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Title: *Abstract title The Challenge of Indigenous Demography*

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There is a range of notions embraced by indigenous peoples that include understandings of their number, of their geographical area, of their societal structure, of limitations and definitions, and of the foundation of identity that do not represent the indigenous reality. The result is sometimes exclusion, and sometimes alienation from the indigenous culture. Acknowledging the negative effects that can be associated with ethnocentric perspectives, there is an overwhelming need for inside perspectives when demographic categories are discussed. This qualitative dimension is not only a prospect for a more culturally correct understanding and description, but it also has the ability to bring changes into related contexts. This paper discusses the historical and contemporary context of indigenous demographic categorization, with an aim to improving our possibilities for comparison, revision, and development.

The intersectional structure related to demographic research of indigenous peoples has mainly three critical challenges. One is the complicated meeting between quantitative and qualitative methods, representing widely different research traditions. Efforts from both sides have resulted in innovative and complex research design where mutual strengths are promoted and the reduction of disciplinary limitations essential. Another is the relation between the historical and the contemporary context, with geographical variation as an additional complicating factor. It follows that a great concern must be given all divergence involved, but equally that the favourable opportunities are acknowledged. There are excellent examples of studies that have combined comparisons of deviating contexts of time and space, investigating risk factors for measles mortality, survival of mothers and their offspring, the impact of nutrition, and social inequalities in child mortality in nineteenth-century Europe and countries in the contemporary third-world.

A third challenge is the inside and outside understanding of complex indigenous societies. Externally produced censuses, surveys and administrative data are too often inaccurate when it comes to reflection of indigenous social structures. Indigenous poor health is historical, cultural and political in character. In a contemporary era where political distinctions are frequently drawn between 'symbolic' and 'practical' reconciliation, historical records can provide a powerful contrast to this, illustrating the inextricable links between bodily health, social values and systems of colonial power. The providing of adequate indicators for health and living conditions among indigenous peoples is related to our



understanding of the historical process that has led us up to where we are today.