Who are they - 2006
Variability according to categories compared to being a NA Indian (odds ratio of being in a region vs North & BC)

Drifters & Métis in the Prairies
Multiple origins, identities: Eastern Canada
Who are they?

Total variance explained by predictors - 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>According to</th>
<th>indicator</th>
<th>According to</th>
<th>to</th>
<th>category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nord</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20-59 only</td>
<td>without Inuit&gt;</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20-59 only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age &amp; sex</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Schooling</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Income</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ rural-urban</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Region</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As in 2006, the main predictors of category shifts are related to where you live: More or less urban, and above all, region of the country.

Much more variance explained in variability according to categories than indicators.

Inuit’s stability has to be taken into account.
Who are they -- 2012?

Variability according to categories compared to being a NA Indian (odds ratio of being in a region vs North & BC)

Drifters to Métis: everywhere except in BC & North.
Drifters to Indian: Eastern Canada.
Métis: Prairies.
Comparing with LatinoBarometro

What are the characteristics of those who change their answers?

- Those who change declarations,…
  - Tend to be more educated and wealthier

- They are also more likely to be living in urban areas.

- Note: In Canada, until the 1960's, an Indian who ended up with a University degree was “emancipated”, i.e. not subject to Indian Act.
Conclusion: What should we do?

- Should we measure ethnicity, what are we measuring finally?
  - Does it feed “folklorization” of who Aboriginals are, hiding the variability within the group?
  - Does it help evaluate and fight inequalities or
  - Does it contribute to hide the inequalities that should be dealt with?

- If access to education is the core of inequalities, what are the reasons for the lower level of education of Aboriginals?
  - “Being” an Aboriginal or living in regions where education is hardly accessible or relevant?
Extra slides
What are the estimates?

The proportion of each group varies much with time, and with different wordings (2001 vs others).
What are the estimates?
LatinoBarometro 2001-2007-2011

The proportion of each group varies much with time, and with different wordings (2001 vs others)
What are the estimates?

The proportion of each group varies much with time, and with different wordings (2001 vs others).