

CHANGES IN CENSUSES FROM IMPERIALIST
TO WELFARE STATES

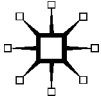
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CHANGES IN CENSUSES FROM
IMPERIALIST TO WELFARE STATES

How Societies and States Count

*Rebecca Jean Emigh, Dylan Riley, and
Patricia Ahmed*

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CHANGES IN CENSUSES FROM IMPERIALIST TO WELFARE STATES

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To our families

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Volume 2

How Societies, States, and Their Interaction Affect Information Gathering

How do states and societies shape censuses? In the United States, it is common knowledge that censuses entail politics. Most censuses have been surrounded by political controversies over redistricting, privacy, sampling, and undercounting (e.g., Anderson and Fienberg 2000b:783; Choldin 1994:1, 5; Spencer 2010:A8). These debates create dismay among scientists and political commentators about the politicization of the census and calls for the renewed autonomy of the scientists at the US Census Bureau (Choldin 1994:3–4, 11–12, 237–238).

While there is no doubt that the census intersects with these visible political battles, there is a surprising consensus, from virtually opposite ends of the political spectrum, that the census also stems from the nefarious, but largely invisible, power of the bureaucratic state. For example, the debates over the 2010 US census suggested that right-wing Republicans in the US House of Representatives believed that the state controls society through the census. Some of them strongly criticized the 2010 census, claiming that its questions (other than the question about the number of people in the household specifically needed for legislative apportionment) invaded individuals' privacy, making it easier for the government to fine households or to abuse its power (Dinan 2009:n.p.; Editorial 2010:20P; Hooper 2010:4; Spencer 2010:A8; Weiner 2009; cf. Dinan 2012:n.p.).

Perhaps even more astonishing is that most academics—who generally tend toward the left on political and social issues—would agree with the overall thrust, even if not the details or politics, of right-wing Republicans' argument that the state gains extensive

knowledge through censuses that makes it easier to maintain power over society. The highly influential work of Foucault (1979:27) on “power-knowledge relations” implies that censuses are instruments of state control, shaping individuals’ thoughts and actions, whether they realize it or not (e.g., Kertzer and Arel 2002:5–7). A benign variant of this view comes from the US Census Bureau (2010a:1) itself, which suggests that the census “affects our lives in ways we don’t often realize.” Its brochure reminds readers, that in addition to redistricting, the census is used to plan schools, roads, the production of commodities, and hospitals (US Census Bureau 2010a:1). These views represent variants of a “state-centered” perspective implying that states, not societies, influence censuses. In turn, these censuses affect society. Thus, the state-centered perspective suggests that states influence societies through censuses.

However, the extensive social mobilizing—in addition to partisan politics—that surrounds the US census seems to contradict this state-centered perspective. Some ethnic and national origin groups organized extensively to encourage their members to participate—or not—in the 2010 census (Abdulrahim 2009:A6; Ludden 2009; Watanabe 2009:A3). Lobbying by multiracial individuals, ethnic minorities, and groups representing them influenced the US Census Bureau’s decision to allow individuals to check more than one race in the 2000 census (Perlmann and Waters 2002:13). Social influence may extend beyond this visible lobbying: just as the state-centered view points to the state’s visible and invisible influence on the census, there may be fundamental and strong, but invisible, social forces that affect the census. Thus, there is a “society-centered” perspective analogous to the state-centered one, but the causal influence of states and societies is reversed. The “society-centered” perspective suggests that societies, not states, shape censuses. In turn, these censuses affect states. The society-centered perspective therefore suggests that societies influence states through censuses.

Of course since both state and social influences are apparent, both must have some effect. They may have differential influence in different contexts or they may interact in some way to produce censuses. These broad state and social influences on censuses, however, are not easy to examine by looking only at the United States in the present (or in any single case at a single point in time). The influences of state and social actors on censuses are not necessarily explicitly intentional, so actors may not be able to provide direct evidence about them. These influences may also have long-term causes and effects that are not understood by actors in the present or in the absence of temporal

information. Finally, in any given social setting, actors often take for granted how a particular institution, such as the census, works, which may be quite different in different societies. The United States, for example, is virtually unique in constitutionally mandating that the census apportions representation, so using the US census as a single example of state and social influences may be misleading.

Thus, we employ a historical and comparative method that analyzes censuses or census-like information in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Italy, starting in England about 1000 years ago. In Volume 1, we analyzed these developments up to the nineteenth century. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, censuses finally became taken for granted parts of the institutional landscape in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Italy. One common way of interpreting the rise of censuses is to treat them as outcomes of state formation, which also occurred during this period of time. This volume, drawing on the model developed in Volume 1, offers a different perspective. We suggest that censuses arose out of an interaction between bureaucracies and social interests. Censuses constituted public, official knowledge not where they were insulated from social pressures but rather where there was intense social and political interaction around them. During the period of time we examine here, we show how this interactive process came to be most developed in the United States, was relatively less developed in the United Kingdom, and was the least developed in Italy. Chapter 1 begins with a theoretical overview and ends with chapter summaries. Our empirical analyses begin in Chapter 2.

States, Societies, and Censuses

To start, we review relevant work that explains the relations between the state, society, and science. These literatures were long dominated by state-centered perspectives, but they have recently taken a more interactionist turn. We then turn to summarizing the general theoretical model that we developed in Volume I. We argue that it represents a fully interactive view of the way that societies and states affect censuses. Our model thus draws on the interactionist turn exhibited by the larger literature on states, societies, and science. However, we argue that we develop this interactive view much more fully than this previous literature.

FROM SOCIETY TO THE STATE IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

Until the 1980s, the dominant approach in political sociology used to analyze the relation between the state and society was society centered. This approach had Durkheimian, Marxist, and Weberian roots. Pluralists, following Durkheim (1958:45; [1893] 1984:171), suggested that the state arose either out of the needs of organized social groups or the division of labor. Pluralism sometimes suggested that the state did not even constitute a distinct institution (Dahl 1971:1–2; review in Mann 1993:46–57). Marxists had a more nuanced view. They developed an instrumentalist account of the state suggesting that the state was directly controlled by the dominant economic class and a structuralist one suggesting that the state guaranteed the overall conditions for dominant classes to exploit subordinate classes (Held and Krieger 1984:4; Lenin 1975:314; Marx and Engels [1932] 1972:187; Miliband 1970:56; Poulantzas 1969:70). The structuralist position explained state autonomy under capitalism as a consequence of the separation of economic exploitation and political domination.

However, Marxist accounts never fully theorized the state as an organization, and subsequent theorists used Weber's theory of bureaucracy to fill this gap (e.g., Therborn 2008:49–63). A more recent development, combining Weberian and rational choice theory, suggests that the state bargains with its society. Rulers seek to maximize revenue while negotiating with officials and taxpayers (Ardant 1975:164–172; Kiser and Schneider 1994:190; Levi 1988:1–4; Tilly 1990:102; Wilson 2011:1437–1438). Through this process, state administrations come to reflect the social structures they govern (review in Wilson 2011:1437–1438). All these theories suggest that societies shape states insofar as the theories derive features of states from social relations (productive or exchange relations, or power and resources more generally).

Despite the emergence of this combination of neo-Weberian and rational choice accounts, most neo-Weberian work has been decidedly state centered (Hintze 1975:215; Mann 1992:148; Skocpol 1979:14; 1985:7–8; reviews in Gorski 2003:3–10; Tilly 1990:5–16). These scholars followed Weber (1958:77–78) in defining the state by its means—its bureaucratic and infrastructural capacities—not its ends, suggesting that states might pursue a variety of ends not imposed by society, such as war making or economic development. The neo-Weberians did not ignore the relations between the state and society, but they analyzed them to understand the state and how it controlled its society (Migdal 1988:21–25).

These state capacities to penetrate society and to implement decisions determine a host of social, economic, and political outcomes (Evans 1995:10–12; Mann 1986:170; O'Donnell 1978:9–15; Slater 2008:253–254). State power or strength stems from a combination of autonomy from society and embeddedness within it (Evans 1995:12). Politicians were the ultimate source of political ideas, social priorities, and economic policies (review in Furner and Supple 1990:9). The participation, collaboration, cooperation, and trust of dense networks and organizations of social actors, as well as the transfers of information and resources they support, are also crucial to the success of states (Evans 1995:248–249; Hoffman and Norberg 1994:2–5; Lange 2003:374). Unsuccessful states are constrained or even dominated by their societies (Migdal 1988:33–39). Given this overall Weberian emphasis, the once influential Marxist focus on patterns of production and class relations and the pluralist focus on interest groups no longer predominate, but these social features are often seen as important characteristics that can weaken or strengthen states (reviews in Carroll 2009:558; Gorski 2003:3–10; Tilly 1990:5–16). Thus, though there are notable exceptions (Furner and Supple

1990:9; Mann 1986:22–28; Putnam 1993:9; Riley 2010:1–3), most works discussing the relationship between state and society, even the most society-centered perspectives such as Migdal’s (1988:28–35, 40–41; 2001:22), generally analyze social influences (conceptualized as social organizations or social networks) to understand state capacity but are relatively uninterested in social dynamics *per se*. Indeed, the neo-Weberian literature so effectively brought the “state back in” (Skocpol 1985:3–4), that the social foundations of political struggle in their own right have been relatively neglected over the past several decades.

During the last two decades, a new cultural position challenged this neo-Weberian consensus. Many Weberians and Marxists hold that the state is the locus of a relative monopoly over the means of violence (Bourdieu 1999:58; Carroll 2009:555–556; Evans 1995:5). This “bellicist” tradition notes the close connection between war making and state making (reviews in Centeno 2002:11–20; Gorski 2003:5–10). Of course since Gramsci (1971:12) and Foucault (1979:7–24; 1980:142; Gorski 2003:166), it is common to argue that states, at least in the advanced capitalist world, exert their control more often through widespread, everyday cultural practices rooted in society (e.g., hegemony or knowledge) than by overt violence.

These influences, along with Weber’s cultural writings and the cultural turn more generally, created interest in the cultural processes of the state (reviews in Carroll 2009:560–573; Loveman 2005:1653; Orloff 2005:201–202; Steinmetz 1999:19–29). States often exploit cultural, religious, and scientific institutions in society to enhance their power (Carroll 2006:168; Gorski 2003:15–22; Loveman 2005:1655). Nevertheless, state administrations do not merely reflect but also refract the societies they govern (Wilson 2011:1443).

Although the cultural turn coincided with a trend toward “bringing society back in” (Evans et al. 1985:347; Orloff 2005:207), in many ways, this work has been just as statist as the neo-Weberian literature. For example, although Foucault (1991:103–104; 2007:93–94) decentered the state by focusing on the diffuse nature of power and everyday practices of governmentality that sustain it, like the neo-Weberians, he also emphasized how state power is enhanced through its interaction with society (cf. Carroll 2009:561; Eyal and Buchholz 2010:130; Kerr 1999:175; Murdoch and Ward 1997:311; Power 2011:49; Rose et al. 2006:86–87). Thus, although ambiguous, Foucault’s work has been open to a highly statist interpretation. Bourdieu (2012:14–15, 60, 228, 231, 326) is more openly statist, defining the state as having a relative monopoly over “legitimate physical and symbolic violence”

and claiming that it possesses great cultural power. Thus, the cultural turn has strengthened the statist approach by suggesting that states control the way social actors perceive the world.

STATES AND SOCIETIES IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF SCIENCE

This state-centered bias of the cultural turn is also apparent in studies of science, knowledge, and technology (also called the sociology of science and knowledge, science and technology studies, the sociology of scientific knowledge, social studies of science). Before the 1990s, ethnomethodological and phenomenological perspectives that emphasized the local and contingent nature of knowledge production were influential in science studies, especially in micro studies of scientific work and talk in laboratories (Lynch 1988:71–72; Mukerji 1994:151–153; Shapin 1995:295–296, 305). However, since the 1990s, the focus of these studies expanded beyond formal scientific settings and the construction of knowledge within laboratories to understand the broader dimensions of public engagement with science and technology and the social role of intellectuals and scientists (Carroll 2009:582; Epstein 2008:166; Eyal and Buchholz 2010:128; Irwin 2008:583; Jasanoff 2004b:14; Schweber 2006:8). Durkheim and Foucault influenced the analyses of the interface between science, society, and the state at this macro level (Law 1986:1–3).

This macro perspective often subtly emphasizes the power of science and experts, and where these experts overlap with governmental officials, it also emphasizes the power of the state (cf. Eyal and Buchholz 2010:128). For example, actor-network theory emphasizes how scientists build their authority by positioning themselves in central positions of networks composed of other scientists, objects, and the general public (Callon 1986:196; Latour 1987:258–259; Law 1987:111; reviews in Epstein 2008:168–169; Lynch 1993:109–111; Sismondo 2008:16–17). Scientists work to assure that “actants” (anything that acts, biological or natural), arranged into networks, work together in a consistent way (Callon 1986:196; Latour 1987:258–259; reviews in Epstein 2008:168–169; Sismondo 2008:16–17). Scientists’ control over science enhances their control over society (review in Epstein 2008:168–169). Thus, actor-network theory considers how knowledge is a combination of humans and materials, echoing Marx’s dialectical theory of ideal and material forces. Similarly, “performativity,” an outgrowth of actor-network theory, also emphasizes the power of experts, especially economists, to induce social reality to reflect

their own theories (Callon 1998:23, 30; MacKenzie 2004:305–306). Thus, ideas come from scientists, and social forces are mostly important in broadcasting the ideas. Another theoretical variant of actor-network theory, “co-production,” suggests that natural and social orders are produced together, as scientists work with material objects (Jasanoff 2004a:2–6). This perspective acknowledges the social context that surrounds scientists, but it focuses on the role of scientists and experts.

Though there are important differences, actor-network theory and its variants have strong affinities with Foucauldian analyses of governmentality because both emphasize diffuse power held by actors and material objects (Carroll 2009:573; Comaroff and Comaroff 2006:213; Eyal and Buchholz 2010:129–130; Mukerji 1994:144–146; Murdoch and Ward 1997:310–312; Rose et al. 2006:93; Sánchez-Matamoros et al. 2005:185). The dialogue between actor-network theory and Foucault, when applied to social phenomena, again subtly emphasizes how formalized knowledge reinforces states’ power when expert or scientific knowledge is adopted and deployed by states (Sánchez-Matamoros et al. 2005:185; e.g., Carroll 2006:20–27; Mukerji 1997:309–320; Murdoch and Ward 1997:310–313).

The analysis of classificatory schemes—censuses provide one example—is an important aspect of this new agenda focusing on the relationship between state, society, and science (Barnes et al. 1996:46–47; Bowker and Star 1999:1; Camic et al. 2011:2–3; Carroll 2009:561; de Santos 2009:468; Epstein 2007:282–283; 2008:166; Lynch 1993:112; Martin and Lynch 2009:246; Orloff 2005:223–224; Shapin 1995:303). Yet, much of this research also emphasizes the state’s power to shape scientific categories and thus reinforces the statist trends within the state-society literature (Epstein 2007:278, 282–283). Similarly, the creation of standards and standardization has been linked more strongly to state than to social power (Timmermans and Epstein 2010:82–83). Of course, society is not ignored; recent science studies that look at the relationship between science, society, and the state necessarily examines social forces more explicitly than earlier studies that focused on scientific workplaces. Nevertheless, this body of work also subtly privileges state power.

In sum, our theoretical call for the equal consideration of state and social influences in the political sociology literature applies to the science studies literature as well. Our agenda redresses the current focus of these literatures on the power of the state over society. We now turn to our investigation of censuses, as we take them as one example of a phenomenon at the interface of science, the state, and society.

STATES, SOCIETIES, AND CENSUSES

In Volume 1, we showed that during the early modern period, the purpose of collecting population information shifted slowly from fiscal extraction to demographic description. After the mid-nineteenth century, the purpose of censuses changed dramatically from description to intervention. Initially, states were concerned primarily with assessing resources with descriptive censuses. There was little sense that the governed themselves were changeable, so social intervention was not central to this form of governance or information gathering. In contrast, after the mid-nineteenth century, interventionist information gathering was linked to the concept of population—the idea that individuals could be combined into aggregates and analyzed with statistics (Curtis 2002:506–509; Foucault 1991:99–101; Loveman 2014:8, 25–26; Murdoch and Ward 1997:308–310; Rose et al. 2006:86–87; Scott 1995:202; Ventresca 1995:32). Thus, the population was a unit that could be altered through reflection and intervention (Buck 1982:29; Curtis 2002:506, 509; Foucault 1991:99; 2007:105–106; Higgs 2004a:20; Sánchez-Matamoros et al. 2005:184; Singer and Weir 2008:59). The state justified its governance in terms of how it defined the welfare, needs, wants, and interests of this population, so statistics became important rhetorical sources that supported these definitions (Carroll 2009:561; Foucault 1991:99–100; Rose et al. 2006:87; review in Higgs 2004a:20).

A well-developed state-centered literature, not surprisingly, explains the shift from descriptive to interventionist censuses as a product of state actions. From this perspective, censuses are linked to broad projects of social control either directly through policing or indirectly through the provision of welfare (Foucault 1978:139–141; 1979:28; 1991:96, 98–99, 102; 2007:274–275; Hannah 2000:8; review in Higgs 2005:3–4). States can use information for planning, administration, and controlling their societies (e.g., Dandeker 1990:12–13; Loveman 2005:1657, 1660–1661, 1678; Rule 1973:13–14; Skocpol and Rueschemeyer 1996:4–6; Stapleford 2009:7, 384; review in Higgs 2004a:16; cf. Bowker and Star 1999:322). States exercise symbolic power by creating or reinforcing categorical distinctions within populations (Bourdieu 2012:24–25; Corrigan and Sayer 1985:198–199; Hacking 1991:194; James and Redding 2005:191; Kertzer and Arel 2002:2, 6; Loveman 2014:14–19; Starr 1992:281; Urla 1993:819). Furthermore, this perspective suggests that censuses are most likely to be conducted where strong bureaucracies, staffed by experts who are structurally separated from elite and nonelite social actors, collect

information (Anderson 1988:83–115; Higgs 2004a:83–91; Ipsen 1996:50–89). Although the rise of the international statistical movement during this period of time in some ways curbed state power, it also reinforced it vis-à-vis social power because state elites shaped censuses within the international environment, and thus, these elites were more responsive to interstate pressure than to domestic social pressure (cf. Loveman 2014:9–10; Ventresca 1995:10–11, 68–98).

Despite the predominance of the state-centered view, some work points to social influences on the census. The rise of industrial capitalism led to greater demands for information from business groups and labor (Wright 1900:81–82). Organized elite and nonelite social interests emerged in the advanced capitalist world after 1850 (Clemens 1997:1–2; Hobsbawm 1987:44–45; Weber 1958:102; 1978:224). They demanded and produced information (Giddens 1981:218; Starr 1987:20; Szreter 1984:525; review in Higgs 2004a:11–13, 87–88). During the early nineteenth century, the production of numbers more generally was a response to social pressures and reinforced the idea that society had a substantial reality outside the state (Crook and O’Hara 2011:11). Mass literacy and numeracy eased the task of census taking.

Finally, some work points to how the interaction between states and societies shaped censuses by considering how state actors, usually located in state bureaucracies, interact with social actors. Several authors, rediscovering Weber’s (1978:984–985) argument that social, nonbureaucratic pressure helps maintain state bureaucracies (Volume 1, Chapter 2), emphasized that state bureaucratic autonomy is a response to highly organized interests (Carpenter 2001:3–5; Kolko 1963:57–59; Orren and Skowronek 2007:90–91; Sarti 1971:1–3; Skowronek 1982:32–33, 50–52). Elites come from the private sphere into the bureaucracy, and bureaucracies serve elite interests (Cammack 1989:274–278; Mann 1993:470; Searle 1971:19–20; Szreter 1996:158). Loveman (2005:1661–1662) argued that as state actors strive to establish censuses, they interact with nonstate actors in four ways: innovation, imitation, incorporation, or usurpation. These arguments suggest that census bureaucracies emerged under intense social pressure and that social actors brought their ideas and interests into census bureaucracies through a variety of interactions. The form of interaction also varied historically (review in Volume 1, Chapter 1). In the period covered in this volume, there were two main phases. During the first half of the twentieth century, elite lobbies became intensively involved in censuses. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, there was greater pressure from below from a wider

variety of social groups (Bowker and Star 1999:223; Kertzer and Arel 2002:27–31; Nobles 2000:19–22).

TOWARD AN INTERACTIVE MODEL

Despite this scholarship, the interactivist position remains underdeveloped; here we seek to understand fully its implications for censuses. In Volume 1 (Chapter 2), we created a model that well represented the state-centered perspective, the society-centered perspective, and a fully interactive one. We review briefly here our model, depicted in figure 1.1. It is based on a distinction between domains and levels. Domains are aspects of reality, and we focus on the domains of state and society. Levels indicate the scale of reality. The macro level refers to systemic structural features, the meso level refers to specific organizations, and the micro level refers to individuals and their interaction. We combine these domain levels to suggest a fully interactive model of information gathering. Figure 1.1 implies that information intellectuals, other social actors, and state actors located in the domain levels of micro society and micro state are embedded within the domain levels of macro state, macro society, meso state, and meso society. Thus, the actions, capacities, power, and common-sense knowledge of social and state actors are conditioned by the macro and meso levels of state

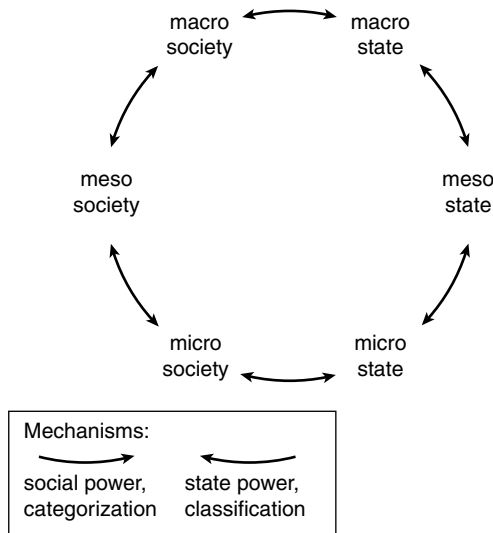


Figure 1.1 Interactive Model of Information Gathering

and society. The domain levels are linked by flows (represented by solid lines with directional markers). These flows represent sequences of exchanges and interaction between positions held by actors within institutions and structures. We attach mechanisms of categorization and classification to these flows to represent, respectively, the processes of social and state actors' marking and dividing on the basis of social attributes. Similarly, we attach mechanisms of power to represent actors' ability to influence their environment. Thus, the actual deployment of information gathering depends on the relative balance of power among these different actors.

Each of our substantive chapters examines five empirical implications derived from the relationships in figure 1.1 (see Volume 1, Chapter 2). First, we examine the state strength argument. If the state strength perspective is correct, then differences in state strength should correspond to differences in census outcomes in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Italy. When states are strong, they should be able to conduct censuses. When they are weak, they should not. When levels of state strength converge or when states establish close ties with one another in international statistical organizations, their censuses should also converge. Empirically, then, we consider the relative strength of these states and the overall nature of their censuses. In general, our evidence does not confirm this argument.

We also consider three society-centered processes. First, we consider the role of lay categories in shaping censuses. The society-centered perspective implies that categorization originates from social actors' common sense that is given by structural social patterns in macro society and instantiated in institutions and organizations in meso society. Empirically, we consider whether information gathering was based on lay categories. We show that state actors drew from lay categories to create census categories, and when census categories and lay categories conflicted, censuses produced little socially relevant information. Thus, our evidence supports this argument.

Our second society-centered argument investigates the role of "information intellectuals" or "census intellectuals." The society-centered perspective implies that information or census intellectuals should be prominent social actors who translate lay categories into scientific ones to create information. (By definition, information intellectuals, in our technical usage, are social, not state actors, though of course, state actors also influence information intellectually.) Thus, empirically, we look at whether information or census intellectuals exist or not, and we try to locate them socially within their meso-level social organizations and institutions and macro-level

social structures. In particular, the society-centered argument suggests that states should not be able to innovate or usurp the role of such intellectuals, relying instead on co-optation and imitation. Our evidence broadly confirms this point.

The third society-centered argument concerns power. It suggests that social actors have enough power vis-à-vis state bureaucrats to force them to adopt their translated categories as the basis for information gathering. We can empirically examine the relative balance of power of nonstate elites, nonelites, and state actors to shape information gathering, and we can consider actors' political struggles over these categories. We also consider how meso-level organizations and institutions and macro-level structures influence the balance of power of these state and social actors. Our cases show how social actors' power was highly influential in shaping where and when information was collected and thus broadly support this argument. Taken together, then, the investigation of these three society-centered arguments provide evidence to illustrate the counterclockwise flows of social power and categorization in figure 1.1, because our evidence shows how information categories derived from lay categories by census intellectuals or information intellectuals were then taken up by state actors and incorporated into the practices of the state.

We call the fifth implication the "historical trajectories" argument. The main point of figure 1.1 is to show that the interaction between states and societies determines where and when information is collected. Thus, the figure suggests that the mechanisms of classification and categorization and state power and social power work together to create information gathering. We illustrate empirically how states and societies interact, and in particular, we show how information gathering creates historical patterns that both constrain and enable states and societies. We examine this argument by tracing out the temporal sequences of information gathering for our cases through our historical narrative, highlighting how information gathering at any particular point in time is influenced by the rounds of information gathering that preceded it.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Chapter 2 discusses censuses conducted in the United Kingdom between 1841 and 1931. Though the United Kingdom was a world power at this time, the census remained relatively weak. Despite the growth of a census bureaucracy, data collection remained dependent upon local administration. The strong emphasis on social class and

occupation already apparent in the first censuses was strengthened. Expert lobbies, supported by social elites, pushed for censuses to solve problems of social unrest and public health created by capitalism. In some ways, this period was the golden age of the UK census, though it still never reached the level of institutionalization that it had in the United States or Italy. Nevertheless, the relative weakness of the census as well as resistance to it meant that even during this period the census never was as socially relevant as in the United States.

In contrast, the United States between 1850 and 1930 (chapter 3) had a weaker state than the United Kingdom, but its census was more developed, better institutionalized, and more socially relevant. Elite lobbies that supported eugenics were also important in the United States, but they focused on racial categories, not occupational ones as in the United Kingdom. The format of the race questions coincided with a cross-class interest in creating a monolithic white identity that would include recent European immigrants and exclude all nonwhites, especially blacks. The US census bureaucracy was firmly institutionalized as a semi-autonomous agency, with strong links to both the state and society. This created intense interaction between the state and society over the census, leading to a highly interventionist census in the next time period.

Chapter 4 covers Italian censuses between about 1814 and 1921. Before unification in 1861, the Italian regional states, though relatively weak politically, had already conducted nominative censuses, based on strong histories of information collection. And in 1861, Italy, though newly unified and relatively weak, conducted a precocious interventionist census, with the express purpose of trying to strengthen the country as a cultural and political unit. The main categories of the Italian census drew on lay categories of place and residence (as opposed to class in the United Kingdom and race in the United States). Italian intellectuals had a distinctively important role in the census, partly because of the relative weakness of other social elites. Census intellectuals suffered neither the resistance of powerful landowners that their UK counterparts did nor enjoyed the level of collaboration from industrialists that their US counterparts did. A strong statistical tradition continued through the liberal regime and Italy's first halting experiences with democracy after 1918. As a result, the Italian census was more developed than the UK one but less developed than the US one.

Since World War II, all three of our states have had the capacity to conduct censuses, and they all are pressured by the same international census-taking norms. However, neither the convergence in state

capacity nor international influences explain why differences remain in these censuses. The UK census became well developed (chapter 5), but the influence of interest group politics on it was always partial. Increased postcolonial immigration shifted the focus of census debates from class to race, but most debates revolved around whether or not racial information should even be collected. Resistance to information gathering, including information about race, was always difficult to overcome. The 1991 census was widely regarded as unusually unsuccessful for a modern census. In contrast to the US and Italian ones, the UK census was never as fully institutionalized and not as strongly supported by social groups. It never garnered widespread social support as in the United States, and with the recent conservative turn in politics, it was an easy target of budget and government cuts. The census will continue after 2011 but in an altered format.

In the United States (chapter 6), the census was strongly influenced by interest group politics, organized and mobilized around race, that developed out of the 1960s civil rights movements. These influences created a cultural understanding of “rights” that could be both demonstrated and ascertained through censuses. This politics formed the core of the post–World War II understanding of censuses as ways for groups to show their numerical strength and thus political power. Although the census was firmly institutionalized with its own research staff, these interest groups, as well as academics, strongly shaped the content and format of information because they formed powerful lobbies that influenced the census. In turn, the Census Bureau made explicit appeals to these groups for input and included them in the process of planning the census. In contrast to the United Kingdom where a conservative turn threatens the census, in the United States, there is little support to eliminate the census (though there is considerable partisan disagreement over it). In the United States, a strongly interventionist, instrumental census used for many social purposes, developed out of the interaction between state and society because of the way that the census had been institutionalized.

In Italy, the census still serves a largely symbolic purpose (chapter 7). It was institutionalized as a partially autonomous agency during the fascist period. Census officials supported the demographic project of the regime, but the ambitious attempt to use census data to reverse declining fertility failed. The depoliticization of the census after the fascist period coupled with the autonomy of the agency that conducted it undermined the development of intense interaction

between the state and society over the census when mass democracy developed after 1945. Census officials had the power to implement information gathering as they chose. Censuses were well developed and used for academic and scientific purposes, but in sharp contrast to the US censuses, they were not socially relevant. Although regional parties espousing new forms of linguistic cultural identity became important in Italy after the 1970s and although immigration increased massively, census authorities excluded language and ethnicity from their forms. The census is not a target for social groups and serves relatively few social purposes. The census—actually no longer a census but a cross between a register and a census—remains only weakly interventionist because there is little interaction between the state and society about its information.

In chapter 8, we review our theoretical and empirical contributions. Our general empirical conclusion is that where there is intense interaction around the census (the United States), the census is a vibrant social institution. Where there is little interaction or where interaction is narrowly focused (Italy), the census is less socially relevant. The UK censuses, we argue, fell between these two extremes. We also note six surprising conclusions we can make with our interactive model of information gathering, examined by combining a historical and a comparative method. First, though the previous social science literature emphasizes the role of the state in information gathering, we find that its role has been variable, important at some times but not at others. Second, we find that censuses produced public and official knowledge to the degree that they faced social pressures. Third, we find that the quality and usefulness of information as such also depends on social pressure. In fact, an interventionist census depends on a social setting in which many parties are involved in the production of information, creating an environment in which knowledge is produced, understood, and used. Fourth, we find that society has a massive and largely unrecognized role in censuses, because it is the source of systems of lay categories. Censuses are most successful not when populations are coerced to provide information through the introduction of novel state categories but when censuses draw on lay categorization that respondents understand. Fifth, we find that no census categories are inherently controversial or uncontroversial. We show that occupational categories, locations, or racial designations can all be equally controversial in different times and places. Finally, we emphasize the role of ordinary actors in the production of official knowledge. The