Category

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The concern of this chapter is the inventive capacities of the category in the ordering of our lives and that of others. Categories are part of everyday practices through which we sort and classify the material objects we use (tools, furniture, books) and identify ourselves and others (student, British, child). In relation to the latter, some of the identification categories we use in various social settings are the same as those of governmental practices such as population censuses. What then is the relationship between the two, between grounded and 'non-authoritative' categories of the everyday and the categories of statistical knowledge-power such as those circulated by censuses? One answer is to think about the category as a device that travels and mediates the relationship between individuals and states, between everyday practices of classification and authoritative state classifications. Rather than a great divide between the two there are often ruptures when lived experience is ordered against a formal set of state categories.[i] All classification schemes have multiple sets of ruptures arising from such a tension. However, over time there is often a convergence between the two through a 'double process' by which formal classification systems and social worlds come together (Bowker and Star 1999). On the one hand, a classification system is partially constitutive of a social world; on the other hand any given social world generates many loosely connected but relatively coherent categories used to classify. In this way, formal categories and social worlds are involved in

processes of mutual constitution or 'co-construction' (Ibid.). In relation to censuses, identification categories are constituted by and retain an account of the classification work of states but also the work that has been occurring in the social worlds they seek to classify.

As I will argue below, the double process through which formal and everyday categories come together leads to the invention of new people. I will start with an example of census taking to illustrate this inventive capacity of the category. The example concerns the category 'Canadian', which by the end of the twentieth century became the fastest growing 'ethnic' origin group in Canada. Yet, until 1986, state identification practices such as the census discouraged and advised against 'Canadian' in the classification of racial or ethnic origin (Boyd and Norris 2001). During the first half of the twentieth century, the census inquired into 'racial or tribal origins' defined on the basis of the father's ancestral lineage: 'as in English, Scotch, Irish, Welsh, French, German, Italian, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Bohemian, Ruthenian, Bukovinian, Galician, Bulgarian, Chinese, Japanese, Polish, Jewish, etc.'.[ii] With the 1951 census, 'ethnic origin' replaced the racial focus and conflated country of origin, race and religion, which continued to be determined in relation to paternal lineage (until 1981) and the question worded such that the expectation was non-Canadian ancestral designation (until 1986). However, throughout this period of Canadian census taking, numerous respondents persistently indicated 'Canadian' as their origin and by 1971 Statistics Canada for the first time reported their numbers: over 71,000

respondents insisted on Canadian as their single response (Boyd 1999). By 1986, when multiple responses to the ethnic origin question were permitted for the first time, one-half per cent of respondents reported Canadian; in 1991 this rose to four per cent and by 1996, when 'Canadian' was added to the list of possible categories the percentage increased to 31 per cent (Ibid.).

Interpreters have variously attributed this phenomenon to state encouragement and promotion of a Canadian identity (Howard-Hassmann 1999), ethnic intermarriage (Kalbach and Kalbach 1999), the over 200 to 300 year residency of British and French groups for whom immigration is but a distant memory (Boyd and Norris 2001), changes in the wording of the question or the influence of media and political campaigns that mobilise dormant responses (Boyd 1999). The question itself has been criticised for emphasising identification with ancestral origins (ethnic ancestry) and thus assuming that ethnicity is a biological and primordial identity (Howard-Hassmann 1999). The alternative interpretations of ethnicity as a social and cultural identity has led to the recognition that there are numerous dimensions and practices of ethnic identification, which census questions cannot possibly capture (Boyd 1999). Additionally, the meaning of responses has been brought into question since many people conflate ethnic ancestry and ethnic identity (Kalbach and Kalbach 1999). These debates and issues have led some researchers to conclude that, 'to date little evidence exists as to what is actually captured by the Canadian census question on ethnic origins' (Boyd and Norris 2001).[iii]

Much has been debated, interpreted and theorised about the category of ethnic identity in relation to this specific example. However, the approach I offer here allows us to enter into this debate in a new way. Rather than interpret the meaning or 'reality' of Canadian as a group identity, I pose a different question: what is the role of the category in inventing or making up new people? Ian Hacking, in his various writings, has argued that 'making up people' refers to the ways a new classification can bring into being a new conception and experience of a way to be a person. Censuses are one such method of classification that may inaugurate a new kind of person that had not been self-conscious before through a process he calls dynamic nominalism (Hacking 1983a). Names interact with the named and the classified but the dynamic also involves 'the *experts* who classify, study and help them, the *institutions* within which the experts and their subjects interact, and through which authorities control' (Hacking 2007: 254; emphasis original). Another way of saying this is that the process of dynamic nominalism involves socio-technical arrangements that include not only human actors such as experts but also the techniques and material practices of institutions such as census authorities and their paper forms, enumerators and of course categories.

The 'Canadian' is different from the kinds of people that Hacking investigates such as those named in relation to autism, obesity, child abuse, and multiple personality disorder. Rather than medical diagnoses, census identification categories are bound up with practices of political and cultural recognition. Yet a

similar process is at work albeit with a key difference. Census taking is a process that engages subjects in both the confirmation and creation of identification categories whereas in Hacking's account of medical diagnoses such engagement occurs when kinds of people resist and try to take back control of the classifications into which they are sorted. However, as I argue below, subjects are always engaged in the categorical work involved in the taking of censuses. So rather than conceiving of the assertion of the category 'Canadian' as resistance, subjects engage with categories that mediate what I call double identification. Through categories circulated by the census subjects identify as part of the population (subjectification) and the state identifies subjects and assembles all of the categories to make up the population (objectification). It is through such *double identification* - of recognition by both the state and subjects - that census categories come to have an existence, come to be facts that can then in turn not only be measured, analysed and assembled into population (objectification) but also be identified with (subjectification). But as the example shows, subjects also claim categories, which are transported back to the state on census forms. What both the state and subjects do is put into circulation mediators, 'non-human actors,' categories that with centripetal force can mobilise others to identify as well as create new 'others.' The presence of such double identification makes an ostensible division between the real and constructed artificial. That is, the question in this chapter is not whether 'Canadian' as an ethnic category existed prior to being reported by the statistical authority in 1971. Rather, it concerns the

role of the category in mediating identification and how it is active in the making up of people. To start, just what kind of an entity is a category?

WHAT IS A CENSUS CATEGORY?

It is through census categories that the state identifies the individual. In the hands of a central authority the category is an objectifying technique of configuring social relations and when all categories are assembled (gender, origins, occupation, income and so on) the population comes into being. So while the census is often described as the 'counting of noses,' or 'taking stock' and knowing 'how many' it is categories that become actionable and governable: the immigrants; the elderly; the 'Indians.' However, it is also with categories that individuals identify themselves in relation to others within a social space. It is through categories or classes of equivalence that the individual passes from their singularity to a generality (Desrosières 1998). Identification is not in relation to a statistical object, which is what happens when census officials make up a population. Categories are 'conventions of equivalence, encoding, and classification, precede statistical objectification' and are the 'bonds that make the whole of things and people hold together' (236). But then what does identification with a category mean?

A population is an entity divided and differentiated into numerous categories and census taking involves the subject identifying her difference and resemblance in relation to these classifications. The subject is mobilised to participate in the

practice of identifying with categories that are circulated and transported by different techniques (the census manuscript form, enumerator instructions). But identification is never with one but rather the census demands that individuals simultaneously identify with numerous classifications: age, gender, marital status, ethnicity, origins, language, and so on. But importantly, individuals are not subjected by categories or the census (connoting disciplinary power) but subjectified through it, that is, made into census subjects. This is the meaning of subjectification that Foucault (1983) articulated. Census taking is a subjectifying technology through which individuals examine and articulate who they are in relation to others in a population. To do so they must engage in creative acts that involve comprehending and identifying themselves in relation to categories. This requires cognitive tools of generalisation, which is also a necessary precondition of statistical reasoning on the part of the state (Desrosières 1998). It is a capacity that involves 'articulation work' - all of the juggling of meaning that goes along with the task of interpreting categories and then performing in the face of uncertainty (Bowker and Star 1999: 310). Rather than an objectifying procedure to control bodies, census categories are thus specific ways of encoding and directing the articulation work of the subject.

If the census only involved the state imposing categories then census taking would be an easier endeavour. The state could simply do the work of identifying, classifying and categorising bodies on manuscript forms. However, the state needs to and wants to find subjects who can identify with its census categories, it

needs subjects to tell the truth about themselves, and it needs to affirm that they can recognise themselves as part of the population. Consequently, much effort is expended in educating people, training enumerators, creating instructions, and establishing classifications and categorisations through which individuals can identify. This was no more evident than in 1911 with the taking of what was declared to be the first 'scientific' enumeration of 'Indians and 'Eskimos', the Aboriginal people inhabiting the Canadian Far North.[iv] Aboriginal people could not identify with the categories circulated by the census and see themselves as part of the population. The difficulties were not simply a matter of language and translation. Cultural concepts for representing divisions of time and social relations also intervened, shaped and confounded enumerators. Thus, aboriginal people could not be classified or identified, nor could corresponding relations be established between them and others in the Canadian population. In other words, census taking was not able to bring forth the subjectivities necessary to produce population in the Far North.

Census categories not only require subjects but are also objects of classification struggles. Bourdieu (1988) made an important distinction between hypothetical and real groups, that is, between classification struggles and group struggles. The former consists of symbolic and conceptual struggles over the categorisation of individuals who occupy similar social positions, and who are thus subject to similar conditions and thus tend to perceive themselves as members of a group. But just because individuals are perceived or classified as a group does not mean

they will act as a group as this requires the practical and political work of organising and mobilising. Census categories are thus part of symbolic and conceptual struggles over the classification of people, which in turn can mobilise and reinforce group struggles. The two struggles can overlap in a number of significant ways: through census categories groups can be 'nominated into existence' (Golderg 1997) which in turn can reinforce their affiliations and identifications (and of course the reverse is also possible); through numerable mediations between individual actors categories can be modified, subverted and changed; and through recognised census categories groups can claim or be denied social and political rights (Higgs 2004, Kertzer and Arel 2002, Potvin 2005).

If authoritative categories arise out of practical ones, then agents must have the capacity to challenge, change, modify, invent, and refuse the categories in circulation. To be sure, agents can and do refuse identification with authoritative categories or claim different ones than those circulated by the state. They also can and do obfuscate and misreport their identification and use identification as a tactical resource. As such census taking is not only a subjectifying technology but also a strategy. That is, subjects can and do engage in different strategies of identification (both intentionally and unintentionally). They can absolutely refuse to identify with the census and any of its categories. While legally and ethically compelled to participate (for the good of the collective he has a responsibility to articulate himself into the population) they can refuse and remain 'outside' of the population. Alternatively, they can identify and be part of the population through

their association or solidarity with its categories. To resist or challenge particular categorisations would thus represent a classification struggle. The understanding I want to develop here is that the census category is not only a subjectifying technology but also a strategy and as such always results in categories that are non-authoritative. For while professing completeness and attempting to incorporate all identifications, censuses always produce 'others'.

The processes involved in double identification and classification struggles are well captured in Ian Hacking's definition of 'dynamic nominalism' briefly introduced above. A kind of person comes into being at the same time as the kind itself is invented; the category and the people in it emerge at the same time (Hacking 1986). The question is not whether categories are real but how they are constituted (Desrosières 1998, Hacking 1983b). They are constituted as a result of battles over truth, debates, controversies, etc. - or what was described above as classification struggles. Once settled then the entity - in this case the category - can be said to exist and can be investigated and acted upon (and I would add, identified with). This is a historically contingent outcome: some categories are 'discovered' and others are not. Hacking says there are many possible descriptions that are true of the world, but the events that establish the truth of one version close off other equally true versions. This contingency does not disqualify the truth status of the versions of the world we arrive at, but does account for why some things become true rather than others, or why some categories become authoritative and others do not. Once authoritative, categories can then be

deployed administratively, shape social development, support particular political projects, have practical consequences for the distribution of resources and shape collective identities (Kertzer and Arel 2002).[v]

Interpreting census categories in this way directs our attention to understanding how particular categories have triumphed over others and have come to be recognised as authoritative. Once they have emerged they survive if it is possible for the state to do things with them (objectification) but only if subjects can also identify with them (subjectification). It is only when the category involves such double identification (state—subject) that it can be said to be 'real.' This understanding marks a departure from those who would argue that census categories are merely state constructed. If the categories of the census are made authoritative by the dual processes of subjectification and objectification and if population is assembled from the categories of the census then population is not an abstract or theoretical entity. It is a 'real' thing through which the subject can identify herself, both her resemblance and difference. It is a 'real' thing through which the state can know subjects and their resemblances and differences.

This dynamic is perhaps most visible when we consider the subject's refusal or inability to identify with the categories circulated by the census. While the census imposes a limited repertoire of categories, subjects do not necessarily limit their identifications to it. Can we then consider moments when individuals assert new identification categories as a rupture and indicator of the divergence between the

formal and informal categories and when new kinds of people or social beings start to emerge? If so, then authoritative categories could be said to arise out of these moments. This is the point I will develop by returning to the example that opened this chapter, the emergence of the non-authoritative ethnic category of 'Canadian' in the early part of the twentieth century.

THE CATEGORY OF CANADIAN

The process of taking and compiling the 1921 Census of Canada involved a particular dispute and struggle over the classification of origins, a classification that has been included in every Canadian census since its beginnings.[vi] But before the controversy in 1921, and as early as the first scientific census of 1871, individuals were claiming their ancestral origins as 'Canadian' despite the fact that this category was discouraged and not recognised by the central authorities (Curtis 2001). Even though the list of categories circulated by the census did not include 'Canadian,' many respondents declared it and enumerators recorded it on the manuscript forms, only to be erased by compilers after the fact when the forms were transported back to the statistical authority, and re-categorised often on the basis of surnames.[vii] As manuscript forms reveal, the practice did indeed continue throughout all enumerations into the next century.[viii] So, while the manuscript forms and enumerator instructions did not encourage or permit the category, respondents stubbornly or habitually claimed it. Regardless of the wording of the question, and no matter how much the state attempted to guide responses through its various relations of communication (formatting of questions and forms,

instructions, statements in the media, and so on) the category was asserted. Thus, many governing agents, from the enumerators to the heads of households, engaged actively in the articulation work required to interpret, accept, resist and create categories through which they could identify. Even before self-enumeration (1971) and the contemporary practice of blank boxes for recording 'other' responses, capacities of self-categorisation were thus being exercised. Subjects creatively engaged in the practice rather than being simply objectified by it. But this is only one half of the process of identification. Respondents were census subjects in a second way: as subjects of political rule. In the hands of the state, which alone could reveal the truth about the population, the census was a political technology. Through corrections, erasures and reclassification, the state made Canadians disappear from official reports of the population. Subjects were forced into accepted categories suggesting a much more disciplinary rule than that afforded by the introduction of the 'other' category later in the twentieth century.[ix]

However, the category 'Canadian' was still transported and communicated back to the state via the manuscript form, and with each census the state had to contend with 'Canadians' as a disruption to its disciplinary efforts. This is evident in changes to the instructions and the wording of questions in subsequent enumerations, which were in part efforts to subdue insistent citizens. The practice thus involved an interaction between the subject and the state through the census form and mediated by categories and many other devices including instructions, enumerators, and compilers. But in the 1921 enumeration another actor was also

involved, the newspaper media, through which we can gain some further insight about how categories mediate classification struggles. A few weeks before the 1921 taking of the census and in light of just-released enumerator instructions, a media campaign was launched against a change in the wording of the instructions concerning categories of racial origin. The 1911 instructions stated briefly that the 'racial or tribal origin' should be recorded. A list of possible categories was provided (English, Scotch, Irish, Welsh, and so on). However, in 1921 the list of categories was followed by the direction that 'The words "Canadian" or "'American" must not be used for this purpose, as they express "Nationality" or "Citizenship" but not a "Race of people." ' The explicit direction was perhaps a response to the increasing occurrence of 'Canadian' (and 'American') as an origin in the 1911 census manuscript forms.

One paper reported, 'There is no "Canadian" or "American" race, according to the regulations.'[x] News headlines in the English speaking press across the country declared 'No Canadian Race, Census Takers Say.'[xi] An article reproduced in five western newspapers asked, 'Who and what are we? Is there such a person as a Canadian? The Government of Canada says there is not.'[xii] While many editorialists and letters to the editor used nationality, citizenship and racial origin interchangeably, they nonetheless asserted a challenge to the authoritative categories circulated by the census. Canadian as a bona fide origin category was variously defended on the grounds of patriotism, nationalism, as a means of ethnic integration and assimilation, against watered-down 'hyphenated identities', and

with the consternation that 'the only persons who are really entitled to be called Canadians are the hundred thousand Indians whose ancestors held the land when Jacques Cartier sailed up the St. Lawrence almost four centuries ago.'[xiii] It was thus a category that established the difference of a group - the Canadians - in relation to all others (e.g., immigrants).

What happened as a result? In 1931, an elaborate definition was included in the instructions to enumerators that no longer explicitly singled out 'Canadian' as an incorrect category. However, as manuscript forms reveal, the category 'Canadian' was still not permitted as an origin for when it did appear it was edited. As the foregoing account illustrates, the census subject was not the only actor. While difficult to account for all the possible narratives overflowing census taking, there are numerous traces that can be identified such as those put into circulation by the newspaper media.[xiv] Certainly, categorisations and narratives of 'ethnicity' and 'race' were also in circulation. For example, around the time of census taking there were various discussions and debates about what it meant to define oneself as Canadian, who constituted a 'good' immigrant, and problematisations of foreigners and aliens, which expressed understandings of these different identification categories. It is in this regard that we can conceive of the category as a mediator that circulates between practices, with newspaper narratives providing traces of some of these.

Whatever the political reasons and other factors that might have been at work, census taking constituted a symbolic and conceptual struggle over the recognition of a particular identification that was mediated by the categories circulated by the census. For it is worth repeating that the census form and its categories mediated the state—subject relationship in the dispute. Census manuscript forms could make individuals do things (identify with its categories) but was also made to do things, that is, transport back to the state alternative and competing categories.

It is also worth remembering that identification with the category 'Canadian' occurred before being recognised on the census form and before the newspaper media took up the issue. I would suggest that the creation of the census subject was a condition that made identification with and the eventual recognition of the new category possible (subjectification). Indeed, after much time and controversy it was finally included amongst the authoritative categories and reported in the official statistics of the census authority, and could then be investigated and acted upon (objectification) (as well as made an object of social science research). The inclusion of the category also mobilised ever more subjects to so identify illustrating how categories circulated by the census and the individuals to which they are linked are simultaneously created. That the number of ethnic 'Canadians' increased from four per cent to 31 per cent in five years attests to the power of the category to mobilise identification and 'make' Canadians. As Hacking reminds, this is a historically contingent outcome, and as I have documented above it was only through political and classification struggles (both represented on the

manuscript forms and in the political and media debates) that it came to be included amongst the authoritative categories. Canadian thus understood is the result of co-construction and convergence: between the authoritative classification system of the census authority and the practical systems of subjects. I am not suggesting that it is only through the census that such practices occur. There are many practices of identification and census taking is but one. Rather, I am suggesting that by analysing census taking we can gain insights about how categories mobilise identification more generally.

The example brings me back to the concern of this chapter, which is about the role of the category in inventing or making up new people. Census taking required and brought into being subjects with the capacity to reflect on their similarities and differences in relation to categories circulated by the census and in turn the capacity to challenge and create new identifications. In the case of being Canadian, it was a process through which subjects claimed a new category and differentiated status. The making up of ethnic Canadians was thus not an event that the census simply recorded. Rather, census taking helped bring into being a category that travelled across the country, attracted new members, and confounded the state's efforts to exclude. But it was only when the category was recognised by both the state (objectification) and subjects (subjectification) through the practice of double identification (state—subject) that it was possible for someone to be officially recognised as an ethnic Canadian. So, while censuses have been interpreted (and legitimised) as simply the recording of data and the

construction of population, census taking and its attendant practices including the creation of categories play an inventive (and constitutive) role in making up people.

Researchers often note that how people respond to a survey or census form is very much influenced by the way questionnaires are formatted to how questions are posed and what categories are included. Rather than technical or operational issues this chapter suggests that each of these devices is an active mediator involved in making up and inventing people. The category is not a simple recording of who people are but a device that mediates everyday classifications and those of statistical knowledge-power. The question then is not how to improve techniques such as censuses to better 'capture' or describe the social world 'out there' but to examine how these very devices are involved in both making up and legitimising particular versions of the social world. From this perspective debates about whether categories of people are 'real' or 'constructed' are redundant for if we attend to the inventive capacities of categories in the ordering of our lives and that of others we see that categories have a formative and transformative potential. Indeed, it is a potential that has and can be activated by subjects. For example, as part of their political repertoire social groups have often intervened in census taking to assert new questions and mobilise new categories (e.g., on ethnicity, religion, sexuality).

What then can we say about social science researchers who use methods like surveys and in doing so mobilise categories? No matter what our intentions, we are always in some measure involved in the making of the social world and cannot fall back on claims to neutrality and objectivity. Instead, as Law and Urry (2004) suggest, we need to make transparent how the categories we mobilise also mediate the making of the social world and the 'ontological politics' of these practices. This is not only an invitation to be reflexive about how our interventions contribute to the making of some realities and not others. It is also a call to think about how we can interfere and creatively challenge accepted categories as well as illuminate the choices we make about the social worlds we help make happen.

NOTES

[i] Bowker and Star (1999) address this question in their discussion of the relationship between formal or scientific classification systems and informal or practical classification systems deployed in the everyday. They cite in particular Mary Douglas's work on how practical classifications of the everyday become reified, and Durkheim and Mauss, for whom primitive, practical social classifications are linked to the first scientific classifications.

[ii] 'Instructions to Commissioners and Enumerators,' *Extract from the Manual of Instructions to Officers Employed in the Taking of the Sixth Census of Canada* (1921).

[iii] Additionally, every census in the twentieth century made changes to the list of possible responses, the wording or presentation of the question, enumerators' instructions and data processing rules (Potvin 2005).

[iv] See Ruppert (2009) for a detailed discussion.

[v] Similarly, Curtis (2001) (as do other researchers) argues that the census must also 'reflect social relations' (34). He notes, for instance, that 'statistical knowledges are conditioned by the materiality of the social relations they attempt to appropriate; they are historically specific knowledges that are adequate to particular kinds of social objects and, by implication, inadequate to others' (308). The latter Curtis says feeds off other ways of configuring and knowing social relations and in turn come to shape those very social relations.

[vi] The inclusion of questions on racial and ethic origins in Canadian censuses is connected to the demographic, economic and political stakes in the relations of power between different minority and majority groups that have constituted Canada - its three 'founding nations' (Aboriginal, French, and British) and diverse immigrant groups. Census statistics have thus always formed the basis of political and institutional organisation, group recognition, constitutional rights and the implementation of equality and anti-discrimination laws (Potvin 2005).

[vii] Curtis (2001) notes how the attribution of origin was based on different criteria in Quebec and other provinces. Census commissioner Taché was concerned with ensuring a high count of French Canadians; in Quebec, children were thus categorised as 'French' if either parent was of French origin. In other provinces, attribution was based solely on the paternal line (284–6).

[viii] This discussion draws from data compiled by the Canadian Century Research Infrastructure Project (CCRI), a five-year interdisciplinary and multi-institutional initiative that involved building a set of interrelated databases concerning the 1911-1951 Canadian censuses of population. As one of eleven Team Leaders from seven universities across Canada, I assisted with the compilation of databases including digitised data from original census manuscript forms, and documentary data derived from Statistics Canada files, newspaper commentaries and parliamentary and legislative debates. For further information see a recently published special issue of *Historical Methods* (2007): 40(2).

[ix] As far as I know, a genealogy of the 'other' category is yet to be written. In 1951, however, an 'other' box was included for enumerators to write-in groups not listed on the census form. Nonetheless, enumerator instructions still discouraged the use of 'Canadian' in this box and the census authority re-categorised any such entries based on a set of coding rules. However, in 1971, though still discouraged, the number of people who self-reported 'Canadian' was reported for the first time in the final tabulations.

[x] *Sudbury Star*, 7 May 1921: 1.

[xi] *Victoria Daily Times*, 10 May 1921: 1. Other headlines included: 'Can't say race is Canadian' (*News Chronicle* (Port Arthur), 11 May 1921: 5); 'Census takers now on the job' (*Cobalt Nugget*, 4 June 1921: 6); 'How Census Takers Classify Nationalities' (*Camrose Canadian*, 23 June 1921: 7).

[xii] *Banff Crag and Canyon*, 2 July 1921: 2; *Strathmore and Bow Valley Standard*, 27 July 1921: 2; *Lloydminster Times*, 21 July 1921: 6; *The Vegreville Observer*, 29, July 1921: 6; *The Gleichen Call*, 10 Aug 1921: 6.

[xiii] *The Globe*, 15 Feb 1922: 4.

[xiv] Monica Boyd for example concludes that the most influential factor responsible for the upsurge in the number of self-identified ethnic Canadians in 1996 was a high profile 'Count Me-Canadian' campaign waged by major media outlets (Boyd 1999). See (Bellavance, Normand, and Ruppert 2007) for an analysis of the influence of the media during 1911 census taking.

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