Demographic and Socioeconomic Inequalities between Whites and Indigenous in Brazil

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Abstract

This article describes and compares some major demographic and socioeconomic indicators between whites and indigenous populations in Brazil. Using data from the sample of the Population Census 2000 of IBGE, the fifteen Brazilian municipalities with the highest percentage of indigenous people are analyzed. Results show that the indigenous population is younger than the white one, has elevated dependence ratio, higher fertility and infant mortality, unfavorable socioeconomic conditions, such as lower education and income, and households with little access to electricity, piped water, and sewage. The fact of the indigenous population represents a significant portion of the total in the fifteen municipalities does not mean that it has demographic and socioeconomic conditions similar to those of the white population. It is likely that the white population of these municipalities has received more attention from local government, appropriating, so uneven, available resources including those coming from state and federal levels.

Key words: Racial Inequality, Indigenous Population, Race, Brazil

Introduction

For many years Brazil has been considered as a country where there is no racial discrimination (Fernandes, 2004; Coimbra Jr and Santos, 2000; Silva, 1988; Hasenbalg, 1988). Given the diverse pattern of mixed racial identities observed in this country, many scholars believed to have found a place of racial democracy in the world (Freyre, 1987). This perspective, in fact, helps to hide serious problems of social inequalities in Brazil (Lopes, 2005; Hasenbalg, 1988).

Some researchers have argued that social inequalities are results of class conflicts, not of racial relationships (Ribeiro, 2006; Fernandes, 1964; Costa Pinto, 1953; Pierson, 1945). Despite of the importance of this theoretical approach, recent studies have pointed to racial relationships as a major answer for social inequalities in Brazil (Fernandes, 2004; Telles, 2003; Hasenbalg e Silva, 1988). Some of these studies have shown that even after controlling for socioeconomic variables, whites are better off than non-whites. According to these studies, this subgroup has lower education (Ribeiro, 2006; Fernandes, 2004; Silva and Hasenbalg, 2002), and income (Ferreira, 2000), occupations with low social prestige (Picanço, 2007; Hasenbalg, 1988), restricted access to health and higher exposure to urban violence (Chor and Lima, 2005; Lopes, 2005). That is, for that portion of the Brazilian population, upward social mobility is almost impossible (Telles, 2003; Silva, 1988).

One aspect that deserves attention in studies of racial inequality in Brazil is the exclusion of indigenous people of the analysis (Miranda-Ribeiro, 2006; Coimbra Jr and Santos, 2000). Previous studies very often compare whites with non-white, which is almost always a group formed by blacks and browns (Picanço, 2007; Ribeiro, 2006;

Fernandes, 2004; Silva and Hasenbalg, 2002; Olinto and Olinto, 2000; Wood and Carvalho, 1988). Indigenous people have not received a lot of attention, even being a group of historical and cultural importance in Brazil (Miranda-Ribeiro, 2006). This negligence is almost always justified by the small number of indigenous people, since they accounted for only 0.5% of the total population in Brazil in 2000 (Dias Junior et al, 2008; Perz, Warren and Kennedy, 2008; Chor and Lima, 2005; Pagliaro, Azevedo and Santos, 2005; IBGE, 2005). Another reason is the absence of reliable data (Cardoso, Santos and Coimbra Jr, 2005; Chor and Lima, 2005; McSweeney and Arps, 2005; Coimbra Jr and Santos, 2000).

Data from IBGE have several shortcomings in the race concept. It does not allow, for example, knowing the ethnicity of indigenous peoples and characteristics of villages (Chor and Lima, 2005; Coimbra Jr and Santos, 2000). Nevertheless, the census of the IBGE is an important source of demographic and socioeconomic data, which undoubtedly has been underemployed (Wong, Morell and Carvalho, 2006).

This article aims to contribute for a better understanding of racial inequalities in Brazil, examining differential between whites and indigenous people in this country. This study focuses its analysis on fifteen municipalities with the highest percentage of indigenous population in Brazil. Adding the entire indigenous population of these municipalities, they make up 51% of the total. It is important to note that since all fifteen municipalities contain indigenous villages, so one can expect that our results are a proxy for indigenous populations living in villages in Brazil (IBGE, 2005). The main objective of this article is to examine if indigenous people have demographic and socioeconomic conditions similar to those of the white population in municipalities where they are

majority. It is used here several sources of information, which are data from the 2000 Demographic Brazilian Census, Ministry of Health, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and registration of the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI).

Materials and methods

This article describes demographic and socioeconomic differentials between whites and indigenous peoples living in fifteen Brazilian municipalities with the highest proportions of indigenous in 2000. The other categories (black, brown, yellow and ignored) were excluded because this article aims to compare indigenous peoples with the racial category that presents the best socioeconomic indicators, namely whites. The database used contains 86,429 cases, of a total of approximately 134 thousand.

Demographic differentials were measured using population pyramids, sex ratios, dependence ratios, total fertility rates (TFR), infant mortality rates (IMR), and the percentage of non-migrants. Socioeconomic differentials were measured using the mean years of education for individuals aged 15 and over, the mean income of workers aged 10 years and over, the percentage of individuals aged 10 years and over working in the labor market, and the percentage of individuals aged 65 and over financially supported by the National Institute of Social Security (INSS). Finally, household assets were measured by the percentage of individuals living in households with electricity, piped water and sewer system or septic tank.

Results

Table 1 show the list of fifteen Brazilian municipalities with the highest proportions of self-reported indigenous peoples and their Human Development Index (HDI). These municipalities are small, since only four of them have a population larger ten thousand inhabitants. It is worthy to note that their HDI ranges from 0.542 to 0.718, characterizing them as areas of medium HDI.

All fifteen municipalities have indigenous villages. According to Figure 1, the municipality of São Gabriel da Cachoeira has the greatest number of indigenous peoples living in villages, since it contains fifteen different ethnicities.

Table 1
Municipalities with the Largest Proportions of Indigenous Peoples, Brazil, 2000

Municipality	State	Region	Population	% Indigenous	HDI 2000
São Gabriel da Cachoeira	Amazonas	N	29,947	76.3	0.673
Uiramutã	Roraima	N	5,802	74.4	0.542
Normandia	Roraima	N	6,138	57.2	0.600
Santa Rosa do Purus	Acre	N	2,246	48.3	0.525
Ipuaçu	Santa Catarina	S	6,122	47.9	0.716
Baía da Traição	Paraíba	NE	6,483	47.7	0.594
Pacaraíma	Roraima	N	6,990	47.4	0.718
Benjamim Constant do Sul	Rio Grande do Sul	S	2,727	40.7	0.666
São João das Missões	Minas Gerais	SE	10,230	40.2	0.595
Japorã	Mato Grosso do Sul	W	6,140	39.2	0.636
Jacareacanga	Pará	N	24,024	38.4	0.652
Amajari	Roraima	N	5,294	37.3	0.654
Bonfim	Roraima	N	9,326	37.0	0.654
Charrua	Rio Grande do Sul	S	3,783	35.4	0.716
Santa Isabel do Rio Negro	Amazonas	N	10,561	34.8	0.548

Source: IBGE, 2000 Demographic Census; UNDP, 2008.

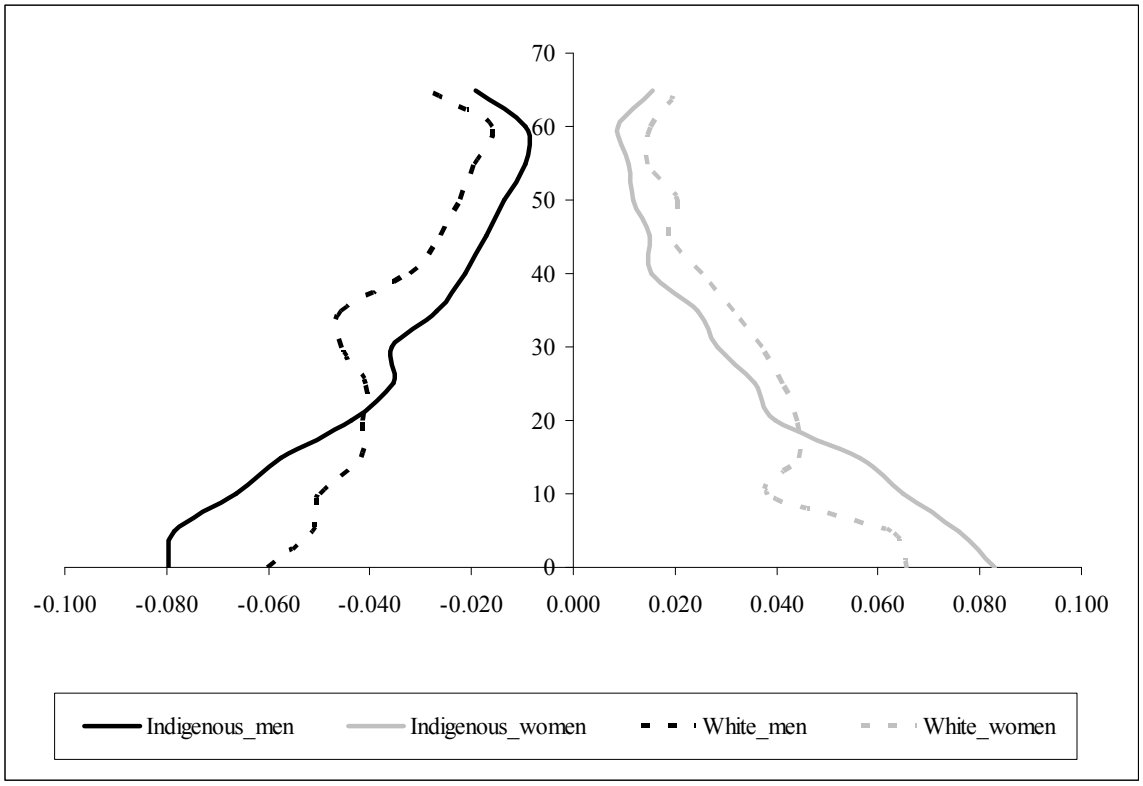
Figure 1
Ethnicity of Indigenous Peoples Living in Village by Municipality - Brazil, 2000

Municipality	State	Ethnicity
São Gabriel da Cachoeira	Amazonas	Desano, Arapaso, Baniwa, Barasana, Baré, Karapanã, Maku, Miriti, Piratapuya, Suriana, Tariano, Tukano, Tuyuca, Wanano, Warekena
Uiramutã	Roraima	Patamona, Ingarikó, Makuxi, Taurepang, Wapixana
Normandia	Roraima	Patamona, Ingarikó, Makuxi, Taurepang, Wapixana
Santa Rosa do Purus	Acre	Kaxinawá, Kulina
Ipuaçu	Santa Catarina	Kaingang
Baía da Traição	Paraíba	Potiguara
Pacaraíma	Roraima	Makuxi, Taurepang, Wapixana
Benjamim Constant do Sul	Rio Grande do Sul	Kaingang, Guarani
São João das Missões	Minas Gerais	Xakriabá
Japorã	Mato Grosso do Sul	Guarani, Guarani Ñhandeva
Jacareacanga	Pará	Kaiabi, Mundukuru, Apiaká, Koyabi
Amajari	Roraima	Makuxi, Wapixana
Bonfim	Roraima	Aturaiu, Jaricuna, Makuxi, Wapixana
Charrua	Rio Grande do Sul	Kaingang
Santa Isabel do Rio Negro	Amazonas	Desano, Baré, Maku, Piratapuya, Tikuna, Tukano

Source: CIMI, 2008.

Graphic 1 displays the population pyramids of white and indigenous populations living in the fifteen municipalities. According to this Graphic 1, indigenous populations are much younger than the white one. Moreover, this graph shows that the male contingent is larger than females in most age groups, regardless of color.

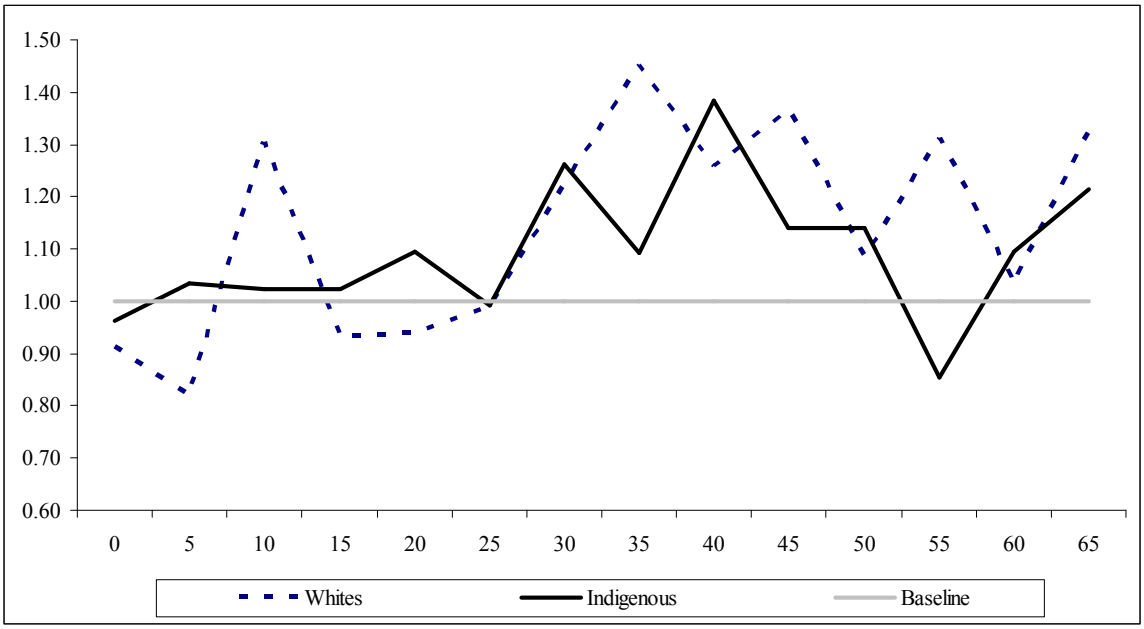
Graphic 1
Population Pyramids for Whites and Indigenous Peoples - Brazil 2000.



Source: IBGE, 2000 Demographic Census

Graphic 2 shows the sex ratio by age groups and race. Regardless of race, white and indigenous men are the majority in the fifteen municipalities. The exceptions are found among whites in the age groups from 0 to 9 years and 15 to 24 years, and indigenous of the aged 55 to 59 years.

Graphic 2
Sex Ratios by Age Groups and Race - Brazil 2000



Source: IBGE, 2000 Demographic Census

Table 2 confirms the findings shown in Figure 2. It shows that sex ratio of the fifteen municipalities is 1.08 to 1.10 for whites and indigenous, respectively. That is, for every 100 white women there are 108 white men, and for every 100 indigenous women there are 110 indigenous men.

Table 2 also shows that the total dependency ratio for the indigenous population is 101, meaning that for every 100 people in productive age there are 101 young people and elderly. In contrast, among whites the dependence ratio is 69. A smaller value compared to indigenous, but still high. The indigenous dependence ratio for young people is much higher when compared with that of whites. According to Table 2, for every 100 indigenous people aged 15 to 59 years, there are 90 under 15 years of age. Among whites this ratio is 55. On the other hand, the elderly dependency ratio is inverted; it is higher for whites.

Table 2
Demographic and Socioeconomic Aspects by Race - Brazil, 2000

Variables	Whites	Indigenous
Demographic aspects		
Sex ratio (M/F)	108	110
Dependence ratio (Total)	69	101
Dependence ratio (For young people)	55	90
Dependence ratio (For elderly)	13	11
Total fertility rates (TFR)	2.8	5.1
Infant mortality rates (IMR)	15.2	45.3
% of non-migrants*	52.6	94.8
Socioeconomics aspects		
Mean years of education of individuals aged 15 and over	5.8	2.9
Mean income of workers aged 10 years and over	463.1	61.3
% of individuals aged 10 years and over working in the labor market*	44.8	14.4
% of individuals aged 65 and over financially supported by Social Security Service *	83.7	60.3
Household characteristics		
% Urban*	43.2	12.9
% of individuals living in households with electricity*	90.1	32.1
% of individuals living in households with piped water *	47.8	24.1
% of individuals living in households with sewer system or septic tank *	24.9	12.1

Source: IBGE, 2000 Demographic Census; Datasus, 2008.
**p valor* < 0,0001

Among other population dynamics components presented on Table 2 are TFT and TMI. It is clear that fertility rate among whites is much lower than among indigenous, being the difference among them equal to 2.3 children. Regarding infant mortality, indigenous presents the highest rate again. When compared with the white population, their IMR is three times higher (45.3 against 15.2). On the other hand, whites have a higher percentage of migrants when compared to indigenous. In fact, the percentage of Indigenous who have never migrated from their hometown is really impressive (94.8%).

Socioeconomic differentials among whites and indigenous peoples are also shown on Table 2. Although education is low among both race groups, whites have almost the double mean of years of schooling as indigenous. The gap between the mean income for both groups is striking; while whites receive on average R$ 463.00 monthly, indigenous peoples earn only R$ 61.00 per month. According to Table 2, whites have higher labor market participation (44.8%) and are more financially supported by the INSS (83.7%) when compared with Indigenous (14.4% and 60.3%, respectively). Finally, regarding household assets, while 43.2% of whites live in urban areas, only 12% of Indigenous reside in the same area (which is expected, given the presence of indigenous villages in the municipalities examined).

In conclusion, with regard to access to public services, it is clear that whites have greater access to electricity, piped water, and sewer system or septic tank when compared to indigenous peoples.

Discussion

According the results of this article, there is a substantial gap in demographic and socioeconomic characteristics between whites and Indigenous populations in Brazil. These differences reflect a combination of oppression and neglect that indigenous people have long suffered in Brazil (Chor and Lima, 2005; Coimbra Jr and Santos, 2000).

The age structure of the indigenous population examined in this article is much younger than that of whites, which can be explained by their high fertility rates (Pereira, Santos and Azevedo, 2005). This structure produces different dependence ratios between whites and indigenous. As shown in Table 2, indigenous people in the working ages have to carry a greater burden than whites. This pattern may suggest the need for public policies focuses on young indigenous people in Brazil (Coimbra Jr and Santos, 2000).

The TFR for Indigenous found in this study (5.1) is, in general, lower than those found for indigenous peoples of Amazon villages. The Suyá people, for example, presented a TFR equal to 6.7 children between 2000 and 2007 (Pagliaro et al, 2008). Moreover, Teixeira and Brazil (2005) found a TFR of 8.1 for the Sateré-Mawé people of the state of Amazonas, and Campanário (2005) estimated a TFT of 10.2 children for Kaiabi of the Xingu National Park, between 1995 and 2000. Among the population of Xavánte Sangradouro-Volta Grande, the TFR was 8.6 in the period between 1993 and 1997 (Souza and Santos, 2001). On the other hand, when comparing the TFR found in this study (5.1 per woman) to the TFR of Krenak (a group of indigenous people living outside Amazon), the latter has a rate 1.5 children lower (Dias Júnior et al, 2008).

Comparing to the white population, the TFR for indigenous is much higher, regardless of the place of the household (Wong, Morell and Carvalho, 2006, IBGE,

2005). Some explanations for this higher TFR may be related to restrict access to medical services, family planning as well as to formal education (Dias Júnior et al, 2008).

It has been observed in Brazil racial differentials in mortality too (Wood and Carvalho, 1988). According to our results, the probability of an indigenous child dies before turning one year of life is three times higher when compared to a white child. Indeed, infant mortality for indigenous people is the highest in the country (Chor and Lima, 2005). However, the Indigenous IMR found in this study for (45.3) is much smaller than that for the Xavánte population (87.1 per thousand) (Souza and Santos, 2001), but is higher than the rate found for Kaiabi people (32.8) (Pagliaro, 2005).

Differential in migration between whites and indigenous is another important aspect shown here. While 50% of whites living the fifteen municipalities are migrants, this percentage is only 6% among indigenous.

Regarding household and socioeconomic aspects, it is clear that both whites and indigenous residing in the fifteen municipalities have low standard of living. However, conditions for indigenous people are much worse. For instance, whites have on average almost the double of years of education. Low levels of education among indigenous may reflect their low income. Our results finally show racial differentials in the access to public services such as electricity, piped water, and sewage or septic tank. Again, Indigenous are in disadvantage when compared to whites.

In general, findings highlight worse demographic and socioeconomic conditions for Indigenous populations in Brazil (Chor and Lima, 2005; Coimbra Jr and Santos, 2000), and this paper indicates that it is true even where they are the majority.

Conclusions

This article finds enormous demographic and socioeconomic differentials between whites and indigenous in Brazil. The fact of indigenous represent a significant portion of the population of the fifteen municipalities studied does not guarantee similar demographic and socioeconomic conditions when compared to whites. It is quite reasonable to assume that whites receive more attention from local government, appropriating, so uneven, from the resources available. Such behavior can reflect prejudice against indigenous people (Miranda-Ribeiro, 2006; Coimbra Jr and Santos, 2000).

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