

The Uncounted: Citizenship and Exclusion in the Israeli Census of 1948

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Abstract

Previous research on official statistics, and the national census, has established the role of these practices in the construction of modern political institutions, particularly the state and citizenship. Studies have described the use of statistics in transforming a territorial population into a citizenry, but have not examined the role of the census in the exclusion that is an essential element in the constitution of citizenship. Based on a case study of the Israeli national census and registration of 1948, we discuss the use of this census to legitimate an ethnic/national exclusion at the heart of Israeli citizenship. It is this task that explains the peculiar features of our case: a census carried out in wartime, under a 7-hour general curfew.

Keywords: census, citizenship, Israel, statistics, nationalism, Palestine

In May of 1948, the State of Israel was established as the modern nation-state of the Jewish people. That November, a state agency, the “Central Bureau of Statistics” (CBS), conducted the first population census, at the height of the War of Independence. Under a curfew of 7 hours, military and security personnel proceeded to canvass every Israeli household and register all its citizens. An order was given specifying that those absent from their homes would not be registered as citizens and that their ownership of goods, property and land was not to be recognized. Though the order was formulated in universalistic terms, applying to all inhabitants, its sanctions were in effect applied only to the Palestinian Arab population, for it was only members of this group who were not at home. Hundreds of thousands had fled and had been driven from their homes during the fighting. While the census was ostensibly an enumeration of all residents, it in fact created the population that it was counting. Those who were not counted were thereby excluded from the target population, their rights forfeited. This included not only the refugees who had left the territory under Israel’s control, but internal refugees as well. Of those absent during the census, many were internal refugees, remaining within the territory that eventually became Israel’s, and others had managed to return before the next population registration in 1950. Though this group was given Israeli citizenship, their property rights were never restored, and they became the statistical category of “present-absentees.” This category would receive legal recognition a number of years later, and as a result of the first census, slightly more half of the Palestinians who ultimately became Israeli citizens were legally deprived of rights to their property and lands.

When compared to the typical national census, the case of the Israeli census of 1948 contains a number of peculiar features. The census was carried out during wartime; it was conducted by military personnel under a seven-hour curfew; and the population being counted was simultaneously registered as citizens. But these peculiarities are connected to a more important feature of the immediate historical context. Like many new states of the 20th century, and in contrast to the long consolidation processes that European states underwent in the two previous centuries, the state-building process was compressed into a brief span of time. Indeed, for Israel to become a state within an already-constituted system of states, a whole range of institutions had to be built virtually overnight. And in the Israeli case the existence of the entity being enumerated in the census, an Israeli national population, was the object of intense, indeed military, conflict. The census, therefore, was not the enumeration of an

already self-evidently existing population, but brought into existence the very entity it was counting (Schnapper 1994).

In recent years a large area of research has been opened up by an appreciation of the constitutive role of official statistics in political and social institutions. Statistics are no longer regarded as better or worse ways of measuring an independently existing reality, but as **constitutive** of social reality. Moreover, when official statistics contribute to the construction of their objects, they also are instrumental in defining the **subject** of statistical knowledge, the modern state. A system of population statistics makes the population visible in a particular configuration, and thereby implicitly says something about what kind of subject is appropriate to that object and what type of intervention is conceivable (Desrosières 1998). The state's legitimacy is enacted. It is secured through ritual observances, and key among those observances is the formulation of action in terms of appropriately gathered statistical knowledge. For this reason, official statistics constitute a key political resource, and the comparative-historical study of statistical systems is part of the historical sociology of modern political institutions. The comparative study of their social history is an integral part of the comparative study of the rise of the modern state (Patriarca 1996).

The intimate linkage between the census and the Israeli state-building project, far from rendering this case an irreducible singularity, allow for the examination in particularly high relief of general features of official statistics. In particular, we find that the census plays a key role in the establishment of the legitimate, territorially-based form of social closure that is modern citizenship. It legitimates the exclusivity of citizenship rights by allowing an exclusion based on nationality and ethnicity to be transformed into one based on a formal and universalistic legal distinction between citizens and non-citizens. It is also used in establishing and legitimating distinctions in the allocation of rights within the population of citizens.

In order to establish the connection between the census and the exclusionary dimension of citizenship, we will first bring together insights from two distinct bodies of research. Social histories of probability and statistics have traced the parallel development of statistics and modern political institutions, and have detailed the role of statistics in constituting the state and its distinctive mode of action. Official statistics are not simply a tool used by existing states to augment their capacity for planning and administration. They construct the state itself as a subject, as well as the objects of state action. But this work has not described the importance of statistics to the

exclusionary features of citizenship and the state, described by comparative sociological studies of modern political institutions. A case study of the Israeli census of 1948 will then be used to draw this connection. We will examine the political context, the deliberations leading to the census, and the uses to which it was subsequently put.

LITERATURE ON STATISTICS AND THE STATE

Historical studies of the initiation of population statistics, and the arguments of those responsible for establishing official statistics such as the national census, have emphasized the instrumental benefits to the state of possessing systematic quantitative figures on the population and its features. Studies of the state as an institutional structure have emphasized the contribution of social science in general, and statistics in particular, to augmenting the state's capacity to undertake large-scale social intervention. The "state structures" approach to the development of social policy places a premium on the capacity of the state for "learning", and the institutionalized channels for feeding social knowledge back into policy making (Hecló 1974; Weir and Skocpol 1985). States which establish centralized data-collection by experts who take the point of view of the state itself, and have access to policymakers, simply have a greater capacity to implement large-scale social intervention. Kuhnle, in a comparative study of the early adoption of social welfare policies in Scandinavia, suggests that the development of centralized statistical bureaus in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, was a necessary condition for social legislation (Kuhnle 1996). Builders of statistical institutions often cite the need to coordinate state policy as a major justification (Petty 1992). Indeed, the founders of the Central Bureau of Statistics in Israel, who carried out the census discussed here, argued that a system of national population statistics was necessary for any kind of planning.

Studies in the neo-institutionalist tradition, as well as social constructionist studies in the history and sociology of science, have argued that statistics do not contribute to the state's capacity for social intervention in the abstract, but enhance its capacity according to a particular, culturally and historically specific, set of principles. These approaches, therefore, have emphasized the **symbolic** efficiency of statistical representations of the citizenry and the state (Foucault 1991; Kalpagam 2000). Porter, for instance, describes how statistics allowed the representation of a population as composed of interchangeable individuals, rather than corporate groups (Porter 1986). Social insurance programs, which cover all citizens in cases of injury, illness, or

retirement, with benefits determined by universalistic and formal criteria, presuppose a statistical representation of the eligible population. Because payments no longer take the form of discretionary gifts, needs must be determined in advance, and the equivalent of actuarial tables need to be constructed at the national level (Hacking 1990; Porter 1995). To state this idea in stronger terms, state intervention that proceeds by means of the uniform application of predetermined eligibility criteria can only be conceived and defended in terms of a representation of the population in the form of a statistical table.

Neo-institutionalist approaches are particularly helpful in their rejection of the distinction between instrumental and symbolic dimensions of state action, since they treat both the ends and the means of action as given in existing institutions (Meyer 1999). Statistics have instrumental uses, but the ends to which they are put, and criteria for measuring success of state action, are themselves part of the same institutional order (Breslau 1997). With an emphasis on international isomorphism of census practices, Ventresca points out the relationship of the census to the institution of citizenship, since “the emphasis of the modern census on the full and complete enumeration of all persons provides authorized representations of persons articulated in terms of the modern state, that is, as individual citizens comprising a national population” (Ventresca 1995). Desrosières goes as far as to argue that statistical representation is a prerequisite for a public sphere: “The construction of a statistical system cannot be separated from the construction of equivalence spaces that guarantee the consistency and permanence, both political and cognitive, of those objects intended to provide a reference for debates” (Desrosières 1998, p. 324). It not only serves as a guide to state intervention, but a particular kind of a guide, in which the state is a benevolent rational administrator, and the object of intervention is a population of equivalent, but distinct, citizens.

Statistics, therefore, are not simply an instrumental tool wielded by an already constituted state for intervention in a preconstituted society. Rather, systems of official statistics contribute to the constitution of both the state—the subject of intervention—and the society that is the object of the state’s action. They are a key component of the emergence of the modern state, and the transformation of a collection of collectivities based on estates and religions, each with distinct rights and privileges, to a citizenry of equally rights-endowed and formally interchangeable individuals. In turn, new kinds of collectivities are constituted from the statistical categories that now guide state action and shape the way that people perceive themselves (Hacking 1990, p. 2-3, 6).

Perhaps because most of the work on statistics and the state deals with already constituted territorially-based national populations and states, it has not analyzed the relationship between statistics and the exclusionary dimensions of citizenship. The studies mentioned above look at the effects of the enumeration of existing populations, whose very existence is not contested. They therefore emphasize the effects of statistical re-representation of a collective, the contours of which are already established. These effects include the greater inclusion and assimilation of the population, and the establishment of a direct citizen-state relationship unmediated by corporate entities of any kind. Statistics are thus treated as one of many means by which a territorially defined population is transformed into a nation of citizens. Because the exclusion of non-citizens is in many of these cases a settled issue when official statistics are established, the connection is not identified.

Yet exclusion is a defining feature of the modern state and the institution of citizenship (Brubaker 1992; Schnapper 1994). There can be no inclusion without exclusion; the rights of citizenship acquire their value only because of they are denied to non-citizens. As the state was transformed from a territorial sovereign to a membership organization, citizenship became a formal status, distinguishing politically homogeneous citizenry from all who are denied access to the rights and protections dispensed by the state. As the state ceased to allocate rights to specific subgroups on a personalistic basis, these *internal* forms of social closure were replaced by an external closure, restricting membership in the citizenry, the members of which were assigned uniform rights and obligations. In Prussia, for example, the erosion of the hierarchical *ständische* order was accompanied by the establishment of a single status for all those who belonged to the state and the exclusion of all those who did not (Brubaker 1992, p. 55-72). The formally defined and bounded citizenry, adopted reciprocally by nation states in a system, became the legitimate means of social closure. Citizenship has continued to be a means for excluding migrants, if not from the nation-state's territory, at least from access to the political and social rights granted to citizens (Joppke 1999). Indeed, it is in its exclusivity, its social closure, that the state generates problems of legitimacy that require that it adopt an internationally accepted institutional form.

Therefore, although the census enumerates the state's citizens, it is also directed at those who are not counted. It plays a crucial role in the reinforcing and legitimating the external boundedness of a citizenry. By exhaustively enumerating its citizens, the state ritually renews its commitment to their formal equality, and establishes or renews

the legitimacy of its social closure as based in impersonal formal criteria, and not personal identity. The census is a rite of passage, signaling or reinforcing the transformation of those counted into a national population of equivalent units. But an exclusive focus on this passage, as in historical studies of official statistics, neglects the ways the census functions as what Bourdieu calls a *rite of institution*, which functions to “consecrate or legitimate an arbitrary boundary” (Bourdieu 1991, p. 118). In designating the boundaries of the citizenry through the logic of mechanical rationality, which substitutes impersonal, formal criteria, for tests of ethnicity or political allegiance, the census thereby legitimates the exclusion of all non-citizens.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS IN ISRAEL

The conduct of the 1948 census must be seen against the backdrop of the intense demographic politics of Palestine of at least the previous thirty years. Tactical stances of Palestinian Arabs and leaders of the Zionist movement, and claims made by both sides before the British colonial authorities, the United States, and the United Nations, were informed by the demographic balance in Palestine and in possible zones within it. As a way of accumulating a crucial resource in the demographic politics, population counts were conducted at irregular intervals by many of the concerned political entities. The Zionist Federation conducted the first count of the Jewish population of Palestine in 1918. Censuses of Jewish localities were also carried out sporadically throughout the mandate period. And the Histadrut, the Federation of Labor of the Jewish Yishuv, conducted several censuses of workers and their living conditions. The British mandatory authorities themselves sponsored censuses in 1922 and 1931, with the express intention of gauging the interethnic demographic balance in Palestine. Disputes over immigration quotas, territorial claims, even the very legitimacy of the Jewish state, were, and are still, carried out in terms of disputes over statistics on population subgroups and their movements (Bachi 1974; Friedlander and Goldscheider 1979; McCarthy 1990).

The population counts prior to Israeli statehood institutionalized this practice as a way that groups became conscious of their own demographic strength, and projected their claims to the outside world. But in several respects these were qualitatively different from the typical modern census. Conducted on an *ad hoc* basis, by specific groups, they resembled the statistical precursors to the modern census (Westergaard 1968; Wolfe 1932). Limiting their focus by the political, occupational, and ethnic identity

of their target population, they embody the sectarian perspective of their sponsor, rather than the universalistic, neutral subject that is the modern state. Such a census was only contemplated once a statistical bureau was established that was linked to the state alone, with the backing of the state's legitimate use of violence, and adopting the (relatively) universalistic perspective of the state.

The establishment of a statistical capacity on a national scale in Israel was part of the process of nation-building, and the particular form the statistical institutions took was itself an outcome of the politics of that process. Within the Zionist labor movement, which was the dominant political force of the *Yishuv* and represented the majority of Jewish settlers in Palestine, the years leading up to Israeli independence were marked by a struggle over the formation of the state. In all of the major institutional areas—the military, social services, health—a faction promoting statism, or *mamlachtiut*, led by David Ben-Gurion, struggled with the array of organizations of the *Yishuv* that had provided these services (Ben-Eliezer 1998; Medding 1990). The existing organizations—of which the largest and most powerful was the General Federation of Labor, or *Histadrut*—had become a kind of quasi-state, empowered by the British authorities to tax their members, to administer social services, and to coordinate investment and economic planning. These particularistic quasi-state organizations depended on their control of resources to recruit and mobilize their membership, and resisted relinquishing them to a universalistic state (Grinberg 1991; Migdal 1988). In some areas, such as the military, the statist prevailed, and were able to consolidate centralized control. In others, an accommodation was struck in which the state delegated partial authority to sectoral organizations to provide these. The *histadrut* retained control of its health insurance system, which remained its most potent recruiting tool, while the religious authorities maintained administrative control of their state-funded school systems.

The founding of the state's statistical capacity was subject to the same conflict. Several of the major *Yishuv* institutions possessed internal statistical offices, and were interested in having the state's official statistics be composed of the concatenation of distributed efforts of various labor, agricultural, and political organizations. Ben-Gurion found a powerful ally in Roberto Bachi, a Jewish-Italian statistician who had run the statistical office of the British mandatory authority in Palestine. Bachi had a doctorate in statistics from the University of Rome, and established academic statistics training at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (Nathan, Bachi and Schmelz 1986). His academic

credentials and training place him within what Vantresca terms the international statistical sector (Ventresca 1995, p. 59). Bachi developed a plan for a centralized state statistical bureau that would establish a universalistic point of view above the authority of the sectoral organizations, and would deprive them of the ability to put forth authoritative statistical knowledge. As with the centralization and consolidation of the military (Ben-Eliezer 1998), Bachi's vision appealed to Ben-Gurion's statism, and he was appointed to oversee the establishment of the Central Statistical Bureau (CBS), which would carry out a census. Having been among the staff of the British authorities, and without formal affiliations with Zionist political organizations, Bachi was an unlikely choice. But his very independence from sectoral interests, and his academic—as opposed to ideological—credentials, made him a natural ally in the statist's quest to construct a universalistic and rational Zionism, a Zionism of the Israeli state (Leibler 1998).

As the British prepared to relinquish their mandate, the Jewish community in Palestine comprised somewhat less than one-third of the total population. Even in the areas assigned to the Jewish state in the UN partition plan of 1947, the Jewish population was a slim majority. With the armed conflict that broke out even before the British had evacuated, between the military forces of the Jewish Yishuv and various “irregular” Palestinian forces, this situation changed dramatically. In the first half of 1948, before the entry of armies of surrounding Arab countries into the conflict, the vast majority of Arab residents of the areas controlled by Israel either fled or were driven from their homes. It was already clear in the fall of that year that a Jewish majority had been achieved in all of the areas controlled by Israel. While the war continued, it was clear to the leaders of the recently declared state that the Arab problem – the prospect of a large and partially hostile Arab minority interspersed among the centers of Jewish population – had been solved. During the Summer of 1948 military and political leaders in Israel had concluded that the Palestinian refugees could not be allowed to return, even in the face of the expected pressure from Arab states and especially Western powers for a mass repatriation of at least the non-hostile among the refugees. The country's borders, however, remained porous, and there were constant reports of infiltrations of Palestinians, many attempting to return to their homes, and against the deprivation of refugee camps, seeking to harvest their crops. Besides patrolling the borders, measures taken to prevent the refugees' return included: razing of deserted Arab villages, rapid resettlement of new Jewish immigrants on the sites of Arab villages, or even in deserted homes. Jewish agricultural settlements were authorized to harvest and cultivate

abandoned Arab lands (Lustick 1980; Morris 1987). It was against the backdrop of these massive population movements, and the political meaning attached to them, that the census was carried out. We turn now to the deliberations among the main actors involved in planning this undertaking.

STATISTICAL ENTREPRENEURS AND THE CENSUS

The census combined two functions that we ordinarily think of as distinct: the enumeration of the population for statistical purposes, and the registration of citizens for administrative use. The two goals of compiling statistical data and preparing lists of citizens for use in allocating rights and obligations, such as military service, were barely distinguished by those who designed and carried out the census. It was Roberto Bachi, the head of the new Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) who proposed he combined census/registration. Bachi's recommendation was far-reaching: to register the entire population, to assign identification numbers, to deposit the data gathered in the hands of the CBS as statistical data for subsequent research and policy planning. He urged the unification of the two activities and the periodic repetition of the population census, which would serve as the basis for both demographic statistics and for managing the population registry. The registry would be updated continually through the registration offices of local settlements. The updated registry "will serve as a source of information on each resident, information needed for efficient administration of the state."¹

In support of his proposal, Bachi wrote a document in January of 1948, addressed to the "situation committee" charged with setting up the new state's institutional infrastructure, in which he detailed his arguments for bringing together the various goals in a "detailed census."² First, a census was needed to serve as a basis for subsequent statistical activities. This was important for administrative and scientific reasons. Efficient planning and administration must be based "on detailed information about the population, for whose benefit plans are prepared and laws passed." For instance, economic programs, or programs for developing schools or enlisting soldiers must be based on the composition of the population in terms of age, sex, and occupation. Efficient planning of cities is based on information about conditions of housing, the demographic, economic, social and topographical characteristics of a neighborhood. The census provides the universe from which statistical samples can be drawn and evaluated.

Second, Bachi argued, from a scientific perspective, it is impossible to carry out demographic research without information on the structure and development of the population—mortality, morbidity, marriage, fertility, etc., which would be recorded by the census. The data would constitute the life-blood of a range of disciplines: anthropometrics, history, military medicine. As population statistics provide the ground for the rationality of state administration, they also provide the ground for the validity of statistical representations. The conditions for the operation of a modern state are also the conditions for the authority of statistical experts.

In these comments of Bachi, written in January of 1948, we can already see the social alchemy promised by statistical representation, which would allow the Arab citizens to be perceived and administered as a population subgroup. The demographic struggle that had been waged in Palestine since early in the century now became a question of a measurable and forecastable “demographic balance” between the two population groups. The Palestinian refugees, politically and economically dispossessed, became non-citizens beyond the state’s jurisdiction and boundaries. The minority that remained became, like all citizens, objects of the enlightened rational gaze of the state, as revealed through statistics. As Bachi could add to his arguments in support of his proposal, the census would “illuminate the influence of the Zionist enterprise on the health, social life, economic life and education of the Arabs.”³ Statistics allowed what had been understood, and was still in danger of being understood, as an inter-communal conflict, to be understood as the rational benevolence of the state towards an ethnic minority. Through the rationality of statistics, Bachi and his patrons were establishing the state’s rational point-of-view.

FREEZING THE FACTS ON THE GROUND

The census was carried out during wartime, and in the course of battles. Therefore some of the residents were on active military duty, further complicating the process. Not all citizens were in their homes, depending on where fighting was taking place. This created several threats to the success of the census, according to Bachi: a severe shortage of personnel for carrying out the registration and all the related activities, and a shortage of equipment. Above all was the difficulty of capturing the demographic situation at a single point in time while the country’s inhabitants were constantly moving because of the war. But these difficulties were overridden by other considerations, stressing the urgency of carrying out a census as soon as possible.

From the point of view of the statisticians, the urgency derived from the demands of their work, and the need to quickly establish a basis for ongoing official statistics. Statistics for managing the war, administering rationing and conscription, depended on a population frame. Without such a base, all of the bureau's statistical work would be in doubt. As Bachi describes the situation:

It was very difficult. Our first problem [of the bureau] was that we had to carry out a census. That is the foundation of the whole business [national statistics]—without knowing how many residents there are; their occupations; where they live; it is impossible to do statistics. At the same time there was also a need to register the residents for the purposes of Knesset elections and distribution of rations. There was a need to establish an institution that would be responsible for registering the residents. The CBS took upon itself the task of conducting the census. (Author's interview with Roberto Bachi, March 1992).

The administration of the British Mandate, or what remained of it, collapsed in the Spring of 1948. Chaos prevailed throughout the country and the government's statistical department was not unaffected—during the war the entire system of collection of statistical information crumbled and its equipment was damaged. At the same time, a massive wave of immigration had begun, first from Europe, but by the early 1950s composed mostly of Jews from the Middle-East and North Africa. Thus, as described in the CBS memoir:

With the establishment of the state of Israel (May 1948) it was necessary to begin statistical activities from almost nothing ... The state had important functions that required a great deal of statistical information: While the country was still in a state of war there took place a tremendous process of population movements. On one hand there was a mass exodus and flight of Arab residents from most of their areas of settlement in the country, and on the other hand each day a mass Jewish immigration arrived from across the sea (Central Bureau of Statistics 1955).

Due to the changes in the structure of the population and the change in the territorial borders, disturbed the economic structure of the Jewish community. All of the problems facing the state required the immediate establishment of statistics based on a population census, just as other advanced countries had done:

It was clear that just as every advanced country must track this kind of normal phenomena, in Israel, which is on the road to being an advanced country it was inconceivable to carry out everything that the state had taken upon itself, without basic statistical information (Central Bureau of Statistics 1955, p. 10).

An additional rationale for carrying out the census just a few months after the establishment of the state and in the midst of war, is related to economic efficiency: "It was desirable to take advantage of the opportunity to collect statistical material in the course of the registration that was done for administrative purposes of the moment, and to therefore avoid the large expenditures that would be required by a census carried out for purely statistical purposes." And the possibility of carrying out a census under curfew would not have been accepted if not linked to other purposes such as voter registration and distribution of rationing coupons. These were inducements to the citizens, for their cooperation with the requirement to carry identity cards with a unique number. This illustrates a further unification of administrative and statistical goals.

But a more compelling reason for the census/registration, and the main source of its urgency, is one that is not explicitly mentioned in the deliberations, but which we know was a major impetus if only because, other than prosecution of the war itself, it was the main preoccupation of the temporary government in the Fall of 1948. This was, namely, the issue of the refugees and the goal of permanently excluding them from Israeli territory and political rights therein. All through the summer, while the military strategy was left to the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and the Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, in his dual role as Defense Minister, the government was split over the issue of repatriation. The United Nations mediator for Palestine, Count Folke Bernadotte, was meanwhile pressing Israel for an immediate and unrestricted return of refugees, and restoration of their property (Morris 1987, p. 142). With the initiation of a cease fire on July 18, The Israeli government rejected out of hand any return of refugees while the war continued, and by summer's end, had concluded that the advantageous demographic situation achieved during the war should not and would not be reversed by future peacetime repatriation. At the same time, there was a steady trickle of Arabs who had made their way back into the country, and of course, once reintegrated, were indistinguishable from those who had never left.

The government was searching for a formula for perpetuating the exclusion of the refugees, turning it into a legal and permanent one. As part of the November 1947 partition plan enacted by the United Nations, the Jewish state was required to grant full

citizenship to anyone living within its borders, regardless of religion or nationality. The granting of citizenship on the basis of territory alone is a sign of a state's good will and a condition of its legitimacy, allowing it to conform to the international system of states, defended by the UN. An extension of citizenship on a territorial basis in 1947 would have imperiled the slim Jewish majority in the new state. But by late 1948, after the mass exodus of Palestinian Arabs, the same principle provided a solution to the refugee problem. The interior minister, Itzhak Grinberg, proposed a solution that was based on recognition of the UN requirement of universalistic, territory-based citizenship. If the departure of Arab residents could be defined as a political act of renunciation, and an abandonment of property, the exclusion of an ethnic minority could be legitimated in terms of international norms regarding citizenship rights. The presence or absence of Palestinian Arabs within the borders of Israel was thereby defined as an acceptance or rejection of citizenship. If now, in late 1948, all those remaining in the country, Jew and Arab alike, were universally granted citizenship, it would be possible to observe international norms while turning the distinction between Arabs who had stayed and who had left into a permanent, legal divide. As Grinberg was able to announce in October, 1948, after half a million Palestinians had already fled: "Every citizen of the Hebrew state, who resided within the Jewish state on November 27, 1947, and whose permanent residence was there, will receive citizenship in accord with the decision of the United Nations on November 29, 1947."⁴ As in any other country, those who had—according to the state's own narrative—disavowed their allegiance, were excluded from this right. Any Arab returnees would be non-citizens, with no presumptive right to even be present within Israel's borders.

THE SCIENCE OF EXCLUSION

The combination of political and scientific objectives of the census called for a particularly stringent set of methodological requirements. Both the validity of the numbers and the achievement of the political/administrative goals required that the population "stand still" while the census was underway, a daunting demand during wartime. As Bachi argued, a census must serve as a mirror of the state of the population at a particular moment. However, there are many hazards threatening the attainment of this goal, since every census takes time to carry out. How is this problem solved in other countries? In countries in which the citizens are not all literate, a curfew is imposed for one day and census workers go from house to house and fill out forms for

the residents. In other countries forms are distributed before the census day and the residents are responsible for filling them out. Afterwards, the workers collect the forms and check them. This can take a number of days.⁵ Although Bachi argued that none of these possibilities was suited to the Israeli case, the curfew solution was adopted, but with forms distributed well before the census day.

Those to be counted would ultimately be left with no responsibility for relaying information to the census takers, and no possibility of mediating between their families and communities and the state enumerators. The strict procedures ruled out any second-hand reporting, and turned the census into a count of those who were physically present in their homes during the curfew:

The principle that guided the census takers in their work left no room for argument or error: “list and get signatures from what is there!” I.e., no replacements, no “in the name of”, no tricks. The wife of a husband who does not manage to return home by the start of the curfew is not authorized to sign for him; the census taker is forbidden, under any circumstance, to leave the registration form with anyone, in order to obtain the appropriate signature “afterwards”. In short – you list and gather signatures only for those who are actually there in front of you (Yurman 1983, p. 96).⁶

Following procedures that had already been standardized in the international community of statisticians, the country, having no official internal geographical divisions, was divided into 16 districts, and further subdivided into 10,000 blocks, or registration cells of about 80 inhabitants each. Volunteer census officers completed registration forms for each household during the month before November 8. On that day, a curfew was imposed from 5 P.M. to midnight, during which time the officers returned to all the homes to verify information and the presence of all household members, and to distribute identity numbers (Bachi 1974, p. 405-6). Whoever was absent during those seven hours was not registered, or counted. The consequences for absentees are described below.

In its execution, the census relied heavily on the authority of the military, whose armed representatives accompanied the census takers. For those who carried out the census, and for the willing participants, it was an explicitly political act, a “celebration”, as described by Bachi himself. Statistical Order number 31, which was formulated in 1947 and revised in 1972, gave broad authority for the state’s information-gathering activities (Hershkovitz 1990, p. 22). The order requires citizens to cooperate with the census

taker, and to respond to each question in the questionnaire. Whoever refuses, interferes, or supplies false information, is liable for punishment. A similar law was passed by the Knesset in 1951. Bachi himself emphasized the cooperation of the public with the census, and minimized the role of the show of military force:

It was fortunate that we succeeded in seizing the right moment. Something like this, under different circumstances would have raised suspicions that it was a police operation, or a means of imposing authority on people...few countries have an identification number (Author's interview with Roberto Bachi, March 1992).

Bachi's assessment was echoed in the popular press. According to the daily paper of the labor movement, the registration was received throughout the country "with enthusiasm and order and exemplary discipline. The curfew that was declared from 5 to 12 at night was implemented rigorously."⁷ Another daily paper announced that "the apparatus for registering the citizens of the state of Israel, with its known immediate and historical importance, was completed last night at midnight with complete success."⁸ All stores, factories, services, and transportation came to a halt. The citizens sat in their houses and waited for the enumerators.

Not all of the citizens, however, were willing participants in the curfew or the enumeration. In the Jewish sections of Jaffa there were reports concerning a few immigrant families that refused to open their doors to the enumerators. It is not clear what their reasons were. Another case occurred in Jaffa: in the preliminary registration a family reported three children, but on the day of the census nine were discovered. The reason for the inconsistency seems to have been the fear of the evil eye.⁹ In Jerusalem members of the "Naturei-Carta" religious movement—which for religious reasons opposed the creation of the Jewish state and refused to cooperate with the state in other matters—refused to be counted. Names of those who refused were listed and forwarded to the government. Also in Jerusalem, several workers in foreign consulates refused to cooperate and agreed to sign on the registration forms only after extensive explanation and persuasion (Yurman 1983, p. 94).

Once again, the procedures harmonized concern for the validity of the census numbers with the political objectives of the registration:

In the neighborhoods of Haifa, for example, the census takers encountered the residents' attempts to list the names of relatives who had fled in April [1948,

when the vast majority of the city's Arab residents had fled *en masse* to Lebanon and Syria, in order to obtain Israeli identity cards for the absentees and to eventually allow for their return to the country. (Yurman 1983, p. 96)

The arabs who were not counted were defined as absentees. This designation was also applied to those who had fled to a safe haven within the country's borders, seeking refuge from battles.

But the statistical component was not simply an afterthought, tacked on to a purely administrative action of registering the population. The seven-hour curfew, for instance, was justified just as much in terms of scientific as administrative requirements. As one of the participants in the planning was later to record in a memoir, Bachi himself came up with the idea:

In the course of discussions about the census, various and strange proposals were raised. Finally Roberto Bacchi, the exact opposite of the absent-minded professor who looks down from Mount Olympus, tossed up an amazing idea: Let's impose a curfew, a full and general curfew! Then we'll be able to catch the entire population and carry out our mission. The conditioned reflex to this unconventional proposal was a decisive and unequivocal "No!" But it quickly became apparent that no one could come up with a more reasonable and efficient solution. The opposition was forgotten and the interior minister said: "A curfew? Why not?" (Yurman 1983, p. 93-4).

While the statistical representation of the territorially-based society was essential for carrying out the state's goals, the statisticians in turn relied on the state's power in enforcing cooperation with the census and for enforcing the curfew that would keep each citizen in place while the census was in progress. The coercive method of administering the census was made more palatable by its statistical necessity. Scientific validity depended on the state's coercive power, while the state as a rational administrator for all its subjects depended on valid statistical data.

In summary, when we examine the planning of the 1948 census, and the arguments for its implementation at what may seem like an inopportune time, we find a complementarity between scientific and political or administrative considerations. The extraordinary measures taken to implement the census, and the use of the state's military force for that purpose, were justified in terms of scientific validity and

comprehensiveness. Both served the purpose of transforming the territorially-based population into a citizenry, and legitimating the arbitrary exclusion of the refugees.

TEMPORAL STRATIFICATION

In addition to the boundaries of the citizenry and the exclusion of non-citizens, the census was also the basis for distinctions between categories of citizens and even communities. Stratified statuses and rights allocated on a personalistic basis, such as the *Standen*, could not be sustained in a state that derives its legitimacy from the adoption of universalistic procedures. But differential rights could be based on impersonal formal criteria established by the methodology of the census. The 1948 census became a kind of temporal frontier, establishing the baseline population, with full and equal citizenship rights. Those who showed up in later censuses, both Arab internal refugees and Jewish immigrants, were distinguished from the original citizens on the basis of formal criteria, and their citizenship qualified by administrative and legal rules. These distinctions allowed, and continue to allow, the state to be blind to communal identities, but to nonetheless discriminate on the basis of formal, impersonal criteria.

A striking instance of this temporal stratification is the case of the subgroup of Arab citizens who were referred to by the Orwellian label, “present-absent” (*nochechim nifkadim*). At first unofficially, but as eventually codified in the Absentee Property Law of 1950, anyone who had left the areas controlled by Israel before the Fall of 1948, was designated an absentee. Any of their rights to land, homes, and other property, were cancelled on that basis. In fact, it was the 1948 census and registration that were used to determine who had been present, for this purpose. The vast majority of these dispossessed remained refugees, outside of Israel’s boundaries after the Rhodes armistice of 1949. But, in a subsequent registration, in 1949, there were some 81,000 of these “absentees” living within the country and entitled to citizenship. While some of these had returned to Israeli territory since 1948, most of these “present-absent” were internal refugees, in some cases entire villages, who had not been counted in the first census simply because they had fled their homes. Others had fled to areas that were only annexed to Israel with the 1949 armistice (Grossman 1993, p. 84). There remain fifty-one reconstituted villages of the present-absentees which today are not legally recognized and receive no government services and no building licenses. The justification for denying one of the most basic components of citizenship to a particular subgroup of citizens rests ultimately on the 1948 census.

As a temporal frontier, marking the boundary of statehood in time, the census also served as a source of distinctions among Israel's Jewish population. The census did not differentiate among those who were already in the country by 1948, composed mostly of four waves of Zionist immigration since the late 19th century. But as a snapshot of the population in that year, it introduced a distinction between these "veterans" and subsequent waves of Jewish immigration. In practice, and through the early 1960s, the distinction between "veterans" (*vatikim*) and "new immigrants" (*olim chadashim*) was that between Jews of European origin, and those from the Middle East and North Africa. Residential areas were also classified in temporal terms, as recommended initially by Bachi. The distinction between centrally located, more prosperous, and primarily Ashkenazi settlements and the socially and geographically marginal towns populated mostly by Jews of middle eastern origin, is based on a temporal stratification between "veteran settlements" and "development towns." This distinction was the basis for the differential provision of services to these towns and for structured inequality between Jews of European and middle eastern origin (Levy 1997).

THE INSTANT CITIZENRY

Citizenship, the institution toward which all national identities and national movements strive, can be assigned in many different ways, based on many alternative systems of classification: religion, birthplace, language, descent. But once the criteria of national identity and citizenship are established, the institution works in a way that is quite uniform (Brubaker 1992). The relatively arbitrary basis for assigning citizenship in the first place is translated into territorial terms, as the granting of rights to all those who legitimately belong to the state's territory, without regard to other social distinctions. In a sense that is not fully captured by what Brubaker calls the citizen's right of "access" to the territory, the citizen *belongs* within the nation's territory. "Citizens alone enjoy an unconditional right to remain and reside in the territory of a state, including the right to reenter should they leave for any reason. The territory of the state is their territory, and they can plan their lives accordingly" (p. 24). The many and varied rights different states grant to their citizens, and from which they exclude noncitizens, are based on this prior relationship of citizens to the territory. Citizenship is therefore a liberal institution with an illiberal historical basis. It is a particularistic category transformed into the object of the universalistic gaze of the modern state through the state's determination to treat all

those with legitimate access to the territory as equivalent individuals. It was precisely this transformation that preoccupied the builders of the Israeli state in 1948. The dominant Zionist institutions, to become state institutions, had to redefine the basis of their relationship to their constituency. The pre-state institutions were based on a non-territorial connection of a movement organization to members of the movement. Their organization and operations were based on the ideological commitment of their members. A state is an entirely different kind of organization. Its connection to its citizens is based on its sovereignty over a territory. It is not a voluntary organization, but is compulsory for those it includes, and inaccessible for those it excludes.

The modern national census also bases its validity, and its claim to universalism, in territorial terms. Although special categories of citizens living abroad are sometimes appended, the census is distinguished from other types of population statistics by its effort to enumerate exhaustively a territorially-defined population (Anderson 1988; Ventresca 1995, p. 50-4). Porter, among others, has pointed out the connection between statistical representations of populations, as composed of interchangeable, equivalent individuals, and modern conceptions of citizens and their relationship to the state. But the census, as we have shown, is a key practice in the constitution of citizenship in terms of territory. It derives its validity from an utter indifference toward distinctions among the residents of a territory, assigning precisely the same weight to each individual, while ignoring completely those outside the territorial boundaries. Roberto Bachi was concerned above all with the validity of the Israeli census, on which his authority as a statistician depended. An ardent Zionist himself, Bachi could enlist the state's coercive power to assure a comprehensive census count without reference to particular political objectives.

But the social closure of citizenship is based not only on territorial boundaries, but on temporal boundaries as well. It is not based simply on a relationship of a population to a territory, but on a narrative that places temporal bounds on that relationship. Although states vary in their temporal criteria for granting citizenship, all incorporate such criteria. Citizenship depends on the timing of one's connection to the territory, in terms of the citizen's own birth and duration of residence, and the history of the state. It thus calls for a temporal accounting of the presence or absence of competing groups in the territory. A clear temporal accounting allows the allocation of citizenship, and its exclusions, without explicitly particularistic criteria.

While temporal criteria are a general feature of definitions of citizenship, their establishment was particularly pressing in 1948 Israel. Claims to national rights in Palestine and Israel have often been staked in temporal terms, having to do with priority and continuity of residence, resulting in highly politicized narratives of population movement. Establishing a clear baseline in 1948 was therefore a way of establishing an authoritative and official narrative. And, as we have seen, during a period of massive immigration, temporal priority, and the associated privileges, could be legitimated by the same official and quantitative narrative.

This requirement dovetails with the requirements for statistical validity of the census, allowing the latter to define the state's temporal frontiers. Although it takes time to administer a census, to be valid, it must be carried out as though it was capturing a single moment in time. No one can be at two places at once, or can be counted more than once, and no one who is present during that moment can be missed. Exactly as Bachi argued, it must freeze the situation, so that it can be a fixed point by which to gauge the population flows that preceded it and were expected after it. It was through rigorous observance of the scientific conditions of the validity of the census that it was later to serve as a legitimate basis for assigning differential rights to subgroups of citizens.

CONCLUSIONS

We have argued that the census was crucial to the establishment of legitimate exclusion based on citizenship. It provided the spatial and temporal frame, within which all citizens were treated as formal equals, while those outside were defined as beyond the state's responsibilities. And it did so by following formal procedures, rationalized rituals, drawn from an international institutional order which guaranteed their legitimacy (Meyer and Scott 1983; Ventresca 1995). The census, and the statistical representation of the population, continues to play an important role in structuring Israeli nationhood and citizenship. It is used in particular to contain a tension between the liberal conception of citizenship embodied in statistics, and the ethnic/national discourse of citizenship still prominent in Israeli society, above all, in the law of return, guaranteeing immediate Israeli citizenship (and a package of relocation benefits and subsidies) to anyone who can demonstrate Jewish identity (Shafir and Peled 1998). But when objections are raised to this communally-based discrimination, the terms provided by statistics can be used to restore the definition of the citizens as equivalent individuals

before the state. Even when the statistical discourse is used effectively to expose unequal provision of rights and services, and to formulate programs to correct those inequities, it is used against claims to redress and recognition on the basis of collective identities. And the statistical outlook, by which the nation is composed of interchangeable equivalent individuals for whom ethnic or national identity is but an individual variable, has no doubt contributed to legitimating the denial of basic rights to the nearly three million Palestinians living under occupation, who are excluded from the citizenry.

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Notes

¹ Israel State Archives, Statistics, volume 41, gimel/107/18, January 1948.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Israel State Archives, Volume 41, gimel/117/33, October 1948.

⁵ Israel State Archives, Statistics, volume 41, gimel/107/18, January 1948.

⁶ The source for this quote, Yurman's 1983 article, was printed in the periodical of the ultra-nationalist Revisionist movement, *Ha'uma*. Although it may contain a somewhat idealized depiction of the administration of the census, it is enlightening for precisely this reason. It documents the determination to enforce strict bureaucratic rules under difficult conditions.

⁷ *Davar*, Nov. 9, 1948, "The Israeli Citizens Have Been Counted" (Heb.).

⁸ *Ha'aretz*, Nov. 9, 1948.

⁹ *Ha'aretz*, Nov. 9, 1948.

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