



Original Article

NATIVE PEOPLE IN POPULATION CENSUSES: United States (2020) AND CANADA (2021)

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ABSTRACT

Since population censuses have been an instrument implemented by governments to know their population and to implement or design public policies, the objective of this text is to discern the differences and similarities in which the governments of Canada and the United States know the native peoples living in their territories. Through an interpretative methodology of content analysis, we analyze the institutional objectives and purposes, the periodicity of each demographic exercise, the margin for ethnic specificities to be expressed in the surveys, the ways of referring to these alterities and the alternative sources of statistical information used. It is concluded that, while the Canadian census advances in the recognition of First Nations, Inuit or Inuk and Métis, the U.S. census reduces the margin for the cultural diversity existing between American Indians and Alaska Natives to be expressed.

Keywords: *population censuses, Canada, United States, native peoples, ethnicity*

I. INTRODUCTION

Population censuses have become an important statistical information tool. As an instrument of governmental power, they allow the State to learn about changes in demographic dynamics, to design or implement public policies accordingly, and to administer and distribute resources. However, as Petruccelli (2002) has pointed out, the changes -throughout history- in the ways of counting the inhabitants of a Nation highlight the transcendent role they play in the understanding of collectivities and their differences, but also the weakness of the categories used. This happens

because the ways of conceiving the diversity of the social body that inhabits a territory are usually linked to political reasons (Petriccelli, 2002).

According to Statistics Canada (2015), the first census took place in 1666, but only recorded the inhabitants of the French colony. The native population began to be contemplated in the counts from 1765; however, various authors (Guimond et al., 2004; Saku, 1999) agree that the first serious attempt to develop a record of the Canadian native population took place until 1871.

During the first 100 years of population counting (1871-1971), the members of the native peoples could only register a single origin, specifically patrilineal (Guimond et al., 2004; Saku, 1999). While the one corresponding to maternal inheritance was suppressed. The situation changed in the 1981 census, when a multiple response was implemented. That is, it was possible to register one or more ethnic origins. Hence, it is considered that the most comprehensive attempts to know the indigenous population on the part of the government took place in the middle of the 20th century. Today the Canadian government uses First Nations, Inuit and Métis to refer to these communities, but in the early stages, Indians, Eskimos and Métis were used.

However, it has also been pointed out that the counting of the indigenous population in Canada has had several problems. Among them are the rounding of figures, the suppression of populations smaller than 250, the emphasis on the wage economy and the omission of the informal economy - which includes essential activities of the indigenous economy such as hunting, fishing, gathering, etc. - and linguistic translation when applying the surveys (Saku, 1999, p. 375). Thus, there is a sense of uncertainty in interpreting the history of ethnic composition and population changes in these communities (Guimond et al., 2004, p. 3). It should be noted that in Canada, the government institutions that have been responsible for collecting this information are Statistics Canada and the Government of Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics (GNWTBS).

In the United States, the first census took place in 1790, but the population count only took into account Anglo-Saxon inhabitants -categorized then as whites- and people of African descent -categorized then as people of color or slaves-. It took seven more decades before, in 1860, the category "Indian" was included for the first time in order to count the population of tribal territories.¹ In 1950, the term "American Indian" was implemented. In 1960, "Eskimo" and "Aleut" were added to this category. And, since 2000, "American Indian" and "Alaska Native" have been used.

However, until before 1960, the "race" of the population interviewed was assigned or decided by the person conducting the survey. From that year on, the people interviewed began to be allowed to state their own "race". In the 2000 census -40 years later-, it was possible to self-identify in more than one racial category. This change is relevant because the United States was assumed to be a multiracial population. In other words, in previous registries, respondents were forced to choose only one category to describe themselves. Finally, in the last census of 2020, for

¹ According to data from the Pew Research Center (2020), prior to the 1860 census, American Indians living with Anglo society were included in the statistical count. However, the category "Indian" is included until that year's census.

the first time, respondents were given the possibility of choosing their "race", but also -if they considered it pertinent- to give more information about their origins. It is worth mentioning that one of the most characteristic features of U.S. censuses is the repeated use of the term "race" to measure and understand the population (Brown, 2020).

This non-exhaustive set of examples shows us the importance of analyzing the censuses, since they allow us to locate when the need to have information on the volume of the indigenous population of one territory or another arose, but also reflects the way in which the conception of and interest in this population has been changing and the way in which it has been recognized. In fact, it is considered that the demographic knowledge of the native communities is insufficient and confusing, since the conclusions have been constructed according to the way in which it is profiled (Guimond et al., 2004, p. 3). Given that population statistics provide relevant information for the elaboration of public policies and the distribution of the state budget, it is considered relevant to know the way in which the native peoples of Canada and the United States are being conceived and counted in the most recent censuses.

II. CENSUSES IN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES AS AN OBJECT OF RESEARCH: STATE OF THE ART

Based on a review of the state of the art regarding the Canadian and U.S. censuses, it has been possible to identify the main nodes of interest that have been fostered within the academy. First, there is a common agreement that institutional exercises to count the population clearly reflect the political vision of the governments that carry them out (Winkle, 1994 and Emigh et al., 2005). In this sense, Haggerty (2002) states that political needs shape statistical practices. Emigh et al. (2005) point out that the U.S. census tends to reflect the discursive link to social forces. Chatzky and Cheatham (2020) consider that the U.S. census plays a relevant role in politics and economics, specifically in determining the number of votes in the electoral college and in allocating the budget for social programs. These approaches are fundamental because they allow us to assume that the analysis of the census will make it possible to understand the interest and conception that the Canadian and U.S. governments have in relation to the native population.

A second node has put under the spotlight the problems and challenges presented by the implementation of censuses. Since the end of the 20th century, Winkle (1995) drew attention to the limitations they present for the elaboration of a credible account of social groups and pointed out the need to contrast such data with other sources. More specifically, Pryor et al. (1991) elucidated the main difficulties faced by the Canadian census, such as resistance to the responses and their veracity on the part of the native population. Other authors (Guimond et al., 2004) pointed out problems of terminology, legislative changes, low quality of the information and inconsistencies with the registry that the native peoples themselves have elaborated. They

considered that this accumulation of difficulties silences relevant information. In the case of the United States, Forbes (1990) spoke of the under-representation of American Indians due to racial manipulation and a tendency to whiten the population - undertaken by the demographic exercises of the Census Bureau. The relevance of these findings makes it necessary to consider the many aspects that can affect demographic practice and, therefore, the results.

The third set consists of analyses that review time periods. Marshall (1951) provided an early historical account of the strategies -technical aspects and district decentralization- employed by the Canadian census to improve its implementation and coverage. More recently, Hamilton (2011) examined the characteristics -type of questions, application instructions and tabulation of results- of the census applied by Canada to native peoples in 1891, to point out the wide possibilities of distortions or underrepresentation in the data collected. He concludes that the methodology used determines the information collected. With respect to the United States, Winkle (1994) has provided an account of the changes in population counts between 1790 and 1970. Jobe (2004) explored the reasons why American Indians and Alaska Natives were included until the 1890 count, as well as the changes in terminology used to refer to them.

The fourth group of inquiries focuses on the terms and definitions used by the censuses. The earliest study (Fischer, 1958) that was found analyzed the category "residence" used by the Census Bureau in the United States and its different classifications. However, it is important to mention that research in the following decades has focused on aspects related to the ethnic and racial categories used.² In Canada, Pryor et al. (1991), as well as Kralt (1990), review the different terms used between 1971 and 1988, from those referring to French and British inhabitants to those of native origin. Guimond et al. (2004) do review the categories that have been used to count and define the indigenous population.

With regard to the United States, there is a similar picture. Bhagat (2003) states that the U.S. census places a strong emphasis on the racial aspect. Along the same lines, Snip (2003) argues the existence of a racial cosmology that affects the perception of the phenotype of the inhabitants and establishes a hierarchy in society. He considers that public policies are created on the basis of race. Similarly, Emigh et al. (2015) analyze the racial categories used by the U.S. population count and conclude that they are asymmetrical combinations of race and legal status, which have no anchor in the constitution. Forbes (1990), like Anner (2001), spoke of a process of whitening in population counts and a numerical fading of native communities. Loveman (2007) made the same observation about the techniques used by the Census Bureau in Puerto Rico. These contributions are considered essential because they help us to think about the extent to which the terms include or exclude the diversity that makes up the population.

The last identified set of explorations attempts to understand the demographic changes in native peoples. With respect to Canada, the transformations and causes of numerical increases or

² This is not to say that the focus has been exclusively on the indigenous population.

decreases in indigenous communities are analyzed (Norris, 1990; Romaniuc, 2003). Among them, the numerical growth of this population is attributed to the implementation of new definitions (Guimond et al., 2004). In the United States, it is argued that the increase in the number of indigenous inhabitants can be explained by a growth in ethnic consciousness and, therefore, the need to claim native ancestry as a result of processes of indigenous political activism (Nagel, 1995). But weight is also given to the possibility of self-identification that was implemented in the censuses (Passel, 1997).

The review presented here shows that academic interest in the censuses of Canada and the United States is concentrated mainly between the 1990s and the first two decades of the 21st century. Although attention to the subject is not recent and concern for the way in which native communities are counted is far from being unexplored territory, it is also true that research is neither abundant nor systematic. Given the importance that censuses have in the creation of public policies and the number of problems involved in their necessary application, the absence of research that explores the most recent demographic counts is striking, hence the relevance of analyzing the latest demographic exercises in relation to native peoples.

III. THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

In order to understand the way in which the population censuses undertaken by the governments of Canada and the United States know the indigenous population, and having reviewed the state of the art on the subject, it is necessary to take up again the positions of those authors who put on the table the close relationship between national policy and the way in which the population count is implemented. More specifically, the positions of Winkle (1994) and Haggerty (2002) are useful. As well as Emigh et al. (2015).

The first two (Winkle, 1994 & Haggerty, 2002) consider that the State has an irreducible role in the type of information collected and, therefore, in the results obtained during the demographic exercise. In fact, Haggerty (2002) highlights the link between the word "state" and the word "statistics" to illustrate the close relationship between population counts and the institutions that implement them. Winkle (1994) argues that each census produces a type of community history, written from an institutional perspective. In line with this, Haggerty (2002) points out that the categories used and the statistical averages obtained shape identities and behavioral norms, fostering and strengthening essentialist discourses. The point of view of both authors is fundamental, as it shows the importance of generating reflections on the way in which the State knows the different groups, in this case the native peoples.

Emigh et al. (2015), accept the position of Winkle (1994) and Haggerty (2002), but take away the centrality of the role of the state. They argue that censuses highlight two aspects: the content of the categories and the influence of the actors. Although they accept that government agencies

design and introduce new terminology, they consider that this happens only when they are already widespread and accepted by society. In other words, from their perspective, there is an interaction between social forces and the way in which governments apply population counts. This proposal is suggestive because it will allow us to reflect on the role of Canadian society and the place or acceptance of native peoples.

In order to achieve the proposed objective, an interpretative methodology of content analysis was implemented (Giroux & Tremblay, 2011). This assumes that any human expression can be analyzed (López, 2002, pp. 174-175) because it is a reflection of human activity and its significance. The particularity is that it is capable of revealing latent attributes, present, but little evident on the surface (Fernández, 2002, p. 37; López, 2002). It analyzes and describes ways of proceeding, conceptions, tendencies, beliefs, objectives, goals, similarities, differences, values, attitudes, etc. (Fernandez, 2002, p. 37), that take place among different sectors of society.

From this perspective, censuses - the design of the survey and the objectives that government agencies set forth in it - reflect human activity. They reveal the values that are poured into its elaboration, the principles it supports and the messages it intends to convey. With this approach, it will be possible to identify some of the meanings of demographic practice in relation to indigenous peoples. To achieve this, a comparative analysis is made of: a) the periodicity, b) the institutional purposes and objectives of both population counts, c) the place of indigenous peoples in each country's survey, d) the way in which they are mentioned, and e) other sources of statistical information on indigenous peoples.

3.1. Canada's census in 2021

In Canada, the last national population census will take place in 2021. Its periodic application is a constitutional mandate, since 1867. It is conducted every 5 years.³ The government agency that carries out this statistical exercise is Statistics Canada. For this institution, such activity is fundamental because: a) it provides analytical information about the characteristics, conditions and changes in the population and b) it allows for the planning of programs and services implemented by the government (Statistics Canada, 2021c). In other words, it constitutes the main source of socioeconomic information on "specific population groups" and "detailed or small geographies" (Statistics Canada, 2021a).

By law, all residents are required to answer the questionnaire in its entirety (Statistics Canada, 2016).⁴ With the intention of making it more accessible, since 2006, the possibility of answering it online was implemented. Apparently, this change did improve the response rate (Statistics

³ Since 1985.

⁴ Currently, only a fine is applied for failure to answer the questionnaire. The prison sentence was eliminated in 2018.

Canada , 2021b). In 2021, 84.1% of the households surveyed opted for this route - personal computer, tablet, smartphone - (Statistics Canada, 2021b).

Most of the data is collected through a short survey format. It requires the following information: 1) telephone number, 2) address -city, municipality, town, village, township or Indian reservation-, 3) name and number of usual residents in the dwelling, 4) date of birth and age, 5) sex at birth and generic identity, 6) marital status, 7) relationships among household members -including marital status-, 8) English and French language proficiency, 9) language regularly spoken in the surveyed dwelling and language regularly spoken elsewhere, 10) mother tongue of each person living in the dwelling, 11) participation in military service, 12) if the surveyed dwelling is in Quebec, we also ask which French-speaking educational program the members of the dwelling attended and how many years they attended. It should be noted that none of the questions is directed at the native peoples of Canada; the only indirect mention is in the second clause where it is possible to specify whether the respondent lives on an Indian reserve.

However, 25% of the surveyed households are asked to respond to the long form. This is designed to obtain more detailed information on the inhabitants of Canada and their economic, social and demographic characteristics. Statistics Canada (2020, pp. 70-71) notes that this long-form questionnaire is used to represent other similar households; that is, the information it collects may be representative of the entire population. In addition to the short survey questions, this includes:

- (1) official language in which basic education was attended,
- (2) educational level,
- ((3) main area of study or educational training,
- (4) place of educational training where the maximum level of studies was obtained,
- (5) activities of daily living - hearing, visual, motor, learning, mental, health difficulties,
- (6) place of birth of the persons living in the dwelling and their parents,
- (7) citizenship,
- (8) proficiency in other languages,
- (9) cultural or ethnic origins of the ancestors of those living in the surveyed dwelling,
- (10) membership in First Nation, Inuit or Métis - registered or treaty Indian status, in terms of the Indian Act of Canada, name of First Nation or Indian Band of membership, name of Métis organization or settlement, name of Inuit land claim agreement-⁵,
- (11) religion,
- (12) mobility (place where people in the surveyed household lived one year and 5 years prior to the census application),
- (13) activities linked to the labour market - hours of work, type of industry, business or service,

⁵ It is important to note that specific questions about membership in a Métis organization or settlement, as well as enrollment in an Inuit land claim agreement, were included for the first time in the 2021 census.

- employment status, language most used in the workplace, main reasons for absenteeism, unemployment-
- (14) place of work and commuting -type of transportation and length of commute-,
 - (15) expenditures related to child care, child and spousal support,
 - (16) housing -type of housing and expenditures- (Statistics Canada, 2021).

In addition, in 2022, Statistics Canada is implementing the Indigenous People Survey⁶ (Statistics Canada, 2022). This survey takes place every 5 years. Its purpose is to obtain detailed information from indigenous communities on aspects such as education, language, health, housing and mobility, access to services and employment. It is also categorized as a thematic survey because each edition delves into a specific topic. The 2022 edition focused on family stability, trauma and discrimination, physical and mental health, education and sense of belonging, language and indigenous culture.⁷

3.2. U.S. Census implemented in 2020

In the United States, the last population census took place in 2020. The constitution establishes that it must be carried out every 10 years. The office in charge of conducting it is the United States Census Bureau, which is part of the U.S. government's Department of Commerce. From the perspective of this governmental entity, the population count is relevant because it is used to: a) determine the number of seats that each state has in the House of Representatives and apportion electoral districts (United States Census Bureau, 2021a)⁸, b) distribute federal funds that go to grants, counties, communities and provide assistance to states (United States Census Bureau, 2022a).

It includes all people living in the United States, regardless of nationality and immigration status (Cohn, 2020). By law, people living there are required to answer it. But apparently, the government does not usually pursue those who do not (Cohn, 2020). In the 2021 census it was mostly answered online. However, people who do not have Internet were able to answer it via telephone, or even answer it in the paper format and mail it in (Cohn, 2020).

The questionnaire includes the following items and is applied to each of the people living in the dwelling (United States Census Bureau, 2021b, p. 1) number of people living in the surveyed household, 2) relationship to the dwelling -owned, mortgaged or rented-, 3) telephone number, 4) name, 5) sex, 6) age and date of birth, 7) race. In this last section, each of the inhabitants is asked

⁶ Before 2022 it will be known as the Aboriginal People Survey.

⁷ For example, in 2012 we delved deeper into the educational issue, in 2017 into the participation of native peoples in the economy.

⁸ That is, one of the two most important functions of the U.S. census is to distribute the 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives among the 50 states that make up the country (United States Census Bureau, 2021).

if they are Hispanic, Latino or of Spanish origin and what their "race" is. The universe of responses includes the following possibilities: a) white - "German, Irish, English, Italian, Lebanese, Egyptian, etc. ", b) black or African American - "African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, etc.", c) American Indian or Alaska Native - "Print name or enrolled or principal tribe(s), for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc." -; d) Asian - Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro⁹, Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong¹⁰, Pacific Islander, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese. It should be mentioned that it is possible to add any other "race" not mentioned there (United States Census Bureau, 2021b).

In addition to this decennial exercise, the American Community Survey¹¹ (United States Census Bureau, 2022b) is applied. This contains more detailed questions about the economic and social characteristics of the population, such as employment, education, transportation, and Internet access. It is conducted on a permanent basis; that is, every year during every month. It is considered that in this way, it provides constantly updated information. It works through a sample that is applied only to 3.5 million homes. And, according to the United States Census Bureau (2022b), the information collected is useful for local or national leaders to create plans, programs and to know the problems or conditions in which the population finds itself.

IV. INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN THE US (2020) AND CANADIAN (2021) POPULATION CENSUSES: DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

In order to determine the importance and place that the Canadian population census -of 2021- and the U.S. census -of 2020- give to indigenous peoples, we will begin by reviewing the objectives and periodicity of each. It is worth clarifying that although there is no explicit reference to the indigenous population in these two headings, it is useful to analyze and compare them because they allow us to understand the way in which each government relates to the total population, of which indigenous peoples are a part. Subsequently, we will analyze the place of indigenous peoples in the survey(s) of each of the countries, the way in which they are mentioned and whether the agencies responsible for providing and generating statistical information on the population use other surveys to learn about the communities.

4.1. Objectives and purposes of each census

⁹ Refers to the Guamanian Indians, inhabitants of Guaján Island, located in the Mariana Islands archipelago in the Western Pacific.

¹⁰ Also known as Miao (ethnic group inhabiting southwest China).

¹¹ It was implemented in 2000 and was used to replace the long format of the decennial survey.

In relation to the objectives or purposes set forth in both population counts; two points of confluence were found. The first is linked to the democratic exercise. Both Statistics Canada (2020, pp. 7-10) and the United States Census Bureau (United States Census Bureau, 2021a) list among their purposes the generation of information to determine -define, adjust, redraw or divide- electoral districts and representativeness. Either in the House of Commons -Canada- or in the House of Representatives -United States-. The second aspect in common has to do with the use of the budget. Both governments use the demographic figures obtained in each census to distribute monetary funds -support, grants, infrastructure, etc.- among provinces or states, territories, counties and communities. However, the U.S. census introduces a nuance that is not present for the purposes of the Canadian population count. The distribution of funds is made based on the total population and the breakdown by sex, age and "race" -among others- for the benefit of communities (United States Census Bureau, 2021a). Here, the importance given to racial differentiation for budget allocation is striking.

Regarding the differences, we see that the U.S. census only has the objectives mentioned above, but Canada's census has other intentions. It provides information (Statistics Canada, 2020, pp. 7-10) to: know the characteristics of the country's demographics and the changes occurring in it; feed the political debate; improve decision making -whether private or public-; calculate the demand for services in official minority languages¹². This allows us to observe that while the purposes of the U.S. count cover only a political-electoral and budgetary distribution need, the functions of the Canadian count are more diversified. The latter expects to know the inhabitants of the territory and their transformation rhythms, so that the information can be integrated into the political arena and the creation of public policies.

4.2. Periodicity

There is also a significant divergence in the periodicity with which censuses are applied. While in Canada there is an urgency to apply it every 5 years, in the United States it is more relevant to do it every decade. Both strategies indicate that the Canadian government has a more dynamic notion of its population, as it needs to be aware - in a more expeditious manner - of the changes occurring in it. This allows the government to be more updated about emerging needs, to renew the institutional discourse and to make adjustments at the public policy level. It can even implement reforms in the way data is collected.

4.3. Expression of indigenous specificities

¹² That is, services required in the French language.

Having reviewed the convergences and divergences between the objectives and periodicity of the Canadian and U.S. census in relation to the general population, it is time to ask ourselves about the margin in the questionnaires to express the specificity of the indigenous inhabitants.

As described above, the 2021 Canadian census applied a short and a long format. In the former, apart from the possibility of being able to indicate an indigenous reserve as part of the data requested at the address, there is no question directed to this population. The second, on the other hand, does contain questions where it is possible to express belonging to an indigenous community, as shown below:

- (1) Question 23: What were the ethnic and cultural origins of this person's ancestors (Statistics Canada, 2021, p. 16). An explanatory note is added to the question indicating that ancestors can have indigenous origins or origins that refer to different countries. In addition, it is asked to indicate as many origins as appropriate for each respondent (Statistics Canada, 2021, p. 16). While this question does not directly refer to First Nations, Inuk (Inuit) and Métis, it does allow for their expression. In fact, it allows for the manifestation of ethnicities that are not native to the territory now known as Canada. This question reflects the fact that the Canadian state recognizes the presence of indigenous peoples in its territory, including those from other regions of the world.
- (2) Question 24: Is this person First Nations, Métis or Inuk (Statistics Canada, 2021, p. 16). As in the previous paragraph, the questionnaire adds a note specifying that it recognizes both those persons who have indigenous status and those who do not¹³; it also asks the respondent to answer to which of the three groups of native peoples he or she belongs (Statistics Canada, 2021, p. 16). Here we can already observe a direct interest on the part of the State in getting to know these communities. Even for those members who are not registered by the government.
- (3) Question 26: Does this person have Indian status (registered Indian or treaty Indian, as defined by Canada's Indian Act¹⁴) (Statistics Canada, 2021, p. 18)? (Statistics Canada, 2021, p. 18). This question shows the Canadian government's interest in knowing how many people are recognized as part of an aboriginal people, even though they are not registered as such in any government institution. At the same

¹³ As long as they recognize themselves as indigenous.

¹⁴ The Indian *Act* was established in 1876 and determined that the Canadian Parliament would be in charge of legislating any aspect related to native peoples and territories qualified as reserves. It also allowed intrusion into cultural practices and gave way to aggressive assimilation policies. Since its creation, it has been amended several times in favor of these communities. However, changes have been slow and delayed. In fact, it is considered that today the real debate surrounding the Indian Act is whether it should be sustained or eliminated altogether (Parrot, 2020).

- time, there is an implicit acceptance that not all the indigenous population is registered in the registry of government institutions.
- (4) Question 27: Is this person a member of a First Nation or Indian band (Statistics Canada, 2021, p. 18). If the answer is yes, the questionnaire asks to specify which one. As it is possible to observe this item is directed specifically to First Nations and not to the broad set of the native population. The fact that it is requested to specify the Nation or Indian band to which they belong, shows the care taken to build an exhaustive list of the diversity of this community.
 - (5) Question 28: Is this person a registered member of a Métis organization or settlement (Statistics Canada, 2021, p. 18). Like the previous question, if the answer is yes, it is required to indicate the name of one or the other, either by ticking the list provided by the survey or by adding a new name in the blank space. It is aimed exclusively at the population that identifies itself as Métis and evidences, on the one hand, the government's interest in being aware of this group. On the other hand, the implicit acceptance by the institution of the existence of people identified as Métis who may be part of a Métis Nation or settlement not recognized by the State. Finally, the possibility of adding a name not included in the list implies an interest in knowing them exhaustively.
 - (6) Question 29: Is this person enrolled in or a beneficiary of an Inuit land claim agreement? If the answer is yes, the interviewer is asked to specify which claim or agreement - from the list provided in the questionnaire - the respondent is enrolled in. But there is also a blank space in case the respondent belongs to a different one. Like the two previous questions, this one also has the objective of collecting information about a specific indigenous group: Inuit. Likewise, the blank space to add an agreement not contemplated accepts, on the one hand, that there may be an Inuit population not registered in government databases, but also the institutional interest in having the most complete information possible.

In this respect, the U.S. census is radically different. None of the questions that make up the questionnaire is directed to the original peoples. Neither to those who have inhabited the territory before the colonization period, nor to those who are natives of other parts of the world. In other words, the Census Bureau does not find any usefulness or relevance for its objectives¹⁵ to obtain direct and detailed information about American Indians and Alaska Natives. The only reference

¹⁵ Determine electoral districts, review representation in the House of Representatives, apportion federal funds that go to grants, counties, communities, and provide assistance to states (United States Census Bureau, 2021a).

to these communities is in the form of a response, as one of the possible options to the question about the "race" of the people living in the surveyed dwellings.

However, if we take into account the nuance that the U.S. census introduces in a tangential manner when referring to the distribution of government resources, the interpretation expressed in the previous paragraph changes slightly. But not substantively. That is, the United State Census Bureau (2021a) notes that it apportions funds according to the sex, age, and "race" of the population. In asking about "race," one of the options offered by the questionnaire for response is "American Indian or Alaska Native"-there itself it asks to specify the name of the primary or enrolled tribe. However, it does not require further information. Hence, it is concluded that the interest in the native peoples that inhabit the United States is not of first order because it does not use any direct question. It is also possible to affirm that the information it obtains is fundamentally numerical - how many American Indians and Alaska Natives there are in U.S. territory -, distributive - number of members per tribe - and homogeneous - it does not discern the specificity of American Indians and Alaska Natives -. Furthermore, it does not take into account the various recognition processes these communities are going through.

4.4. Terms to refer to otherness

To learn about the cultural diversity that inhabits the Canadian territory, Statistics Canada (2021, p. 16) asks about the "ethnic origins" of each respondent and when enunciating the original peoples uses the terms with which these same communities self-ascribe: First Nations, Inuit and Métis. To make the comparison with the U.S. census, it is important to mention that ethnicity refers to the process of self-determination that emerges within groups -translated into cultural practices and ways of seeing the world-, and that distinguishes them from others (Gregory et al., 2009, pp. 214-215).

The United States Census Bureau (2020), for its part, uses the term "race" to interpret cultural diversity and refers to them as American Indian and Alaska Native, which coincides with how they self-identify. From the perspective of the United States Census Bureau (2022c), these communities make up one of the five "racial" categories recognized by this institution.¹⁶ Unlike ethnicity, which refers to a process of purely cultural affiliation, the term "race" refers to a way of typification and social distinction that "essentializes political and cultural differences by linking them to physical traits" (Gregory et al., 2009, p. 615). This hierarchical and inferiorizing notion, which classifies people and groups according to physiological or genetic characteristics and which has had genocidal effects -as it assumes the superiority of some "races" over others-,

¹⁶ Racial categories: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (Census Bureau, 2022).

has its origins in the European colonialism of the 18th century (Gregory et al., 2009, p. 615; Morales et al., 2020).

Although the United States Census Bureau (2022c) clarifies that it understands racial categories as sociopolitical constructions, rather than scientific, anthropological, biological or genetic ones, it is definitely striking that, given the multiple negative and inferiorizing connotations of the term race and the reproduction of these connotations in its use, the United States Census Bureau continues to distinguish human beings living in the United States on the basis of this term. While Statistics Canada starts from the self-determination of individuals and groups to know the diversity of their population, the United States Census Bureau continues to use a term that reproduces violence and that has been widely and thoroughly refuted (Gregory et al., 2009, p. 615).

4.5. Alternate sources of statistical information to learn about indigenous peoples

In addition to the two questionnaires -short and long- that Statistics Canada implements, every five years it applies the Indigenous People Survey, specifically aimed at this population. As mentioned above, each edition focuses on a specific topic. However, for the purposes of this research, it is noteworthy that the 2022 Indigenous People Survey investigates more than one, which can be interpreted as a pressing governmental concern to know different aspects of the native peoples (Statistics Canada, 2022). Not just one, as in previous versions.

The American Community Survey, although focused on various social and economic aspects of the population, does not target American Indians and Alaska Natives. Even if we assume that the American Community Survey is able to obtain data from native peoples regarding labor conditions, educational levels, access to transportation and the Internet (United States Census Bureau, 2022b), there are two notable aspects in relation to the Indigenous People Survey applied in Canada. The first is that its scope is limited, thematically speaking. The Indigenous People Survey obtained data on more dimensions that make up the everyday life of these communities: family stability, trauma, discrimination, physical health, mental health, education, sense of belonging, language and indigenous culture (Statistics Canada, 2022). The second is that the American Community Survey does not show interest in collecting information on cultural aspects.

V. CONCLUSION

When asked about the differences and similarities between the Canadian census (2021) and the U.S. census (2020) in the way of knowing the native peoples, the first thing to say is that one and the other reflect two different trends in the way of conceiving the usefulness and objectives of the demographic count. In the Canadian case, there is not only a tendency to recognize native

peoples, but also to pay attention to the ethnic diversity existing among such communities, as a result of different processes of self-determination. In the United States, on the other hand, the scopes and objectives proposed seem to respond to an inertia that reduces interest in understanding the specificities of the different groups.

By implementing questions aimed at First Nations, Inuit and Métis in the national census, Statistics Canada shows recognition of these communities and seeks to understand the dimensions of this population, regardless of the different relationships they have with the government. The topics covered by the Indigenous People Survey applied in 2022, as an alternative instrument, reflect the Canadian government's interest in knowing specific aspects that can contribute to solving the most pressing problems resulting from the colonization process, such as the consequences of residential schools and the weakening of the intergenerational transmission of knowledge. These and other data are used, as stated in the objectives and purposes, to calculate the demand for services, improve the creation of public policies, nourish political debate, distribute the budget and define electoral districts.

The interest that the United States Census Bureau has in knowing the native peoples as of the 2020 census is indirect and tends to reproduce a homogeneous conception of these communities. In other words, it is not interested in constructing data by ethnic group. Among other things, this may be due to the fact that its objectives are solely to distribute electoral districts and the budget.

In accordance with the studies of Baghat (2003), Snip (2003), and Emigh et al. (2015), it is possible to affirm that in terms of cultural diversity, the latest demographic count undertaken by the U.S. government continues to be centered on the notion of "race". Although the United States Census Bureau makes it clear somewhere on its website that it does not refer to biological aspects, the truth is that such an explanation is not socialized. Hence, we agree with the work of Guimond et al. (2004) that problems of terminology tend to diminish the quality of the data collected. In this case, it is considered that the violence reproduced by the term "race" may silence information about ethnic affiliation for fear -among respondents- of being labeled as inferior. To the extent that the United States Census Bureau chooses not to update terminology and not to obtain information by ethnic group, it is worth asking to what extent it is able to produce a credible record of American Indians and Alaska Natives?

After analyzing the differences and similarities between the U.S. census conducted in 2020 and the Canadian one in 2021, it is possible to argue that these instruments of demographic knowledge clearly reflect the political vision that governments and the institutions that implement them have towards the different sectors of the population, as Winkle (1994) and Emigh, Raley and Ahmed (2005) have stated in their research.

Finally, following Emigh et al. (2015), who consider that the categories used in censuses reflect an acceptance on the part of society, it is possible to say that the 2021 Canadian census reflects a conformity on the part of the bulk of the Canadian population towards the existence of

native peoples. Whereas in the United States, such tolerance carries and reproduces the inferiorizing connotations of the term "race".

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