

## Chapter Eight.

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### **Findings, interpretation and conclusion.**

Ever since publication of the 1903 Philippines Census, the occupation accounts in that document have puzzled scholars. The organisation of the data was opaque, based on an imprecise measurement of the labour market and an obscure classification of occupations. The data appeared to misrepresent the industrial structure of the economy, partly by reporting a concentration of women in the manufacturing occupations. Researchers described the data for women from a technical point of view as dubious, implausible, exaggerated or as an error of presentation. Studies then either disregarded the women or treated the data for men and women inconsistently in their descriptions of the workforce.

Scholarship now centres on other issues relevant to the reading and assessment of a document, with two papers in the literature of particular pertinence. Scott (1988) stimulates consideration of the evaluation of historical census documents, including interpretations of representation and objectivity. Benedict Anderson (1991) proposes an interpretation of the colonial census instrument that an examination of the early twentieth century examples from the Philippines might test. Other literature presents a view that historical documents misrepresented the daily life, work and employment of women as part of a constructed identity in a discourse of oppression. Central to my inquiry, therefore, is the context of the data compilation and the means by which census authorities regulated the portrayal of Filipino women's employment in the 1903 and the 1939 Censuses. A review of these matters enables me to re-assess in part the reputed transformation in selected women's occupations during that period.

This chapter draws together the strands of my investigation. It begins with summaries of the viewpoints in the literature. There follows an assessment of the criteria of occupational identification and measurement as the U.S. Census Bureau and the Philippines Census Commission applied them in the Philippines. After considering the validity of the evidence, I suggest tentative findings about what we can and cannot infer from the data. A brief judgement of the inquiry and suggested topics of future research follow. Some comments about an alternative view of the significance of the

Philippines Census occupation accounts and the interpretation of a census conclude the inquiry.

Scholars persuaded by post-structuralism consider an historical document to be a subjective construction of an imagined reality, a biased text of one perspective only. The style of the document conveys a meaning explained by the predominant power relationship according to this view. The relationship impels both context and text, which are looked upon as the same scene of action. Analysis of the text would uncover the colonial, gender, class or racial domination of the surveyed population and therefore, the cultural construction of the women's identity. Anderson adopts the standpoint in his critique of the colonial census and Chapter 2 tests his hypothesis in relation to the Philippines Census (see below).

Scholars now argue that subjugated people alone can tell their stories, so that historical documentary representation is neither legitimate nor true. The corollary of this position is that ethically, we cannot speak for the (colonial) authors either. It tends to leave researchers with little choice but to reject such documents as reasonable evidence of the time. Other scholars, however, suggest that while a documentary representation is subjective, it does portray human beings who can influence the report. That is, the boundary between compiler and respondent is negotiable or shifting, instead of there being strictly defined separate spheres between coloniser and colonised, male and female, or victim and agent, for example. Accordingly, we cannot dismiss the document as unjustifiable or wholly false. Evaluation of the report might then proceed by testing evidence of the authorial rationale for the selection and interpretation of information, including any gaps. In the case of census occupation accounts, this means scrutiny of the criteria of measurement, organisation and tabulation. The view allows consideration of the local and imported aspects of the Philippines Census instrument and is the foundation for my inquiry. Examination of Anderson's hypothesis from this perspective also enables me to place the Philippines Census in its immediate context.

Benedict Anderson considers that the colonial census intentionally represented a mythical society that confirmed the predetermined view and power of the local ruling authorities. The documentary style fostered and legitimised that purpose. It is clear that the 1903 Philippines Census, ordered by the U.S. Organic Act of 1902, was of an imported form and process. American officials, previously employed by the U.S.

Census Office, relied upon familiar Census Office notions, structures and technical equipment to administer the event. It implied a sense of superiority by the Americans. The style was quantitative, standardising and stereotyping and it seemingly aligned race and religious affiliation, as Anderson argues. As well, Census information (text, data and photographic representations) appeared to confirm a need for colonial authority and tutelage, images subsequently duplicated by other print publications. The evidence from the Philippines Census therefore supports that part of Anderson's hypothesis.

Conversely, the count was incomplete and fuzzy and faith categorisation was perhaps unwitting. In compliance with U.S. constitutional and legislative requirements, the Census did not enumerate religion. Anderson offers no alternative means for the representative and public policy purposes cited, and there is evidence of local influence over the Census through the actions of enumerators and respondents. Anderson also tends to underestimate in his hypothesis the part played by the metropolitan power in favour of the local ruling body, which in the case of the Philippines Commission had delegated authority only. Any claim that the function of the 1903 Philippines Census was intentional political domination is impossible to test. We can confirm neither the intention of the Census Director nor possible colonialist influence on the U.S. Census Office. In addressing matters of style and purpose, Anderson therefore tends to conflate meaning and effect. The Census did not cause the establishment of either colonial rule or the associated bureaucratic structures in the Philippines, although it perhaps facilitated diffusion of government regulation over time. We cannot attribute the manner, style or purpose of the Philippines Census to the concept of colonialism. This does not mean Anderson's hypothesis is wrong, but perhaps it overestimates the power and capacity of the Census Bureau in the Philippines case.

Similarly, an assertion that the Philippines Census account of women's occupations testified to deliberate gender bias also tends to overstate authorial intention. It disallows Filipino women's capacity to influence the enumeration, presumes the same Census experience in every province or region and disregards Census Office acceptance of reports confirming married women's employment. The line between census taker and the represented Filipino women was blurred. The assertion also implies that the Census Office deliberately chose a specific measurement tool, gainful labour, to devalue Filipino women's work, instead of choosing another

structure with more openness. Even if we accept that officials knew the consequences of using that instrument, the claim of subjugation declares an intention that is speculative and cannot be verified. This does not signify that the measurement of gainful labour did not detrimentally affect the record of women's employment.

By their very nature, census accounts of occupations require management. Most probably, imported U.S concepts and structures were basic to the Philippines Census occupation records and Census staff operated in that context according to U.S. logic. The concepts were perhaps inappropriate to circumstances in the Philippines. First, gainful labour, by which officials measured the workforce, in all likelihood assumed independent market labour and women's dependency, but the standard by which enumerators were to measure paid work was ambiguous and vague. Where an exchange economy operated in part and where there was an expectation that married women worked – as in the Philippines – tensions appeared in the counting process. Women who worked at home or under reciprocal labour obligations did not necessarily fit the categorisation of gainfully employed. Despite that, enumerators probably counted married women who had seasonal or irregular paid work, although it was unclear if that included farm work paid in kind (Chapter 5). The Philippines Census Commission, guided by a Census Bureau appointee, most likely used this method of measurement again in 1939, but they created a paradox by identifying and counting housewives in the tables of Usual Occupations. At the same time, the Commission recorded over 701,000 of the housewives as having part-time paid work, but categorised them in a secondary count. I suggest that a veiled introduction of a new labour force concept might have contributed to the illogical result (Chapter 6).

The identification of occupations and their classification and tabulation were unexplained, obscure and perhaps haphazard in 1903. As much as it is possible to deduce, Bureau officials failed to define individual occupations, a difficulty that non-specialisation of the workforce compounded. Respondents or enumerators perhaps locally interpreted indistinct occupation boundaries between, for example, an unskilled labourer and a farm labourer. Enumerators or respondents might have made other arbitrary decisions when women worked in multiple occupations, as the example of teachers in Chapter 5 illustrated. Such conditions, as well as the likely social identification of married women, meant that chance possibly affected the count of occupations. It illustrated ways in which Filipinos might have influenced the data,

whether by non-co-operation, choice or interpretation. Perhaps these elements of statistical chance arose because of the inappropriate nature of the occupation count, but it is debatable if any neutral identification and measurement of occupations at the time could have integrated or charted the factors. Census authorities apparently accepted and incorporated the given responses, perhaps in recognition of deficiencies and rigidity in the counting process.

Moreover, the Census Schedule possibly encouraged enumeration according to place and type of work, resulting in a count of industries such as the cigar industry, instead of a record of occupations. Even so, some of the data did not represent a recognisable industry in today's sense. Women who worked from home as seamstresses or wet nurses could not be quantified as an industry and to that extent, the 1903 Census listed a wider range of occupations for women than that catalogued in the 1939 Census. The provincial tabulation of occupations in 1903, however, was incomplete and the data unsuitable for statistical testing.

An attempt in Chapter 4 to clarify the operation of the unexplained 1903 classification scheme achieved limited success only. With its purpose disputed by U.S. Census Office officials, the scheme probably emphasised productive occupations at the expense of service work and was perhaps unsuitable for a pre-industrial economy. The sector location of some occupations was unclear and the suggested placement of others, unsubstantiated. Peculiar classifications of some occupations probably altered the economic sector distribution of the workforce at national and provincial scales. Perhaps the Manufacturing and Mechanical sector classification was an overestimate, while Domestic and Personal Services appeared to be a class of residual occupations. In 1939, officials clearly emphasised an industrial count that failed to identify individual occupations. Without explanation, occupations of proportional importance to women in 1903 disappeared in 1939, either within the industrial count or altogether. The statisticians also relocated other occupations in an enlarged economic sector range. I therefore suggest that comparison of sector employment between 1903 and 1939 is perhaps improper.

Other factors might also have affected the data, although in some cases the variable is conjectural and untested. Conditions in the Philippines in early 1903 did not favour the taking of a census, much less a comprehensive count of occupations. Second, temporary, untrained and inexperienced Census enumerators made errors in

completing the Schedules or interpreted instructions according to local perceptions. Census authors acknowledged some instances of this, yet we cannot adjust the data with any confidence. In addition, statisticians in 1903 amalgamated or omitted occupations from the published provincial records, although why the Bureau chose to omit data from the provincial distribution is not clear. As Appendix 1 elaborates, it is not possible to determine the precise effect of this action on the records for each province or individual occupation.

I have therefore not been able to unravel all the perplexities of the measurement and classification of occupations in the Philippines Census. Census officials most likely adhered to the familiar context of gainful labour and classification, that is, to their rationale for their selection and interpretation of data, despite strains between those constraints and the circumstances confronting enumerators in the field. Indeterminacy about the methods of measurement and imprecision in the generated data, however, suggest that we can make only a hesitant assessment of the Bureau's management of the accounts. Consequently, my examination of the Philippines Census representation of women's occupations and possible change over time is largely conjectural. There are, however, some assumptions and possible interpretations that I believe require circumspection.

We first cannot read the data from a present-day perspective. Assumptions basic to the interpretation of labour statistics today are of limited relevance, particularly when reading the 1903 occupation data for women. We cannot assume that Filipino women considered their paid work in terms of one economic occupation, or that they considered paid work in terms of a career. Instead, occupation probably had an open meaning and was perhaps contingent on social status, seasonally dependent work and the need for family maintenance. The data therefore did not definitively describe women's paid employment either at the time of the Census, over the previous year or for a prescribed period. Furthermore, organisation of the data was opaque. Any assumption of a clear and fixed standard classification of occupations in carefully rationalised economic sectors is injudicious. Such basic notions are incongruous with the circumstances and characteristics of the 1903 data especially, and a presumption that the nature of the data was stable over time can lead to faulty conclusions.

Claims in the literature that Census data were inaccurate are indisputable and it is not possible to estimate the degree of error in the incomplete data of 1903. There is

insufficient other evidence to prove claims of miscounting through faulty enumeration in that Census, for example. Claims of under or over counting because of conceptual wrongs, however, are dependent upon different views of productive work, gainful employment and the classification of occupations, that is, of the conceptual basis of measurement and organisation of the accounts. A value judgement that the concepts were unsatisfactorily rationalised, biased and inappropriate implies that the subsequent representation was likely to be a flawed and prejudicial construct, misrepresenting and distorting the reality of women's work. Two inferences are then possible. First, because the records were subjective and imperfect, we can extract nothing of worth from them. It would therefore be hypocritical to use the data. Alternatively, the assessment can imply deliberate misconstruction of the facts. On the contrary, there is no available proof that the data were impaired, or of Census Bureau interference with intent either to distort reality beyond the needed generalisations or to misinform readers. Even if we cannot know the truth of the matter, we nevertheless should not be indifferent to possible inaccuracy in either the data or their interpretation. With this in mind, my investigation finds that the occupation data for women were at times soft, open to misinterpretation and occasionally misleading.

Such a finding suggests that not all the data were defective. Is it therefore possible to consider the Census as tolerable, valid evidence of the time with certain qualifications? However much we might question the data for women on conceptual or technical grounds, recognition is due to the efforts of the officials who organised, collected and compiled the accounts. The 1903 Census appeared to include a significant proportion of married women from Schedule 1 in the occupation data, for example (Chapter 5). It contrasted with concurrent U.S. domestic Census custom where, even contemporary American scholars agreed, the counts grossly under-represented married women's paid work. Census Bureau willingness to accept enumeration of the married women's occupations in the Philippines should be admitted. The action indicated some honesty about the local circumstances and might be viewed as reasonable objectivity in the sense that there was readiness to acknowledge the validity of local opinions. The recorded presence of the women conformed to the accepted local view that married women participated in the economy, and Filipinos probably would have seen any other outcome in the Census as faulty and biased. It suggests that the Philippines records were not wholly imaginary or illusory.

It does not mean that the records were necessarily accurate, but perhaps the Census provided a representative cross-section of women's employment and occupations and to that extent, might be considered tolerable evidence of the time.

Furthermore, it is possible to view the 1939 account from a similar perspective. The secondary listing of the additional occupations of housewives, scholars today would argue, appeared to confirm an inherent bias against women in the measurement of gainful employment. Implied in this view is the idea that the status of the listing was wrong because of the alleged wrong belief of Census staff. The criticism tends to confuse the form of the idea with the idea itself. It also fails to account for the oddly placed housewives classification in the tables of Usual Occupations. Moreover, the viewpoint disregards the entirety of the additional occupation list. Perhaps the categorisation was a legitimate attempt by the Census Commission to recognise the fact of multiple occupations in as sex neutral a manner as possible. It implied openness to local conditions and a fairness that researchers might tend to overlook. To be objective in our own assessment of the document, we should acknowledge the position as being viable and sound and the Census data compilation as being complete to that extent. It does not deny the possibility that the character of the data was fixed in a narrow set of foreign beliefs.

With some limitations, therefore, the data revealed much about Filipino women and their occupations. Enterprising women in 1903 earned income from occupations found in all economic sectors. A great majority probably worked from home, perhaps on a part-time or irregular basis to supplement family income as small-scale manufacturers, farm labourers and fishers, in health care and domestic work, as small-scale traders or as labourers. Others had moved into regulated occupations in the formal market such as the printing occupations and in cigar factories, or ran their own trading firms or worked as brokers and agents. Still others, although few in number, had made ingress into the traditionally male fields of the clerical sector (but as clerks and retail sales clerks only), some of the professional occupations including journalism and in transport and the emerging telecommunications occupations. By 1903, women had perhaps begun to break down the structural and social barriers to their regular employment in the formal market. These examples do not dispute the inequality or gender divisions of labour in the economy, but Census data did not always illustrate those complexities, nor were they intended to do so.



By 1939, women worked in all but a few of the named occupations and industries. More specialisation of occupations (for example, hairdressers) occurred as a consequence of an expanding market economy, which clarified the boundary between household maintenance and personal service. Better availability of education for girls meant women took advantage of opportunities in health and welfare, in occupations such as dentist, optician, doctor, nurse, pharmacist and social worker. Women comprised just over half the teaching force and participated in all other professional occupations except surveying and forester/ranger. Scholars argue that because women occupied the lower levels of those occupation hierarchies, it implied a downgrading of their labour market position, yet we should not disregard the contribution and determination of these women. For most women, even a teaching position in an elementary school proclaimed upward occupational mobility and perhaps provided better working conditions and more opportunities than did farm work, for example. On the other hand, professional workers constituted just 0.7 per cent of women aged 10 years or over in 1939. Similarly, there was limited movement into occupations in the clerical, public service, transport and communications sectors.

Clearly, there was a fall in the reported national de facto activity rate of women between 1903 and 1939. The magnitude of the fall is not clear, however, partly because of incomplete data in 1903 and partly because of the problems associated with the identification of housewives in both counts. I tend to think the accounts overstated the national change by perhaps about half (Chapters 5-7). It is similarly difficult to be precise about individual provincial levels of women's workforce activity in 1939. Nor are reasons for the fall established. It is easy to claim that the slippage reflected the decline of home-based textile production alone, but it also illustrated a withdrawal of women from the workforce and their failure to move sufficiently into other occupations. Another possible hypothesis might be that the 1903 activity rate was over-estimated. These descriptions do not explain the decline in activity. Different short and long-term factors, including gender prejudice and economic inequity, influence women's participation in the labour force, but on this topic there has been little research done into the 1900-1940 Philippines experience.

Each set of Census data gives but a guide to the occupation patterns in that year, while the investigation in Chapter 7 illustrates the difficulties in testing reputed change. Only tentative findings are therefore possible about patterns of distribution or

likely changes. It should be noted first that, as most women still lived in rural households, the fundamental geographical distribution of women's occupations had changed little since 1903. The data showed that a shift to urban-based occupations (administration, clerical, sales, higher professional) away from the rural, home-based occupation pattern was not yet common. Women, perhaps married women especially, had barely moved into occupations located, for example, in workplaces that required travel or time away from home. It might have been that decisions by married women to choose occupations and employment, perhaps according to childcare, housing and transport constraints, were entirely rational. Most likely, institutional or social constraints also limited opportunities and choices.

Although aggregated provincial data hid the urban-rural distribution in each province, evidence from the examination in Chapter 7 of specific data tends to support the finding of consistent geographical distribution over the period. Contingent upon the inclusion of the part-time occupations of housewives in 1939, the data demonstrates evidence of the persistence of home-based manufacturing occupations in the provinces, for example. Although the decline in spinning and weaving meant that home-based manufacturing occupations decreased in importance both nationally and provincially, women continued to make mats, hats, embroidery, nets, clothing, textiles and other items at home. The investigation shows distributional changes across provinces, but possibly not at the same rate, in the same direction or simultaneously. It might imply that some of the changes were perhaps independent from events in Manila. Additionally, the data suggest that household help occupations were still important to provincial women and perhaps the fastest growth in these occupations occurred in southern provinces distant from Manila. On the other hand, there was anecdotal evidence to suggest that women were already migrating to urban centres, including Manila, for domestic service work.

National data also indicated a substantial, proportional increase in farm labouring by women. Though my inquiry does not investigate farm occupations in detail, the literature urges caution in using the 1903 data. I tend to agree with that view. One view proposes that the count of women farm workers, dependent on ambiguous and unfavourable instructions, was perhaps an under-estimate in that year (Chapter 5). Compared with the enumeration in 1903, the higher proportion of women enumerated as farm labourers in 1939 might have corresponded in part to a more accurate

identification of waged farm workers in that year. Although it is not possible to test such speculation from the data, the possible increase did not point to a fundamental shift in the geographical distribution of the occupations in which women worked.

Second, examination of the data tentatively suggests that changes amongst occupations did not necessarily imply change in the basic industrial structure of women's occupations. This does not deny that women changed occupations over the period, but evidence of transformation across economic sectors tends to be ambiguous. To be a valid argument, there should be evidence of the distribution of the change as well as its nature. As already noted, home-based manufacturing continued, if to a lesser degree, despite the decline in spinning and weaving. The investigation in Chapter 7 suggests that changes in home-based manufacturing were inconsistent across provinces and that perhaps intra-sectoral substitution rather than inter-sectoral transformation might have occurred. The latter proposition is necessarily conditional owing to the selective nature of my investigation. On the other hand, we cannot determine from Census data the links connecting the changes, and the data did not record other factors that might have encouraged or induced women to adjust their occupations.

Yet, from the national occupation records, the literature commonly refers to the decreased spinning and weaving as a decisive occupational change. According to this view, the fall indicated a general collapse of home-based manufacturing and consequently, a loss of independence for women and their increasing economic marginalisation during the period. Contrary to historical evidence, the interpretation assumes that before 1903, spinning and weaving had undergone no change and that textile production yielded independence for women. It also disregards the uneven provincial decline in textile manufacturing that occurred after 1903, as Chapter 7 shows. To conclude on the strength of the fallen textile production that women curtailed all small-scale manufacturing is to ignore other Census evidence that in itself clouds any interpretation of change. The argument also does not prove structural change.

In addition, I suggest that the recorded movement into domestic service was misleading and perhaps uncertain (Chapter 7). Although the Census reported an absolute increase in the household help occupations, proportional change was not clear. The increase might have been a consequence of population growth instead of

simply transference from the manufacturing sector. Another view might suggest that women's partial withdrawal from spinning and weaving in particular resulted in a proportional increase in domestic service that was nominal only. Both suggestions imply that there was not yet real movement into domestic service. Examination of the records, however, reveals complexity and connections within the data that make interpretation of these possible movements between occupations and sectors difficult.

Manufacturing and Domestic Service sector data from 1903 and 1939 tended to be deceptive. The two sectors implied a clear separation between public or market labour and personal or household service that was not always evident in the Philippines economy. In both years, the records gave an imprecise report of the distribution of women's paid employment in separate occupations while the 1903 sector distribution differed from that of 1939. Crucial to interpretation of the data on this issue are the servant and seamstress occupations, probably linked by the characteristic of being household help. As Chapter 7 relates, servants typified the difficulties of enumeration, while seamstresses illustrated inconsistencies and inadequacies in the classification schemes. It is impossible to make any claim about change in the latter occupation especially. Until there is detailed research of where seamstresses worked and who employed them in both years, I would argue that it is only possible to hypothesise about movement between manufacturing and domestic service. Furthermore, doubt about the counting of unskilled labourers and their Domestic Service placement in 1903 adds to the difficulty of interpreting data in these sectors.

Unexamined Census data, however, appeared to support the claim of change across economic sectors and the reading became fixed over time. I am not claiming that across-sector movement was non-existent, but it is possible that the evidence supporting the notion of economic sector transformation is perhaps weaker than the interpretation presumes. I have argued in Chapters 4 and 6 that comparison of sectoral data between 1903 and 1939 requires great care because of possible dissimilarity in the statistical category. Scrutiny of selected occupations in Chapter 7 also supports the view that evidence for sector change tends to be ambiguous. On balance therefore, the evidence indicates that we should perhaps reconsider the conventional interpretation that there was definitive change in the industrial structure of women's occupations. Detailed investigation of Census data indicates that the fixed nature of the reading is

possibly unsustainable, and suggests that the form of the Census accounts might have contributed to the view of structural economic change.

These findings tend to differ from those in the literature (for example, Eviota 1992; UN 1960). Other interpretations nevertheless may be correct, since they are a function of different questions in accord with the different interests and hypotheses of scholars. Yet at the same time, those scholars express doubt about the historical Census representation of women's occupations in particular. Claims of unreliability are repeated, but there has been very little exploration of what happened and why it occurred. It is to this end that I have directed my questions, in a search for some certainty and understanding of the accounts. By asking how the Philippine Census instrument represented the employment of women in 1903 and 1939, the inquiry addresses possible misrepresentation in the data, at national and provincial scales, for individual occupations and aggregated economic sectors. Thus, the inquiry considers the factors that affected the data as well as the implications and consequences of the representation. Some assessment of the investigation is now appropriate.

Apart from the necessity to regulate data, the factors of influence fell into three broad categories. They were the U.S. origin, purpose and conceptualisation of the Philippines Census and its constituent parts; specific management practices by the Census Bureau and the Census Commission for each set of data; and the possible interaction between census takers and respondents. The first two controlled the manner and form of counting, classification and tabulation, so that the two sets of data were different in detail according to the actions of the authorities in each year. My investigation has allowed us to make an assessment of the Census structures as well as their application. It is now possible to approach the Census data with rudimentary awareness of their gathering and compilation and the implications and consequences of that process. We might make an informed opinion on the likelihood and possible form of flawed data in the representation, but doubt remains about the scale and intensity of regulation and its specific type. Until there is a full description of the mechanics of the census process, we cannot tell the extent and precise causes of faulty enumeration, inaccuracy or poor representation. It does not necessarily mean that all the data were faulty, but any findings must be tentative. The factor of likely reciprocity in the census process perhaps limited in part the degree of misrepresentation that was possible, given

the other factors, yet we can only speculate about its influence. Even an assumption that women had the authority to represent themselves in the exercise might be wrong.

My hypothesis, that misrepresentation of women's occupations occurred when Census authorities used their knowledge to manage the statistics, is unproven. Although the inquiry suggests that poor representation and even distortion were likely, it was not possible to verify the proposition from the given information and data. Deficiencies in the data did not necessarily mean deliberate deception by statisticians who adhered to their rationale, although we might now consider the data misleading or open to misinterpretation. Since the second part of the hypothesis, that the misrepresentation was sufficient to influence future interpretations, was dependent upon proof of the first part, it remains speculation. Only by assuming misrepresentation is it possible to consider consequences of that portrayal. There remains, therefore, much of uncertainty about the document and the data and to that extent, the inquiry has been unsuccessful. Conversely, it is possible to view the investigation as confirming the need for researchers to be alert to the problems and to keep an open mind. At best, it helps clarify reasons for the uncertainty and points to necessary future research, especially of U.S. Bureau of the Census archival resources in Washington. Research might also establish exactly what archival resources are available in Manila from the 1939 count.

Apart from the mechanics of the process in 1903, other particular difficulties need investigation. (i) To what extent did the Bureau alter enumerators' schedules in 1903? Detailed examination of the completed Census schedules, compared with other possible sources of evidence such as the Manila Directories, for example, might reveal some of the answers for that city. Other sources perhaps need to be tested for details of occupations elsewhere (for example, marriage, birth and death records in parish registers, or perhaps school, court or company records). (ii) Full disclosure of the provincial distribution of occupations in 1903 would be helpful. How did the Bureau justify the abridged version of that listing? (iii) In relation to the 1939 Census, we need to understand the thinking behind the peculiar format in that document. (iv) It would be useful to have better, specific data for particular occupations in 1939, which might inform us of the extent of the Commission regulation then, as well as possible movement amongst occupations. If that research is not possible from, for example,

enumerators' returns, then other sources might provide clues. Such research might increase confidence in the data and enhance its usefulness for other researchers.

On the other hand, these avenues of research presume acceptance of the imported Census in 1903 as it stands. Perhaps we need to ask, what would a census constructed by Filipinos have shown? Would Filipino men have recorded the work and occupations of Filipino women in a more appropriate manner? If Filipinos had chosen different criteria in 1903, what would have been the effect on the planning and organisation of the 1939 Census? What concepts, controls and methods of census taking would allow us to understand real life in the Philippines? How useful would such a census be and for whom, and how would we assess it? Some would suggest that it would be presumptuous of us to assess such a document against external (western) criteria. Is it possible to gather and compile an account of occupations so that accusations of prejudice or relativism might be avoided? The questions point to the difficulty for researchers of assessing claims of representative authority. Borofsky (2000) sees the problem in terms of comparing assessments of context of production and assessments of evidence.

For now, given the uncertainty and acknowledging the subjectivity of the Philippines accounts, it is legitimate to ask if the historical Census data can be of any use today. First, the documents provide the only statistical evidence of the paid employment of Filipino women at the time. In the search to reconstruct the lives of women or to understand the changes that affected them, we should test all available evidence, including Census data. A representation of social lives from Census data that were not social accounts, however, must necessarily be tentative. Second, study of the records may point to the diffusion of U.S. control and ideas, the spread of the market economy or, alternatively, the influence of Manila throughout the population. For example, different interpretations of Census instructions or faulty enumeration might indicate limited acceptance of the notion of women's dependency and, therefore, patchy diffusion of U.S. ideas into rural areas in the early 1900s. Even the expansion of occupations in education, health or communications or in export-oriented industries such as embroidery might indicate permeation of U.S. bureaucratic and economic control. It would be wrong to assume that the expansion occurred only because of that, however. In these examples of possible usefulness, the data are evidence only, which needs testing against other evidence before any conclusions might be drawn. This

inquiry also illustrates a third possible use of the data, as a means to test other theories presented in the literature. As well, the study of a single document can lead to wider questions and to future research.

Unjust misrepresentation of women in occupation data remains a significant problem even today some would argue, and the Philippines Censuses of 1903 and 1939 appear to be instances of the historical problem. Here, scholars theorise that the significance of the Census portrayal lies in its being consequential. Following Scott (1988), the interpretation tends to concentrate on what Lawson (1995) refers to as the politics of counting, recognising the role of counting in expressing power relations and the political power to represent oppression statistically. According to this view, by not challenging the representations we consequently sanction the colonial exercise of power and that part of the gender construction process in the Philippines. But the reading verges on negating women's agency by its division into rulers and victims. As well, its focus on women as a marginalised group tends to place them in a select position, open to be another object of control. The interpretation is therefore inclined to sustain the notion that women are victims.

Moreover, an investigation of the Philippines occupation accounts shows that the data were more complex than the above interpretation assumes. Strains and contradictions appeared between the procedural structures set in place and the published records. Contrary to all precedents, the Census Bureau (assuming their influence on the 1939 Philippines Census Commission) appeared to recognise, accept and record the occupational identification of married Filipino women given by respondents in both Censuses. The accounts consequently exhibited qualities that are difficult to explain in terms of a male, colonial construct. It suggests that perhaps we need to view the Censuses in a broader context.

I tend to think that these distinctive characteristics perhaps indicated experimental exercises on the part of the U.S. Census Bureau and its agents. Is it possible, therefore, to view the Philippines Census as part of the evolution of occupation statistics, part of a series instead of as a discrete event? More than for any other topic of data collection, the collation and dissemination of occupation statistics was constantly under review throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Census authorities came under pressure from governments, politicians, academics, feminists, statisticians and business people to gather and compile data as social and/or



economic indicators. That is, the statistical purpose was unclear in design and therefore confused in practice. As well, statisticians and others in the U.S. debated the desirability of married women working, their possible independence from males and how best to represent this in the occupation statistics (M. Anderson 1992). By 1890, prevailing beliefs manifested as assumptions about the position of women in society pervaded the statistics, but the perceived bias was thereafter in dispute. Additionally, there was not yet an International Standard Classification of Occupations. Under the entrant of census in Palgrave's *Dictionary of Political Economy*, as late as 1926 the author still described occupations as "a rubric which is the despair of the international statisticians" (p. 243). Then, after 1929, the U.S. Census Bureau confronted new economic and social circumstances that necessitated a complete rethinking of the purpose and form of occupation statistics, for all workers.

American researchers (for example, Conk 1978; Folbre and Abel 1989) and the U.S. Census Bureau indirectly acknowledge that each successive occupation account in U.S.A. after 1850 was largely trial and error. New methods of counting, classifying and tabulating occupations were tested in population counts and in labour surveys, through various state labour bureaux and nationally. It is my belief that the significance of the 1903 and 1939 Philippines Censuses, with their unusual treatment of married women, exists within that framework. They first illustrated the disputes within the Census Bureau over the purpose of occupation statistics. More notably, the accounts represented early, perhaps flawed and maybe illogical, but material steps in the development of a statistical recognition of women's economic contribution to society. As such, I suggest that they were exercises of consequence in the continuous attempts to find a satisfactory structure for occupation statistics. This does not detract from their possible gender construction and myth-making characteristics, especially for Filipino women, but I tend to think there were wider implications.

The question therefore arises, what exact role did the conduct of the Philippines Census play in subsequent U.S. domestic Censuses? In particular, to what extent was the 1903 Philippines account of women's occupations a precursor of the count of women's occupations in the U.S. Thirteenth Census of 1910, until recently regarded as aberrant? To what extent can colonised women cause or facilitate a change in the real world of women in another nation? How did the 1939 Philippines Census affect the change to a labour force description and the organisation of the labour statistics in the

1940 U.S. Sixteenth Census? And if these are fair questions, then can we see the Philippines Census as part of the self-defining process for Americans?

An interpretation such as this points to the way in which we view a census. On the one hand, if we see a census as an instrument of surveillance and communication, a constructed means of data representation, then we assume that a political relation governs cause and effect. It implies that the process is one-way and that the information gathered is valued for its political message alone. Although each census event is viewed as a single entity, the aggregating and generalising census instrument is part of the problem in this perspective. The instrument reinforces injustice and inequality in society, impinges on privacy and nullifies individual identity. It suggests that the notion of a census is unacceptable, and if we reject the concept, then we must reject the data.

On the other hand, this inquiry illustrates that a census is not necessarily a one-way process. It suggests instead complex flows of information moving back and forth amongst a government, the census authority, enumerators, respondents and readers over time in a multilevel information system across borders and boundaries. Not one person or ideologue has total control over the process or the representation. Humans introduce uncertainty into the system when they interpret and contribute to the flows at different levels for different purposes and in different ways. Perhaps that characteristic of human agency should be sufficient alone to encourage continued research of individual census events as well as the census process in different contexts.

The notion of assessment is intrinsic to the census concept, by historical use since biblical times and from its Latin root. It does not mean that the concept is unchangeable, but the census was not a colonial invention. Just because particular censuses stereotyped race or were reductionist and perhaps inaccurate does not mean that we should reject the idea of a census. By accepting the notion of a census, we can perhaps use tested census information and data to make other generalisations at different scales. This includes at provincial level and linking events to a broader setting. Governments take a census to make such generalisations. It means the count draws upon commonalities instead of differences. A census can identify an inequitable distribution of resources amongst a population, for example, and to that extent, it might be seen as working for the greater good. But this raises the dilemma common to

government – does the greater good outweigh individual rights and freedom to maintain an identity and privacy?

It is important to know the possible tensions between a census authority and the population. The documentary representation of women might or might not be part of the strategy of ruling. Perhaps it is possible to recognise that women might attempt to limit the capability of the ruling authority to define them by counting and classification. Information about the census process might therefore contribute to an awareness of women's endeavour to maintain their own identity and their struggle for justice. As well, perhaps it is possible to recognise that women might influence subsequent government policy through their responses. On the other hand, a census does not cause the construction of women's identity or inherent injustice in a society, just as it does not cause occupational change. We will not answer those questions from a census, but the document may provide evidence for the argument.