

## 1 Censuses, identity formation, and the struggle for political power

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*David I. Kertzer and Dominique Arel*

The past decade has seen a great outpouring of interest in the nature of collective identities of various kinds. Within the United States, both popular and academic interest in identities that divide the population have not only spawned heated debates but have also had substantial social consequences and public policy implications. Fueled in part by the legacy of racism and the still daunting problems of racial division, and nurtured as well by recent and ongoing waves of immigration, the issue is frequently framed in terms of “multiculturalism.” In this version, the American population is presumably divided into a fixed number of different “cultures,” each deserving of equal respect and some, perhaps, deserving of special aid.

Beyond the American shores, interest in issues of collective identities, their nature, and their consequences, is scarcely less acute. Nineteenth-century theorists of nationalism – riding the Europe-wide wave of state-creation according to principles of national identity – gave way in the twentieth century to theorists who predicted that such national identity would soon be supplanted by supranational allegiances. The European Union was, for some, viewed as the very embodiment of these processes. Yet events of the recent past have sent these evolutionary internationalists into retreat and ushered in a new concern for the continuing – some would say growing – strength of national and ethnic loyalties. Moreover, from the Balkans to central Africa, ethnic conflict and violence have been interpreted as evidence that people’s collective identities do not necessarily match national borders. Accordingly, states that are ethnically heterogeneous – the great majority of states in the contemporary world – are under pressure to take measures to prevent the escalation of ethnic tensions and the development of internal lines of social division.

These tensions are all the more on people’s minds as a result of the huge movements of peoples that characterize the world today, movements that are likely to continue to reshuffle the human population in the decades to come. Huge differentials in wealth are drawing people from the poorer to the richer countries, just as low fertility means that, in many cases, the

wealthier countries cannot maintain their population without such immigration. The many other well-known sources of instability in much of the world – wars, famines, political fragility, environmental degradation – mean that even within what used to be known as the Third World people are continually in motion, producing a new mix of peoples lacking any common sense of identity.

All of this may be granted, yet what does it have to do with national censuses? Censuses are, after all, generally viewed as matters of bureaucratic routine, somewhat unpleasant necessities of the modern age, a kind of national accounting. Yet it is our argument that the census does much more than simply reflect social reality; rather, it plays a key role in the construction of that reality. In no sector is this more importantly the case than in the ways in which the census is used to divide national populations into separate identity categories: racial, ethnic, linguistic, or religious. It is our hope that the chapters in this book will establish this point and show how collective identities are molded through censuses.

### **State modernity and the impetus to categorize**

The significance of official state certification of collective identities through a variety of official registration procedures can be gleaned by contrasting these government efforts with the situation that existed before such bureaucratic categorization began. Collective identities are, of course, far from a recent innovation in human history. However, before the emergence of modern states, such identities had great fluidity and implied no necessary exclusivity. The very notion that the cultural identities of populations mattered in public life was utterly alien to the pre-modern state (Gellner 1983). That state periodically required some assessment of its population for purposes of taxation and conscription, yet remained largely indifferent to recording the myriad cultural identities of its subjects. As a result, there was little social pressure on people to rank-order their localized and overlapping identities. People often had the sense of simply being “from here.”

The development of the modern state, however, increasingly instilled a resolve among its elites to categorize populations, setting boundaries, so to speak, across pre-existing shifting identities. James Scott refers to this process as the “state’s attempt to make a society legible,” which he regards as a “central problem of statecraft.” In order to grasp the complex social reality of the society over which they rule, leaders must devise a means of radically simplifying that reality through what Scott refers to as a “series of typifications.” Once these are made, it is in the interest of state authorities that people be understandable through the categories in which they fall.

"The builders of the modern nation-state," Scott writes, "do not merely describe, observe, and map; they strive to shape a people and landscape that will fit these techniques of observation" (1998:2-3, 76-77, 81).

The emergence of nationalism as a new narrative of political legitimacy required the identification of the sovereign "nation" along either legal or cultural criteria, or a combination of both. The rise of colonialism, based on the denial that the colonized had political rights, required a clear demarcation between the settlers and the indigenes. The "Others" had to be collectively identified. In the United States, the refusal to enfranchise Blacks and native Americans led to the development of racial categories. The categorization of identities became part and parcel of the legitimating narratives of the national, colonial, and "New World" state.

States thus became interested in representing their population, at the aggregate level, along identity criteria. The census, in this respect, emerged as the most visible, and arguably the most politically important, means by which states statistically depict collective identities. It is by no means the sole categorizing tool at the state's disposal, however. Birth certificates are often used by states to compile statistics on the basis of identity categories. These include ethnic nationality (a widespread practice in Eastern Europe); mother tongue, as in Finland and Quebec (Courbage 1998: 49); and race, in the United States (Snipp 1989: 33). Migration documents have also, in some cases, recorded cultural identities. The Soviet Union, for instance, generated statistics on migration across Soviet republics according to ethnicity. The US Immigration Service, from 1899 to 1920, classified newly arrived immigrants at Ellis Island according to a list of forty-eight "races or peoples," generally determined by language rather than physical traits (Brown 1996).

Parallel to the need for statistical representation was the need for control. In order to establish a "monopoly of the legitimate means of movement" (Torpey 2000: 1), states imposed the use of personal identity documents to distinguish the citizen from the foreigner (Noiriel 1996) and, in some cases, attempted to control the internal migration of their population through residency permits and internal passports (Matthews 1993). In a number of cases, such identification documents contained an identity category beyond the civic or legal status of the individual: for example, the Soviet Union, where citizens had their "nationality" (in the ethnic sense) indicated on their internal passports (Zaslavsky and Luryi 1979); Rwanda, with Hutu or Tutsi ethnicity (actually called "race") appearing in identity cards (Uvin, this volume); Greece, Turkey, and Israel, with religion recorded in identity cards (Courbage 1997: 114; Goldscheider, this volume)<sup>1</sup>; and apartheid South Africa, with racial categories inscribed on identification papers (Petersen 1997: 97).

The categorization of identities, along culturally constructed criteria, on *individual* documents can serve nefarious or well-meaning purposes. In the United States, a racial category in birth certificates was long used to discriminate against Blacks and Indians. Following the rigid principle of the “one-drop rule,” according to which a single Black ancestor, however remote, made one Black, birth certificates were often used in Southern states to bar individuals of racially-mixed ancestry from marrying Whites (Davis 1991: 157). The rise of affirmative action, based on the notion that achieving true equality required special consideration to be given to historically disadvantaged minorities in access to jobs and education, implied the bureaucratic categorization of “minorities.” As a consequence, particularly in the case of Blacks and Indians, it has meant continuing commitment to the determination of race according to “objective” ancestry, as opposed to simple self-definition. Thus, the Indian Health Service of the Bureau of Indian Affairs continues to hold that eligible patients must have a minimum of one-fourth “blood quantum,” which in practice entails that they must prove that at least one of their grandparents appeared on tribal enrollments (tribal rolls) of recognized tribes (Snipp 1989: 34).

A similar policy was employed by Nazi Germany to identify both Jews and Germans. In spite of the shrill propaganda on the physical alienness of Jews, the criterion actually chosen to separate the Jews eventually targeted for destruction was a mixture of religion and descent, and not anthropometric measurement. Those with at least three Jewish grandparents were categorized as Jews. Ancestry, in turn, was determined by birth certificates issued by religious institutions (Hilberg 1985). At the outset of World War II, when the Nazi government sought to transfer German-speaking populations from the East (Baltics, Ukraine, Romania) to newly annexed territories from Poland, the question of defining German identity arose. In this case, religion was not deemed determinative and ethnicity did not appear on birth certificates. In Estonia, where a liberal minority law in 1925 had established officially recognized ethnic associations, claimants had to show a certificate, delivered either by their German association or by the Estonian Ministry of the Interior, attesting to their German ancestry (Institut national de la statistique 1946: 80).<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, since post-war Germany has adopted a kind of Law of Return, granting automatic citizenship to ethnic Germans from abroad, the issue of legally documenting one’s ethnic German affiliation remains germane today. After apparently relying on the self-declaration of applicants during the Cold War, the German state devised a complex questionnaire in the early 1990s to determine who can be deemed “German” (Brubaker 1996).

The practice of inscribing cultural categories on personal identification documents can clearly affect an individual's own sense of identity. In the Soviet Union, the ethnic nationality in one's internal passport was also determined by descent (i.e., one's parents' nationality), as with the cases of the Jews, Germans, Blacks, and Indians cited above. In such a context, it seems likely that people whose passport certified them to be of "Ukrainian" ethnic nationality, yet spoke Russian as their first language, would nevertheless associate "Ukrainian" with their ethnic identity, at least by force of habit. However, a literature is lacking on the relationship between state-enshrined identities on personal documents and collective identity formation or, for that matter, between categories used on the census and in private documents. Clearly, comparative research on the politics and bureaucratic implementation of identity categorization practices in state documents is needed. Yet, while cognizant that the census belongs to a larger family of state categorizing practices, the current volume focuses its gaze on the census and its relationship to identity formation. Our goal in doing so is both to reconcile various strands of emerging literatures, which to date have often been regionally segmented (New World, colonial experience, France, East-Central Europe), and to help provide a theoretical framework for further comparative research. The universality and political salience of the census dictated our selection of the census as a fruitful point of departure.

### **The rise of population statistics and the construction of identities**

Much of the most influential literature on the role of statistics gathering in extending state control has focused on the colonial state. Anderson, in his influential book *Imagined Communities*, pointed to the census as one of the primary devices employed by the colonial state to impose a "totalizing, classificatory grid" on its territory, and hence make all inside it its own. For Anderson, the key was the ability to make distinctions, to draw borders, to allow governments to distinguish among "peoples, regions, religions, languages." The very boundedness of the state meant that its component objects were countable, and hence able to be incorporated into the state organization (Anderson 1991: 184). The state's goal here, as Scott (1998:65) put it, is to "create a legible people."

In short, the use of identity categories in censuses – as in other mechanisms of state administration – creates a particular vision of social reality. All people are assigned to a single category, and hence are conceptualized as sharing, with a certain number of others, a common collective identity. This, in turn, encourages people to view the world as composed of distinct

groups of people and may focus attention on whatever criteria are utilized to distinguish among these categories (Urla 1993). Rather than view social links as complex and social groupings situational, the view promoted by the census is one in which populations are divided into neat categories. Appadurai's (1993: 334) comment is apropos here: "statistics are to bodies and social types what maps are to territories: they flatten and enclose."

In Europe, national statistics-gathering was developing in the nineteenth century as a major means of modernizing the state. International congresses were held where the latest statistical and census developments were hawked to government representatives from across the continent. Knowledge was power, and the knowledge of the population produced by the census gave those in power insight into social conditions, allowing them to know the population and devise appropriate plans for dealing with them. As Urla (1993: 819) put it, "With the professionalization and regularization of statistics-gathering in the nineteenth century, social statistics, once primarily an instrument of the state, became a uniquely privileged way of 'knowing' the social body and a central technology in diagnosing its ills and managing its welfare."

Such language, not coincidentally, brings to mind Foucault, and his view of the emergence of a modern state that progressively manages its population by extending greater surveillance over it. In examining state action in the construction of collective identities, we enter into the complex debates over what is meant by "the state." The state itself is, of course, an abstraction, not something one can touch. Such a perspective impels us to examine the multiplicity of actors who together represent state power, and discourages us from the view that "the state" necessarily acts with a single motive or a single design. An inquiry into censuses and identity formation, then, requires examination of just which individuals and groups representing state power are involved, and how they interrelate with one another as well as with the general population. Pioneering research of this sort has been done on the impact of various advocacy groups. Especially valuable work has been done on the Census Advisory Committee on Spanish Origin Population in formulating the "Hispanic" category in the 1980 US census (Choldin 1986). Similarly important work has been done on the role of ethnographers, geographers, and party activists in devising an official list of ethnic "nationalities" for the first Soviet census of 1926 (Hirsch 1997). Sorely needed are more ethnographic efforts at examining the workings of state agencies of various kinds – from legislatures to census-takers – in their interactions with each other and with the people under their surveillance.<sup>3</sup>

That the kind of counting and categorizing that goes on in censuses is an imposition of central state authorities, and thereby a means of extending

central control, has long been recognized. Indeed, ever since the first census-takers ventured into the field, struggles between local people and state authorities over attempts to collect such information were common. Such was the case in mid-eighteenth-century France, when various attempts to collect population data by the central government had to be abandoned. Opposition came not only from a suspicious populace but also from local governments. Each feared that the information was being gathered to facilitate new state taxes (Starr 1987: 12–13). These first population enumerations were typically identified with attempts to tax (often newly acquired) populations, as well as to conscript them for labor or military service.

Given such purposes, those undertaking these early censuses sought not to achieve a complete enumeration of the population, but only to register the part of most direct interest to state authorities. That segment generally was a taxable unit, such as the household, and not the individual *per se*. Moreover, since several social groups were exempted from taxation – in the case of the first enumerations of the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries these included religious orders, the military, and judges (Behar 1998: 137) – pre-modern censuses were neither comprehensive nor standardized. Regional implementation tended to vary enormously, both in time and form.

Churches, too, have long been involved in this process, indeed in parts of Europe long predating the state in attempting comprehensive population enumerations. For example, the Lutheran Church in Sweden began a full registration of its population in the 1600s (Willigan and Lynch 1982: 123). Similarly, one product of the Roman Catholic Church's counter-Reformation efforts to solidify its control over its far-flung population was to order parish priests to take an annual census of their parishioners. This practice, begun in the sixteenth century, continues in many areas to this day.

Full, regular, periodic state-sponsored enumerations of individuals apparently date to 1790, when the United States began its decennial censuses. Within a century, they would become a defining feature of the modern state, with most European/New World states and colonial possessions having experienced their first modern census by the latter part of the nineteenth century. The decision to enumerate individuals, however, brought up the question of *which* individuals to include. Should the enumeration be limited to citizens, or should it encompass all individuals residing within the boundaries of a given state at the time of the census, irrespective of civic status? The United States, for example, did not count Indians remaining in reservations, who were not considered citizens and therefore subject to taxation, until the 1820 census

(Nobles, this volume). The question of whom to count was debated several times by the International Statistical Congress, a body that met every three years or so in Europe between the 1850s and the 1880s, and its recommendation to count the *resident* population became standard practice.

States thus sought to count everyone on their soil, and among the first categorizations introduced on the modern census was the division between citizens and non-citizens or the related – but distinct – division between those born within the state and those born abroad. The French case, in this respect, is of particular interest. The French republican state had an organic conception of “*la nation*,” a civic body regarded as indivisible. French discourse became philosophically opposed to any subcategorization of the nation in the census or other state-sponsored practices. This conception, however, called for a strict separation between those who were part of the *nation* and the others. As a result, “the citizen and the foreigner became the two principal categories of analysis” (Blum, this volume). “Foreigners” were categorized according to their country of origin, a criterion eventually extended, from 1962 on, to the “naturalized French.”

British, American, and Australian census-designers have also long been interested in ascertaining the country of origin of their residents. A census question on birthplace has appeared on the censuses of these countries from the beginning in the United States, since the middle of the nineteenth century in Britain, and since 1911 in Australia. In Britain, a question on nationality (citizenship) was likewise included from 1851 to 1961 (Booth 1985: 256). The German census had questions on both place of birth and citizenship, while Austria and Hungary – which administered separate censuses – were only interested in ascertaining citizenship (Tebarth 1991). The information on the foreign-born was sometimes used to calibrate immigration policy. When legislation was passed after World War I to restrict immigration to the United States, an annual quota (2 percent) was established for each country of origin according to the census figures of foreign-born for 1880 (Simon 1997b: 16).<sup>4</sup> This remained in force until the 1965 immigration law abolished country-specific quotas.

### The development of cultural categories

While the practice of distinguishing the enumerated by civic status or place of birth became generalized, no such consensus emerged over the merits of using *cultural* categories in the census. With the rise of the “nationality question” in Europe – i.e., the legitimization of political

demands based on the cultural markers of territorially concentrated groups – two representations of the “nation” came into conflict. On the one hand there was the French model of a political nation that was coterminous with the boundaries of the citizenry (the “nation-state”). On the other there was the German model of a cultural nation (in practice defined by language) not necessarily corresponding to state boundaries. States of Western Europe (France, Britain, Spain) professed the ideology of the “nation-state,” while to the east (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Imperial Russia and the Ottoman Empire) leaders embraced a model of the multinational state (with religion serving as a marker of identity in the Ottoman lands).

At the sessions of the International Statistical Congress, statisticians from the Western “nation-states” argued that the concept of cultural nationality, as developed in Eastern Europe, did not apply to them. Their Eastern counterparts argued that the concept was not geographically restricted, and they held extensive discussions on which particular categories would best represent people’s cultural “nationality.” A consensus emerged among Eastern census-makers that the question of cultural nationality should not be asked directly, but rather be derived from a question on language. With a few minor exceptions to the rule, this became the practice in the first wave of periodic censuses in Eastern Europe before World War I. The main objection to directly asking individuals about their cultural nationality was that, at a time of low national consciousness, many would have been confused about what to answer (Kleeberg 1915: 42; Roth 1991). In other words, while certain nationalist elites were arguing that national groups existed and needed to be statistically represented, many of the putative members of these groupings were unaware that they had such an affiliation.

Meanwhile, as new colonial territories were conquered, or modern administrative practices brought to old ones, censuses were introduced to the colonies as well. One of the major elements of this attempt by colonial state authorities to make populations knowable, to link them to the state and thereby make them governable, was the Herculean effort to divide the people into mutually exclusive and exhaustive identity categories. This represented a decisive break from precolonial enumerative practices. Appadurai contrasts the European practice with that of the earlier conquerors of South Asia, the Mughals, who did much to map and measure the land they controlled, as part of their efforts to tax it, yet showed no interest in enumerating the whole population. “Enumeration of various things,” he writes, “was certainly part of the Mughal state *imaginaire* as was the acknowledgment of group identities, but not the enumeration of group identities” (1993: 329).

The European colonial powers (France, Britain, Belgium), who rejected cultural categorizations in their metropolitan censuses as incompatible with their imagined “nation-states,” had no such qualms when faced with the daunting task of counting their colonial subjects (Kateb 1998: 105; Appadurai 1993: 317–18). There is little doubt that racial ideologies, popular in Europe in late nineteenth century, influenced the thinking of colonial census-makers regarding the enumeration of Asian and African communities (Hirschman 1987). Yet another important factor was the absence of any idea of common citizenship uniting the colonial settlers with the locals. Since the “nation-state” construct was restricted to the relatively tiny number of colonial settlers, other categories had to be devised for the vast majority of the population (Anderson 1997: 58).

### Censuses and the construction of race

As a product of the ideology of colonial and modern states, the project of dividing populations into separable categories of collective identity inevitably intersected with the division of populations into racial categories. The two efforts share a common logic, a kind of categorical imperative, in which people must be assigned to a category and to one category alone. The history of racial thinking is a history of cultural categorization, of seizing on certain physical characteristics and inventing a biological category for those people who manifest them.

In devising “racial” categories, imperial census-makers used names from the existing repertoire of cultural and geographical markers, but the categories themselves reflected the perception of the European rulers rather than that of the natives. Anderson (1991: 165–6) writes that few recognized themselves under the early “racial” labels of “Malay,” “Javanese,” “Sakai,” “Banjarese,” etc. in the 1911 Indonesian census. In the same vein, Hirschman (1987: 567) argues that the “Malay,” “Chinese,” and “Indian” categories in the Malaysian census were much broader than socially understood. That these categories reflected subjective values is hardly distinctive. Identities being by definition subjectively determined, their conceptual representation in *any* census can only reflect subjective processes. What distinguished colonial from non-colonial censuses, however, was that the formulation of categories in the colonies was unilaterally done by the ruling officials, while European categories of cultural nationality and language were already being negotiated, to some extent, with social groups.

Even more significant was the belief, fundamental to a racist conception of the world, that racial categories were rank ordered according to aptitude. Imperial races, unlike colonial ones, were fit to rule, while

certain colonial races were better equipped to assist the colonial project than others. Such a conception of group categories was initially foreign to the natives in most areas. In Rwanda and Burundi, for instance, the Belgian colonial state ruled through the minority Tutsi, in keeping with the widespread colonial practice of indirect rule. The Belgians legitimized Tutsi dominance by creating a racial distinction making the Tutsi superior Africans, due to an alleged “Hamitic” origin, while the Hutus were relegated to the bottom of the racial scale. What was new was not the naming itself, since the colonial categories of Tutsi and Hutus overlapped with pre-existing ones, “but rather the colonial policy of indirect rule and the racist ideology associated with it. It was those factors that crystallized the categories and erected them against each other.” (Uvin, this volume.)

It is the United States, however, that has the longest continuous history of placing its entire population into mutually exclusive racial categories based on pseudo-scientific theories of race. As Nobles shows in her chapter in this volume, the categories and criteria have evolved over time, with categories once thought natural – such as that of “mulatto” – eventually being regarded as not only unscientific but morally reprehensible. In societies such as the United States, where the ideology of racial categorization has had tremendous social and political consequences, the census is a cauldron of racial construction. By pigeon-holing people into official governmental categories, the census gives a legitimacy to the categories and to this mode of thinking about people. Moreover, in so far as the census is presented as an instrument of scientific inquiry, racial categorization in censuses provides an aura of scientific legitimacy for the racial project as well.

### The confusion between race and ethnicity

The compulsion to divide people into racial categories has never been far from the drive to divide them into ethnic categories. In fact, the two concepts are often blurred, a confusion having largely to do with a belief that identity can be *objectively* determined through ancestry. We have already discussed how racial categorization in the United States continues to be linked, in courts and government agencies, to “blood quantum.” Yet the primordialist discourse of nationalism, with its emphasis on the timeless “essence” of the nation, also implies a genetic transmission of identity across the ages. “National consciousness,” rather than phenotypical traits, constitutes the inherited trait for primordialists. Nationalist literature is replete with assumptions about presumed members of the ethnic nation who do not know who they *truly* are, that is, whose authentic and transmitted national identity is, as it were, buried within

themselves. To give an example among many, Lithuanian nationalists consider the Polish minority of Lithuania to be “polonized Lithuanians.” As Snyder (1998: 10–11) points out, “On this line of thinking, national identity is treated as a question of race rather than of history or personal choice.”

This explains why, prior to World War II, European ethnic nationalities were routinely referred to as “races” in public and scholarly discourse. For instance, when the renowned British historian R. W. Seton-Watson published *Racial Problems in Hungary* in 1908, a book chiefly on the Slovaks, he was mostly employing categories that would now be called “ethnic.” The Slovaks formed a different nation, in his view, because of such cultural traits as their distinct language and their belief in sharing a common descent. Moreover, it was widely believed at the time that nations had unique “characters.” The “national character” of the British was deemed to be different from that of the French or Germans. Even the nations espousing a so-called civic conception of themselves, such as the British, were commonly referred to as “races” as well. The common thread to this semantic jumble of nations, nationalities, and races – the term ethnicity was rarely used before World War II – was a notion that what these “races” passed along through heredity was largely expressed through *cultural* traits. These included not only language and religion but also “character,” denoted by work ethic, collective personality, and so forth.<sup>5</sup>

This is not to say that the colonial emphasis on inherited physical traits was absent from the European landscape. Yet, until the rise of fascism in the 1920s, the biological idea of race remained marginal in nationalist discourse and, even more importantly for the purposes of this volume, was entirely discarded from pre-World War I censuses in Europe. However pervasive in popular discourse, “race” was found, by census-makers of the era, to be totally inadequate to capture cultural nationality (ethnicity). Crucially, these census-makers shared a belief that nationality was *subjectively* determined, and thus contingent on one’s sense of identity, a notion that contradicted the belief in objectively descended “races.” When Nazi Germany introduced racial categorizations based on documented lineage – in the 1939 census, respondents had to indicate whether one of their grandparents was Jewish – it constituted a break not only from the German census tradition of categorizing identity by self-professed language, but also from the entire European census practice of rejecting race as a category (Labbé 1998).

After the Nazi cataclysm, the conflation of biology and culture was discredited and the old practice of calling national, religious, and linguistic groups “races” vanished in Western Europe and the New World. References to “race,” which had been routine in the League of Nations, were

replaced by references to “ethnicity” in documents of the United Nations. In the colonies, on the other hand, while imperial rule became gradually delegitimized in favor of native “self-determination,” racially-based categories often survived decolonization, and not only in the apartheid regimes of Rhodesia and South Africa. We have already mentioned how Hutu rulers in Rwanda continued to highlight the Hutu and Tutsi “races” in censuses, identity cards, and local population registers (Uvin, this volume). That case does not appear to be singular. As Rabushka and Shepsle (1972: 8) pointed out, giving Malaysia as an example, “very often the inhabitants of plural societies subjectively perceive broad cultural divisions as a surrogate for objective phenotypical characteristics.” The pre-World War II European confusion between race and ethnicity is still found in various parts of the non-Western world.

That confusion, however, has re-entered Western discourse in recent decades and, for the first time outside of the United States, has become enshrined in official categorizations in a few notable cases. Three developments brought race back to the forefront. First was the unprecedented flow of migrants from Asia and Africa to European countries that previously had relatively little immigration from these areas. Second was the rise of official concerns about combatting discrimination, often leading to policies of “positive discrimination”. Third was the mobilization of immigrant groups on the basis of their cultural heritage. Countries that had previously been loath to categorize their populations along a cultural marker were suddenly confronted with a dilemma: how to effectively prevent discrimination without statistically distinguishing the people most likely to be discriminated against? In Britain and the historic countries of immigration (United States, Canada, and Australia), the answer, highly politicized and contested, was to devise “minority” categories – in the case of the United States, to enhance existing “racial” ones, while infusing them with an entirely new purpose. In most instances, the new categories muddled race and ethnicity, despite the consensus among anthropologists and ethnologists on the spuriousness of conflating biology and culture. The case of Britain is illuminative of the recurring failure to distinguish race from ethnicity.

In 1976 Britain passed an anti-discrimination bill, the Race Relations Act, which defined discrimination as the unfavorable treatment of an individual on “racial grounds,” that is, on the basis of “colour, race, nationality (including citizenship) or ethnic or national origin” (Simon 1997a: 25). In one fell swoop, the legislation thus mixed together race, ethnicity/cultural nationality, and citizenship. Census officials were instructed to categorize the “minorities” targeted by the Act in order to enable the government to obtain statistical information on them on a variety of social

indicators, such as family structure, housing, employment, education, and so forth (White 1979: 333). Various tests were conducted to determine how minority data could best be collected. While people from some minority populations – such as those from India and China – had no objection to checking themselves off as belonging to such a category (e.g., “Indian” or “Chinese”) despite the fact that they were born in Britain, others felt differently. Most notably, many of those whose forbears came from the West Indies objected to being officially categorized as “West Indian,” arguing instead that they should simply be considered British. To overcome this opposition, census officials proposed using the term “Black British,” thus indicating that those so dubbed were indeed British, while distinguishing them by their race, as was done in the United States. Government officials, however, rejected this proposal on the grounds that it placed (politically) unacceptable emphasis on “race” rather than ethnicity (White and Pearce 1993: 274–75).

Political discomfort in Britain with using “race” led to attempts to replace racial terms with ethnic terms. One problem was to find a way out of the use of “White,” and so the proposal was made to substitute “White” with two composite categories, separating groups “indigenous” to Britain – “English, Welsh, Scottish or Irish,” – from “Other European.” Yet whatever terms were used, minority groups objected, and in the end no minority question was asked on the 1981 British census (Booth 1985: 259–60). The matter did not end there, however. After these abortive attempts, the census authorities managed to institute a minority question in the 1991 census by reintroducing the racial categories “White” and “Black,” with “British West Indians” becoming a subcategory of “Blacks.” The official categories became: White; Black (divided into Caribbean, African, Other); Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi; Chinese; Any Other Ethnic Group (Bhrolcháin 1990: 559–60).<sup>6</sup> This amalgam of racial and ethnic categories reflected political pressures. “European” British officials, in line with colonial thinking, viewed the key marker of differentiation between “Europeans” and minorities as racial (“White” versus the Others). Yet those in these minority populations had a different perspective. As Ballard (1997: 185) explained:

So precisely because the visible minorities quite rightly repudiate (in sharp contrast with ‘white’ majority!) any suggestion that they can be positively identified in biological terms, plain logic suggests that the only kind of question to which they might be expected to offer a positive response would be one about their self-defined ethnic affiliation. And so it proved.

Similar difficulties with collecting data on minority categories were experienced in Canada. Unlike Britain, Canada had an ethnic origin

question appearing on its censuses from the start, i.e. since 1871, a century before the rise of the anti-discrimination movement. The reason was that Canada defined itself as a pact between “two founding peoples,” largely territorially concentrated – the descendants of French and English settlers. The purpose of the ethnic origin question was to register the changing proportions of these groups in relation to themselves and other groups. The Canadian desire to enumerate groups based on cultural origin was therefore closer to the Eastern European conception of cultural nationalities than to the nation-state premise epitomized by Britain. Between 1901 and 1941, the census question on origins was actually called “race,” yet it reflected the sentiment, widely held at the time, that, when applied to European-based groups, “races” were mostly defined through cultural markers.<sup>7</sup>

As in Britain, legislation on the prevention of discrimination forced census-makers to introduce new categories. In 1986, the Canadian government passed the *Employment Equity Act*, requiring employers to report annually on the representation of “designated groups” among their employees. The Act identified four such groups: women, persons with disabilities, aboriginal peoples, and “persons who are, because of their race or colour, in a visible minority in Canada.” In a development similar to the British experience, the first efforts to develop a question using racial categories for the 1991 Canadian census floundered, since pre-tests revealed that many respondents found the question offensive (Boyd 1993: 535–36). Amidst continuing controversy, the racial question finally made it to the 1996 census, where respondents were given ten choices: White, Black, Chinese, South Asian, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Filipino, Arab, Japanese, Korean, Latin American, and Other. Aboriginal peoples, the Canadian equivalent of “Native Americans,” were counted in a separate question, offering the categories North American Indian, Métis or Inuit (Eskimo). In response to criticisms about instituting racial enumeration, the Chief Statistician of Canada, Ivan P. Fellegi, argued that the question was not about “race,” but about “visible minorities,” to enable the government to implement its employment-equity legislation (Fellegi 1996).

While adding the new questions on visible minorities and aborigines, the Canadian census kept its old ethnic-origin question, but the rationale and the categories underwent drastic changes. To counter the rise of nationalism in Quebec, Canada passed the Official Languages Act in 1969, making English and French the official languages of the federal government. The elevation of French as an official language proved unpopular among the increasing number of Canadians of neither British nor French stock who objected that a minority (the French Canadians having been

a demographic minority since the inception of Canada) be given more recognition than other immigrant minorities. To assuage the growing opposition to the vision of two “founding peoples,” the Canadian government passed the Act on Multiculturalism in 1971 (revised in 1988), which defined the country as a mosaic of cultural groups and provided state funds for the promotion of ethnic heritage. There are important differences between the Multicultural Act and the Employment Equity Act. The former calls for state subsidies of cultural and educational activities of groups including those of European ancestry. Indeed, it was the “Europeans,” such as the Ukrainians, who were most involved in mobilizing for such a law in the 1960s). The latter mandates “equitable” representation of certain groups (“visible minorities”), excluding those of European background.

The Official Languages Act, and the subsequent Quebec law making French the sole official language of Quebec, had the effect of shifting the battle between the English and French groups from the ethnic origin to the language question. The ethnic origin question became instead the means of assessing the demographic strength of the groups susceptible to benefit from the Multicultural Act. The question, however, became vulnerable to other emerging political currents. The campaign for gender equality in the 1970s forced the traditional emphasis on paternal ancestor to be dropped from the 1981 census (White, Badets, and Renaud 1993: 229). A decade later, a growing backlash against the “Balkanization” of Canada led to a grass-roots campaign, spearheaded by the *Toronto Star*, urging Canadians of all backgrounds to identify their origins as “Canadian” (“Call Me Canadian!”), a category which had never been allowed by census-makers. In the 1991 census, 3.3 percent entered “Canadian” in the category “Other – specify” of the question on origins, making it the fifth largest “ethnic” group. Since the ethnic categories on the census form must, by law, appear in order of demographic weight according to the previous census, “Canadian” was for the first time listed as an official category in the origin question of the 1996 census, appearing in fifth place. The effect was staggering. A whopping 24.1 percent of the population put down “Canadian,” an increase that could be partly be attributed to a semantic confusion among Québécois respondents, since the French term “Canadien” has historically referred to ethnic French Catholics (Goldscheider, this volume; Desjardins 2000).<sup>8</sup>

In the United States, as mentioned earlier, a question on race has appeared in all censuses since 1790. A growing number of categories supplemented this original distinction between White and Black over the years. Indians (in the sense of Native American) and Chinese appeared in 1870, Japanese in 1890, Filipino, Hindu and Korean in 1920

(the last two categories disappearing in 1950), Mexican in 1930 (and only in that year), and Hawaiian, Aleut and Eskimo in 1960. In the 1970s, buffeted by changing political winds, having to respond to civil rights legislation, and facing increasingly vocal "ethnic" or "racial" lobbying groups, census officials found they had less and less control over the categorization system that they administered. In 1977, Directive No. 15 of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) enunciated a policy for distinguishing races and ethnic groups in all federal statistics including, of course, the census (Nobles, this volume). As a result, several "racial" categories were added to the 1980 census: Korean, Vietnamese, Asian Indian, Guamanian, and Samoan. A separate question on Hispanic ancestry was also added to the census, as mandated by the OMB directive, thanks to intense lobbying from Hispanic groups (Choldin 1986). Twenty years later the categories were largely unchanged. As in Britain and Canada, these categories became linked to specific anti-discrimination legislation: in this case, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, requiring that the decennial redrawing of congressional districts produce a fair representation of selected minorities (Jenkins 2000).

American census-makers have also, in recent years, been tackling the question of ethnic origin. Previous to 1980, the only question about origin had to do with the country of birth of the respondent and their parents, never venturing beyond the second generation. That question is useful to gauge the current wave of immigrants but is a poor indicator of ethnic identity, since most countries of origin are multiethnic. Thus, a study conducted at the turn of the century showed that only 2 percent of the "Russian" immigrants to the United States, i.e., immigrants from (Imperial) Russia, could be classified as ethnic Russians, the great majority being either Jewish or Polish (Petersen 1987: 219), or claimed as such by leaders of Jewish and Polish ethnic organizations in the U.S.<sup>9</sup> The 1980 census marked the first time an attempt was made to attach an ethnic label to every member of the population, regardless of how long a person's ancestors had been in the country. Before that, data on ethnicity were only gathered indirectly, by combining information on place of birth and language (McKenney and Cresce 1993: 176). The census language data, however, were unreliable because the questions were poorly formulated and frequently altered (Crawford 1992: 126).

Beginning in the 1970s, the rise of "multiculturalism" created pressure on enumerative bodies to pay attention to the "ethnic" make-up of the population. The US Census Bureau began to experiment with a question on "ancestry." As happened in Canada, whether an ethnic group was listed or not as an example in the ancestry question made a huge difference in the number of respondents identifying with that particular group.

Thus, the number of Americans of Slovak, Croat, and French Canadian ancestry more than doubled between the 1980 and 1990 censuses, while the number of Cajuns increased sixty-fold – all four categories which were not listed in 1980, but were in 1990 (Passel 1994). On the other hand, no significant popular resistance to ethnic enumeration, in the genre of the “Count Me Canadian!” campaign, arose in the United States (Goldscheider, this volume).

In Australia, another of the historic countries of immigration, similar developments were observed. In preparing for the 1991 census, a government committee found that more than the indirect indicators of place of birth, religion, or language used at home – the questions previously used in Australian censuses – were needed to properly distinguish an ethnic group. Committee members concluded that such was the complexity of ethnicity (involving a sense of history, of cultural tradition, of being “racially conspicuous,” etc.) that a specific ethnic question should be asked. Among their arguments was that third and subsequent generation immigrants to Australia could not be distinguished by these indirect indicators, while people born in British colonies who themselves came from British stock were being erroneously assigned to the ethnic category of the colonized (Cornish 1993: 308–11).

Even though the concepts of race and ethnicity tend to be used in a confusing manner in contemporary censuses of the Western countries of the former British Empire, census categories of “race” and “ethnicity” are kept separate (except in Britain) because they serve different political purposes. While the enumeration of “races,” or “visible minorities,” is directly linked to the politics of entitlement, the enumeration of “ethnic groups” is linked to a renewed pride in one’s ancestry, generally without *individual* benefits. (In Britain, as we saw above, the largely racial classification is actually called “ethnic”.) Non-White recognized minorities, such as “Japanese,” can benefit from policies of implicit or explicit positive discrimination, while Whites of a minority ethnic background, such as Ukrainians, cannot. A key question is whether such political distinctions are sustainable in the long run.

### **The validity of defining cultural identity in the census**

As the discussion has so far amply demonstrated, the formulation of census questions and categories is inextricably embroiled in politics. This raises the question of whether the collection of census data on cultural categories can have any scientific validity. Does the politicization of the census represent the undermining of an exercise that should be left in the hands of scientific experts? Social science does not speak with one voice

on the matter, due in part to conflicting disciplinary assumptions and a certain compartmentalization of research.

The assertion that statistical science can stand above politics assumes that the object to be enumerated “exists previous to and outside of statistics” (Labbé 2000). From this perspective, the task of the statistician, and thus of the census expert, is to establish methodological rules protecting data collection from imprecision and sundry distortions, thereby attempting to describe with the greatest accuracy the object under study. The problem with this approach is that, by focusing mainly on the technical aspects of measurement, it takes for granted the existence of the category itself. This is unproblematic when categories refer to objective markers such as “age.” But to assume that categories denoting cultural affiliation can be enumerated as objectively as age is to assume that identities can be reduced to an essential core within each individual, a core that exists outside of politics.

The notion that cultural categories can be reduced to an objective core, called “statistical realism” by Labbé, is dangerously close to the primordialist notion of timeless identities, much discredited in recent social science, particularly among anthropologists. Nonetheless, statistical realism appears to have many adherents among demographers. Labbé relates the case of an ambitious project undertaken by the French Institute of Demography, aiming at assessing the reliability of all available demographic data in the Balkans. One of the issues concerns the underregistration of Romas (Gypsies) in the last Hungarian census. The project apparently does not question the criteria used to define the category “Roma” in the first place and whether someone of Roma descent could not legitimately declare him or herself as “Hungarian” (Labbé 2000).

The same mindset characterized the European experts sent to Macedonia in 1994 to devise and conduct a special census aimed at verifying whether ethnic Albanians had been undercounted in the 1991 Macedonian census, as Albanian activists claimed they had been. The experts “thought they were going to be overseeing the technical aspects of a statistical exercise,” but were instead shocked by the level of political passion their very exercise reignited, and baffled by the sheer ethnographic complexity of the area (Friedman 1996, 94). How is a Macedonian-speaking Muslim to be counted? As the experts discovered, two diametrically opposed views existed on the matter, and statistical realism was of little help to adjudicate the issue.

Anthropologists emphasize the fact that identities are social constructions, that is, intrinsically dependent on social incentives and political projects, as opposed to deriving from some unalterable kernel that could be discovered in an ideal “state of nature.” Some conclude from this

that identities are “not real” and therefore inappropriate for enumeration, or for political recognition, for that matter. Others, however, point out that while identities have no reality independent of people’s perceptions, the belief by social actors that their identities are real is itself a social fact. In other words, identities are socially “real,” inasmuch as socially significant acts are based on ideas of identities (Labbé 2000). For instance, while there is no objective “Macedonian” identity, there is little doubt that social movements and political parties exist whose action is based on the belief in such an identity. The social import of these movements and parties is certainly “real” and, at the same time, likely to affect how individuals define themselves. In this vein, enumerating identities is akin to sorting out how people subjectively define themselves *vis-à-vis* others. As Bulmer claimed, during a debate on the merits of introducing a race/ethnicity question on the British census:

The use of “race” (and the term itself is unsatisfactory and even misleading) in the context of social research refers to the way in which members of a society perceive differences between groups in that society and define the boundaries of such groups, taking into account physical characteristics and skin colour... What the ethnic question is trying to do is to find out in as objective a manner as possible how members of British society identify themselves. (Bulmer 1980: 5)

In other words, the census sets its goal as that of *objectively* assessing the state of *subjective* identities. As has already become clear from our discussion of contemporary Western cases, however, the categorization of subjective categories by census-makers is more often than not a matter of political *negotiation*, rather than objective assessment.

While among scholars constructivist approaches have demystified the “scientific” nature of census identity categories, outside the scholarly community many people remain wedded to contrary views. Anthropologists have recently shown considerable interest in the ways that the powerful have attempted to use statistics and quantification to lend themselves the legitimacy of science, to appear to speak truth to the benighted. Urla (1993: 819) refers to this as the equation of knowledge with measurement, and writes of statistics as “technologies of truth production.” She herself examines these issues in the heart of Europe, analyzing the fraught political relations of the Basques to the modern Spanish state. In that study, she points out that censuses and social statistics are not simply means of state domination, but also seized on by insurgent political forces to create their own construction of social reality (1993: 837). Far from being a scientific enterprise removed from the political fray, the census is more like a political battleground where competing notions of “real” identities, and

therefore competing *names* to assign to categories, battle it out. The prize is a census category which will “scientifically” legitimate the existence of a socially imagined group.

Pierre Bourdieu (1991: 105) discusses this power to create social reality through the use of words. “By structuring the perception which social agents have of the social world,” he writes, “the act of naming helps to establish the structure of the world, and does so all the more significantly the more widely it is recognized, i.e. authorized.” Although not citing Bourdieu, David Goldberg (1997: 29) echoes him in examining the use of race in the US census, referring to the census as “an exercise in social naming, in nominating into existence.” The fiction is maintained – or at least is attempted – that the racial categories used in the censuses, and the process of assigning individuals to each category, simply reflect a pre-existing property of the world, and a scientific effort to capture it objectively. In Goldberg’s (1997: 34) phrase, “The census reflects the racializing categories of social formation that it nevertheless at once reifies, which it reproduces as it creates and cements as it naturalizes. The process of objectified nomination thus fixes (at least temporarily and tenaciously) what are at best racial fabrications.”

Southeastern Europe gives us some of the most dramatic evidence of a political struggle over nominating ethnic groups into existence. At the turn of the twentieth century, political boundaries in the Balkans were unstable, with the Ottoman Empire receding in influence and several states competing over territory. Among the most contested areas was Macedonia, an Ottoman possession claimed by Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece. At a time when, according to the “principle of nationalities,” the legitimacy of territorial sovereignty was determined by the ethnicity (cultural nationality) of the population, the three emerging Orthodox states had reason for adopting a different view. Each sought to define the population in a way that would produce majorities, or at least pluralities, for those claimed ethnically as “theirs.” Population figures produced around this time (1889–1905) by Bulgarian, Serb, and Greek authors, and retrospectively by a Turkish author (1975), offered wildly varying accounts of the identity of the population, as can be seen from the collection of figures gathered by Friedman (1996: 85),<sup>10</sup> describing the population of “Macedonia” (see Table 1.1).

Bulgarian, Serbian, and Turkish authors all found that their own ethnic group was in a majority in Macedonia, while the Greek author claimed a plurality of Greeks. One is tempted to impute the huge variations (from 71 percent of Serbs to none!) to willful fabrication, the accusation of choice found in all nationalist literature. “Fabrication,” however, while

### 1.1 *Ethnic Composition of Macedonia, 1889–1905*

<i>Ethnic group by percentage</i>	<i>Source of census figures</i>			
	Bulgarian	Serbian	Greek	Turkish
<i>Bulgarians</i>	52.3%	2.0%	19.3%	30.8%
<i>Serbs</i>	0.0	71.4	0.0	3.4
<i>Greeks</i>	10.1	7.0	37.9	10.6
<i>Albanians</i>	5.7	5.8	0.0	0.0
<i>Turks</i>	22.1	8.1	36.8	51.8
<i>Others</i>	9.7	5.9	6.1	3.4
<i>Total</i>	100	100	100	100

Source: Friedman (1996: 85).

certainly a factor, largely misses the point, since it assumes, in the tradition of statistical realism, a correct and objective method of counting identities, whose process is then spoiled by political elements.

Cultural identities in Macedonia were complex, with much of the population multilingual, religion (Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Islam) cross-cutting languages, three Patriarchates (Serbian, Bulgarian, Greek) contending for the loyalty of Orthodox believers, and much of the population having a weak “national” consciousness, in the modern sense of the word. All four competing powers rejected the existence of a “Macedonian” ethnic identity, which explains its absence from Friedman’s table, even though archival sources attest that a growing number of people were beginning to define themselves as such at the time (Brown 1996).

The argument of the Bulgarian and Serbian nationalists was that the Slavic language spoken in Macedonia was a dialectical version of their own language, and therefore Slav-speakers were Bulgarian or Serbian, respectively. The Greek position used language as well, but less the vernacular than the language learned at school. Conveniently (if not coincidentally), Greek schools were prevalent in the area, since Greek was the language of prestige and commerce throughout the Balkans. Greek nationalists also used church affiliation as a criterion, counting all those pledging allegiance to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate as theirs and not recognizing the rival Bulgarian Orthodox Church (the Exarchate). The Albanians, meanwhile, were either a minor or non-existent category in these population figures, being counted as part of the group of each author according to their assumed religious affiliation (Albanian-speaking populations being of Muslim, Orthodox, and Catholic backgrounds).

The “Turks” who constituted a majority in the Turkish source included a number of Albanian-speakers.

The figures cited by Friedman were computed from censuses conducted in Ottoman Macedonia, either by the state or churches, where a *direct* question on nationality (ethnicity) was not asked. The original data, on religion and language, was collected under techniques hardly statistically valid, since the practice was to extrapolate from the number of males in households and the counting itself was capricious (Van Gennep 1992: 120). Moreover, the different authors interpreting the raw data had different conceptions of the geographical boundaries of Macedonia, which probably accounts for some of the important discrepancies in the estimates of “Turks.” However scientifically inadequate these numerical exercises were from a technical standpoint, the various and conflicting criteria used to define the categories in the Macedonian case are not the exception but the *norm* of census politics, if perhaps a bit extreme.

### The refusal to count

Nominating into existence implies its reverse – the refusal to name. The geographic area of Macedonia was partitioned in 1912. The Yugoslav state, which inherited northeastern Macedonia, eventually recognized a Macedonian “nationality” on its census after World War II. By contrast, the Greek and Bulgarian states refused to recognize such an identity in the Macedonian territories that came under their jurisdictions. In the Soviet Union, which recognized over a hundred nationalities, Hirsch (1997) documents how the definitive list of nationalities was drawn up in the 1920s and 1930s by ethnographers, under pressure from party officials and, to some extent, local ethnic entrepreneurs. The comparative point is that once a decision to count cultural groups is made, there are inevitably other claimants who feel that their group is being denied an existence on the census, and thus in society.

The refusal to count can also be the consequence of a group’s fear of being shown to be in the minority and therefore of losing political power. Examples abound. In Burundi, ethnic categorizations have been officially ruled out to mask the domination of the state by the Tutsis, who are vastly outnumbered by the Hutus (Uvin, this volume). In Mauritania, the Moor-dominated government suppressed the results of the 1978 census, a decision interpreted by the ethnic Kewri as an implicit acknowledgment that the Kewri had acquired a majority (Horowitz 1985: 195). In Pakistan, the government postponed the census five times between 1991 and 1998, fearing violence by groups likely to claim that they were undercounted. When the results of the 1998 census finally began to

appear, the demographic proportions of the major ethnic groups were virtually unchanged from those of the 1981 census, a highly implausible, but politically safe, outcome (Weiss 1999). The Pakistani exercise amounted to a refusal to count.

The refusal to count can also operate at a deeper level. In various states at various times any use of cultural markers to divide citizens into separate categories has been rejected. Such rejection can arise from an ideological conception of the nation by state elites, or it can result from political pressure. Two of the chapters in this volume discuss cases of modern states that steadfastly refuse to use ethnic categories in their censuses. In Israel, as argued in Goldscheider's chapter, the ideology of Zionism is premised on the notion that ethnic markers among Israeli Jews are the product of the historic exile of the Jewish people. In this view, the return to the "homeland" constitutes a break with the diaspora mentality, and the various ethnic identities of Jewish immigrants will inevitably fuse, within generations, into an Israeli *sabra* identity. Counting ethnicity runs counter to the Israeli nation-building project.

In France, as detailed in Blum's chapter, the republican conception of the "nation," defined as the sum of the state's citizens, admits no other public identity than the civic identity of French. Since national identity is deemed indivisible, the only permissible division on the census is between the nationals (*les Français*) and the resident foreigners (*les étrangers*). Unaffected by the evolving international discourse sympathetic to minority rights, France continues to cling to a vision of the nation which, by its very essence, leaves no legal space for the existence of a "minority," and therefore of ethnically defined groups. A 1991 ruling by the French Constitutional Council that the legal term "Corsican people" (*peuple corse*) is unconstitutional (Rouland, Pierré-Caps and Poumarède 1996: 241), strongly suggests that the French conception is still deeply engrained. By law, questions on ethnicity, language or religion cannot be asked on the census.<sup>11</sup>

Yet in recent years, given the magnitude of immigration from former colonies, an emotional debate has erupted over the merits of introducing ethnic categories into state-financed surveys, a first step that could lead to their incorporation into the census. All parties to the debate invoke the principle of republicanism and the impermissibility of discrimination according to race, ethnicity, language, or religion. The disagreement is over the relationship between cultural categories and discrimination. The traditional republican stance is that any official categorization is discriminatory and runs the risk of politicizing identities and weakening the cohesion of the French political nation. Revisionists reply that discrimination already exists in social interactions and that one has to "identify in

order to act" (Blum, this volume, citing Simon). In this view, the only efficient way to combat discrimination is to assess discriminatory practices statistically. This is, in effect, the argument of the proponents of positive discrimination in Britain, the United States, Canada, and Australia. In considering whether or not to categorize identities, census-makers thus face a dilemma: on the one hand, categorizing can have beneficial effects on the excluded; on the other hand, the very possibility of linking group identities to political benefits can provide incentive for "groups" to mobilize and demand recognition. Far from merely reflecting what is "out there," the census can be transformed into a mechanism of identity formation.

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### Counting fluid identities: the language conundrum

A key argument that has been used to counter the revisionist position in the contemporary French debate is that reducing ethnicity to a single census criterion, such as origin or language, greatly distorts the complex and changing identities of immigrants and their children. In the words of Blum (this volume), "Ethnicity cannot be defined by a criterion like origin, whether it is defined by place of birth or descent, since it results from a combination of multiple criteria, having equally to do with origin, place of residence, social networks, migratory path, and so forth."

Yet, as we have seen, there is a clear trend in "immigrant" countries to select the criterion of *origins* in enumerating the ethnic background of their population. In Canada, the emphasis towards the past is quite explicit, since the ethnic question on the 2001 census asks: "To which ethnic or cultural group(s) did this person's *ancestors* [in bold in the text] belong?" (Census Questionnaire 2001). The question does not directly ask about the ethnic identity of the respondent at the time of the census, but assumes that this identity coincides with that of his/her ancestors. A similar approach is used in the United States. McKenney, Farley, and Lewin (1983, cited in McKenney and Cresce 1993: 196) have justified this new approach by arguing that the new ancestry question minimizes confusion between birthplace and ethnic origin. That is, if an Italian-origin family lived in Argentina for two generations prior to moving to the United States, a question about birthplace would be answered Argentina, while the same individual might reply Italian to the ancestry question. This is a revealing rationale. While it is true that birthplace is a weak indicator of ethnicity, it is not clear from its logic who would qualify as having Argentinean ancestry, as presumably everyone (even the native Americans) at some point had come from somewhere else. The emphasis on ancestry assumes a kind of ethnic purity.

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Third-generation immigrant offspring are treated as if they were as ethnically differentiated as their forebears; Italians are viewed as if they were living generation after generation in a closed breeding population within another country. Such a perspective is totally at odds with the consensus in anthropology and political science, which sees unchanging “primordial” identities as a figment of the nationalist imagination.

The movement to privilege the past, and not the present, in formulating census identity criteria has in fact a long pedigree, as old as the first modern censuses in Europe and inextricably linked to the use of *language* categories. As Arel explains in his chapter, while Eastern European statisticians, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, agreed on the desirability of inserting a (cultural) nationality variable in censuses, they long debated which criteria should be used to ascertain the nationality of a respondent. Should nationality be asked directly, as in “What is your nationality?” Or should it be ascertained indirectly, by asking about one’s language, and then inferring national identity from the language? All agreed that language was a key component of nationality, although hardly the only one. After much debate, a consensus emerged, with plenty of dissension nonetheless, that language should be selected as an indirect marker of nationality.

Language, however, can be asked in many different ways – as either native language (mother tongue), language of home, or language of use. The 1872 St. Petersburg session of the International Statistical Congress recommended that “mother tongue” be used as the language indicator, but that recommendation was not followed in multilingual Austria where *Umgangssprache* (language of use) was the criterion used in the four censuses administered between 1880 and 1910. Czech nationalists strongly objected to a question emphasizing *current use*, as opposed to *first language learned*, since many people of Czech mother tongue, settled in predominantly German-speaking cities in Austrian Bohemia, might be tempted to answer “German” if the question were posed that way (Zeman 1990: 32–33).

Since language acted as a surrogate for “nationality,” Czech nationalists argued that the census *Umgangssprache* data underrepresented them. Someone speaking German outside of the home, but Czech at home, was still a Czech. The opposition to *Umgangssprache*, however, was driven by a sentiment far more essentialist than a plea for statistical precision. The Czech nationalist position could not accept the idea that someone of Czech-speaking parents might actually “become” a German, as this type of language re-identification was portrayed as “forced,” resulting from the unjust policies of an imperial state. A “true” count of the Czech nation, from this perspective, had to be “backward-looking.” Since linguistic

assimilation is seen as unnatural and illegitimate, what must be recorded is the language *that used to predominate*, either earlier in one's lifetime or among one's ancestors.

It is worth recalling here Brubaker's (1996: 79) definition of nationalism "as a form of remedial political action... [addressing] an allegedly deficient or 'pathological' condition and [proposing] to remedy it". This encapsulates what census identity debates are about: the recognition of "truer" realities over fallacious ones. In this perspective, "mother tongue" reflects less the language of an individual, than the language of the nation to whom the individual is supposed to belong. Similarly, "ethnic origins" in the Western immigrant countries is more about *assumed* belonging (assumed from the outside, that is) than about *felt* belonging. Accordingly, census primordialism – the equation of present ethnic/national identity with ancestral identity – appears to be as potent today as it was a century ago.

### **Bottom-up efforts to influence census categories**

Ever since censuses began, state efforts to pigeon-hole each individual into a single category of identity, and then conceive of the whole population as divisible into these units, have faced resistance. The people so categorized have struggled both to change the categories and to change their distribution across them. Indeed, one of the most important of the topics we probe in this book is the evolution of the locus of power over the construction of identity categories in the census. Who actually decides what categories and what principles are to be employed in generating these collective identities? Are we correct in thinking that there has been a major shift from census categories decided from on high to those crafted through a complex and messy process of political struggle, involving interest groups formed from the people being categorized?

The history of the US census suggests that such a shift has taken place. Whether this observation holds comparatively cries out for research. In the case of the Soviet Union, the evolution of the locus of power over the construction of identities can best be seen as a boomerang cycle. The initial census categories, in the 1920s and 1930s, were shaped to a remarkable extent by national elites and scholars sympathetic to nationality claims (Hirsch 1997). Subsequent debate over the categories was frozen for many years by Party fiat. With the demise of the Soviet Union, the democratizing conditions in several post-Soviet states has once again made their first independent censuses (particularly in Russia, Ukraine, and the Baltics) the political battleground that it has proven to be in so many other countries.

Even when the determination of census categories remained in the hands of imperial bureaucrats in Eastern Europe and in various overseas colonies, a great deal of popular agitation was aroused. Parties and movements acting in the name of ethnic groups sought to convince putative members of the group to register as such. In Austrian Bohemia, for instance, Czech parties campaigned to have people of Czech descent claim "Czech" as *Umgangssprache*, and when the tide began to turn favorably to the Czech language in certain urban areas, German parties began their own campaign in favor of claiming "German" (Arel, this volume).

Another enlightening case concerns Imperial India, where the British went to great lengths to categorize the colonized along a variety of markers, revolving around the fundamental category (in their eyes) of caste. By the time of the 1931 census, as Cohn recounts, the political significance of this process of assigning identities to the Indian population had become so pronounced that some groups organized to promote certain responses to the census-takers questions. A flyer, entitled "Remember! Census Operations Have Begun" (see below), distributed just before the census by one such group in Lahore, entreated the local population to make particular responses (Cohn 1987: 249).

Remember! Census Operations Have Begun	
<i>Question</i>	<i>You should answer!</i>
Religion	Vedi Dharm
Sect	Arya Samajist
Caste	Nil
Race	Aryan
Language	Arya Bhasha

This makes the census far closer, in many ways, to a political campaign than to a technical exercise in counting. The activists involved in the agitation generally believe that the identities they are promoting are primordial, and therefore not a matter of choice. Yet they are concerned that many of their co-ethnics are not fully aware of their own "true" identity, and so must be reminded of their roots.

Often, however, people targeted by such campaigning are well aware of their roots, but do not share the backward-looking premise of the nationalist groups. In Belgium, in the post-war period, parents of Flemish mother tongue in Brussels were more interested in claiming French than Flemish as their language on the census, to the despair of Flemish nationalist groups. The parents were motivated by their interest in sending their children to French schools, a desire which they knew would be facilitated

by the statistical “finding” of a greater proportion of “French-speakers” in their district (Arel, forthcoming). Statistical realists have decried this confusion between a plebiscite and a census (Lévy 1960). Yet, since identity is subjective and contingent upon social and political factors, one wonders whether it would not be more fruitful to view the census – or, at least, the identity questions of a census – as a type of plebiscite (Labbé 2000).

In many Western countries, efforts to alter the use of ethnic and racial categorization involve not only lobbying respondents to place themselves in one category or another, but lobbying the designers of the census to alter the categories used. Lieberson (1993: 29–30), deliberately overstating the matter, has argued that now “each ethnic group has the potential ability to control its own enumeration – in the sense of a veto on how it is defined, classified and described. However, each group has no veto power over other groups.” He argues that these ethnic lobbying groups present their case as a matter of basic morality and, in so far as they are in a position to bring unfavorable publicity to politicians, are a potent force where such matters are concerned.

One of the most significant examples of this process comes from the United States. In 1970, in response to the urgings of various ethnic lobbying groups, the census bureau introduced a question asking a sample of respondents if they were of “Hispanic” origin. Those who answered positively were then asked if they fit into one of five categories (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, Other Spanish). This effort led to many criticisms, which were taken up by the US Commission on Civil Rights in 1974. Their report, provocatively titled “Counting the Forgotten,” blasted the Census Bureau for a poorly conceived effort at counting Hispanics. It urged them to include a newly revised question to be asked of every individual on the 1980 census, which would be “responsive to the needs of the Spanish-speaking background population.” The following year, the Census Bureau formed a special advisory committee on the Spanish origin population, having a year earlier established such a committee on the “Black Population.” By 1976, political logic had led inevitably to the formation of a third advisory committee, this one devoted to the Asian and Pacific Island population (Conk 1987: 177–78). Controversy has continued to surround the design of these ethnic and racial identity questions. For our purposes, however, what is most notable is the role of the census in the invention and legitimization of such categories of collective identity as “Hispanic”.

Census politics undoubtedly has a strong emotional dimension, for it matters a great deal to many people that the groups they identify with are granted official recognition. As Geertz stated in his classic article (1963), “The peoples of the new states are simultaneously animated by

two powerful, thoroughly interdependent, yet distinct and often actually opposed motives – the desire to be recognized as responsible agents whose wishes, acts, hopes, and opinions ‘matter,’ and the desire to build an efficient, dynamic modern state.” The historical record has since demonstrated that the desire for such recognition can be as potent among groups in the “old” states as well.

Yet the instrumental dimension of census politics may be just as important since, in the age of the modern state as a provider of social and economic benefits, group recognition in the census entails group *entitlement* to certain rights. Group-differentiated social programs may be directed to certain cities depending on the proportion of their ethnic population. Cross tabulations, with nationality, language, or race as one of the variables, can be used to suggest how some groups lag behind others on certain indicators, leading to demands for further remedial policies by the state.

Since census politics is expressed in numbers, the pursuit of entitlement translates into a contest for achieving the “right” numbers. This may mean remaining in the “majority,” according to a politically salient criterion, or at least not falling below a certain numerical threshold. The census can become so politically contested precisely because it is the most important means by which “majorities” and “minorities” can be officialized (Anderson 1998). Identity politics is a numbers game, or more precisely a battle over relative proportions, both within the state and within particular territories of the larger state. Groups fear a change of proportion disadvantageous to themselves, as this often directly affects how political and economic power are allocated. They fear becoming a minority in the territory that matters most to them, which can be conceived either as state, a province, or a district.

The Pakistani case strikingly illustrates how census majority politics is intimately linked to the emotional (identity as self-worth) and instrumental (identity as a tool) dimensions of identity. Pakistan is divided into four provinces (Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, and the North West Frontier Province [NWFP]), all containing a majority of the eponymous ethnic group (Pakhtuns, in the case of NWFP). For any of these groups losing its territorial majority is politically unthinkable, as it would call into question the group’s legitimacy to rule over the territory that it considers its *own*.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, each ethnic group is given a quota in federal representation and services (including government jobs and university admissions), determined by the relative proportion of the group in the general population as shown in the census. For this reason, falling below their existing quota is also deemed politically unacceptable. This made the government afraid, for security reasons, to come up with results making some groups

the relative losers of the entitlement game (Weiss 1999). Lebanon faced a similar dilemma in the post-war period, when its stability rested on a delicate political balance, apportioned by ethnic criteria. Not surprisingly, no census could be conducted.

In states recognizing the existence of language minorities, the census often becomes a major arena of contention in determining where and according to what criteria the minority language will be used in state-supported institutions. Disputes include the minimum proportion of language-speakers necessary for a language to be used in schools and administration (a proportion which varies greatly across cases), the boundaries of the area where the threshold applies (city or province?), and, as we saw above, the very census indicators ascertaining the proportion of language-speakers (mother tongue or language of use?) (Arel, this volume). The fear of falling below the threshold and “losing out” (assimilating) in the long run can become so fierce, and politically destabilizing, that some states have decided to eliminate the census altogether, or at least the questions regarding ethnic identity.

It is useful here to briefly revisit the classic case of Belgium, where the language question was removed from the census in 1960 following political upheaval over the issue of a “threshold.” Belgian law mandated that Brussels districts (communes) with a minimum of 30 percent of Francophones had to offer services in French, including schools. The 1947 census, which was the first to apply the law, showed that several heretofore unilingual Flemish districts had become legally bilingual. Flemish parties interpreted this as an inexorable, and intolerable, trend towards their minoritization all over Brussels. The situation became politically untenable and, in 1960, a compromise was achieved preventing the census, or any other state-funded activity, from inquiring about language, thereby “freezing” the language status of communes (Van Velthoven 1987).

### The impact of census categories on identity formation

The requirement that each individual be pigeon-holed in a culturally defined category had major implications for how people came to think of themselves, implications that would have a tremendous impact on the creation of politically important interest groups. Bernard Cohn tells how, beginning with the intellectuals of Bengal in the nineteenth century and then spreading to all of the educated Indians in the twentieth century, people began to *objectify* their culture. Not least influential in this process was the need to employ half a million literate Indians to carry out the census of the late nineteenth century. These census-takers were taught

to think of the people around them as divisible into clear-cut cultural categories, and taught as well what the crucial distinguishing marks were to be. What previously had been part of the complex web of relationships, practices, and beliefs they shared now became something quite different. An identifiable, distinct culture was distinguished, allowing people to “stand back and look at themselves, their ideas, their symbols and culture and see it as an entity.” Once they conceived of themselves as part of a culture in this objectified sense, they could then, as part of the political process, select aspects of that culture, and polish and reformulate them in pursuing their goals (Cohn 1987: 228–29).

The case of Soviet Central Asia is also instructive regarding the impact of state categorizations on the formation of identities. Abramson (this volume) shows how the Soviet system of dividing its population into mutually exclusive cultural nationalities in the 1920s was appropriated by Uzbek elites. After Soviet officials decreed, in 1924, that the “Uzbeks” were a “nationality,” it took four years for local elites to agree on who, among the population, should be classified as Uzbeks, largely on the basis of dialects. When Moscow established Soviet republics on the basis of nationality, some newly self-defined Uzbeks ended up on the wrong side of the border. Hirsch (2000: 216) tells the story of Uzbek-identified border villages, assigned to neighboring Kirgizia, whose inhabitants petitioned Moscow to be included in Uzbekistan. She is struck by how adept the petitioners were at using the rhetoric of nationality, which until a few years before had been foreign to the region:

Did the petitioners really *believe* that they were members of a discrete Uzbek nationality? We can never really know. The point is that the petitioners used the language of nationality in their interactions with the state and in doing so helped make official nationality categories real. Indeed, perhaps what is most remarkable is that the petitioners did not question the official assumption that “national identity” was linked to land, water, and other resources. Many of the residents of the new Central Asian republics themselves expressed surprise about how quickly nationality categories took root after national-territorial delimitation.

Even more boldly, Appadurai (1993: 317) has argued that colonial census practices themselves “helped to ignite communitarian and nationalist identities that in fact undermined colonial rule.” In the same vein, Kateb has shown how the French colonial state, by denying French nationality (in the sense of citizenship) to Muslims, paradoxically created a national Algerian Muslim identity from a hodgepodge of local affiliations (1998: 105). Zeman (1994: 31), in his study of the Imperial Austrian censuses of this period, observes that the effort to record a cultural nationality for each individual “made a direct contribution to the conflict . . . between the

nationalities. A device designed by the civil servants to make the Monarchy more easily governable in fact created a large new area of civil strife." What the relationship is between the modern project of exercising firmer control over populations by extending a more thorough statistical gaze over them and the eventual mobilization of these populations against the imperial/colonial regimes remains a provocative question.

Whether in colonial settings, or in other places where centralized state power is supreme, state-defined identity categories can have a substantial impact on people, altering pre-existing lines of identity divisions within the society. "State officials," writes James Scott, "can often make their categories stick and impose their simplifications." The categories used by the state, he argues, "begin as the artificial inventions of cadastral surveyors, census-takers [etc.] . . . can end by becoming categories that organize people's daily experiences precisely because they are embedded in state-created institutions that structure that experience." The classification of ethnicity, and other forms of state-mandated identity categorization, "acquire their force from the fact that these synoptic data are the points of departure for reality as state officials apprehend and shape it." Where the state is powerful, the "categories used by state agents are not merely means to make their environment legible; they are an authoritative tune to which most of the population must dance" (1998: 81–83).

The realization that governmental statistics-gathering and census-taking have been influential in creating and manipulating identities has led to a new look in the scholarly community at government statistical agencies. In a movement that can be traced in part to the influence of Foucault, some of those social analysts and historians who had previously been least interested in statistics, demography, or governmental record-keeping, have recently come to see the production of statistics as of central importance.

When preparations for the 2000 US census got underway, few topics generated more protest and anguish than the requirement that an individual place him or herself in a single racial category. Revealingly, however, this protest was less politically successful than other, much less visible protests, because it was not linked to any well-organized political lobbying group. Indeed, the demands that have filled the letters-to-the-editor sections of many newspapers, asking that people not be forced to place themselves in a single, neat racial or ethnic category, have been met by strong opposition from those who represent ethnic and racial organizations.

This is a point of great interest in understanding the evolution of censuses and the role they have played in constructing collective identities. What is curious, yet highly revealing, is that while many individuals who

feel violated by these rules and practices have voiced strong opposition to them, the leaders of organizations that define themselves in racial terms have strongly backed them. Ironically, given the history of race relations in the US, the continued use of a fundamentally racist ideology ('one drop of Negro blood makes a Negro') has been most effectively championed by African-American organizations. Similarly, both the creation of the ethnic group "Hispanic" and its continued use in the census have been primarily the product of political interest groups who define their membership through such ethnic constructions.

Anthropologists have long been intrigued by the human compulsion to divide the observed world into categories, and by people's discomfort with those people, animals, or other objects who do not seem to fit into a single category (Levi-Strauss 1966; Douglas 1966). This human drive lies behind the universal efforts not only of elites and state officials but also of people of all kinds to divide the social universe into neat categories. In this context, those preferring the blurring of categories confront not only actors whose interests lie in championing their own categorical identities, but a more general difficulty of promulgating identities that fail to fall in any simple category at all.

One other relatively new element of censuses should be considered in this context: the move from census forms filled out by enumerators to those filled out by the respondents themselves. The notion that only the individual has the right to decide which identity category he or she should be placed in is a powerful force in the world today. This can be viewed as part of the western ideology of modern individualism, which Handler (1988: 51) refers to – following Macpherson – as "possessive individualism." The idea here is that people demonstrate their individuality through making choices for themselves; their identity is something that they themselves produce, and so own.<sup>13</sup>

Self-identification for the census, however, has its practical, and sometimes ideological, limits. As tabulated results can list only so many entries, some identities get either lumped in an "Other" category or subsumed into existing ones. The latter occurs when an identity is unrecognized by census authorities. As Abramson explains in his chapter, in the last Soviet census of 1989 there were almost seven times as many self-identified "nationalities" (823) as recognized ones (128). Thus, even when self-identification is allowed, the recoding of people's responses into a smaller set of categories plays a large role in the statistical representation of groups.

This move to place the respondent in charge of filling out the census form only became possible when and where literacy became universal,

and so is still not found in many countries of the world. However, where people now compile their own form, racial and ethnic categorization must cope with a much more chaotic hodgepodge of self-labeling processes. Even, for example, if directions indicate that an individual of mixed “Indian” and “Negro” “blood” should identify with the category reflecting the greatest proportion of “blood,” many individuals who identify as native American simply list themselves as native Americans. This reminds us, once more, that what is measured by the census is a particular kind of politicized social construction of reality.

### **The continuing political and social importance of census categorization**

Census categorization of populations by various markers of identity – race, ethnic group, language, religion – has a two-hundred-year history. Today there are few countries which do not have regular population censuses; yet significantly, in those cases where censuses are not held, it is often the very process of enumerating populations by various markers of collective identity that is viewed as most threatening and discourages census enumeration.

The census, although only one of many government information-gathering devices, is arguably the most important and certainly the most universal. As such, investigating the census/identity matrix offers a privileged vantage point for examining such fundamental social and political issues as the growth and evolution of nationalism, ethnic conflict, racism, and transnational identity formation and organization. But these processes should be seen in the larger context of how individuals come to assert certain collective identities for themselves, how they come to assign them to others, and the role that state authorities play in these collective identity processes. This raises a much broader field of inquiry than we have been able to examine in this chapter (or in this book), relating to a newly emerging field of studies. It is a field that includes studies that range from the historical examination of the state’s imposition of surnames to the emergence of modern criminology and state surveillance of populations through passports, fingerprinting, and the like (Noiriel 1996; Torpey 2000).

We have seen, too, that the numbers produced through census or census-like categorization schemes can have important political consequences. At its most dramatic, claims to majority status for an “ethnic group” or “nationality” in a particular geographical area can be central to claims for political power. As the case of the Balkans today makes

painfully clear, the matter of influencing counts in various ethnic categories is not only a matter of getting people to identify themselves in certain ways when the census-taker comes around. It is also linked to the use of force to empty territories of people associated with other identities, and hence justify a claim to political ownership of the land by those sharing the collective identity deemed to be in the majority.

Examination of the relationship between the census and the formation and evolution of collective identities, as we have seen, involves us in the messy process of politics. We witness the struggle among a multiplicity of actors over that most basic of powers, the power to name, to categorize, and thus to create social reality.

The nature of the contestation over such categorization varies in different parts of the world, as it has over time. Yet, as we have seen, some important parallels can be found when we look at these questions in comparative perspective. It is part of our effort in this volume to examine these similarities, and these differences, to see what general principles are operating, and what their implications are for processes of collective identity formation and for the relationship between states and their citizens.

#### NOTES

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1 In Spring 2000, the recently elected Greek government announced that the “religion” entry would be removed from identity cards, to conform with European Union standards. This provoked a storm of protest from the Greek Orthodox church, which argued that, since Greece is the only Orthodox state in the Union, such a policy would imperil Greek identity (Smith 2000).

2 Official certificates of ethnic status were apparently first used to regulate the 1922 transfer of populations between Greece and Bulgaria. Candidates for emigration had to obtain the certificate from the mayor of their commune (Institut National de la Statistique 1946: 77).

3 A good study of the intra-state workings of identity politics can be found in the chapter “Homeland Nationalism in Weimar Germany and ‘Weimar Russia’,” in Brubaker (1996). The author details how various state and quasi-state agencies, and voluntary associations, competed to formulate a policy *vis-à-vis* the diaspora Germans of Central Europe. For the ethnography of bureaucracy, see Herzfeld (1992).

4 The selection of older census results (1880), as opposed to recent ones (1920) – the final post-war immigration law was passed in 1924 – was made

to greatly diminish the relative proportion of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, compared to those from the then more “acceptable” states of Western and Northern Europe.

- 5 At the turn of the century, a popular notion held that northern and southern Italians were of such different “character” that they constituted separate “races.” In the *Dictionary of Races or Peoples*, prepared for the US Bureau of Immigration (Report on the Immigration Commission 1911), the South Italians were described as “excitable, impulsive, highly imaginative, impracticable . . . [and having] little adaptability to highly organized society.” The North Italians were presented as “cool, deliberate, patient, practical, and . . . capable of great progress in the political and social organization of modern civilization.”
- 6 In the 2001 census, the category “White” has been subdivided into “British” and “Irish” for England and Wales, while the questionnaire distributed in Scotland and Northern Ireland will have the sole “White” category along with the various identities of ex-colonials. The three territorially-grounded ethnic identities of “Irish” (in Ireland itself), “Scots,” and “Welsh” will thus continue to be absent from the census question, which is officially called the “Ethnic Group question.” Interestingly, the category “Irish Traveller” – a group akin to Gypsies in terms of local perceptions – was added to the categories in Northern Ireland (*The 2001 Census of Population*, 1999).
- 7 Ryder, quoted by Simon (1997b: 22), claims that the fact that English Canadians spoke of the “founding races,” which French Canadians translated as “founding peoples,” suggests a misunderstanding in the meaning to be ascribed to the founding communities. Yet, French Canadians also referred to themselves as “la race canadienne-française,” in the European turn-of-the-century cultural connotation of the term.
- 8 The French- and English-speaking groups were originally called “Canadien” and “English.” When descendants of English settlers began to identify as “Canadians,” the French speakers became the “French Canadians.” In the 1996 census, 42 percent of the “Canadians” in the origin question were from Quebec.
- 9 Since “national” consciousness correlates with urbanization and industrialization, many immigrants to the United States, rural and uneducated, tended to carry a regional identification and have little, if any, sense of a national belonging. Most “Italians,” for instance, identified as “Calabrian,” “Sicilian,” “Neapolitan,” and so forth. The “Poles” cited by Petersen also gave regional identities (Connor 1993: 221). After 1899, the US Bureau of Immigration, unlike the US Census Bureau, sought to classify immigrants by “races” (in the cultural sense then prevalent in Europe) and to recode a lot of these regional identities into one of forty-eight “races or peoples” it recognized on its official list (Keith Brown, personal communication).
- 10 Table A.1, “Conflicting Census Figures for Macedonia 1889–1905” in Friedman (1996: 85) mistakenly gives the figure of 13.86 for the percentage of “Others” claimed by Serbian sources. The correct figure, derived from the absolute figures provided in the Table, is 5.86 percent.
- 11 As previously mentioned, the French did introduce such cultural categories in colonial censuses, in order to differentiate among the colonized masses

- who, perforce, were not citizens. On census practices in Algeria, see Kateb 1998.
- 12 The same principle operated in the Soviet Union, where federal units were named after the “titular” group (called nationality). The former republic of Kazakhstan, independent since 1992, did not actually have an ethnic majority of Kazakhs in the last Soviet census of 1989. For reasons of territorial legitimacy, everyone expected that the first post-Soviet Kazakhstani census would register a majority of ethnic Kazakhs, whether “true” or not, and it did (Peter Sinnott, personal communication).
- 13 Although a distinction should be made between whether a census-taker fills out the form (as opposed to the respondent) and who decides what identity category the respondent is placed into. Even when the enumerator filled out the form, at least in the European cases, the question of the appropriate identity category in which the individual should be placed had long been a matter for the respondent to determine. Labb   (1998: 220), in this context, examines the attempts of the Nazi regime to take away from individuals the right to categorize their own race/ethnicity.

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