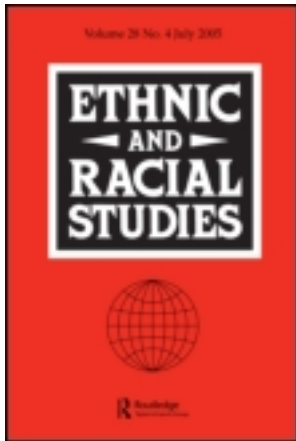


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# Numbering the nationalities: ethnic minorities in Norwegian population censuses 1845–1930

Einar Lie

## Abstract:

Between 1845 and 1930 the relatively small minority groups in Norway – the Samis and Kvens – were counted in Norwegian censuses on the basis of ‘objective’ criteria settled by the State’s Central Bureau of Statistics. The censuses data supplied a foundation for the repressive policy towards minorities. But in identifying alien nationalities within the Norwegian borders, the census classifications also contributed in shaping the boundaries between the Norwegians and ‘the others’. Especially the construction of mixed categories reveals substantial changes in this period. In the last part of the nineteenth century, their categorization was based mostly on language, and the distinctions that were made between Norwegians and minorities were largely cultural. The more pronounced race rhetoric of the interwar period re-shaped the concepts of nationalities and brought about a much greater emphasis on purely genealogical factors.

**Keywords:** Norwegian minorities; census; ethnicity; nationalism; race; classification.

‘The Norwegian population is exceptionally homogeneous’, stated the influential chief of the Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], Anton Nicolai Kiær,<sup>1</sup> in the introductory chapter of a book where the results of the 1875 national census were analysed and summarized (Kiær 1882, p. 144). The only deviations from this homogeneity were the Sami and Kven peoples in Northern Norway: The Sami were the indigenous peoples of the Nordkalotten region, who had inhabited the region since ancient times. The Kven comprised immigrants from Finland and their descendants. Neither individually nor as a group did these people represent a particularly large segment of Norway’s population. According to the statistics at the time, there were about 15,718 ‘pure’ Sami and 7,594 ‘pure’ Kvens. After taking into account the ‘mixed population,’ about 4,000 were added to each of these groups to arrive at an exact

quantification of 'the foreign element' in the Norwegian population. Despite the relatively small size of this group, it was nevertheless given exhaustive treatment in this book, just as it had received it in the preparatory work and implementation of the preceding and following censuses.

The national census for 1845 was the first to use separate categories for the Sami and Kvens,<sup>2</sup> as they will be referred to in the following discussion. (The terms used in most of this period were respectively 'Lapps' and 'Finns', which already in those days, but even more so today, are considered pejorative.) Although previous censuses had counted the minority population, usually because the local civil servants considered this important supplementary information to the statistics the authorities had explicitly requested, the Sami and Kven were grouped together as one (Torp 1986). From 1865, not only were the Sami and Kven counted separately, but it also became mandatory to count the 'mixed population' and to specify what type of 'mix' the individual was made up of. Thus up to World War II, every national census in Norway since 1845 represented an attempt to define and quantify the minority population in one way or another.

### **The national censuses, state policy, and construction of identity**

The earliest censuses were formulated to meet the specific needs of the state: They counted mainly men, and to some degree also their property so that the state could effectively collect taxes and enforce the draft. Some presentations of the history of the census (e.g. Wilcox 1930; Starr 1983) emphasize how the relationship between the state and the people – those who counted and those who were counted – gradually shifted. Not until after the mid 1700s did the production of statistics begin to serve purposes other than the placement of burdens in the form of taxes and conscription of military personnel. The results of the censuses were kept secret; in studies of such countries as Russia and China, it has also been demonstrated how there has long been a tight bond between the secret police and the production of statistics (Blum 2000). By the 1800s, the asymmetrical relationship between the state and the people was then replaced with a more symbiotic relationship throughout the more liberal states. This gradual metamorphosis brought the state and its citizens together in the effort to obtain important information about society. As the collection of statistics was gradually separated from the administrative agencies that monitored individual persons, levied taxes, and drafted personnel for military service, the censuses also became more advanced, detailed, and reliable.

The evolution of the Norwegian national census can also be told as a story of gradual de-politicization: in 1660 and 1701, most of the male population was counted. The first census to cover the entire population

was developed in 1769, and in 1801 the first nominative census was held in Denmark-Norway. For the first time, people were registered by name, residence, and social position/occupation. However, none of the results of these censuses was published at the time.

Ten-year censuses were taken between 1815 and 1855. These censuses were purely numerical, not nominative, but they contained an increasing amount of data on, e.g., socio-economic, medical, and ethnic factors. It was not until 1815 that the first census was published. Although the Norwegian parliament rejected financing the publication of the 1825 census, all subsequent censuses were published as soon as they were fully compiled. From 1815 to 1855, and later to the censuses in 1865 and 1875, a growing number of local officials took part in the enumeration. In 1865, self-reporting was introduced, which meant that the home-owners themselves filled out the forms, which were checked and collected by the officials. In rural districts, it was still the enumerators who filled out the forms, but 'other qualified people' apart from the official functionaries also participated in this work. For subsequent censuses, the magistrates recruited, with the blessing of the CBS, volunteer enumerators to go around, collecting and checking the lists. Thus, the people themselves gradually became involved in the important censuses, to the benefit of the entire society.

A story like this is based on the true story – but it could and should be told otherwise. This way of constructing the history corresponds with a common way of conceptualizing statistics: as a technically neutral tool, one that can be used in politics, but is in itself apolitical. More recent works that have studied the census in a cultural-historical perspective have written other stories that do not end up with a neutral and non-ideological statistics where technical and practical issues dominate. These stories have focused on how the census has helped to separate the normal from the abnormal, and how in complex political-administrative systems it has functioned as an important tool to monitor the population by categorizing certain social and ethnic groups.

Some studies have shown how the practice of statistics has not remained as distant from the political and other administrative apparatuses as the rhetoric from the statistical bureaux would imply. A study by William Seltzer and Margo Anderson (2000) on the use of census material in the United States in connection with interning Japanese immigrants and their offspring during World War II is characteristic, but not the only example of this (see Seltzer 1998 for references). Espen Sørbye (2000) has in a recent study examined the role of statistics in the deportation of Norwegian Jews during WW II. Local population registers were used in the preparation of the arrests but census data did not play any role. This was probably because the records were of marginal value for the ruling regime – little was done to protect the information concerned from possible misuse.

In this connection, it is worth noting that, for the Norwegian national

censuses in the 1800s, distinguishing between statistics and other tasks of the state protected only certain groups from the CBS releasing their personal information to others. Several times it was made clear that the national censuses had a *general* objective, and that the individual person should not worry that the information would be misused. In specific instances, it appears that it was only individual data for *taxation purposes* that was not to be released from the Central Bureau. In practice, those who did not pay taxes or who had a lower social standing were more poorly protected. The Central Bureau's archives contain a number of examples of instances where transcripts of the personal forms of certain individuals and groups were made at the request of other governmental agencies. These were people with little social and political influence in society, such as minorities, vagrants, and welfare recipients. But the only examples found of transcripts of information from whole groups, concerns the minorities.

Several of these examples show that placement in certain categories could have consequences. But to see how statistics shaped social conceptions, we must step back and look at where and how statistical classification originated. What kind of role did the statistical grouping of the population play in the conceptualization of how society is constructed and composed?

The point of departure for almost all modern statistical activity is precisely that of creating equivalence between individual occurrences or objects (Desrosières 1998). Equivalence enables the statistician to summarize and make comparisons. Also to understand or explain an object will often mean having to place it, or attempting to place it, in a certain group or comparing it with something that is known. Law and medicine are both built upon comprehensive systems of categorizing individual instances, where the result of the categorization often determines the outcome. And in our everyday lives we classify almost without interruption. Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Star's (1999) book about classification goes under the title *Sorting things out*, and is introduced with an overview of the authors' own classifications made during the course of a normal day: Sorting laundry, incoming mail, magazines that are read and not read, etc.

The categories in statistics are naturally not constructed in a vacuum within a statistical bureau, but often reflect and amplify existing conceptualizations in politics, science, and government in general. Overlapping categories will normally exist throughout various parts of society. But the categories and concepts in statistics often have a very strong normative power. Statistics have always carried an aura of being the most factual and objective 'facts' there are. Statistics are generated through complex process involving large bureaucracies, and it is difficult to see how they are derived – and yet they can be used without question in the simplest and most speculative arguments. And in practical terms, it is naturally difficult to use quantitative data in line of reasoning

without using the same concepts as those used in the statistics. As Theodore Porter (1994, p. 49) puts it: 'Public statistics are able to describe social reality partly because they help to define it.'

Most categories, in statistics and in other areas, have a marginal impact on the understanding of social relations, formation of identity, and definitions. Other categories can have clear legal and institutional consequences. This applies especially to the definitions of indigenous populations in countries such as the United States and Canada, and the definition of 'colored' and 'black' in South Africa under apartheid (Davis 1991, Blanck 1998, Bowker and Star 1999). The criteria for defining a category and the consequences of belonging to it will in such instances be related, while in other instances each can be changed independently of the other. The distinction between child and adult, woman and man, and mentally ill and of sound mind, have always had consequences of a social nature, both formal and informal, and these have changed over time. On the other hand, the boundaries between woman and man are today about the same as they were 200 years ago, but the social consequences have changed dramatically.

In a statistical context, the changes that are caused by shifts in categorization are the most interesting. Establishing and modifying categories such as 'Lapps,' 'Norwegian', 'vagrant', 'idiot', 'worker', and 'unproductive pauper' will have consequences for how a society looks and functions. These concepts, gathered from Norwegian censuses from the late 1900s, are examples of what the Swedish historian Anders Berge (1995, 1998) calls classifying collective concepts. These concepts make up social categories that are normally associated with certain 'types' of individuals that are considered to have certain qualities and traits. And when an individual is placed in a certain category, he is often expected to have the same qualities as the imagined 'type.' Such classifications help shape identity and create unity. Connections between the categories in the national censuses, the creation of states, and the construction of national solidarity have been analysed in studies by such authors as Benedict Anderson (1983), Margo Anderson (1988), Silvana Patricia (1996), and to some degree, Eric Hobsbawm (1990). These studies show that constructing groups to be bearers of national identity excludes some parts of the population while others are included. Distinguishing groups from one another, the 'actual' or the 'normal', is a main theme in a number of other works that use official statistics as a point of departure, where the construction of medical and especially ethnic categories has been examined.

### **Ranking the nationalities**

In general, the CBS became the leading institution for social and economic research and investigations in Norway in the late nineteenth

century (Lie 2001, 2002). With respect to the issue of minorities, the CBS was more than just a central tabulation and publishing office in this period. It was here that guidelines were drawn up for defining exactly what a 'Sami' and a 'Kven' were. Sami and Kven issues were often discussed in politics with the point of departure in figures and concepts from the official statistics. And the local civil servants who were involved in census work received instructions from central authorities explaining who and what the minorities were. This gave the CBS their power over definitions.

It is also noteworthy that the CBS used the terms 'Lapp' and 'Finn' almost invariably throughout the most intense Norwegianization period. In his book from 1882, Director Kiær (1882, p. 144) pointed out in an introductory note that the most correct would have perhaps been to use the terms 'Samæk' and 'soumalaiset,' since they more closely resembled the words that the minorities used in their own language, while the official terms 'have a certain disparaging connotation.' Full stop, end of note. After that, Kiær continued to use the stigmatizing terms 'Lapps' and 'Finns' in his further discussion. And even the presentation of the census results provides a condensed picture of how the minorities were placed in the bigger picture of the nation's human resources. In 1900, the fourth volume of the national census presented 'Population according to nationality, birthplace, religion: The blind, deaf-mute, and insane.' In 1910, the comparable volume was called 'Finns and Lapps. Returned Norwegian-Americans. Dissidents. The blind, deaf, and insane.' The only place these people ever encountered one another was in the national census. Here they were portrayed as threats and challenges to the civilized, as losers and burdens on society, and as examples of what did not fall into the normal statistical picture.

In their extensive written analysis of the census material, the CBS used the terms 'race' and 'nationality' interchangeably – although in both the questionnaires and in the tables, however, the main term used was 'nationality.' And the way this term was used reflects a clearly limited conceptualization of nation. In the literature on nationalism, a distinction is often made between the French and the German inspired conceptualizations of nationality (Hobsbawm 1990, Østerud 1994). The first goes back to the French enlightenment philosophy and revolutionary ideology. In this tradition, the term 'nation' means a voluntary union of people within a country's borders; it comprises people who are subject to the same laws, with the same rights and obligations. In the German version, the term 'nation' implies a group of people with the same culture and heritage: an outsider cannot simply 'move into' a nation, he must be born into it.

The category of 'nationality' in the Norwegian national censuses is definitely closer to the German than the French tradition. It is noteworthy that the instructions accompanying the census never explain how



a Sami or a Kven should be defined: only the mixed population. It was clearly assumed that the enumerators could tell just by looking what a 'Lapp' or a 'Finn' was. This becomes even clearer when immigrants from other countries (usually regions that were geographically proximate) did not belong to foreign nationalities. They were 'persons born abroad': that is to say, as long as they did not belong to either of the two minority groups that were distinguished in the national censuses. In the mixed population accounts, an immigrant who *was not* a 'Lapp' or a 'Finn' could also count as a full-blooded Norwegian if he or she married a person from one of the minority groups. A Sami woman with deep roots in Norwegian soil could never become 'Norwegian.' But she could have half-Norwegian children if she married a high-status white man from Sweden. From 1891, her children could even be considered full-blooded Norwegians – as long as they spoke Norwegian at home.

Throughout the entire process of enumerating the Sami and the Kven – from the preparatory work, through the sorting, the processing, and to the concluding analysis of the completed tables – the mixed categories were central. When we try to find out how statistics were used and conceptualized terms such as 'nationalities', 'cultures', and 'races', construction and interpretation of mixed categories are important. The first time this category was used was in 1865, when the nationalities of the parents of the person of mixed origin were to be registered. Ten years later, as mentioned above, the census not only asked about the nationality of each parent, it also allowed for the possibility of each parent coming from mixed heritage.

This kind of information was important in censuses from other countries as well. Canada was one of the first countries to introduce laws designed to protect the political and social rights of its indigenous population. Here, the paternal line determined who, in both the census and other government-related contexts, would be counted as an Indian. From 1869, an 'Indian' was defined as a person with an Indian father, and up to the 1980s 'Indian status' in Canada was granted exclusively on the basis of the father's heritage (Amft 1998). In Swedish censuses, a comparable principle was used to determine mixed populations (CBS 1889, p. 7). In the 1800s, this appears to have been the natural way to codify in the context of normal social beliefs and rules of inheritance. These principles were made concrete during the interwar period, when the Swedish authorities were to identify the 'real' Sami, who were to be granted exclusive rights to herding reindeer (Amft 1998).

In Norway, belonging to a minority group entailed no special rights. On the contrary, in the age of liberalism, minority groups had a limited freedom of trade in relation to the Norwegian population (Hagemann 1997). The census, however, did not play a direct role in this type of discrimination. Nor was there any patrilineal principle behind the definition of the mixed population. What was the point, then, of gathering such

detailed information about the mother's and father's ethnic background for all individuals outside the 'pure' categories? Here, the statistical analysis of the relationship between the nationalities plays a role.

Eilert Sundt, often referred to as Norway's 'first and greatest' social scientist, provided the methodological inspiration. In his book *Giftermaal i Norge* (On Marriage in Norway), he demonstrated that, in social terms, women marry 'up' while men marry 'down'. A farmer's daughter seldom married a cotter's son; however, a cotter or a labourer's daughter often found her husband among sons from the upper classes (Sundt 1857 [1980]). The province governor of the northern districts had in several accounts been interested in the relationship between the three population groups in mixed marriages. Kiær pursued the issue further, united it with Sundt's work on civic family ideology and literature studies on minorities, and came to relatively strong conclusions about how the population groups should be ranked relative to one another.

The figures for the mixed population by gender were presented in the following way, with the father's ethnic heritage listed first:

Norwegian-Finnish	1150
Norwegian-Lapp	1016
Norwegian-Mixed	1784
Lapp-Finnish	388
Lapp-Mixed	771
Finnish-Mixed	709
Finnish-Norwegian	1060
Lapp-Norwegian	746
Mixed-Norwegian	1283
Finnish-Lapp	701
Mixed-Lapp	907
Mixed-Finnish	548

The figures actually show children from a mixed marriage, but Kiær interpreted them to reflect the number of *marriages* within the various mixed categories. The conclusion was that Norwegian men were most likely to marry 'mixed' women, followed by Kven women, and finally Sami women. For women, the order was the same, but the number of Norwegian women who married Sami and Kvens was lower than for the men. In his interpretation, Kiær coupled his conception of the master race in the north with the head of the household: It was difficult for a woman from the master race to marry a Finn or a Lapp because she would lose status in the eyes of her people. 'But it is clear that the relationship appears to be totally different for the man, who looks for a wife from a group below his own ethnic group. For him, it will not as a rule be a question of losing status, but of bringing his wife up to his own' (Kiær 1882, p. 146).

The ranking issue applied mostly to the relationship between the Sami and the Kvens. 'Norwegians are the ruling tribe; they are generally of higher standing, more advanced intellectually than Finns and Lapps.' For the statistician Kiær, the simple fact that the Norwegians counted the Kvens and Sami, and not the reverse, must have been a convincing argument for who had the higher position. Intermarriage between Kvens and Sami, however, clearly ranked the lowest. We must also take into account that the Sami by far outnumbered the Finns. The fact that the Kvens entered so often into mixed marriages was seen as a proof of the Kven population's role as an intermediary between the Norwegians and the Sami. The Sami were generally wealthier than the Finns, 'but on the other hand, there is no doubt that they belong to a more powerful, energetic, and generally more advanced race.' The conclusion was clear: 'Ranking on the basis of the factors discussed here should be as follows: 1) Norwegians, 2) persons of mixed heritage, 3) Finns, 4) Lapps'. In this and other examples, the groups are ranked relative to each other on the basis of characteristics of their 'race.' The statistics here were used to confirm the presumption of superiority that shaped minority policies, including the registration of the Sami and the Kvens.

### **The national security justification for enumerating minorities**

Before going into greater detail about the rules for defining mixed populations, it is also worth exploring how national security concerns played a role in justifying the registration of minorities. Of primary concern was a group of Finnish immigrants to the Norwegian areas of the Nordkalotten region. Several Finnish settlements were established early in the 1700s, but the real influx in immigration from the northern areas of Finland did not occur until the 1830s, with a peak during the famine in Finland in the 1860s (Eriksen and Niemi 1981, pp. 30–33). The Kvens constituted 24.2 per cent of the population in the county of Finnmark, according to the 1875 census, while Norwegians constituted 42.3 per cent and Sami 33.5 per cent. Some cities and regional societies were almost entirely Finnish. For example, in the city of Vadsø, located near the Finnish and Russian borders, about 60 per cent of the population were Kvens around 1870.

This influx of immigration came at the same time as the growth of a new political and cultural Finnish movement. The objective was to achieve an independent Finland that encompassed the areas where the Finnish population groups lived. It was the inception of the idea of a Greater Finland, which for some also included areas of Finnmark. The Finnish nationalism occurred at the same time as a wave of Norwegian nationalism in the north, which thus came to amplify the active Norwegianization policy in the two northernmost counties. As is already well known, the school system and the church were important executors of

this policy, but colonization through road construction and immigration and settling of Norwegians from the south was also encouraged. At the same time, the authorities also made it more difficult for the minority population to acquire land. This policy had its consequences. In the official statistics original main work, the publication *Rigets oekonomiske Tilstand* (The Economic Status of the State), the Norwegianization policy and its impacts were already described in 1870:

In four of these administrative counties, Norwegians do not even make up one-tenth of the population. And yet any Norwegian who comes from Russia or Finland, no matter where he sets his foot down in the county – even in the areas with the highest populations of Lapps and Kvens, where they are also the least civilized – will immediately feel that he is on Norwegian ground. Traces of the Norwegian institutions and their civilizing power fortunately reach far beyond the boundaries of the county's Norwegian population. Despite the difficulties of implementing an organized social life in districts with such a spread out, mixed and transient, semi-nomadic population [. . .] as in most of Finnmark's administrative counties, the Norwegian institutions have been able to break down the hindrances and left their indelible mark on the population. This could never have happened without an enforcement of the law, which has had occasion to generate complaint from most people because of its ruthless strictness' (CBS 1873, p. 58).

The policy of Norwegianization thus created protests and opposition. Eriksen and Niemi (1981) in their book *Den finske fare* (The Finnish Threat 1983) quote a prominent Finnish editor who, after travelling in Finnmark in 1882, reported home that his countrymen were virtually tyrannized in Norway. He believed that if a Finnish army should appear on the shores of the Tana River, every single Finn would rise up against the Norwegian rule. Such statements received a great deal of attention in Norway, and they undoubtedly encouraged the policy of Norwegianization where minorities were repressed politically, economically and culturally. One of Eriksen and Neimi's main conclusions was that the policy of Norwegianization originated in a view of civilization that was independent of security issues, but that this policy was far harsher than it otherwise would have been because of what in Norway was perceived as a 'Finnish threat.' This implies that the policy of assimilating the Sami became much stricter because the Sami and the Kvens were covered by the same measures to promote Norwegianness in the north.

There is little explicit explanation of the prime motivation behind the enumeration of minorities in the administrative preparatory works. The security dimension, however, is discussed in connection with the urban census that was carried out in 1886. In accordance with international recommendations, in the late 1870s the practice was changed from taking

a census every year that ended with 5 to years that ended with 0. The CBS, swamped and lagging far behind on both regular and extraordinary works, passed up 1880 and waited for 1890 to conduct the next census. In 1885, however, it was decided to carry out enumeration in the cities, which was far more feasible and less costly than would be conducting a census in the rural districts.

Some time after the urban census was approved by the government, however, a supplementary measure also to carry out a census in the northeastern districts of Tana, Nesseby, Vardø, Vadsø, and Syd-Varanger was also adopted. On behalf of the 'entrusted' men in Finnmark, infantry captain Aksel Magnus made contact with the Central Bureau of Statistics and offered to conduct a census also in this district. At that time, Magnus was a definitive supporter of a hard-line Norwegianization policy in the north (Magnus 1889). He was highly involved in the work of stopping what was perceived as a Finnish-Russian threat. He was most concerned about the Kven population. 'The Lapps are a dying nation,' he wrote in a newspaper article in 1889, 'and shortly their existence will be relegated to the history books' (Eriksen and Niemi 1981, p. 55).

On behalf of his like-minded followers in Finnmark, Captain Magnus explained that they could not afford to wait another five years to obtain an exact overview of 'the enormous increase in the foreign element' that was created by the Kven immigration. Magnus could also report that the case was perceived as so important that the authorities could count on a voluntary effort that would keep the costs down.<sup>3</sup> It seems that the costs of carrying out enumeration in these districts *were* relatively low. The CBS took advantage of the 'interest in the district that could be assumed useful for the enumeration', as Kiær puts it. The vicars were instructed to find persons who would carry out the enumeration for free or for a very small wage. In this sense, this illustrates how the national census project attracted the involvement of the country's most prominent citizens – in this case, with both the assistance and implementation by local authorities. It fits well into the stories about how the national censuses went from being a part of the state's power apparatus over the majority of the population to becoming a tool in the hands of the same majority.

But this should not be taken to mean that the national censuses were no longer used as a tool to exercise state power, or that they had become apolitical or no longer ideological. The censuses merely contributed to defining the boundary between 'Norwegians' and 'others', to tabulate and rank groups. They were also important foundations for developing national policy in central quarters with respect to population groups in the outlying districts that were the farthest away from the political centre. The national censuses and maps were, as pointed out by Benedict Anderson, crucial for creating a uniform conception of 'nation' for people who lived in isolated districts without direct communication with one another. They participated in creating an *imagined community* around the concept of nation, which eventually had very

'real' consequences, both for those who were included and those who were excluded from the concept of nation. But censuses (and maps) were also essential elements of knowledge in political control and monitoring across large geographical distances. The research tradition that stems from the Foucault-inspired concept of 'governmentality' also emphasizes such instruments as maps and censuses (Rose 1999, ch. 6). But here attention is largely directed at how these instruments create opportunities to exercise control and carry out policy from a central hold. Socially and geographically, the politicians in the capital were far removed from Finnmark (about 2000 km). The policy on minorities was 'action at a distance', to use the terminology of Bruno Latour (1987). The minorities had to be defined and enumerated, and experts on their cultural status and potential threat against the Norwegian community had to be mobilized so that it became possible to discuss and formulate a policy on minorities from the capital. For this, national censuses and the preparation of 'ethnic maps', for example, which depicted the relative strength of the minorities, played central roles.

Of course, the distance between statistics and politics was not always so overwhelming. As mentioned earlier, minority groups in the north were not protected from having their personal information released to other government authorities to the same extent as other citizens of the state. In 1891, the CBS received, for example, a request from the foreman of the so-called Lapp Commission for copies of 'Personal Form 2' for all the Sami in and south of the county of Søndre Trondhjem to use in the Commission's work. By profession, the Commission's foreman was a district attorney, and the Commission was to help develop guidelines for the national policy regarding the Sami. 'Personal Form 2' was the form that contained all the information about each person's occupation, nationality, family ties, mental health, as well as ownership of property and livestock. Lists of names were compiled in the CBS and sent out along with a specified statement on the number of the reindeer belonging to each Lapp.<sup>4</sup>

With a point of departure in a norm that the personal information included in the census should not go beyond Kiær's offices, this 'detour' is probably of less interest. The lists of names were prepared by exactly the same local civil servants who were to carry out the Norwegianization policy with respect to minorities. These civil servants included sheriffs, bailiffs, clergymen, and teachers who prepared personal forms and carried out the first tabulations; in the above case, the combined urban and Finnmark censuses, it also included all those who were particularly motivated to carry out the task.

### **'The mixed population' – a product of race or culture?**

The most important difference from the ordinary national census in 1875 and the urban/Finnmark census in 1886 to the national census in 1891

was that, for the latter, the CBS collected data on language from everyone who belonged to the minority population or mixed groups. These data played a key role in the construction of nationalities. In the main table of the 1891 census, the number of people from each nationality was presented, along with data on language and how many who were nomadic. Here, there were no 'mixed': they were divided according to language into the main nationalities. In 1875 it was 'origin' alone that was used to define the mixed population. Fifteen years later, genealogy and language were combined so that everyone who was part Norwegian and spoke Norwegian, even though the person also spoke Kvenish and Sami, were registered as Norwegians. People of mixed but unknown origin, who spoke Norwegian, were also counted as Norwegian. While in the United States, for example, the 'one drop of blood' principle applied, which meant that each person who was not of a completely 'pure' origin was registered as 'mixed' (Davis 1991), in Norway from 1891 it was sufficient to have just a trace of Norwegian blood to join the ranks of Norwegians – that is, if the person spoke Norwegian.

The road into the Norwegian nation was thus here less narrow than if a symmetrical genealogical principle had been used. On the other hand, the mixed population was presented in supplementary tables, where they were first sorted according to 'origin', and later according to linguistic criteria. Those who were especially interested in mixed blood were therefore appeased. In the Central Bureau of Statistics' introductory analysis of the tables, it was, however, the main table that was used as a basis for discussion and analysis.

The censuses that have been discussed so far were conducted before physical anthropology took root in Norway. In the 1890s, Dr. Andreas Martin Hansen published his studies on race as an explanation for particular characteristics of the Norwegian population and internal regional differences. Many of his ideas were controversial, but the principles he drew upon in his thinking on race won broad acceptance among his contemporaries (Monsen *et al.* 1997). And early in the 1900s, a research tradition on heredity with a eugenic aim, where mixed races were presented as harmful and potentially degenerating, became established in Norway. These schools of thought made the concept of race far more salient in discussions on the Sami and Kvens: often with clear social-political implications.

Until and after the turn of the century, there were also a number of works that expressed a kind of social Darwinism, similar to what infantry captain Aksel Magnus represented when he referred to the Sami as a weak nation that would soon die out. The monumental state financed work *Norges Land og Folk* (Norway's Land and People), which was released in thirty-nine large volumes in the decades around the turn of the century, provides a glaring but not particularly unusual example of this. The Sami in east Finnmark were portrayed as 'a lower race, without

life force and without a future'. The Kvens were depicted as a fitter race, one that would 'be able to endure in the struggle for survival' (Helland 1906, pp. 4, 6).

In some historical literature on Sami and Kven policy, it has been claimed that the Norwegianization policy stemmed from a social-Darwinist view of minorities: that minorities were ranked below Norwegians and should be raised up to their level. More recently, it has been pointed out that in many cases this has been a misinterpretation of the concept. True social Darwinists, such as Magnus and the author of *Norges Land og Folk*, have little faith in improving a general population by one race raising the other up to its level. Progress consists of the dispersion of the strongest race and the capitulation of the weaker. The perception that the qualities of a race can be improved through influence from a culture that is perceived as more advanced is in line with theories of learned qualities being passed down to the next generation (social Lamarckism), but not with theories about natural selection in the species' struggle for survival (Jølle 1998).

On this basis, it can be interesting to look at the attempts of statistics to categorize from the following two viewpoints: (i) Through natural assimilation and conscious policy, minorities can become like Norwegians, and the task of statistics becomes simply to register this process. (ii) The races are essentially different in their 'nature' and not just in their 'culture'. The most important differences between them will continue to exist independent of whether individual people learn a different language and live among Norwegians.

The first of these positions is consistent with Kiær's belief that a Norwegian who marries a Sami or Kven woman will 'raise' her up to his 'level'. In this case, the categories must totally or partially be based on language or factors related to cultural belonging and lifestyle. The second viewpoint, however, implies that it becomes important for statistics to keep the 'pure races' apart and keep detailed overviews of the genealogies of the mixed population. When Kiær writes that the Kven constitute a 'more advanced race' than the Sami, he is being consistent also with this type of viewpoint. But it is important to point out that his conception of race from 1882 is so unclear that it is not possible to simply assume that he is thinking here of inherited characteristics in a social-Darwinist sense, and not learned characteristics. In any case, there is a degree of ambiguity in Kiær's analysis of minorities that one would assume could have been cleared up in the decades around the turn of the century when the racial discourse became more intense.

The censuses in 1900 and 1910 are nearly identical with the 1891 census in their organization and categorization. They are consistent with a perception that ethnic groups differ primarily in terms of culture, a difference that can gradually be erased through contact, information and learning. It is also worth noting that the concept of race was not used



either in 1891 or in 1900. The 1910 census, however, represented a turning point towards the more pronounced racist rhetoric of the 1920s and 1930s. In the introduction, the references to the figures state that the term 'nation' could have two meanings: a society where members belonged to a common state, or a society where they 'belong to the same race'. The census was probably shaped by the strong nationalism that arose around 1905, when Norway dissolved the union with Sweden. In any case, the issue of defining both race and state become highly prominent. It was in this context that the following somewhat curious table was introduced, and incidentally never again presented afterwards:

Present population	2,357,790	100.00 %
Lapps [Samis]	18,590	0.79
Kvens	7,172	0.30
Born abroad and presumably of a foreign race	50,041	2.12
Born in Norway plus born abroad of Norwegian race	2,281,987	96.79

'At the most only 4 percent of the population can be considered of a foreign race. Most of these were, however, Swedes and Danes', states the explanation. All people who were born abroad and did not have Norwegian parents were 'presumably of a foreign race' – with the exception of about 900 people born in Finland who were Kvens (CBS 1916, p. 43). Now the racial division also followed state borders, except for the Sami and Kvens, who were Sami and Kvens no matter where they were born. The concept of race was now used in a more aggressive way to define the new nation, which only a few years earlier had been preparing for war against Sweden. Swedes in Norway were now defined as belonging to a foreign race, but this did not lead to any greater integration of Northern Norway's minorities into the Norwegian nation. Moreover, a Swede was perceived as being closer to being Norwegian than a Sami with Norwegian citizenship. In 1910, as in 1920 and 1930, it was still the case that people born abroad were counted as Norwegians if they had children with Sami or Kvens when the time came to categorize the child's race.

Among others, sociologist Vilhelm Aubert (1970) has pointed out that the collection of linguistic data from 1891 on (data were collected but not processed in 1865) must have been related to the desire to register the results of the linguistic aspect of the Norwegianization policy. This seems probable, but other factors should also be taken into consideration. At several of the international statistical congresses in the nineteenth century, it was recommended that linguistic criteria be used to distinguish between nationalities (Hobsbawm 1990, p. 97). This could

have played an independent role. The Central Bureau of Statistics took these types of recommendations very much to heart. In addition, language use also came to be included in the definition of minority groups. It is not only different in principle from measuring the effect of Norwegianization, this classification also meant that it became impossible to satisfactorily measure the linguistic Norwegianization. The tables recorded knowledge of Norwegian for the 'Sami population' and the 'Kven population', but these groups were, in fact, constructed on principles that built on both genealogy and language. Increasing language skills among the genealogically mixed gradually moved these people from being categorized as 'Sami' and 'Kven' to being categorized as 'Norwegian'. This contributed to increasing the relative numbers of Norwegians and decreasing the relative numbers of Sami and Kvens. This relationship is even more important since the registered mixed population increased dramatically around the turn of the century.

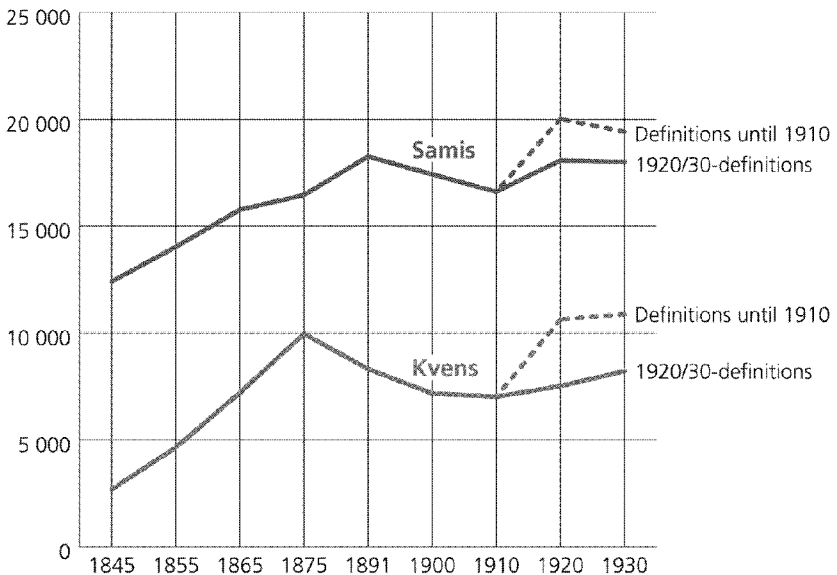
In the processing of the 1920 census, the table that was presented in the introduction – pure races, mixed in the first generation, mixed in the second generation, etc. – again became central. In this table, the percentage of Norwegian speakers within each group was presented in a side column. In this way, a distinction was made between the 'real' Sami and Kven in a genealogical sense; the ethnic groups were defined here exclusively on the basis of race, and their language skills appeared as a separate piece of information. This table, 'Finns (Lapps) and Kven categorized according to origin and language', showed the distribution down to the individual administrative county in Troms and Finnmark. After this came the tables of Sami and Kven according to gender, age, marital status, and birthplace, before it concluded with the excessively large table 7: 'The adult population in Troms and Finnmark districts according to race and occupation'. In the last tables, the Sami and Kven populations were still categorized according to principles that were partially associated with language. But now the road from being in a minority group to becoming a Norwegian was made narrower. Previously, those with Norwegian blood who spoke Norwegian, and possibly Sami and/or Kvenish, were counted as Norwegian. From 1920, the principle of symmetry was introduced, where so-called half-mixed people were divided in equal shares into each group to which their parents belonged. People who had one Kven parent and one mixed Kven/Norwegian parent, and who spoke Norwegian, were counted as pure Kven; and the same principle naturally applied to the Sami population.

There is reason to take note of the principle behind the main table, distribution according to 'origin and language'. From a statistician's viewpoint, this was surely a step forward. Now it became possible to measure the change in and scope of Norwegianization and racial mixing independent of one another. But looking at the introduction and analysis of the figures makes it clear that reverting to 'origin' in 1920 was not only

to accrue additional information. It was probably more a kind of side effect of moving towards a more 'correct' definition of the minority population. The Central Bureau of Statistics now compared the differences over time between defining the minority population on the basis of pure genealogy and on the basis of mixed genealogical/linguistic criteria. The differences were striking: for example, the number of Kvens in Troms in 1920 was 3,221 on the basis of the first definition and 1,779 on the basis of the second. For Finnmark, the figures were respectively 7,416 and 5,743. And this was based on 1920 definitions – with the used in previous censuses, the differences would have been even greater (CBS 1923, pp. 44–45).

These were two essentially different ways of constructing the Sami and Kven populations. Analysis of typical discourse shows that the Central Bureau of Statistics clearly perceived the purely genealogical principle as the correct one. 'The linguistic factors have long attracted the interest of state authorities . . . We can consider the progress of the Norwegian language to be a sign of the foreign nationalities' association with the Norwegian culture,' states a typical formulation in 1920 (CBS 1923, pp. 47–49). The mixed population was also referred to in these paragraphs. In 1891 and 1900, it could be said that the linguistic factors helped to define who was Norwegian and who was Sami or Kvenish. This shift becomes explicit when the Central Bureau of Statistics explains that both pure and mixed Kvens had largely begun to speak

**Figure 1.** Samis ('lapps') and Kvens ('finns') 1845–1930



Norwegian. In the censuses after 1875, such an interpretation would have been meaningless; a mixed Kven, even though he or she had some Norwegian roots, could not speak Norwegian and at the same time be a mixed Kven.

Studies conducted on behalf of the Astafjord parrish in Troms indicate that the principles for constructing minorities in the 1920 census brought the preparation of the basis material more in line with local practices with respect to how the mixed population was to be registered. With the help of census lists and church records, the background of the people who were recorded as 'mixed' in the national censuses from 1865 to 1900 were studied. Many members of the Sami community were registered as mixed, despite the fact that they appeared as 'pure' Sami. Closer examination revealed that the families of most of these people had infusions from other ethnic groups, if one looked several generations back. The conclusions of these works suggest that the national censuses were more reliable than some sceptics believed. Here, it suffices to conclude that the section of the local population that acted as enumerators appears to have had a very good overview of the family background of the minorities, and that this knowledge resulted in many being registered as 'mixed' on the basis of genealogy. In other words: the shift from a more language based to genealogical criteria brought the census definitions more in line with the principles applied by the local authorities living close to the minorities (Hansen and Meyer 1991).

The census in 1930 was very similar to that from 1920. However, it compared changes in the mixed population only to 1875 and 1920. These were the years where only 'origin' was used to construct the mixed population, without mixing in linguistic factors. The comparison confirms the impression that the national censuses were increasingly oriented towards a genealogical principle in the categorization of minorities, where 'race' more than culture and lifestyle determined the lines between the ethnic groups. This line of development was interrupted by the war. In 1946, no information was collected about the Sami and Kven at all, and in 1950 information about language was considered sufficient. The Central Bureau of Statistics referred explicitly to the experiences from the war, which had weakened the legitimacy of dividing population groups on the basis of race.

Language background was also registered after 1950, in combination with questions about whether the person 'identified' as a Sami. This was not done on a regular basis, however, and only subjective criteria were used to count the number of Samis.

## **Conclusion**

The national censuses from 1945 to 1930 were a central part of the Norwegian state's policy on minorities. The way the censuses were set up,

and the categories that were used, reflect the attitudes and motivations that lay behind the so-called Norwegianization policy. At the same time, the minorities received far less protection than Norwegian citizens from the release of their personal information to the state for purposes other than the production of statistics.

The definition of the ethnic minorities, especially people in mixed groups, changed gradually from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth. In practice, it became easier for people of mixed heritage who spoke Norwegian to be counted as full members of the nation. In the interwar period, with a growing focus on racial differences and eugenics, this classification changed. Norwegians, Kvens and Sami were now to a greater degree perceived as groups that were essentially different from birth – belonging to a nation was now perceived more as something to do with ‘nature’ than with ‘culture’ in the census’s classifications.

Minorities were defined by the Norwegian state. But through the definition of what was alien, the censuses also helped to define what should constitute the Norwegian state. The relationship between the group that does the counting, and another that is counted, will in practice never be characterized by full symmetry. This became particularly clear in the way the Central Bureau of Statistics interpreted the figures: The aim was clearly to reveal relationships of superiority and inferiority between the various ethnic minorities, the mixed population, and ‘real’ Norwegians.

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### Notes

1. Kiær (1838-1919) directed the Office of Statistics in the Ministry of the Interior from 1866. When the name of the office was changed to the Central Bureau of Statistics in 1876, Kiær was appointed bureau chief. He remained in the position until 1913.
2. We shall not distinguish here between ‘Kvens’ and ‘Finns,’ even though such a distinction would have been justified during and just after the large influx of Finnish immigration in the 1860s and 1870s; see Bjørklund 1978.
3. From the archives of the Ministry of the Interior, Inner Office D; Aksel Magnus to the Ministry of the Interior, 26.11.1885.
4. From the CBS-archive; The Central Bureau of Statistics to district attorney Berg, 25.3.1891, 1687/1891.

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