

INEGI's (Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geografía e Informática) census has made it possible for researchers to conduct projects on Mexico. However, there is at least one serious concern about the data. That is, the Mexican census may have mistakenly measured the number of its indigenous population. In Mexico, after the 1921 census, ethnicity was determined solely by a person's ability to speak at least one indigenous language. Therefore, if an individual speaks only Spanish, he or she is not categorized as indigenous even if all his or her ancestors are indigenous and/or she identifies herself as indigenous. This leads to logical absurdities because a baby born to two indigenous parents cannot be legally counted as indigenous until she is old enough to talk.

Treating the ability to speak indigenous language as the only measure to determine indigenous population is likely to exclude many indigenous people who are indeed indigenous. Hence, the Mexican census seems to have underestimated the number of indigenous population and the underestimation might have led to erroneous results in the analyses of socioeconomic studies such as racial inequality in education and income.

The 2000 Mexican census provides an important step for the study of indigenous population. For the first time since 1921, it provides a category “indigenous groups” in addition to “indigenous language.” In this analysis, I compare samples based on one of the following two variables—indigenous language and indigenous group—by analyzing various socioeconomic factors including dissimilarity index of residential segregation and income inequality to see whether the level of inequality in socioeconomic status between indigenous and non-indigenous population differs by using the two different types of measurement of indigenous population.

To analyze possible differences in the results of socioeconomic analysis by the two distinct measurement methods of indigenous population, I use INEGI's 2000 census data. INEGI's census provides data on various variables including state, municipality, level of education, urban-rural status, employment status, type of occupation as well as the two measures of ethnicity—indigenous language and ethnic group.

In this analysis, I test several hypotheses: because it is expected that measuring indigenous population by the ability to indigenous language exclude at least some indigenous population, I hypothesize that indigenous population is larger when measuring it by using "indigenous groups" than by ability to speak indigenous language.

Further, I hypothesize that there is a difference in the results of quantitative analyses in terms of inequality in educational attainment, level of income, and residential segregation between indigenous and non-indigenous populations by the two samples.

My another hypothesis is that the discrepancy in the number of indigenous populations between the two types of samples is larger in the sample of the state where a relatively high proportion of indigenous population is found such as Chiapas, Yucatan, and Oaxaca.

Also, I estimate the percentage of children aged 5-19 both of whose parents are categorized as indigenous are also categorized as indigenous in the two samples to see how much correctly the two measurement methods of indigenous population can take into account indigenous population and which one is better in this regard.

Estimating indigenous population as closely as possible is extremely important in Mexico. Numerous studies have shown serious discrimination against indigenous population as well as their socioeconomically disadvantaged situations. In order to

combat indigenous people's negative situation, we first need to acknowledge their accurate demographic characteristics.

If there is indeed the difference in the results of my analyses based on the two types of measurement of indigenous population, we face the need for reconsidering various socioeconomic factors and discriminations of indigenous population revealed in the previous studies.

Therefore, this study may propose a new direction for studying indigenous population. Also, the study will assess the effectiveness of each of the two measures; whether using ethnic group category is superior to using the language category or the simultaneous use of the both measurements is more advisable. By at least more effectively and correctly counting indigenous population, who are more likely to be socioeconomically disadvantaged in Mexico, it may become feasible to construct more effective policies and social services that target Mexico's disadvantaged people. Also, the results of my study may reveal which areas should be more targeted by the social programs launched in Mexico including PROCAMPO and PROGRESA.