

# Governmentality, Territory and the U.S. Census: The 2004 Overseas Enumeration Test

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Accepted for publication in *Political Geography*, June 2009

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The definitive version will be published in *Political Geography*.  
doi: 10.1016/j.polgeo.2009.06.001 (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2009.06.001>)

**ABSTRACT:** In this article, I analyze the transcripts of Congressional hearings held in 1999, 2001 and 2004 on an Overseas Enumeration Test conducted by the United States Census Bureau in order to evaluate the prospect of including American citizens living abroad in the decennial census. As both citizen groups and state actors attempted to define the proper role of the census as a right (and a rite) of citizenship for Americans living abroad, the debate was framed by two distinct discourses of the function of the census in American society. First, some described participation in the census as an affective practice that is rich in symbolic meaning, one which both affirms individual identity and signifies belonging to the national community. On the other hand, the census was also portrayed as a technical process that must above all be accurate and efficient, with meaning derived from the application of accepted procedures in order to generate statistically valid data. I argue that, although the nation-building and data-generating functions of the census are not inherently contradictory, in this case they could not be reconciled because the population in question does not align with the national territorial borders that guide and delimit census procedures. The difficulty of balancing inclusion and accuracy to expand enumeration beyond territorial borders thus raises questions about the mutually constitutive relationship between territory and techniques of governance.

**KEYWORDS:** census; citizenship; expatriates; governmentality; territory; United States.

**RUNNING HEADER:** Governmentality, Territory and the U.S. Census

## INTRODUCTION: THE 2004 OVERSEAS ENUMERATION TEST

On January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2003, in response to a directive from the United States Congress, the Census Bureau announced that it would undertake a test census in France, Kuwait and Mexico “as the first step toward determining the feasibility of counting Americans living overseas in the 2010 Census” (United States Census Bureau, 2003). Advocacy organizations representing American citizens living abroad – a population estimated at 6.6 million by the U.S. State Department in 2005 (Association of Americans Resident Overseas, 2009) – had been lobbying Congress for inclusion since before the 2000 Census, driven by the conviction that an ‘official’ count would make this constituency more visible to lawmakers, and therefore more influential in policy-making. Although various government agencies – including the Department of Commerce, the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and the Internal Revenue Service – maintain partial data on Americans living abroad, no reliable or comprehensive database exists.

Furthermore, it is only the population count as measured in the decennial census that determines the apportionment of Congressional representatives among the 50 states. Currently, of the American population living abroad only government employees and their dependents are included in apportionment counts; therefore, ‘private’ American citizens living abroad, although they have the right to vote, do not count in the fundamental equations that balance population, territory and political representation in the United States.

Due to the results of the Census Bureau’s Overseas Enumeration Test, this situation is not likely to change in the foreseeable future. During a five-month enumeration period from February to July of 2004, just 5,865 respondents in France, 552 in Kuwait, and 3,091 in Mexico participated in the Overseas Enumeration Test – in each case, only a small fraction of the

estimated American population in those countries (5.8, 7.2, and 0.3 percent, respectively). The estimated combined response rate for the three test sites was only 0.8 percent, and the Census Bureau warned that the data “should not be considered to be representative of Americans living in the three test countries or of Americans living overseas” (Moran & Simon, 2005, 4).

Americans living abroad will not be included in the 2010 Census, Congress has not funded any further program development for enumeration outside the United States, and the failure of the Test seems to have effectively removed the issue from the agenda of advocates for Americans living abroad. Yet while the 2004 Overseas Enumeration Test may be little more than a footnote in the history of the United States Census, the episode yields useful insight into the nature of the census as a multifaceted technique of governance, and the challenges of governing an extraterritorial national population.

In this article, I analyze the transcripts of three Congressional hearings on the enumeration of Americans living abroad, of which two were held before the Overseas Enumeration Test, and one after. The ways that stakeholders framed arguments about the desirability and the feasibility of enumeration of Americans living abroad spoke volumes about these citizens’ complex position *vis-à-vis* the American political community as a whole – and also about the perceived role of the U.S. Census as a geospatial technique for reckoning, representing and constituting that political community. I identify two distinct discursive framings in discussions about including Americans living abroad in the census during these hearings. First, participation in the census was often posited as an affective practice that is rich in symbolic meaning, affirming individual identity and signifying belonging to the national community. On the other hand, the census was also portrayed as a technical process that must above all be accurate and efficient, with meaning derived from the application of accepted procedures in

order to generate statistically valid data. In the concluding section, I argue that although these two vital aspects of the United States Census, the affective and the calculative, are not inherently contradictory, they become irreconcilable in this case because the population in question does not align with the national territorial borders that guide and delimit census procedures. The difficulty of balancing inclusion and accuracy to expand enumeration beyond territorial borders thus raises questions about how governmental techniques such as the census are being reasserted and reconfigured in the contemporary era of neoliberal globalization and transnational migration.

### GOVERNMENTALITY, TERRITORY AND THE U.S. CENSUS

When the framers of the American Constitution included a provision for a decennial national census of population, they sought to address two pressing problems of the nascent United States of America: the need to raise revenue in some fair and systematic way from the states, and the need to codify the distribution of political representation among them (Anderson, 1988; Anderson & Fienberg, 1999). Yet the population census was an effective technique not only for managing relations between the collective territorial entities that formed the new republic, but also for encompassing and managing the people living within them. James C. Scott (1998, 3) locates the roots of modern statecraft in “rationalizing and standardizing what was a social hieroglyph into a legible and administratively more convenient format” through practices of identification, registration, and calculation of the population: the birth certificate, the passport, the land title, and the census form all serve to identify and delineate the governable individual, even as they enable their categorization and aggregation into a governable population (Caplan &

Torpey, 2001). In a post-Revolutionary America that was increasingly obsessed with quantification, census enumeration was seen by many as a vital means of understanding and improving American society (Cohen 1999).

The U.S. Census was instituted and refined over a period during which the American people became more and more invested in the production of statistically valid population counts. In her study of the development of numeracy in the United States, Patricia Cline Cohen (1999) argues persuasively that for an ever-increasing portion of nineteenth-century American society, “what was counted was what counted” (207). Cohen’s account of the influence of calculative practices and discourses in early America resonates with Michel Foucault’s elaboration of the concept of governmentality (1991, 2007), in which he suggested that governance in the modern era is achieved not only through state directives, but also through “mundane” practices, interactions and institutions which instill certain knowledges and habits and encourage individuals to actively participate in governing their own behavior and that of others (Rose & Miller, 1992, 175). Under such conditions the census becomes an important element of “the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics” that encompass, define, and regulate the population (Foucault, 2007, 108).

In the 1977-78 lecture series at the Collège de France in which he introduced the concept of governmentality, Foucault pointed to “problems of space” as central to his comparative analyses of the operations of sovereignty, discipline and governmentality (2007, 12; see also Elden, 2007b; Huxley, 2006, 2007). At the same time, however, his analysis tended to view the governance of territory as a waning concern in modern states, eclipsed by the development of techniques for governing population (Elden, 2007a). As such, the spatial constraints and implications of governmental power relations and the role of territory in governing populations

receded into the background. Geographers have thus contributed to an understanding of governmentality by elaborating on its inherent spatiality – for example, through analyses of the meanings and effects of surveying and mapping territory (Crampton, 2006, 2007; Edney, 1997; Rose-Redwood, 2006; Sparke, 1998) and of practices of data collection at various scales (Driver, 1988; Legg, 2005; Matless, 1992; Murdoch & Ward, 1997). A governmentality approach has illuminated the ways that the census not only observes already-existing populations and categories, but actively constructs them and shapes their characteristics by limiting the range of self-identifications that are legible and acceptable (Brown, 2000; Brown & Knopp, 2006; Christopher, 2002, 2009).

As a process contributing to the construction of both individual and group identity, the population census is also a significant factor in the construction of national political community. One reason for the expansion of the U.S. Census in the nineteenth century to include ever more detailed demographic and economic data was the hope that “the cause of national harmony would be served ... by displaying the vast interrelations of all sections of the country” (Cohen, 1999, 177). The message of unity conveyed by the evolving procedures for collecting and publishing census data was simultaneously social and spatial. In his rich study of historical geographies of governmentality in Gilded Age America, for example, Matthew Hannah (2000) examines the ways that the United States Census was imbricated with the consolidation of the American nation-state, the “mastery of territory,” and the construction of the American nation. He shows that the census was a key aspect of the complex of techniques deployed to delineate and encompass both the national population and the national territory of the United States. One byproduct of this attention to territorializing the national population, emphasizing their location within the borders of the national territory as well as the states, counties, and municipalities

within them, is that it is difficult to account for intra- and international mobility of the population through standard census procedures.

Since the first census in 1790, census enumerators have relied on the “usual residence” principle, which requires that individuals be counted as residing at “the place where the person lives and sleeps most of the time” (United States Census Bureau, 2008). However, despite this apparent continuity, in practice the usual residence rule is open to different interpretations and to interventions by the legislative and judicial branches of government. As a result, there have been significant variations over the years in approaches to dealing with the enumeration of American citizens living outside the United States. The most common protocol has been exclusion: in only eight out of the twenty-two censuses between 1790 and 2000 have there been attempts to count certain groups of Americans living abroad – and these counts have usually been limited to government employees. Only in two censuses, those of 1960 and 1970, did the Census Bureau attempt to include all ‘private’ American citizens living outside the United States (Mills, 1993). In terms of that most central role of the census, the apportionment of Congressional representatives, Americans living outside the United States have been even less visible: only military and civilian federal employees abroad have ever been included in the counts used for apportionment, and only in the 1970, 1990, and 2000 censuses (Citro *et al.*, 2004; Mills, 1993).

Critical analyses of recent U.S. Censuses have shown the extent to which enumeration procedures both reflect and reinforce differences in status and political clout, by literally determining “who counts” (Anderson & Fienberg, 1999, 2000; see also Billard, 2000; Brunnell, 2000; Hannah, 2001; Johnston, 2002). In the debates surrounding the planning and assessment of the 2004 Overseas Enumeration Test, what was at stake was not only the broad issue of recognition, but also the calculation of ‘official’ counts that would allow Americans living

abroad to be included in apportionment and redistricting figures – thus solidifying a connection between citizens abroad and their Congressional representatives. Pressure on Congress to conduct a comprehensive census of Americans living abroad – which had not been attempted since the results of voluntary enumerations in 1960 and 1970 were deemed to be hopelessly flawed (Cork & Voss, 2006; Mills, 1993) – began to build in the 1990s. Two events in particular led to the issue’s increased political salience at this time. First, the inclusion of federal military and civilian personnel overseas in the 1990 apportionment counts led advocacy groups representing private American citizens living abroad to question why they shouldn’t be included as well (Small Hoover, 1999; Van Schooneveld, 1999). Second, after the decennial reapportionment of Congressional seats (a process which is based on the distribution of population by state, as recorded by the census) in both 1990 and 2000, lawsuits were filed on behalf of the states that narrowly missed out on the last Congressional seat. The State of Massachusetts (edged out by Washington State in 1990) and the State of Utah (edged out by North Carolina in 2000) each claimed that the inclusion of federal employees living outside the United States in the count unfairly biased the apportionment process in favor of states with large military installations (see *Franklin v. Massachusetts*, 505 U.S. 788, and *Utah v. Evans*, 536 U.S. 452). In both cases, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of counting federal employees abroad – but did not definitively state whether or not other categories of Americans living abroad should be included, thereby leaving the decision to Congress (Lee & Wolfson, 2003; Persily, 2004). In the next section, I introduce the Congressional hearings at which this question of whether and how to include extraterritorial citizens in the decennial census was taken up.

## METHODS: CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE

In the two sections that follow, I examine the dominant discourses used by governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to frame the debate over whether Americans living abroad should be included in the decennial census counts. This analysis is based on readings of three Congressional hearings – key documents in the ‘official’ U.S. government record of policy-oriented discussions of the Overseas Enumeration Test. Two of these hearings were direct precursors to the decision to conduct the 2004 Test: “Oversight of the 2000 Census: Examining the Bureau’s Policy to Count Prisoners, Military Personnel, and Americans Residing Overseas,” held on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1999; and “Americans Abroad, How can we Count Them?,” held on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2001. The third hearing, “Lessons Learned from the 2004 Overseas Census Test,” was held on September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2004, after the Test’s completion.

Testimony delivered before Congressional committees is not necessarily indicative of the full range of public opinion: participants are self-selected to be those with strong interest in the proceedings, and their very presence at the hearings is suggestive of a particular type of social capital resulting from professional or personal connections. Indeed, Gring-Pemble has persuasively argued that rhetorical practices in Congressional hearings may “facilitate elite discourse, discourage the inclusion of alternative public views, and delegitimize particular public voices” (2001, 343; see also Gring-Pemble, 2003; Leyden, 1995). Furthermore, Committee members can use Congressional hearings to advocate for particular policy directions. The hearings discussed below are a perfect example of this: when Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) – an avowed advocate for the inclusion of American citizens living abroad in the U.S. Census – became the ranking member of the House Government Reform Subcommittee on the Census in

1999, she was empowered to conduct two Congressional hearings on the matter which might not have otherwise taken place (Maloney, 2009). However, while these limitations should be borne in mind, the very partiality of Congressional hearings can make them a useful resource for better understanding the rhetorical strategies through which political debates are shaped and political decisions are justified (Chock, 1991), inasmuch as they signal which perspectives are sought out and privileged during the legislative process. The stakeholders who participated in the three hearings discussed below included members of Congress; representatives from U.S. federal agencies including the Department of State, the Census Bureau, and the Government Accountability Office; and representatives of political and citizen interest groups active in lobbying the U.S. government on behalf of Americans living abroad. Organizations whose representatives were invited to participate in the various proceedings included the American Business Council of Gulf Countries, American Citizens Abroad, the Association for Americans Resident Overseas, the Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas, Democrats Abroad, and Republicans Abroad – as well as the C2K Coalition and the Census 2010 Coalition, umbrella organizations for American groups abroad that wished to lobby for inclusion in the census. Taken together, the transcripts for these three hearings comprise 19 spoken statements and 25 written statements expressing stakeholder opinion on the desirability and the feasibility of enumerating Americans living abroad.

Examination of these collections of texts was based upon the epistemological orientation of discourse analysis, which emphasizes the work done by language in making social meaning, the connection between discourse and practice, and the ways that diverse spoken and written texts can work together to reinforce a broad system of meaning that delimits possible ways of understanding the social world (Mills, 1997). Through an iterative process of reading and re-

reading the hearings transcripts, looking for patterns of language and meaning, I identified a set of themes that came up repeatedly in stakeholders' spoken and written statements. I then assessed the relationships that linked these themes into broader systems of meaning, identifying two broad discourses that framed discussions of the enumeration of Americans living abroad. One discursive framing reflected in the Congressional hearings transcripts brought together themes of citizenship, identity, belonging, patriotism, representation, justice, and rights while explicitly tying these concerns to the social role of enumeration: this discourse posited participation in the census as a marker of national belonging and centered around the question of whether Americans living abroad 'deserved' to be counted. Second, there was also a significant counter-discourse that focused on technical questions, beginning from the idea that the primary function of the census is not to serve as a marker of belonging, but to provide a cost-effective, efficient, accurate and statistically valid enumeration of the U.S. population for the purposes of calculation and resource allocation. In the next two sections I discuss how these discourses of the nation-building census and the data-generating census operated in the three hearings on enumerating Americans living abroad.

### THE NATION-BUILDING CENSUS: BELONGING AND THE GOOD CITIZEN

An understanding of the census as a technology for nation-building and identity-formation was enthusiastically adopted by the stakeholders who testified before Congress in 1999 and 2001 in support of the enumeration of Americans abroad. Describing why Americans abroad might wish to be enumerated, chair of Democrats Abroad Joseph Smallhoover said that "it is, first of all, a

feeling of belonging to the American nation, of being part of the American people” (1999, 100). He also spoke of “the patriotic impact” of inclusion, subtly suggesting to his listeners that the desire for inclusion was a credit to the character of Americans living abroad – a sign of allegiance and love for country. Rep. Carolyn Maloney, the chair of the Census Subcommittee at the time, contended that all citizens should be included in the decennial census because it “is a great civic ceremony, really the only real civic ceremony that includes every single American” (2001, 10). Others echoed this argument; for example, Leigh Gribble of Republicans Abroad (and later of the Census 2010 Coalition) emphasized the desire to participate in a communal event, saying, “We want to be included alongside our fellow American citizens in this critical national event” (1999, 80) and that Americans abroad want to be included because “they want to be full-up regular Americans. Again, it is our citizenship. It is our patriotism. That is the bottom line” (1999, 108).

The significance of census enumeration to one’s sense of belonging to the national community was also communicated by descriptions of how it felt to be excluded. Witnesses said they felt that they were “invisible in the eyes of the Census Bureau” (McClelland, 2001, 63; see also Hamod, 1999; Van Schooneveld, 1999), or “[treated] as nobodies” (Hamod, 1999, 63). However, what was at issue was not merely being seen – but also being valued. Tom Fina of Democrats Abroad told Congress that including Americans living abroad in the decennial census might help to heal a rift between these citizens and the American state – a rift that had been caused by the latter’s indifference:

A census will respond to the patriotic desire of the American community around the world to be counted, to be measured, to be seen in its proper proportions as a dynamic part of our society. It will reveal the importance to our economy and to our society of our overseas citizens. And the conduct of the census will help to dispel the notion so prevalent among Americans abroad that our government

doesn't care about their interests and values, their contribution to the well-being and the richness of our society. (Fina, 2001, 46)

Fina's assertion, then, was that counting is caring, with inclusion an affirmation of the identity and value of the individual. In a similar vein, Dorothy Van Schooneveld of American Citizens Abroad extolled the "positive emotional message" that would be sent by inclusion in enumeration, the message being "We know you are there and we care" (1999, 86). In 2004 Leigh Gribble (now representing the American Business Council of the Gulf Countries and the Census 2010 Coalition) went so far as to say that, as an American living in Iraq, "[he did] not exist, according to the census" (44). Census enumeration, then, was typically portrayed as a symbol of belonging and, conversely, exclusion from that enumeration was equated to exclusion from the American political community itself.

#### "I Vote and Pay Taxes": Practices of the Good Citizen

In addition to assertions of citizenship status in and of itself, stakeholders also argued that most Americans living abroad could make a particular claim to inclusion if they earned it by being "good" citizens. Census enumeration in the United States does not require the enumerated to meet some standard of morality or good citizenship. In fact, it has never been limited to citizens or even to eligible voters; rather, all residents are counted regardless of citizenship status or any particular standard of behavior. Nevertheless, advocates for Americans abroad typically made their case for enumeration with some reference to having earned it through behaviors associated with being a good citizen – the two most frequently cited being voting and paying taxes. Voting and paying taxes, voting and paying taxes: this pair recurs again and again in Congressional

testimonies and published materials, invoked endlessly as a justification for inclusion (see, e.g., Betancourt, 2001, 16; Gribble, 2001, 56; Laederich, 2001, 92; McClelland, 2001, 63; Smallhoover, 1999, 100).

Some of this desire to be seen as “good citizens” certainly stems from a sense of being viewed with suspicion, of being “put a bit on the defensive” by encountering an “if you love it, why did you leave it?” attitude (Van Schooneveld, 1999, 115). Americans living abroad may feel pressure to prove that the only difference between them and their compatriots “back home” is that they don’t happen to be living in the United States:

Like Americans who reside within the fifty United States and the District of Columbia, U.S. citizens abroad vote in the United States, pay U.S. taxes, and generally stay in touch with their home communities. (Marans, 2001, 83)

The almost ritualistic repetition of the phrase Congressional testimony suggests that it became a shorthand for doing the things that upstanding citizens living in the United States do.

Furthermore, the strategic evocation of “voting and paying taxes” introduced the idea of citizenship as a relationship that balances rights and responsibilities: the repetition of this theme keeps in the forefront the fact that Americans living abroad are subject to taxation but experience a barrier to representation, and that they are allowed to vote for representatives in Congress but can’t influence their apportionment among the states. In the equation of citizens’ rights and responsibilities, then, inclusion in census enumeration was cast as a right denied to deserving citizens.

## “Ambassadors of American Values and Democracy”: The Good Citizen Goes Global

The figure of the “good” American citizen living abroad is constructed not only through reference to the faithful performance of formal citizenship practices, however, but also through depictions of Americans abroad as high-performing neoliberal subjects – proactive, knowledgeable and competent actors in globalizing socio-cultural and economic networks. Representatives of Americans living abroad, and sympathetic politicians, have often referred to them as unofficial “diplomats” or “ambassadors” of the United States (e.g. Gilman, 2001, 28; Gribble, 1999, 81; Hamod, 1999, 60; Laederich, 2001, 92; see also Michaux, 1996). This role, which is seen as directly benefiting the United States, has two seemingly inextricable aspects: the cultural and the economic. Americans abroad were described in Congressional hearings as “spreading American democratic ideals and cultural values in their foreign communities” and “exemplifying the American way of life” (Van Schooneveld, 1999, 85) – a process that was in all cases explicitly described as beneficial to American economic interests. The following statements are typical:

Americans abroad promote democratic ideals and policies, individual liberty, free enterprise, the American way of life, and last, but not least, American imports. (Small Hoover, 1999, 100)

Our members know from experience that they and their families are valuable overseas “ambassadors” for America; we pay taxes, many of us work for American companies abroad, we buy American, and we contribute to giving the United States a good image in our host countries. (Laederich, 2001, 92)

Here, the “American way of life” is invoked in concert with participation in American commodity chains as producers and/or consumers (see also Workman, 2001, 65). The potential significance of Americans living abroad in this respect is reinforced by explicit references to economic globalization. Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-NY), who had introduced a “Full Equality for

Americans Abroad Act” in May of 2001, emphasized the importance of Americans abroad in the global economy as follows:

In this era of growing globalization, we are well aware of the importance placed upon our nation’s exports of goods and services overseas in an effort to provide a strong and versatile economy. Not only are we reliant on Americans abroad to carry out exports for the creation of U.S.-based jobs, but we rely on these citizens to best promote and advance our interests throughout the world. (Gilman, 2001, 28)

Drawing on themes of competitiveness, flexibility, and global reach, Gilman identifies Americans abroad as useful allies in the strengthening of the American economy. This notion of Americans abroad as valuable assets working to “[advance] national interests around the world” (Miller, 1999, 1) is taken up as another reason why they “deserve” to be enumerated in the decennial census.

Furthermore, arguments that painted Americans living abroad as beneficial to national interests were mobilized in order to protest the inclusion of *some* groups of American citizens abroad – namely, members of the armed forces and federal employees, and their dependents – but not others. By emphasizing the potentially beneficial role of Americans living abroad as “ambassadors” for American culture and economy, advocates for their inclusion in census enumeration hoped to destabilize this distinction and cast Census Bureau Policy as discriminatory (Gilman, 2001, 28). In his testimony at the 1999 hearings, Census Bureau Director Kenneth Prewitt suggested that Americans deployed outside the United States for military service or as employees of other federal agencies constitute a special case, having been sent abroad in the service of the country (Prewitt, 1999). However, aside from this brief reminder of the rationale for partial enumeration – which does cast “private” American citizens living abroad as less worthy of inclusion in the census – there were virtually no attempts to contradict assertions of the value and virtue of the citizen abroad, or to call into question the assumption

that inclusion in the census should be interpreted as a right of citizenship. Instead of directly countering the emotion-laden arguments in favor of enumeration, objections to the inclusion of Americans living abroad in the decennial census were framed in technical terms that emphasized the role of the census as a data-generating technique that must produce statistically valid population counts. In the next section, I examine how the discourse of the data-generating census, and in particular the idea of accuracy, framed debate in the Congressional hearings held both before and after the Overseas Enumeration Test.

#### THE DATA-GENERATING CENSUS: ACCURACY AND EFFICIENCY

Notions of the census as a technique for the generation of accurate, reliable population counts constituted a significant counter-discourse to arguments that were based on a view of the census as primarily about nation-building and identity formation. Questions about technical feasibility were raised mostly by representatives of the Census Bureau and the Government Accountability Office (or GAO, a watchdog agency charged with monitoring the activities of federal agencies on behalf of taxpayers). Kenneth Prewitt, then-Director of the Census Bureau and one of the few voices in the 1999 and 2001 hearings who had little enthusiasm for the prospect of enumeration abroad, was skeptical that established census procedures could work successfully outside the United States. Speaking at the 1999 hearings, he raised concerns about the potential accuracy and validity of the count; in particular, he pointed out that the lack of a foreign equivalent to the master address file (MAF) presented a significant technical barrier:

The difficulty is we cannot accurately estimate the size of the universe of this population so we do not have the means of controlling and checking the progress

as we do here at home, where we use the master address file to control the enumeration. (Prewitt, 1999, 35-6)

Within the United States, the MAF is used to try to ensure that all households receive a census form, and returned forms can be checked against the list to determine where enumerators should be dispatched to contact non-respondents. In this way, the MAF maximizes coverage of the population while allowing the Census Bureau to estimate non-response rates. Both of these factors are essential to claims that the domestic enumeration is statistically valid (if imperfect, particularly in its coverage of economically disadvantaged populations).

A similar procedure is, of course, not possible on a global scale. Prewitt argued that without a “master list” against which census responses from abroad could be checked, the count would have to be “voluntary” – leading to the introduction of bias. There would be no way to ascertain whether those who participated in the census were representative of the entire population of Americans living abroad, he explained, and therefore the data could not meet Census Bureau standards for statistical validity. In particular, he was concerned that a self-selected sample of Americans abroad might not be proportionally representative of distribution by home state, and would therefore introduce bias into apportionment counts:

Now, could we do a poor job, a sloppy job, an inaccurate job, a job which might risk distorting the apportionment numbers? Certainly. Would the Census Bureau want to do that sort of job? Of course not. (Prewitt, 1999, 39)

The apportionment of Congressional representatives among the 50 states according to population is one of the core functions of the census – indeed, this is the purpose for which the framers of the United States Constitution initially instituted a decennial census (Anderson, 1988). Arguably, the current residence rules, under which federal employees and members of the armed forces serving abroad are included in their home states’ apportionment counts, are already biased because they unfairly benefit certain states – particularly those with large military installations.

However, from Prewitt's perspective, the inclusion of these groups was justifiable because the enumeration could be validated by checking against another kind of "master list" – the employment records maintained by federal agencies.

"A 100 percent undercount": accuracy as inclusion

In the two pre-test hearings, the Director of the Census Bureau was firm in his assessment of the technical barriers to an effective enumeration of Americans living abroad – yet Prewitt's testimony appeared to have little impact on the debate. This may be attributable in large part to the tendency of Congressional hearings to privilege certain pre-determined lines of argument (Talbert *et al.*, 1995): in the 1999 and 2001 hearings, there was considerable momentum behind the idea that American citizens living abroad should be included in Census enumeration. In these hearings, at which proponents for inclusion were in the majority, Prewitt's arguments about the technical barriers to an enumeration of American citizens living abroad were dismissed as unproductive or even willfully obstructive. In the 2001 hearing Committee Chair Carolyn Maloney, an advocate for the greater inclusion of Americans living abroad in domestic politics, chastised the Census Bureau about its lack of enthusiasm for the project:

I understand the concerns and difficulties that the Census Bureau has in this challenge, but it seems that the Census Bureau would rather continue to list the challenges than come up with the possible solutions. I don't want to minimize the hurdles that are before us ... Yes these hurdles can only be surmounted by hard work, not bellyaching on the part of the Bureau. (Maloney, 2001, 9)

Maloney's evident exasperation at what she called Prewitt's "bellyaching" is indicative of the extent to which talk of the census as a process of data generation grated against the idea that

decisions about enumeration procedures should be based primarily on principles of inclusion and shared national identity.

However, this did not mean that supporters of an Overseas Enumeration Test eschewed the language of accuracy and validity. On the contrary, some participants seized on this discursive framing of the role of the census to argue in favor of inclusion: glossing over the Census Bureau's specific technical concerns about bias and verifiability, they argued that expanding the United States Census to include Americans living abroad would actually provide a *more* accurate picture of the American population. For example, in a direct response to Prewitt's 1999 testimony, David Hamod of the Census 2000 Coalition took this approach:

The Census Bureau says it wants Census 2000 to be the most accurate census ever but the Bureau cannot willingly and knowingly exclude millions of Americans living overseas and still claim with any credibility that its work is accurate. And I was a bit surprised, I have to admit, that the Director of the Census Bureau this morning said that a 100 percent undercount, which is what we have right now, is better than, say, a 50 percent undercount. (Hamod, 1999, 661)

Hamod and others, in arguing that "something is better than nothing," acknowledged the significance of generating accurate data about the American population while rejecting the Census Bureau's more computationally sophisticated definition of accuracy. Prewitt's arguments about distributional representativeness and biased samples were therefore cast by some other participants in the hearings as overly fastidious quibbling that overlooked the "big picture" problem of excluding a particular group from the census. In this way, concerns about the validity of the data-generating census were incorporated into and subsumed by the prevailing focus on inclusion, rights and the nation-building census. The very meaning of 'accuracy' was called into question.

## “Standards of Measurable Quality”: Assessments of the Overseas Enumeration Test

In the Congressional hearing held after the completion of the Overseas Enumeration Test in 2004, however, the terrain of the debate shifted. The Test results had been disappointing to those who hoped for the eventual extension of the U.S. Census beyond American territory: there were fewer than 10,000 respondents in the three test sites of France, Kuwait and Mexico, for an estimated combined response rate of less than one percent (Moran & Simon, 2005, 4).

Furthermore, with a pilot test completed there was now concrete data to consider: whereas the two pre-Test Congressional hearings were venues for discussing aspirations and the hypothetical benefits of enumerating Americans living abroad, the third hearing focused on the assessment phase – and, in particular, on the practical barriers identified in post-Test assessments that were being conducted by the Census Bureau and the Government Accountability Office. Both of these agencies concluded that the 2004 Test had ruled out the possibility of conducting an effective census of Americans living outside the territory of the United States.

Tasked with issuing objective conclusions based on the “feasibility, quality and cost” of a prospective enumeration abroad (Kostinich & Sheppard, 2005, ii), Census Bureau analysts were not directed to weigh these concerns against the emotion-laden claims that had justified the Overseas Enumeration Test in the first place. Unsurprisingly, their assessments of accuracy were guided by established census procedures rather than by the ideal of full inclusion of Americans living abroad. Charles L. Kincannon, Kenneth Prewitt’s successor as Director of the Census Bureau, prefaced his 2004 remarks before Congress with an acknowledgement of the role of the census as “a civic ritual” and of the importance of “the critical question” of “who counts” (7).

Yet his main message was that, as Prewitt had predicted in the 1999 and 2001 hearings, an enumeration of Americans living abroad would not be technically feasible:

[T]he Census Bureau has determined that taking a census overseas would present unique difficulties, difficulties that cannot be resolved by the methods and tools that the Census Bureau uses to conduct the census stateside. This indicates that without the capabilities to meet high standards of measurable quality, we would be unable to provide data likely to fulfill the purpose for which the decennial census is collected; that is, apportionment, redistricting and the distribution of Federal funds. (Kincannon, 2004, 9)

Here an accurate extraterritorial enumeration is seen to be impossible because it cannot possess the characteristics of the current U.S. Census which allow for “*measurable* quality” – in other words, a count that is not only accurate, but quantifiably so. Kincannon explained that the procedures used by the Census Bureau to ensure measurable quality could not be deployed in an enumeration abroad: it would be voluntary rather than mandatory; there would be no Master Address File to guide enumerators; field work to follow up on non-responses would be prohibitively difficult; and there would be no reliable estimate of the target population (*ibid.*, 8).

In her testimony, Patricia Dalton, Director for Strategic Issues at the Government Accountability Office, concurred with the conclusions of the Census Bureau – but also emphasized the prohibitive cost of trying to mount a global census of Americans living abroad. She argued that the Test proved that such a census “would require enormous resources and still not yield data that are comparable in quality to the stateside count” (2004, 14). Because the GAO had identified both the 2000 and the 2010 Censuses as programs at high risk for “waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement” (Government Accountability Office, 1997, 2003), Dalton was therefore skeptical about the prospect of expanding census procedures outside the United States. In a report presented at the 2004 hearing, the GAO encouraged Congress to focus on the domestic count so as not to “stretch the resources” of the Census Bureau:

As the Bureau already faces the near-daunting task of securing a successful stateside count in 2010, having to simultaneously count Americans abroad would only add to the challenges it faces. (Government Accountability Office, 2004, i)

Advocates for an extraterritorial census suggested measures for improving coverage, such as making participation mandatory for Americans living abroad and improving public outreach measures (Gribble, 2004; Laederich, 2004); however, the GAO (like the Census Bureau) was not convinced that “any refinements or additional resources would generate substantially better data” (Government Accountability Office, 2004, 2). Consequently, Dalton urged Congress to cease funding the development and testing of overseas enumeration procedures. Instead, she suggested that they might consider alternative ways of counting Americans living abroad, using separate surveys, administrative data from various federal agencies, or census data collected by other countries – options that may help to develop better estimates of the number and distribution of Americans living abroad, but would not lead to their inclusion in apportionment counts.

## CONCLUSION

Speaking at the 2004 Congressional hearing about the recently completed Overseas Enumeration Test, Rep. Carolyn Maloney objected to Census Bureau and GAO findings that the enumeration of American citizens living abroad would be infeasible and that the issue should be dropped, saying:

We should begin to count Americans abroad. And I am getting tired of this. We had one director [of the Census Bureau] who was committed to it, then we had a second director who was committed to it. Everybody says they want to do it. Everybody says it is the fair thing to do. And then they say, we can't do it. And I just don't understand that. (Maloney, 2004, 67-8).

The contradiction that Maloney identifies in this statement is not, after all, a particularly shocking one. We might all imagine examples of legislative and bureaucratic bodies wishing to do something, agreeing that something is right to be done, but concluding that it cannot be because it is too costly, too time-consuming, or too difficult. Nevertheless, in this concluding section I want to further consider the contradiction between “the fair thing” and the practical thing in the particular case of the enumeration of American citizens living abroad – its source, its significance, and its implications for thinking about how the practices of governance are evolving as a result of the extraterritorial extent of national populations.

In this article I have shown how discussions of the Overseas Enumeration Test were framed by two distinct discourses of the function of the census in American society: one which emphasized its role as a nation-building technique that encompasses and unifies the national political community, and one which emphasized its purpose as a data-generating technique that must produce complete, accurate and statistically valid data for use in structuring political representation and administering government programs. These two distinct ways of talking about the census are not random, of course, but arise from two distinct governmental rationalities underlying census procedures: enumeration acts both as a technique for the production of population data for calculative purposes, and as a technique for communicating a sense of national belonging. These two vital aspects of the census, the calculative and the affective, are not inherently contradictory: they rarely come into conflict in the process of domestic enumeration, where in fact including as many members of the national community as possible is seen as a way of increasing accuracy. However, the debates in Congressional hearings before and after the Overseas Enumeration Test suggest that the nation-building and data-generating functions of the census become irreconcilable when enumeration is extended to encompass an

extraterritorial population. Hitting upon this irreconcilability, enumeration advocate Leigh Gribble tried to counter the findings of the Census Bureau and the GAO that census counts outside of American territory would be impractical and technically infeasible by arguing that these were the wrong metrics: instead of “[focusing] on the logistical and the statistical,” he urged Congress to consider “whether it is moral and right” to exclude American citizens living abroad (2004, 44). In other words, Congress was in the position of having to choose between inclusion and an accurate, efficient census count.

In this, the Overseas Enumeration Test serves as a reminder of the multifaceted and contingent nature of techniques of governmentality – and also of their inherent spatiality. The census not only renders the national population visible, calculable and governable: it does so in part by aligning that population with the territory of the United States, and defining it in terms of both external borders and internal spatial organization. As Matthew Hannah argues in a recent study of West German census boycotts of the 1980s, “the calculable population is most clearly and explicitly indexed to calculable territory” through processes of enumeration (2009, 73-4). Here calculable territory (see also Elden, 2007a) is conceptualized as both the basis for and the outcome of state intervention – and as a potential site of political dissent. Yet in no modern nation-state can knowledge that encompasses the entire national population be gained through census procedures that are limited to “doorways, hallways and mailboxes throughout the national territory” (Hannah, 2009, 73). The population census expects, envisions, and enacts a static relationship between population and territory that has never been ‘true’ and is only becoming less so. Thus the prospect of census-taking beyond territorial borders – and outside of the nation-state’s calculable territory – raises not only practical barriers to implementation, but theoretical

questions about the mutually constitutive relationship between territory and techniques of governance.

The debate around the Overseas Enumeration Test suggests that territorially-bounded mechanisms of governance, such as the population census, retain political importance amidst developing regimes of what Larner and Walters (2004) call “global governmentality.” In the American case, decennial enumeration is used to delineate electoral districts and to determine how many representatives each state will have in the United States Congress; as such, the census links the population-territory matrix to the formal political structures of the national state, and to important dimensions of political representation. Therefore, organizations representing American citizens living abroad actively lobbied Congress for inclusion in enumeration, seeing it as beneficial to their status as both individual constituents and collective constituency. At the same time, however, the failure of the Overseas Enumeration Test, and more importantly the inability of Congress to reconcile the goals of inclusion and accuracy, suggest that we should attend to the limits of the census as a technique of governmentality in an era of intensifying globalization – and more broadly, perhaps, to the difficulty of re-territorializing the techniques that evolved to govern the Westphalian nation-state.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The larger research project from which this article is drawn was supported by the Howard Martin Fund of the Department of Geography at the University of Washington, and by a Chester Fritz Fellowship from the University of Washington’s Graduate School. I am grateful to peers and mentors at the University of Washington and to three anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful critique.

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