

A Total Science



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From the early 1900s to the end of the Second World War, Italian statistics was characterized by original, consistent, and widely recognized scientific contributions, a clearly hegemonic position vis-a-vis Italian social science at that time, and the totalitarian political environment in which it developed during this period. In "A Total Science", Jean-Guy Prevost charts how Italian statistics emerged as a full-fledged discipline, giving rise to a network of university chairs, journals, and other institutions. He focuses on episodes such as the creation of the famous Gini coefficient and the statisticians' participation in Italy's war effort and also analyses the intellectual project to which most statisticians were committed, that of creating a quantitative social science. In doing so he reveals the political and ideological use of the work of statisticians during the Fascist era. Drawing on the growing body of work devoted to the history and sociology of statistics, "A Total Science" offers an in-depth study of the evolution of Italian statistics as a discipline, bringing together aspects that are often looked at separately, such as theoretical and epistemological foundations, practical applications, formation of a scientific community and its institutions, inner politics, and relations with the state.

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