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The politics of representation in the US national statistical system: origins of minority population interest group participation

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Abstract

The United States is an “interest group society” and federal statistical policy, like all other aspects of contemporary American political life, is dominated by well-organized interest groups. The public review to revise the “Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity,” formerly known as “Statistical Policy Directive 15,” was notable for the significant presence of minority population interest groups. The politics of representation in the national statistical system during the 1970s is the subject of this article. The first part of the article summarizes the role that interest groups played in the recent debates on revising Statistical Policy Directive 15. The second part of the article discusses the origins of national statistics on minorities and their efforts during the 1970s to achieve inclusion in the body politic through representation in the federal statistical and administrative reporting systems. © 2000 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: US federal government statistics; US decennial census; Race; Ethnicity; Minority groups; Interest groups; Political participation

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1. Introduction

The decades since the 1960s have witnessed extraordinary growth of special interest groups with access to extensive technical and material resources.¹ They can be influential beyond their numbers in the public policy process, as well as in influencing administrative policy regarding rules for statistical and administrative data collection and reporting.² The business sector, public interest groups, professional and voluntary associations, and the Academy have dominated nearly every policy issue concerning government information and data production, management, dissemination, and reporting since the 1970s.³

Interest groups were a visible presence during the administrative review process that took place between 1993 and 1997, to revise the “Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity,” known formerly as Statistical Policy Directive 15.⁴ The policy issue of a classification system for racial and ethnic data was particularly salient for minority population groups. Very high stakes, both symbolic and material, were associated with the categories of race and ethnicity. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which is responsible for federal statistical policy through its Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, became the focus of organized lobbying. Congressional advocates were skillfully employed to support the efforts of the minority population interest groups.

This article discusses the origins of the participation of minority population on interest groups in the public review to modify the Directive, to understand how the public review was implicated historically in the larger issues of representation of minority populations in the national statistical system. This article extends earlier discussions of the relationships between the classification of race and ethnicity and the decennial census, the politics of reclassifying racial and ethnic data, and the interdependence of classification systems with public policy and social and political life.⁵ It provides additional evidence for Stratford’s claim that statistics are “an imperfect representation of reality,” and for Thernstrom’s contention that statistics “conceal subjective judgments and obscure complex normative issues.”⁶

The first part of the article briefly describes the role that interest groups played in the public review of Statistical Policy Directive, establishing the contemporary context for minority group participation during the 1970s that led to the development of national statistics on minority populations. The second section provides a framework for understanding the historical exclusion and representation of minority populations in official record keeping systems. Subsequent sections discuss the importance of national statistics for minority populations, the intervention of political elites on behalf of minorities, and their political action to achieve inclusion in the body politic through representation in the federal statistical and administrative reporting systems.⁷

2. The contemporary context of interest group participation in Statistical Policy Directive 15, 1988–1997

Interest groups were active participants in the debates over Statistical Policy Directive 15 between 1988 and 1997.⁸ The pervasive role of the academic community was witnessed in the numerous academics who testified at congressional hearings and responded to the

language of the Federal Register Notices issued by the OMB on Statistical Policy Directive 15.⁹ University demographers, sociologists, and public policy analysts were highly influential during the entire assessment. They were an especially visible presence in the design and evaluation of research on the effects of modifying the racial and ethnic categories, and they provided important testimony at the 1993 and 1997 congressional hearings.¹⁰ Their research served to justify the recommendations made by the Interagency Committee for the Review of Standards for Data on Race and Ethnicity and the final OMB decisions on the revision of the standard.¹¹

Business interests testified against altering Statistical Policy Directive 15, in 1988, after the OMB issued a draft Statistical Policy Circular in the Federal Register that solicited public comment on a comprehensive review of Statistical Policy Directive 15.¹² Although the public record does not indicate the reasons for their opposition, one spokesman, some years later, argued that changes would be expensive to implement, a position maintained by the private sector whenever new government regulations for information or data reporting are required.¹³ The advice of the private sector was also sought between 1994 and 1997, during deliberations of the Interagency Committee.¹⁴

Between 1988 and 1997, cultural, multiracial and multiethnic, advocacy, and minority population interest groups were a visible presence in congressional and OMB hearings and in the public comments to the OMB's review of Statistical Policy Directive 15. The political stance of the American Indian, Hispanic, and black interest groups throughout nearly all this period was that the classification system could not be altered or the gains they had made over the last two decades would be jeopardized. They strongly opposed the addition of a multiracial category and a "select more than one race" instruction for the 2000 decennial census race item, which would permit the assignment of multiple racial identities, but accepted, with deep misgivings, the recommendation made by the Interagency Committee for the Review of Standards for Data on Race and Ethnicity, and the OMB's final decision.¹⁵ Spokesmen for German American, Asian American, and Arab American organizations argued for the expansion of the categories.

Native Hawaiians were unsuccessful in persuading the Interagency Committee or the OMB to reclassify them as "original peoples" in the American Indian and Alaska Native category — a position strongly opposed by American Indians. American Indians also opposed the reclassification of the "original peoples of Central and South America" in the American Indian and Alaska Native category, but failed to convince either the Interagency Committee or the OMB. The Interagency Committee had not recommended that the Asians and Pacific Islanders be reclassified separately; however, the OMB's final decision created two new categories, "Asian" and "Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders." "Native Hawaiian" was identified in the list of ethnic groups in the race category. That the Native Hawaiians identity was now explicit in the official nomenclature, was most likely the result of the intense pressure applied by Native Hawaiian interest groups that had mobilized the entire island, mainland, and their state legislative and congressional representatives.¹⁶

What the public record on the debates over national statistics shows, however, is that, until the 1970s, minority populations were fundamentally "nonparticipants" in the decision-making process for national statistics.¹⁷ National population statistics were, as a research analyst for the National Coalition of La Raza noted during a 1975 congressional hearing, "the

sole property and prerogative of the traditionally recognized academic and research community.”¹⁸ Advocacy and political mobilization would be critical for obtaining legitimacy in the development of national statistics on minority populations.

3. Exclusion and recognition in national statistics: artifacts of political life

The US Constitution, hundreds of treaties, federal and state statutes, Supreme Court rulings, and case law have established the legal and political relationship of minorities in the United States. Federal statistics on race and ethnicity are the concretization of legislative initiative and public law, the articulation of “voice”, and who counts in political life. The extensive body of law and limited statistical profile until the last decades of the 20th century reinforce an undeniable reality, that the history of minority populations has historically been one of exclusion, with statistics as a technology employed by the national government for purposes of control and domination rather than a response to their social welfare needs.¹⁹

Statistics on race and ethnicity are the products of assumptions that have historically dichotomized the society into “White and All Other Races,” erased or created social identity, and reinforced exclusion or inclusion in the body politic.²⁰ Federal statistics have created a similarity of identity where none existed, as with “Latino” identity based on shared language rather than culture and as with “Asian” identity based on shared discrimination and ethnic stereotyping.²¹ At the same time, federal statistics have also reflected a narrow definition of who constitutes a minority population, as well as the balkanized status of minorities in the society. It is these historic conceptions of race and what constitutes a minority population that are fundamental for understanding the production of racial and ethnic group statistics in the national statistical system, and their relationship to law and policy.

While minimal in terms of the information they contained, federal statistics on American Indians and blacks, for whom data had been collected since the 1790 decennial census, constituted the most developed series on minority populations until the 1980s.²² Vital statistics records have historically identified a category related to the black population, and, as such, birth, death, and immigration records have served as an independent source of data for census estimates, to ascertain the accuracy of census counts for the black population. Supplemental schedules for the American Indian population were administered in 1900, 1930, and 1980.

The decennial census began counting “Orientals” in the 1870 census. Federal statutes, principally those that addressed immigration and naturalization, state statutes dating back to the late 1800s, and Supreme Court rulings, have defined the relationship of the Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, and Korean populations to American society. Their marginalized status relegated them, like all “non-White” minorities, to the lowest echelons of the social order. Their numerical size restricted by restrictive immigration, exclusion, and right-to-work laws, and concentration in only a few geographic areas of the country, greatly limited their visibility and contributed to rationalizing the lack of statistics on these population groups.²³ The publication of 1970 statistics on the socio-economic status by nativity, for example, were only available for persons of Chinese and Japanese origin who were first- or

second-generation immigrants. Detailed tabulations of unique ethnic groups were not available, and publications often aggregated ethnic populations, including Pacific Islanders, into one category labeled “Asian” or “Oriental.”

The status of Spanish-speaking populations was established early in the history of the Republic by the Monroe Doctrine and Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848, and codified in a host of exclusionary federal and state immigration, naturalization, employment, taxation, education, and segregation laws.²⁴ Statistical evidence of Spanish-speaking and Latin American identity became available in national statistics beginning in the mid-1800s, as part of the decennial census information collected on place of birth, parental place of birth, and language spoken in the home, and, specifically, in the 1930 decennial census on the Mexican population.²⁵ Immigrant peoples originating in Latin America were reported as “Other America,” or broadly classified as originating in “Mexico,” “Central America,” or “South America” prior to 1951.²⁶ Statistical tables containing detailed information on the different nationality and population groups of Latin America were not published, however, until after the 1970 census (with the exception of data on the origins of the foreign-born population).²⁷ A key assumption underlying the production and publication of statistics on the Latino and Hispanic populations was that they were geographically concentrated in only a few regions of the country.

4. Minority populations and the importance of federal statistics

The principal policy claims articulated by minority groups have revolved around official recognition of their membership in the polity. Recognition was essential because it brought identity in administrative record keeping systems, entitlements to resources, and participation in the decision-making process for statistical data collection and reporting. The fundamental issue regarding administrative data and reporting systems and the decennial census has always been “access, or the ability of groups and their representatives to gain entry to the political arena in order to have their needs addressed and grievances resolved.”²⁸

Population counts are essential for determining political representation, intergovernmental revenue sharing, and contributing to the health and social welfare of the society.²⁹ Groups must be counted in order to make credible claims for political representation, demonstrate discriminatory practices against them, seek and obtain legal remedies, receive governmental assistance for a host of social programs, and evaluate current, as well as develop new, public policy. Thus, a classification system for racial and ethnic data becomes the foundation for population counts of minority populations.

Thernstrom’s analysis of the 1965 Voting Rights Act and expansion of national statistics on race and ethnicity illustrates just how important population statistics were for minority groups. She writes that, “Population data on the proportion of minorities in a jurisdiction and their residential dispersal, as well as statistical analyses of racial and ethnic voting patterns, came to determine the legality of redistricting plans.”³⁰ “National statistics,” she continued, “play[ed] an important role in the allocation of political power among whites [and] blacks.”³¹ Population counts were essential for resolving redistricting disputes and altering the distribution of power among racial and ethnic groups.³²

Thernstrom noted that not all minority groups benefited from the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Census statistics did not alter the distribution of electoral power for designated “language minorities” who would be disadvantaged by ballots printed only in English, because the original Voting Rights Act and its subsequent amendments through the early 1970s were specifically designed to prohibit southern states from employing literacy tests to accomplish black disfranchisement. The Act did not recognize electoral disadvantage by virtue of the status of a language minority, although the decennial census identified concentrations of certain minority groups.³³ Political action would be necessary to modify electoral and other disadvantages for these minorities.

5. Participation in the political arena of federal statistics during the 1970s

Minority population interest groups entered the debates over federal statistical policy in the early 1970s, intent on translating Supreme Court rulings, and Great Society legislative initiatives of the previous decades into tangible improvements in social, economic, and political conditions for minorities.³⁴ They employed statistical data to persuade policy makers of the need for new social welfare policy. Sustained political action was required to ensure production of new statistical series and to make enhancements to administrative record keeping systems that would provide more detailed information on the status of minorities and enable an adequate assessment of the health and welfare of their groups. They also focused their efforts on the decennial census and the operations of the US Bureau of the Census, to improve the quality of the enumeration of minority populations, increase participation in the planning process for the decennial census, increase the number of minorities in senior administrative and executive positions, expand the racial and ethnic group categories, and influence how the categories and numbers would be reported.

Their success in altering the policy debate depended on coalition building with “majority” interest groups and administrative agencies, and on uniting previously unorganized individual ethnic groups. Creating solidarity and emphasizing commonalities were essential for advancing their interests, especially given the powerful political institutional forces that required political strength and a political system in which numbers count. Most often, their principal administrative agency supporters were the US Civil Rights Commission and offices of civil rights within federal agencies.³⁵

Existing statistical series on minority populations, however inadequate, played an important role in developing public policy, and were utilized to demonstrate the need for representation and civil rights. National statistics were used extensively to provide evidence of the health and social welfare of minorities and the disadvantaged, as well as the need for new social welfare policy. For example, coalitions of American Indian tribes and council leaders, with supporting testimony from agencies like the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Service, relied on the decennial census population counts, and administrative reporting systems to demonstrate that the American Indian population was especially disadvantaged.³⁶ The Bureau of the Census’ statistics on minority-owned firms were employed to support increases in contracts for work carried out by members of disadvantaged or minority groups.³⁷ Spanish-speaking groups relied on data collected by

the US Commission on Civil Rights to present evidence that educational opportunities were inadequate.³⁸

Minority interest groups were often joined by “majority” groups to lobby for public laws against racial discrimination in housing, equal opportunity, employment, and education. For example, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) worked with the American Civil Liberties Union, American Friends Service Committee, and League of Women Voters to lobby Congress for public laws against racial discrimination in housing.³⁹ In 1970, the National Education Association, National School Boards Association, and American Federation of Teachers, as well as administrative advocates like the US Commission on Civil Rights, joined the NAACP and the California Rural Legal Assistance advocacy group to support legislation that would provide additional assistance for disadvantaged and minority school districts.⁴⁰ Associations of business organizations, municipal and land use planners, and state and municipal elected officials testified on the importance of accurate counts of minority populations.⁴¹

Neither statistical evidence nor the coalitions they built with non-profit and for-profit organizations or administrative agencies were a persuasive tool by themselves. Even though administrative agencies employed potent symbolic gestures and statistics, which were used to advocate on behalf of the dispossessed and disadvantaged minorities, minority population interest groups were not independently powerful constituents, like business groups and the Academy, even when business and the Academy advocated on their behalf. To succeed, they needed — beyond all the available facts and documentary evidence that they could marshal and beyond the broad coalitions forged with majority interest groups — the attention and sponsorship of powerful political elites in the administrative agencies and on the floors of Congress.

Two events are particularly noteworthy for illustrating that political action had to be coupled with the intervention of political elites in both the federal agencies and national legislature. The first was the administrative task to develop OMB Statistical Policy Directive 15. The second was a series of congressional initiatives throughout the 1970s, to improve the quality of national statistics on minorities. These initiatives included collection and reporting of social and economic statistics on the Spanish-speaking population in 1975, improving the enumeration of minorities in the decennial census, and ensuring “voice” in the planning of future censuses.

The events described below also illustrate the dynamics of a highly complex and interdependent political system. Administrative and legislative bodies operated in autonomous spheres but continually responded to cues from their external environment, thus contributing to institutional change that affected the entire political system. Administrative agencies responded to congressional and minority group concerns at the same time that they took independent action to develop administrative and reporting systems for minority statistics.⁴²

6. Administrative elites as advocates for minority population statistics

Public documents show that Secretary Casper Weinberger of the US Department of Health, Welfare and Education took a special interest in a report entitled *Higher Education for*

Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and American Indians, completed by the Subcommittee on Minority Education of the Federal Interagency Committee on Education (FICE) in April 1973.⁴³ He was “apparently particularly interested” in the section of the report that “deplored the lack of useful data on racial and ethnic groups.”⁴⁴ Weinberger “encouraged” implementation of a recommendation to “coordinate development of common definitions for racial and ethnic groups; [and] instruct the Federal agencies to collect racial and ethnic enrollment and other educational data.” The following year, in June 1974, FICE created an Ad Hoc Committee on Racial and Ethnic Definitions. Charles E. Johnson, Assistant Chief of the Population Division of the Bureau of the Census, and whose research on the quality of census statistics on race and ethnicity had contributed to uncovering measurement error in racial and ethnic group statistics, was named chairman.⁴⁵ The participating federal agencies had major responsibilities for collecting or using racial and ethnic data and administering programs for minorities and disadvantaged populations.

The FICE Subcommittee had addressed only the need for Spanish and American Indian origin population statistics; however, the Ad Hoc Committee “determined that useful racial and ethnic data collection would require reference to a broad range of race and ethnicity.”⁴⁶ As has been reported elsewhere, the FICE Ad Hoc Committee recommendations were accepted, and the standard became effective in 1977, for all new and revised record keeping systems and, in 1980, for systems that required modification.⁴⁷ Over the next two decades, the Directive would alter the statistical data collection and administrative record keeping of federal, state, and municipal governments and the private sector, and would become the foundation of a data infrastructure that supported public law and administrative rules, and regulations regarding the status of minorities in society.

There is, however, no public record of direct minority interest group participation during the FICE Ad Hoc Committee’s deliberations that is reflected in their report. Ad Hoc Committee member Juanita Lott’s prepared statement, nearly 20 years later, for a 1993 congressional hearing on OMB Statistical Policy Directive 15, reveals only that after the Ad Hoc Committee submitted its recommendations, “Persons with origins from the Indian subcontinent were moved from the Caucasian/White category [because] the Association of Indians in America successfully lobbied to be included in the Asian or Pacific Islander category.”⁴⁸ To what extent minority population groups participated directly in the Ad Hoc Committee’s deliberations is unknown. The composition of the Ad Hoc Committee membership, represented principally by administrative units tasked with responsibility for minorities and civil rights, would, however, supports a working hypothesis that minority groups were kept informed about the Committee’s work and that their positions were well known to the Ad Hoc Committee.⁴⁹ Moreover, some of the language employed by minority population interest groups during congressional hearings was subsequently incorporated in administrative documents like the Ad Hoc Committee recommendations.

7. Congressional advocacy for national statistics on the Spanish-speaking population

Public documents also record intense congressional scrutiny of agency practices during this same period regarding the quality of statistical data on minority populations, which

would ultimately result in the development of statistical series and administrative data systems. The conditions and underrepresentation of the Spanish origin population in federal statistics were, for example, the subject of legislative hearings during the 1970s.⁵⁰ The most influential, in terms of improving the collection of federal statistics on the Spanish-speaking population and signaling the need for a “Hispanic” category in a classification system for racial and ethnic data, was a March 1975 congressional hearing on the need for economic and social statistics.⁵¹ Minority interest groups, as well as various administrative agencies, testified, including the following: the Bureau of Census; the Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service; and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. House Joint Resolution 92, published 2 months earlier, directed the federal government to collect statistics on the Spanish-speaking population, and was signed into law 3 months after the hearing, in June 1975.⁵²

Congressman Roybal of California was a major participant in the hearing, identifying the consequences of severe gaps in census, statistical series, and administrative record systems.⁵³ He noted that the National Center for Health Statistics could not provide reliable estimates on health problems and that the Bureau of Labor Statistics had inadequate employment and unemployment statistics. The National Center for Educational Statistics did not collect ethnic or racial data and the Department of Commerce had “failed to conduct voting and registration surveys on the basis of race and national origin, despite the fact that it is mandated to do so under the Civil Rights Act of 1964.”⁵⁴

Manuel Fierro, testifying on behalf of the National Congress of Hispanic American Citizens, accused the federal agencies of “callous indifference” to the needs of the Spanish-speaking population.⁵⁵ “Fundamental data” were needed, “pertinent and faultless information, in order to effectively identify the urgent and special needs of our community, to come to grips with the problems of poverty, deprivation, poor education and housing, unemployment and underemployment, disease and malnutrition which are plaguing our community today.” Members of the National Council of La Raza also directed their remarks to the quality and inadequacy of existing statistical data, citing numerous examples of agencies that did not collect information on the Hispanic population, although there had been major public policy debates that depended on such statistical evidence. The lack of, as well as the inadequacy of statistical data, “have an inherently discriminatory impact on these communities, and, above all, result in both neglect and discriminatory practices against individuals and families who happen to be Hispanic American, as well as do a disservice to the total American society,” argued Roberto Olivas.⁵⁶

Perhaps most critical for a future classification system for national statistics on race and ethnicity was the need for an appropriate “identifier” and terminology to describe the Spanish-speaking population. The issue was framed as a need to “develop a uniform, national, regional, state, and small areas statistical system specifically including Hispanic Americans as an identifiable statistical set.”⁵⁷ Olivas noted La Raza’s “longstanding sense of frustration” because of “failed attempts to persuade federal policy makers and selected public interest groups in the statistics area to understand how they can better serve the real needs of Hispanic Americans with regard to a proper designation, which will produce a more accurate count of today’s Hispanic Americans in this country.”⁵⁸ The La Raza spokesman argued that the appropriate term was not “Spanish origin” or

“Spanish surname” but, instead, “Hispanic American,” which would serve as the “umbrella identifier.”⁵⁹

Towards the end of the hearing, Representative Patricia Schroeder (D-CO) requested clarification on the identifier for Spanish origin, asking if the preference were “to see Hispanic or are you saying Spanish origin? Or would you like to see a variety of things such as you do with the Asian Americans?”⁶⁰ Olivas referenced La Raza’s testimony, which contained a communication with the Director of the Census Bureau and the minutes of the Advisory Committee on Population Statistics to the Census, which La Raza had attended. The Bureau had responded that, “budget constraints allowed for the inclusion of only 12 census characteristics, and since the Spanish origin population is not necessarily national in scope, this subject was reluctantly excluded from the final publication program.”⁶¹ Olivas continued, noting that the Advisory Committee minutes showed a

whole series of identifiers, and, if the term ‘Hispanic American’ were recogniz[ed] for its role as an umbrella similar to the Asian and others...and then, under those, having the subcategories, I’m sure that no one in the Hispanic community would object to that kind of identifier, because if he were a Cuban or, as you mentioned earlier, through marriage or some other, the offspring of that matrimony could identify with ‘Hispanic American’.⁶²

That same language was subsequently incorporated in the April 1975 FICE Ad Hoc Committee report, in a recommendation for a “Hispanic” category, and 2 years later in Revised Exhibit F to OMB Circular No. A-46 (Statistical Policy Directive 15).⁶³

8. The 1970 decennial census: the failures of representation

The decennial census is a metaphor for the fabric of American society, representing for minority populations some of the most important official documentation of exclusionary policies and practices that govern the society. During the 1970s, the quality of the decennial census, in particular, the known systematic patterns of relative underenumeration, was the principal issue on the statistical policy agenda for minority population interest groups.

Minority populations mobilized, and the US Bureau of the Census faced increasingly severe criticism about the quality of its enumeration.⁶⁴ This criticism intersected and was entangled with a host of related issues, including census methodology for classifying and reporting minority populations, enumeration of uncounted ethnic populations, affirmative action, and inadequate representation of minorities in executive positions at the Bureau; participation of minorities in decennial census planning; the logistics of enumeration and community outreach programs; and public policy on political representation and social welfare for disadvantaged peoples.

The decennial census became the subject of numerous congressional hearings during the 1970s, motivated more likely by assessments of the effects of an undercount on intergovernmental revenue transfers for municipalities and states, than by concerns about the dispossessed and uncounted in the society. That the 1970 decennial enumeration of minority groups was incomplete and contained significant measurement error, made it possible, nevertheless,

to mobilize the support of political elites in Congress for significant future improvements in national statistics on race and ethnicity.

Congressmen and interest groups angrily criticized the methodology applied in the 1970 census, the size of the undercount of African–American and Spanish-speaking-origin citizens, and the exclusion of minority populations, including Asians and Pacific Islanders. Echoing the refrain of many other congressmen throughout the decade of the 1970s, Representative Robert Garcia (D-CA) decried at a congressional hearing, where 16 out of 24 witnesses were representatives of minority groups, “Undercounting, especially among minorities, is simply intolerable.”⁶⁵

The core of the controversy over the quality of the 1970 decennial census enumeration was what it implied for political representation and access to resources by minority groups. Whitney Young, Executive Director of the National Urban League, testifying before a congressional committee on the accuracy of the 1970 census enumeration, was severe in his criticism of the Census Bureau for the quality of its count of blacks in the 1960 and 1970 censuses.⁶⁶ Describing just how critical the population statistics were to the black community and the response of the black community, he said,

We take the census count as a terribly important factor in determining representation from the black community in the various congressional and legislative bodies, very important in terms of the amount of moneys that are going to be made available in the central cities. Since so much of this is done on a per capita basis, we think it has both programmatic and political significance, so much so, that we on our own allocated from very limited resources \$250,000 in order to establish this [national campaign by the Coalition for a Black Count] and in order to make clear that we wanted to be both knowledgeable and responsible in our observations.⁶⁷

Young went on to enumerate the Census Bureau’s “failures,” saying that they were “far too many to list here, but just a few of them, will give you some idea of why we believe that the census is structurally designed not to count minorities.”⁶⁸ These included census forms in English, which effectively “ignored” the “huge Mexican-American and Puerto Rican populations in large northern cities and in the Southwest” and led to people not returning census forms because they could not read them; forms never being received in many urban ‘slum tenements’ because mailing lists were outdated; poor management on the part of the Bureau; the lack of assistance centers to help people fill out forms; and no enumerators employed who had “roots in the neighborhood.” He concluded his remarks, “Disastrous social conditions and the tragic plight of the cities make it clear that there’s more at stake here than just numbers.”

The litany of Bureau failures was heard over and over, throughout the 1970s, from other minority groups as well, and the Bureau would become, henceforth, an embattled organization. What an analysis of the political discourse reveals is the repetitive nature, the consistency and similarity of the “flaws” and “defects” that were identified by minority population interest groups, no matter their racial or ethnic group affiliation.

During the congressional hearing on economic and social statistics of the Spanish-speaking population 5 years later, in 1975, La Raza spokesmen criticized the inaccuracy of the enumeration, incompleteness of the count, the use of different identifiers to describe the

population, the decision to exclude a description of the Hispanic American population because it was, according to the Bureau, “not necessarily national in scope,” and the misleading conclusions concerning ethnic identification across and within geographic regions.⁶⁹ La Raza spokesman Roberto Olivas concluded his assessment of the quality of the decennial census by affirming the political nature of national statistics.

It is apparent that policy makers and public leaders are addressing themselves less to the social and economic plight facing millions of counted or identified Hispanic Americans, than to the political interests and the politically organized among the individual subgroups at select local levels. Thus, even though the Hispanic American Issue is a national social and economic question, and a national demographic issue, it will become a matter of national policy considerations and national policy formulation only when the policy makers and public leaders — including within the Hispanic American community — transcend preconceptions resulting from racial–ethnic perspectives and identify the issue for what it is: a national social and economic question, and a national political problem.

In underscoring these “preconceptions,” Olivas was also alluding to premises that had guided policy makers to justify the lack of national statistics and decennial census publications on the Hispanic- and Latino-origin population — that it was “regional” and not national in scope, and, therefore, should not be reflected in federal statistical reporting systems.

The Census Bureau would employ a similar justification for reclassifying peoples of Asian Indian heritage in the White/Caucasian category — that the “population [was] too small to be concerned about,” according to Manoranjan Dutta, a witness testifying on behalf of the Association of Indians in America in a June 1976 congressional hearing.⁷⁰ Throughout the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, the Bureau resisted identifying what they deemed the “impracticality of listing small minority groups in the census questionnaire.”⁷¹

Further reinforcing the problematic status of statistics derived from the decennial census and the census as an imperfect representation of social and political life, Asian- and Latino-origin witnesses identified failures to achieve an accurate enumeration as the result of not understanding the uniqueness and nature of social relations and culture of their ethnic groups. Witnesses also linked the quality of census enumeration to their historical status as “undesirables.”

Wayne Horiuchi, representing the Japanese Citizens League, contended that the Bureau of the Census had not addressed the “distinct social and cultural characteristics, which are unique to [Japanese Americans] as an ethnic group” during its 1980 decennial census planning and implementation, and, consequently, the census could result in an “inaccurate count” of his population group.⁷² These distinct characteristics included an increasingly high rate of interracial marriage, a high proportion of Japanese language speakers, and “Suspicion of Federal Government Based Upon Past Experience.”⁷³ Filipino and American Samoan witnesses echoed Horiuchi’s remarks about the effects of intermarriage on the accuracy of counting their ethnic groups. A Polish American witness described Balto-Slavic American employment discrimination, ethnic stereotyping, and underenumeration in the 1970 census.⁷⁴ Korean, Chinese, Filipino, American Samoan, and Hawaiian witnesses criticized the effacing of their identity in Census Bureau decisions about how to classify people of mixed ethnic

heritage and the lack of publications and detailed statistical tables that identified specific Asian ethnic groups.⁷⁵

Lucy Quadrado, a witness who represented the Latino community, identified failures that included the size of the questionnaire form, which required a second form because of the larger household size of Latino populations and due to the multifamily structures of many Hispanic households; a too complex questionnaire for a population whose educational attainment was minimal; and an English-language questionnaire.⁷⁶ Furthermore, she noted, the questionnaire form(s) arrived by mail, which did not work well in the densely populated barrios and rural areas, where there was often more than one household in a dwelling unit. Operational problems also contributed to failure: inadequate numbers of well-trained Spanish-speaking enumerators, who were also knowledgeable about the local community. Migration patterns, legal and illegal immigration status, and distrust of local officials who enforced zoning laws that prohibited multifamily members in one house, also contributed to the undercount. Her remarks would be repeated many times by other Latino and Hispanic, Asian, and Pacific Islander witnesses before other congressional committees in the next years and decades, attesting to the intimate link between political life, culture, and enumeration.

Three years later, testifying at another congressional hearing, in 1979, Manoranjan Dutta offered a further elaboration on the failure to achieve an accurate count, tracing it to the context of the Asian American's "special historical background."⁷⁷ Once again, social history and census enumeration were inextricably bound.⁷⁸ "The key issue was perception," he suggested.

Exclusionary laws and forced immigration could have made Asians perceive that they were to remain as 'uncounted' Americans. The perception of the Asian/Pacific Americans was largely that they really did not belong here. Perhaps they were made to perceive that they have been here as transient labor, and that they were not expected to be counted as members of the American society. . . There is a widely perceived feeling. . . that they would never be accepted as 'Americans,' even if they filled out the census forms. Many years of residence in the United States they take as sojourns away from the lands where they truly 'belong.' They themselves seem to have resigned to a state of 'statelessness' where enumeration in the census could be of little consideration.⁷⁹

The 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act and its subsequent amendments altered this history, Dutta acknowledged, but then he went on to say that the effects of exclusionary laws and history of immigration were still evident in perceptions of Asian Americans. "Many of them remain 'afraid' to share the perception that they are Americans. They fear that the rest of America, the immigrants from Europe and also those from Africa, really would not welcome them to be Americans. Indeed, they have a strange fear complex."⁸⁰

Furthermore, he contended, the actions of the US Bureau of the Census only confirmed the Asians' perceptions of membership in the polity. While black and Hispanic population undercoverage in the 1970 census was identified and served to mobilize these groups for improvements in enumeration, no such studies had been carried out on the Asian American population. The Bureau should have been "more sensitive," he admonished, and "estab-

lished the case of underenumeration for the Asian/Pacific Americans in the 1970 census” (the Bureau would rectify this following the 1980 census).⁸¹

9. Creation of voice in planning the decennial census

Ultimately, minorities deemed that a “place at the table” in planning the decennial census was required to achieve a “voice” in national statistics, to improve the accuracy of the counts for minorities, and to develop detailed categories for the race and ethnicity items. Sustained political action, lawsuits, and actions on the floors of Congress were all necessary to mount sufficient political pressure on the Census Bureau’s resistance to admitting minority populations into the decision-making process.

During a 1976 congressional hearing on the decennial census, Lucy Cuadrado, Chairperson of the Census Advisory Committee on the Spanish Origin Population, acknowledged this historic unresponsiveness of the Bureau and how legal and political action had been necessary. “The Chicano, the Puerto Rican, the Cuban, the black, and others’ leadership have reacted strongly against the 1970 census results. This has been done through legal action in some cases, obtaining support from the US Civil Rights Commission, Congress, and congressional leaders. These efforts culminated in the creation of the advisory committee that I chair.”⁸²

Congressional support made possible effective advocacy by uncounted or undercounted minority groups. The US Bureau of the Census subsequently acceded to demands to increase the listing of ethnic groups, particularly those of smaller minority groups, including those from Latin America and Asia, and to a 100 percent enumeration for an expanded number of ethnic groups identified in the race item in the 1980 census.⁸³ “Dissatisfaction with the count in the 1970 decennial census,” as Harry Scarr, testifying for the US Bureau of the Census put it some years later, would result in the chartering of minority advisory committees by the US Department of Commerce: the black population in 1974, Spanish-origin in 1975, and Asian/Pacific American in 1976.⁸⁴ “This was progress,” Cuadrado noted.⁸⁵

Disputes between minority populations and the US Bureau of the Census continued over the next two decades. While many Bureau decisions were contested and minority population interest groups found it necessary to enlist congressional support of their congressional advocates in order to pressure the Bureau into altering its position, incorporating minorities in the planning process resulted in a significant change in the tenor of the political discourse of the interest groups and the Census Bureau. Although criticism continued, minority population interest groups were converted to institutional supporters. They became participants as well as stakeholders in the production of national statistics.

10. Summary and concluding remarks

This historical accounting of the recent development of national statistics on minority populations has provided evidence that racial and ethnic group statistics are artifacts of

political and social life. In the political context in which statistics are developed, public policies on political representation, health, social welfare, and many other social policies have been contested.

The political controversy over revising Statistical Policy Directive 15 on the classification of racial and ethnic data is part of the continuing history of American policy and practices toward minority populations. The federal statistical system has always reflected society's complex legacy of racial and ethnic identity, one of exclusion, underrepresentation in legislative bodies and public administration, and inequitable access to resources. Until the 1970s, this legacy translated into near invisibility in national statistics and administrative record keeping systems. Political action forced representation through statistics and resulted in inclusion in the body politic.

Political mobilization during the 1970s brought with it increasing possibilities for benefits for minority populations. As with other groups in the American society that have attempted to influence policy makers, minority populations learned that effective participation in the political process required expert technical knowledge of the policy domain and policy process, financial support, and sustained interest in politics. Well-trained and educated staffs displayed the critical analytic skills for understanding the relationship among definitions of terms, categories and classification, and their consequences for public policy. Statistical policy was no longer the "sole property and prerogative of the traditionally recognized academic and research community," as a research analyst for the National Coalition of La Raza had contended during the 1975 congressional hearing on the collection and reporting of economic and social statistics for Americans of Spanish origin.⁸⁶

The minority population interest groups were "true believers" who sustained their commitment to improving the lives of their social groups. They understood the complexity of administrative life inside government institutions, where most of the decision making about statistical policy takes place. They became skilled political strategists, and developed access to key decision makers and the organizational and political skills for mobilizing supporters, building coalitions, influencing participants of policy networks, negotiation, and accommodation.

Their success, however, depended on more than activating supporters, political knowledge, material resources, and tenacity. A series of events coalesced to challenge the stability of administrative policy on statistics, making it difficult for political and administrative elites to continue ignoring the problems faced by minority groups and making it possible for them to capture the attention of these elites. Legislative initiatives of the 1960s and the intergovernmental revenue sharing policy that took effect in 1972 resulted in a sea change in how the federal government's political elites viewed minority statistics. The venue for administrative policy on statistics shifted from mid-level administrators upward to political elites in the federal agencies, to the floors of Congress, and into the public domain. This occurred simultaneously with minority interest groups intensifying their demands for change. Significant conflict about administrative policies on statistics that few interests had previously attended to spilled over into interdependent public policies designed to improve conditions for the disadvantaged. Another mobilizing force was evident as public policy on intergovernmental revenue sharing rationalized improvements in the national statistics for minority populations. As such, crafting a strategy that focused on improving the decennial census was

appropriate, for it could be said to benefit minority and majority populations. Justice would be served for all.

Minority interest groups might never have become independently successful in altering public policy on national statistics. They remained dependent on political elites and other powerful groups in society to defend their interests. Accommodation was necessary, as it was during the 1993–1997 review of Statistical Policy Directive 15. The gains were, nevertheless, theirs. What was accomplished during the 1970s — the activating of constituencies, coalition building, and representation of the dispossessed and disadvantaged — established minority population interests as legitimate. They became an enduring part of American political life. Such has been the trajectory of the development of national statistics on minority populations and a classification system for racial and ethnic data.

Notes

1. Berry, JM. *The interest group society*. 3rd ed. New York: Longman, 1997. The literature on interest group formation and role in the US political system is voluminous.

2. The phrase “administrative policy” is used broadly as a generic term that includes the development of rules and regulations. For a trenchant analysis of rules as policy, see Kerwin, CM. *Rulemaking: how government agencies write law and make policy*. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1994. It should be noted that administrative agencies are themselves important stakeholders in the development of information policy. They could even be characterized as “interest groups” on the basis of the political activities in which they often engage. On the role that the OMB plays, see Morin, AL. *Regulating the flow of data: OMB and the control of government information*. *Public Adm Rev* 1994;54(5): 434–43.

3. To determine participation in legislative deliberations on the subject matter of this article and, more generally, interest group participation in the development of statistical policy, the author studied the witness lists of congressional hearings held over the last 30 years. Public documentation of administrative deliberations is rarely available, however, because agencies are not required to construct a record under the informal or “notice and comment” rule (Section 553) of the Administrative Procedures Act of 1946. As such, any analysis of administrative deliberations must rely on personal communications and information obtained through interviewing the stakeholders and, where available, archives maintained by stakeholders in the negotiations on various information policy issues. For example, business interests dominated the policy process that led to the authorization, revisions (amendments), and reauthorization of the Paperwork Reduction Acts of 1980 and 1995, including the creation and reauthorization of the OMB’s Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, which is responsible for regulating “paperwork burden” and administering statistical policy standards. For a discussion of the role played by statisticians and social scientists in the history of government statistics, see Duncan JW, Shelton WC. *Revolution in United States government statistics, 1926–1976*. Washington, DC: Office of Federal Statistical Policy and Standards, 1978. For a history of the relationship between social scientists and government, see Lyons GM. *The uneasy partnership: Social science and the federal government in the twentieth century*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1969. A number of publications of the National Academy Press on studies conducted by the Committee on National Statistics attest to the central role played by the Academy in developing the federal statistical system.

4. Statistical Policy Directive 15, “Race and ethnic standards for federal statistics and administrative reporting” was renamed in 1997, following the publication of US Office of Management and Budget. Revisions to the standards for the classification of federal data on race and ethnicity. *Fed Regist* (30 October 1997);210(62):58782–90.

5. Alice Robbin. “The problematic status of statistics on race and ethnicity: An ‘imperfect representation of reality,’” *Journal of Government Information* 1999;26(5):467–83; Alice Robbin. “Classifying racial and ethnic group data in the United States: The politics of negotiation and accommodation.” *Journal of Government*

Information 2000;27(2):129–56; Alice Robbin. Administrative policy as symbol system: Political conflict and the social construction of identity 2000;34(4):398–431.

6. Juri Stratford. “Responding to reference queries for numeric data and the problems inherent in interpreting statistical sources: A note,” *Journal of Government Information* 1998;25(5):413–17; Abigail Thernstrom. “Statistics and the politics of minority representation: The evolution of the Voting Rights Act since 1965,” In *The Politics of numbers*, eds. William Alonso and Paul Starr (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1978), 322. This chapter is drawn from Thernstrom’s book, *Whose votes counts? Affirmative action and minority voting rights* (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1987).

7. This historical narrative is incomplete. Coverage focuses on the politics of the black, Spanish-speaking, and Asian Americans, but omits a discussion of American Indians who were not visible participants in these events during the 1970s. Attention is also not given to other ethnic groups, such as Native Hawaiians, who entered the political arena during this period. Nevertheless, the history of political mobilization by minority population interest groups to improve the quality of national statistics on race and ethnicity and the consistency of their claims is similar, so that describing the development of statistics for one minority group, such as the Spanish-speaking or Asian Americans, for example, serves to exemplify the political action of other groups.

8. For an accounting of the government review, see Robbin. Classifying racial and ethnic group data in the United States: The politics of negotiation and accommodation, *Journal of Government Information* 2000;27(2):129–56.

9. US Office of Management and Budget. Proposed guidelines for federal statistical activities. *Fed Regist* (20 January 1988);53(12):1542–52; US Office of Management and Budget. Standards for the classification of federal data on race and ethnicity. *Fed Regist* (9 June 1994);59(110):29832–36; US Office of Management and Budget. Interim notice of review and possible revision of OMB’s statistical policy directive for the classification of federal data on race and ethnicity. *Fed Regist* (28 August 1995);60(166):44673–93; US Office of Management and Budget. Recommendations from the Interagency Committee for the review of the racial and ethnic standards to the Office of Management and Budget concerning changes to the standards for the classification of federal data on race and ethnicity. *Fed Regist* (9 July 1997);62(131):36874–946; US Office of Management and Budget. Revisions to the standards for the classification of federal data on race and ethnicity. *Fed Regist* (30 October 1997);210(62):58782–90.

10. US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. Review of Federal Measurement of Race and Ethnicity: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Census, Statistics and Postal Personnel, 103rd Cong., 1st sess., 14 April, 30 June, 29 July, 3 November 1993; US House, Committee on Government Reform and Oversight. Federal Measures of Race and Ethnicity and the Implications for the 2000 Census: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Government Management, Information, and Technology, 105th Cong., 1st sess., 23 April, 22 May, 25 July 1997.

11. The American Anthropological Association was the only member of the Academy that strongly opposed the use of race as the conceptual basis for the classification system, but was unsuccessful in persuading the OMB to omit the race item from the decennial census. Their opposition derived from expertise by cultural and physical anthropologists about the physiological basis and constructs of race and ethnicity. See Robbin. The problematic status of statistics on race and ethnicity: An ‘imperfect representation of reality.’ *Journal of Government Information* 1999;26(5):467–83. For the arguments made by anthropologists, see American Anthropological Association. Response to OMB Directive 15 (September 1997) <<http://www.ameranthassn.org/comsumm.htm>>.

12. Proposed guidelines for federal statistical activities (20 January 1988):1542–52. The 1988 draft circular is referenced in Standards for the classification of federal data on race and ethnicity (9 June 1994):29833.

13. Fred Fernandez of United Parcel Service echoed the refrain of high costs to corporations regarding the addition of a multiracial category, asserting that corporations had “estimated it would cost large employers a minimum of a quarter million dollars to comply with federal rules.” He added that this change would have a “major cost impact that would not produce equal, if you will, improvement in opportunities.” Cable News Network. Racial classification in question as 2000 census approaches. *Washington unwrapped* (Transcript #97070908FN-L07) 9 July 1997 <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> [accessed November 27, 1997].

14. Recommendations from the interagency committee for the review of the racial and ethnic standards to the Office of Management and Budget concerning changes to the standards for the classification of federal data on race and ethnicity (9 July 1997):36884.

15. The testimony of the minority population interest groups during the third hearing held on July 25, 1997 was significant for the unanimity of their concerns about implementing the recommendations made by the Interagency Committee. See US House, Committee on Government Reform and Oversight. Federal measures of race and ethnicity.

16. To what extent the OMB considered their decision “costless,” a symbolic gesture that carried little cost for implementation, is unknown; however, their decision appears to be an acknowledgement of the highly effective Native Hawaiian lobby. Their mobilization effort is reflected by the very large number of letters that the OMB received (more than 7000 postcards and hundreds of personal letters opposing the Interagency Committee’s recommendation and the OMB’s final decision).

17. In addition to the review of legislative hearings during the 1970s, the author also examined witness lists for congressional hearings between the 1940s and 1960s to determine the extent of minority group participation in decennial census and social welfare policies. A search of the Lexis database that records congressional hearings reveals very few hearings in which black and Hispanic groups participated, but that they are notable for providing testimony in several hearings on fair housing and employment during the late 1940s and 1950s, and on civil rights during the 1960s.

18. US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. Economic and Social Statistics for Americans of Spanish Origin: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Census and Population on H.J. Res. 92 Joint Resolution Relating to the Publication of Economic and Social Statistics for Americans of Spanish Origin or Descent, 94th Cong., 1st sess., 21 March 1975. p. 43.

19. For a further elaboration on statistics as “control,” see Desrosières A, *La politique des grands nombres: histoire de la raison statistique*. Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1993; Starr P. Introduction. In: Alonso, Starr, editors. *The politics of numbers*. pp. 7–57. In *The Politics of Numbers*, eds. William Alonzo and Paul Starr (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1987).

20. Until the publication of “Statistical Policy Directive 15” in 1977, agencies routinely employed the word “Nonwhites” in their publications. The OMB deemed the term as “not acceptable.” It was, however, acceptable to differentiate between “White” and “minorities.” Thus, the OMB considered it “appropriate” to report “Black and Other Race” or “All Other Races” as collective descriptions of minority races for the “most summary distinction between majority and minority races.” It was also permissible to employ the terms “White,” “Black,” and “All Other Races” “when the distinction among the majority race, the principal minority race, and other races is appropriate.” The terms “White” with “All Other Races” were permissible “if such a collective description is appropriate.” Wallman KK, Hodgson J. Race and ethnic standards for federal statistics and administrative reporting. *Stat Rep* 1977(July);77(7):452–3.

21. Espiritu YL. *Asian American Pan-Ethnicity: Bridging institutions and identities*. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1992. pp. 13–14. See also the testimony of Pian C. Representing the Pacific-Asian Coalition and the Asian and Pacific American Federal Employee Council. In: US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. 1980 Census: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Census and Population, 94th Cong., 2nd sess., 1 and 2 June 1976. p. 32.

22. Note, however, that the early censuses only counted American Indians who were taxpayers.

23. Chan S. *Asian Americans: An interpretive history*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991; Fugita SS, O’Brien DJ. *Japanese American ethnicity: The persistence of community*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991; Schaefer RT. *Racial and ethnic groups*, 6th ed. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996.

24. It was not, however, until 1954 in *Hernandez v. Texas* (347 US 475), that the Supreme Court establishes that the Fourteenth Amendment of equal protection is “not directed solely against discrimination due to a ‘two-class theory’ — that is, based upon differences between ‘white’ and Negro.”

25. In the 1930 census, counts were obtained for Mexicans, defined as “all persons born in Mexico, or having parents born in Mexico, who were definitely not White, Negro, Indian, Chinese, or Japanese, would be returned as Mexicans.” They were “returned” as White in the 1940 decennial census. US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. *200 Years of US census taking: Population and housing questions, 1790–1990*. Washington, DC: Bureau of the Census, 1989.

26. US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Table No. 125. Immigrants, by country of last permanent residence: 1820 to 1979. *Statistical Abstract*. Washington, DC: Bureau of the Census, 1984. p. 91.

27. US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Table No. 35. Foreign-born population in 1910, distributed according to country of birth: By states and geographic divisions — continued. Statistical Abstract. Washington, DC: Bureau of the Census, 1920. p. 60.

28. Feeney P. The 200 Years' War and counting: Power politics and census controversies: 1790–1990. PhD diss., Mount St. Mary's College, 1994. p. 3.

29. Population counts are not the only criterion for allocating intergovernmental revenues, however. A formula may also include an estimate for income.

30. Thernstrom. p. 304.

31. Thernstrom. p. 304.

32. Thernstrom. p. 313.

33. Thernstrom notes that the amended 1975 trigger contained “no suggestion that where language minorities were concentrated, election materials had been printed exclusively in English for the purpose of keeping otherwise qualified voters from the polls.” There was “no reason to assume that the provision of ballots in Spanish and a consequent rise in Mexican American registration would trigger new disfranchising efforts. And thus the absence of bilingual ballots (in conjunction with low voter participation) could not justify, as the presence of a traditional literacy test had, the imposition of the preclearance requirement on those newly covered jurisdictions.” Thernstrom, pp. 325–36. States with large concentrations of Spanish-speaking populations like Texas, New Mexico, New York, and California, did not administer literacy tests.

34. The mobilization of blacks during the 1960s and success of the civil rights movement provided the foundation for all other minority group mobilization. Among the many analyses of the political consequences of mobilization by blacks for other minority groups, see Davies G. From opportunity to entitlement: The transformation and decline of Great Society liberalism. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1996; Lowi T.J. The end of liberalism: The second republic of the United States, 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1979; and Espiritu YL. Asian American pan-ethnicity: Bridging institutions and identities.

35. The offices of civil rights in the federal agencies were among the few administrative units with minorities in senior administrative positions. These units were a conveniently visible location to demonstrate the federal government's commitment to minorities. Civil rights offices were, however, underfunded, weak, and ignored, and were generally viewed as “do-gooders” and as ineffective in implementing their mission. Other agency units throughout the federal government are also tasked with administering programs for specific population groups. Some of these units, such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs, have historically received significant criticism for their lack of sympathy for the plight of minorities. Congress has also underfunded these agency units. On the other hand, the US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) and its various units, especially those with responsibility for public health, have enjoyed a much more favorable relationship with Congress.

36. US House, Committee on Education and Labor. Oversight hearings on laws affecting Indian education: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education, 94th Cong., 1st sess., 28 and 29 July and 5 August 1975; US House, Committee on Education and Labor. Compilation of Federal Laws Authorizing Education Assistance, Explicitly for American Indian and Other Native Americans (Legislation As Amended Through December 31, 1975), 94th Cong., 2nd sess., 1976, Committee Print, August 1976. p. 35.

37. US Senate, Committee on Small Business. SB's 8(a) Subcontracting program: Minority enterprise, 92nd Cong., 1st sess., 29 and 30 September 1971.

38. In 1968, the US Commission on Civil Rights began a study to document the status of education for Mexican Americans in five Southwestern states, with a series of surveys sent to school district superintendents and elementary and high school principals. The Commission later augmented its investigation with studies of the Puerto Rican population in the Northeast. The results of these studies indicated widespread discrimination against the Spanish-speaking population. See US Commission on Civil Rights. Mexican American education study: Ethnic isolation of Mexican Americans in the public schools of the southwest. Report I. Washington, DC: US Commission on Civil Rights, 1970; US Commission on Civil Rights. The unfinished education: Outcomes for minorities in the five southwestern states. Report II. Washington, DC: US Commission on Civil Rights, 1971; US Commission on Civil Rights. The excluded student: Educational practices affecting Mexican Americans in the southwest. Report III. Washington, DC: US Commission on Civil Rights, 1972. The Commission's findings were presented at legislative hearings on the education of the Spanish-speaking population held in 1972 (see US House,

Committee on the Judiciary. Education of the Spanish speaking: Hearings before the Civil Rights Oversight Subcommittee (Subcommittee No. 4), 92nd Cong., 2nd sess., 8 and 14 June 1972).

39. See US House, Committee on the Judiciary. Federal government's role in the achievement of equal opportunity in housing: Hearings before the subcommittee No. 4, 92nd Cong., 1st and 2nd sess., 27 October, 3, 4 and 10 November, 2, 8 and 9 December 1971, 15 June 1972.

40. See US Senate, Committee on Labor and Human Resources. Emergency School Aid Act of 1970: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Education and the Select Committee on Equal Education Opportunity, 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 9, 24 and 30 June, 10 July, 11 and 27 August 1970.

41. See US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. Pretest Census in Oakland, California, and Camden, New Jersey: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Census and Population, 95th Cong., 1st sess., 25 March and 16 May 1977; US Senate, Committee on Governmental Affairs. 1980 decennial census: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Energy, Nuclear Proliferation and Federal Services, 96th Cong., 1st sess., 27 February and 1 March 1979; US House, Committee on Government Operations. The census undercount problem: Hearing before a subcommittee, 96th Cong., 1st sess., 27 April 1979; US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. Oversight Hearings on the 1980 Census, Part XVI — Memphis, Tennessee: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Census and Population, 96th Cong., 2nd sess., 8 February 1980.

42. The historical narrative of administrative and congressional decision making that follows does not imply a causal order or sequencing of events by the author, and the reader should assume none. The description is one of process and about complexity. The important point is that no one institution, individual, or event can be identified as the causal factor in the governmental decision-making process. There is no one “defining” event or decision made by a single political actor. Moreover, action does not proceed iteratively, with one event leading sequentially to the next event. There is no “A” event that occurred “first,” and then a “B” event that took place. Rather, the system is in constant flux; it is dynamic. There are many actors, there are many “moments,” there are many individual or institutional actions — all interacting and interdependent — that eventually result in a particular outcome. Multiple actors act on cues from within their own sphere at the same time that they respond to cues from the external environment. Political and institutional changes take place in a turbulent environment. It is the analytical task to identify the events and to decide how they are related and their causal order. For a brilliant theoretical exposition of the complexity of dynamical systems, see Richardson GP. *Feedback thought in social science and systems theory*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991. On the nature of causal order and interpretation, see Davis JA. *The logic of causal order*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1985.

43. US Federal Interagency Committee on Education. Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Racial and Ethnic Definitions. Washington, DC, 1975. The report also indicates that as early as 1970–1971, administrative agencies had manifested a concern about the lack of national statistics on minorities. Clearly, substantial work would have been undertaken by administrative agencies before the Report reached Secretary Weinberger, and, indeed, agency concerns are evident in congressional hearings that took place before 1974.

44. Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Racial and Ethnic Definitions. p. 1.

45. Johnson CE. Consistency of Reporting Ethnic Origin in the Current Population Survey. Bureau of the Census Technical Paper 31. Washington, DC: Bureau of the Census, 1974. The author judges him to have been “influential” because this particular technical paper has been heavily cited in the literature since the early 1970s.

46. US Federal Interagency Committee on Education. Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Racial and Ethnic Definitions. p. 2.

47. Robbin. Classifying racial and ethnic group data in the United States: the politics of negotiation and accommodation, *Journal of Government Information* 2000;27(2):129–156.

48. US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. Review of Federal Measurement of Race and Ethnicity: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Census, Statistics and Postal Personnel, 103rd Cong., 1st sess., 14 April, 30 June, 29 July, 3 November 1993. p. 44. Lott herself represented the Office of Asian American Affairs in the US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare on the FICE Ad Hoc Committee. According to the introductory remarks made in the FICE Ad Hoc Committee Report, she appears to have played an influential role in researching the issues on “several problem areas” (US Federal Interagency Committee on Education. Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Racial and Ethnic Definitions. p. iv).

49. An examination of newspaper accounts and the Congressional Record during the period when the FICE Committee conducted its work, lends support to the hypothesis. During the mid-1970s, the nation witnessed a

marked increase in political participation by black and Hispanic interest groups and the beginnings of mobilization by Asian and Pacific Islander groups.

50. US House, Committee on the Judiciary. Education of the Spanish speaking. pp. 2–3.

51. US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. Economic and social statistics for Americans of Spanish origin.

52. US House. House Joint Resolution 92 relating to the publication of economic and social statistics for Americans of Spanish origin or descent; Wallman KK. Statistics for Americans of Spanish origin or descent. Stat Rep (February 1978);78(2):148–52. Public Law 94–311, Sec. 4, June 16, 1976, 90 Stat. 688, required that the Department of Commerce “undertake a study to determine what steps would be necessary for developing creditable estimates of undercounts of Americans of Spanish origin or descent in future censuses.” In addition, the Bureau of the Census was required to use Spanish-language questionnaires, bilingual enumerators, and “other such methods as deemed appropriate by the Secretary.” The language of Public Law 94–311 was subsequently codified in Title 13, Section 151. Similarly, the Department of Labor was instructed to “develop methods for improving and expanding the collection, analyses, and publication of unemployment data relating to Americans of Spanish origin or descent” (codified in Title 29, Section 8).

53. US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. Economic and social statistics for Americans of Spanish origin. pp. 19–20.

54. Economic and social statistics for Americans of Spanish origin. p. 20.

55. Economic and social statistics for Americans of Spanish origin. p. 36.

56. Economic and social statistics for Americans of Spanish origin. p. 45.

57. Economic and social statistics for Americans of Spanish origin. p. 42.

58. Economic and social statistics for Americans of Spanish origin. p. 43.

59. Economic and social statistics for Americans of Spanish origin. p. 39.

60. Economic and social statistics for Americans of Spanish origin. p. 60.

61. Economic and social statistics for Americans of Spanish origin. p. 61.

62. Economic and social statistics for Americans of Spanish origin. p. 61.

63. The Ad Hoc Committee report notes that, “Once members agreed that it would be inappropriate to refer to Spanish language or surname for purposes of identifying people to be counted in this category, they decided not to use the term ‘Spanish’ in the heading at all. The term ‘Hispanic’ was selected because it was thought to be descriptive of and generally acceptable to the groups to which it is intended to apply.” One agency, the report notes, “still prefers ‘Spanish’ to ‘Hispanic’.” Federal Interagency Committee on Education. Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Racial and Ethnic Definitions. pp. 5–6. See also Wallman, Hodgson. Race and ethnic standards for federal statistics and administrative reporting.

64. The US Bureau of the Census estimated an undercount rate of 2.7 percent, or 5.1 million persons for the 1960 census, and 2.5 percent, or 5.3 million persons, for the 1970 census. The rate of undercount for minorities was, however, much higher, estimated for blacks at 8 percent, or 1.6 million persons in 1960, and 7.7 percent or 1.9 million persons in 1970. US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. Oversight hearings on the 1980 Census: Part I. Hearings before the Subcommittee on Census and Population, 96th Cong., 1st sess., 7 March 1979. pp. 5–6. The Bureau’s methodology to count the Spanish-origin population relied on a 5 percent sample and the identification of the population based on what was deemed a “Spanish surname.” Relying on “Spanish surname” would not, however, enumerate Spanish origin women who had married a member of a non-Spanish ethnic group. According to testimony provided during the hearings, enumeration errors derived from reliance on identification of the Hispanic population by surname; the restrictive nature of the sampling frame, which had been designed to collect data on Mexicans in the Southwest and the Puerto Rican and Cuban populations in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania; and the “confusion” by respondents of the meaning of race and ethnicity. For more discussion on the cognitive errors, see Robbin. The problematic status of statistics on race and ethnicity: an ‘imperfect representation of reality’.

65. US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. Oversight hearings on the 1980 census: Part IV. Fresno, CA., 96th Cong., 1st sess., 19 April 1979. p. 2. Representatives of minority groups included the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Black Leadership Forum, Pacific Asian Coalition, West Bay Filipino Multi-Service Center, Korean Community Service Center, Japantown Political Association, Japanese American Citizens League, Chinese for Affirmative Action, Concerned Asians of Oakland, ASIAN, Western

Regional Puerto Rican Council, Fraternal Order of the Sons of Puerto Rico, Coalicion de Boricuas, and Gay Class Advocate. The number of minority group organizations that participated in this hearing is further evidence of their politicization over the decade of the 1970s. This is contrasted with the early 1970s, when minorities were nearly always represented by black interest groups, such as the NAACP.

66. US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Services. Accuracy of 1970 Census enumeration and related matters: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Census and Statistics, 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 15, 16, 22, 23, 24, 29, and 30 September 1970. Whitney Young was not alone in his criticism of the US Bureau of the Census. Among the critics who prepared testimony were mayors and city managers; municipal, county, and state legislators or their representatives; regional, state and municipal city planning directors; and organizations that included the National Association of Counties, Chambers of Commerce, and Municipal League.

67. Accuracy of 1970 census enumeration and related matters. pp. 83–4.

68. Accuracy of 1970 census enumeration and related matters. p. 108.

69. US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. Economic and social statistics for Americans of Spanish origin. p. 48. Roberto Olivas of La Raza cited a statement by Vincent Barabba, Director of the Census Bureau, before the Subcommittee on Census and Statistics, House of Representatives, on May 28, 1974. Olivas also employed the Bureau's own publications and La Raza's own privately funded survey of Idaho residents to criticize the Census Bureau's conclusions about the distribution of the Spanish-speaking population in the United States.

70. US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. 1980 census: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Census and Population, 94th Cong., 2nd sess., 1 and 2 June 1976. p. 34.

71. See, for example, the testimony of various Bureau witnesses on the number of racial and ethnic group categories in US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. 1980 Census: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Census and Population, 95th Cong., 1st sess., 9, 10, and 24 June 1977. pp. 156–73.

72. 1980 Census. pp. 38–9.

73. 1980 Census. p. 190.

74. 1980 Census. pp. 186–8.

75. 1980 Census. pp. 41–50.

76. 1980 Census. p. 98. A Spanish-language questionnaire became available in the 1980 census; however, access to it required that the respondent telephone the local census office and obtain a copy. The point is that although Public Law 94–311 (see note 52) required the questionnaire, Bureau of the Census had discretion in determining how access would be provided.

77. US Senate, Committee on Governmental Affairs. 1980 Decennial Census: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Energy, Nuclear Proliferation and Federal Services, 96th Cong., 1st sess., 27 February and 1 March 1979. p. 194.

78. See Anderson MJ. *The American census: A social history*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1988.

79. US Senate, Committee on Governmental Affairs. 1980 Decennial Census. pp. 199, 200.

80. 1980 Decennial Census. p. 201.

81. 1980 Decennial Census. pp. 199–200.

82. US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. 1980 Census. p. 97. During the hearings on the economic and social statistics for American of Spanish origin, held in 1975, the Director of the Census Bureau Vincent Barabba responded to the House Resolution 92, noting, among the various points he made in defense of the Bureau, that it was “in the process of forming an official Census Advisory Committee on the Spanish-origin population.” He defended the Bureau's cautious steps in decision making regarding this “important” population group, noting that the Bureau was “committed to improving the program,” but that “significant efforts will depend on continuing assessments of what is needed and feasible, as well as additional resource allocations” (US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. Economic and social statistics for Americans of Spanish origin. pp. 3–4).

83. The dispute with the US Bureau of the Census over “check-off” vs. “write-in” for ethnic populations and the identification of minority populations in the questionnaire is told and retold throughout the late 1970s through the 1990s at nearly every congressional hearing on the census. For a summary of the Bureau's and minority group positions, see US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. Review of federal measurement of race and ethnicity.

84. US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. Census Advisory Committees on Minority Populations for 1990 decennial census: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Census and Population, 99th Cong., 2nd sess., 27 February 1986. p. 6. An American Indian advisory committee was not created until the late 1980s, although American Indian tribal leaders had requested a similar advisory committee in the late 1970s. See statement of Ronald G. Faich, The Navajo Tribe, to the House Subcommittee on Census and Population Hearing on the 1990 Census, May 19, 1987 in US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. Content of 1990 census questionnaire: Race, ethnicity, and ancestry: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Census and Population, 100th Cong., 1st sess., 19 May 1987. pp. 126–127.

85. US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. 1980 Census. p. 99.

86. US House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service. Economic and social statistics for Americans of Spanish Origin. p. 43.