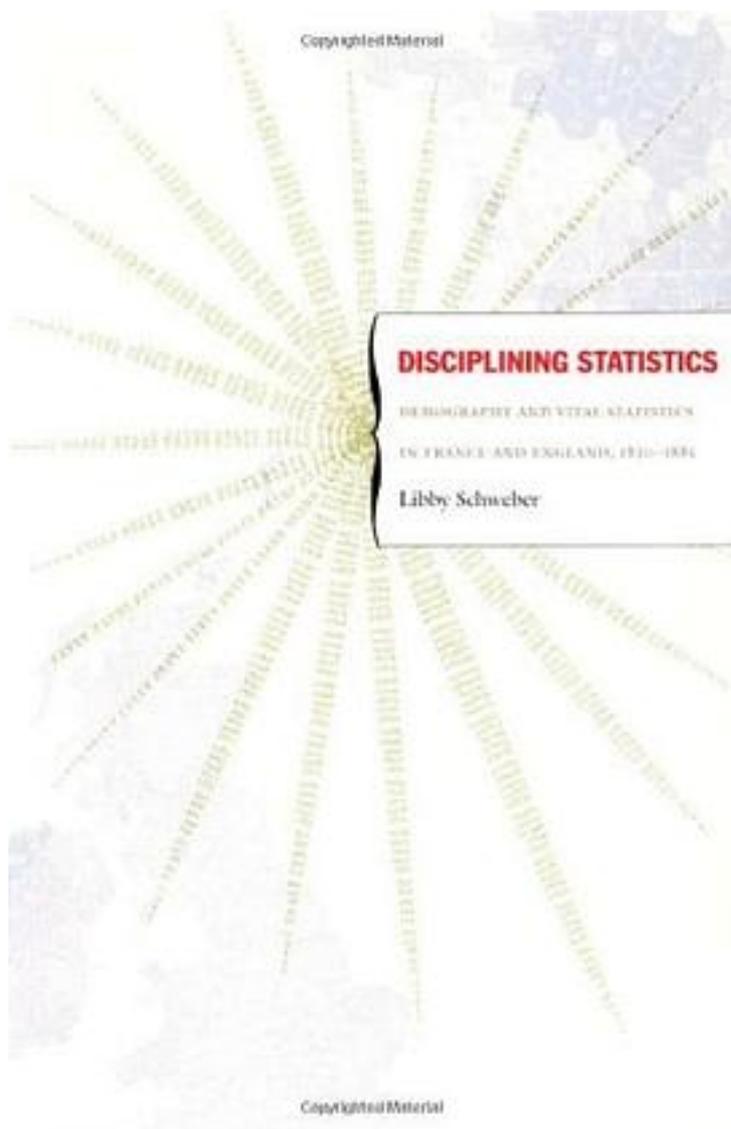


Disciplining Statistics



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In "Disciplining Statistics" Libby Schweber compares the science of population statistics in England and France during the nineteenth century, demonstrating radical differences in the interpretation and use of statistical knowledge. Through a comparison of vital statistics and demography, Schweber describes how the English government embraced statistics, using probabilistic interpretations of statistical data to analyze issues related to poverty and public health. The French were far less enthusiastic. Political and scientific elites in France struggled with the 'reality' of statistical populations, wrestling with concerns about the accuracy of figures that aggregated heterogeneous groups such as the rich and poor and rejecting probabilistic interpretations. Tracing the introduction and promotion of vital statistics and demography, Schweber identifies the institutional conditions that account for the contrasting styles of reasoning. She shows that the different reactions to statistics stemmed from different criteria for what counted as scientific knowledge. The French wanted certain knowledge, a one-to-one correspondence between observations and numbers. The English adopted an instrumental approach, using the numbers to influence public opinion and evaluate and justify legislation. Schweber highlights numerous attempts by vital statisticians and demographers to have their work recognized as legitimate scientific pursuits. While the British scientists had greater access to government policymakers, and were able to influence policy in a way that their French counterparts were not, ultimately neither the vital statisticians nor the demographers were able to institutionalize their endeavours. By 1885, both fields had been superseded by new forms of knowledge. "Disciplining Statistics" highlights the effects of interrelated epistemological, political, and institutional considerations on the development of 'scientific' knowledge.

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写法装逼，粗读。19世纪中后期英法分别形成人口学，法国学界难以接受以平均值代表整体的思路，归因于法国学术与国家的独立，由此形成了政治经济学界相对独立和坚固的认识论边界，早期学者遂放弃政治经济学而投靠孔德等相对边缘的普遍主义传统，形成demography；英国以概率的概念为核心迅速接受vital statistics，并加以工具性的应用，归因于学术对国家的依赖，以及公共政策对多样性科学论述的需求。两种国家-学术关系又反过来主导了两学科的进一步发展。有需要再细读。

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