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been worked through better is the historical contextualization of the Argentinean case. Readers without any prior knowledge can be left with too limited a view. Along with the lack of references and ties to other literature on the topic (for example, to the vast bibliography on collective memory and human rights movements in Latin America), the book falls short in directing readers to historical literature that would allow them to reach a better understanding of the case in point.

One last observation about the book's shortcomings is the one I believe to be the most problematic: Morello's efforts in redeeming the fate of the seminarians and subsequently the church itself (as an institution that should not be demonized as a supporter of the military but understood as a heterogeneous body where anti-military/pro-human rights activists not only existed but suffered violence) hinder his analysis. For example, throughout the book, the author criticizes the church for not taking quick action to liberate the seminarians who had been wrongly imprisoned. Of course, this criticism is logical and commendable. However, his focus on the fate of the seminarians prevents him from questioning the broader picture—the one that has puzzled Argentineans in general and human rights activists in particular for quite a long time—that is, the church's passive or ambiguous attitude about violence being perpetrated (illegally and indiscriminately) against *all* people by military, paramilitary, and other armed groups.

Morello's analysis of the three factions of the church still helps readers understand why the church did not react in a unified way against the widespread systematic abuse of human rights that was occurring in Argentina. However, his emphasis on the seminarians and the attitude of the church toward their own institutional representatives ends up reproducing a hierarchy that puts religious people over non-religious people, believers over non-believers. This was probably an unintended consequence of what we can call ''case over-focus,'' which reminds researchers of an old lesson: too much focus on the tree prevents us from seeing the forest. Books like Morello's, with all of its strengths and limitations, are invaluable contributions furthering our understanding of how injustices have been perpetrated and how people's individual and collective agency to navigate and challenge institutional structures and relations of power continues to be the key to provoke social change.

Reference

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Who Counts? The Mathematics of Life and Death after Genocide, by **Diane M. Nelson.** Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015. 328 pp. $25.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780822360056.

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The last few decades have witnessed a steady growth of scholarship in the social sciences on processes of classification and categorization. Central to social and political phenomena such as race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, religion, language, disease, dis/ability, and more, practices of naming and organizing people according to the constructed (past, present, and ongoing) content of categories and their significance often helps to constitute them in and of themselves. Typically, the state monopolizes this power to introduce categories of perception that then become naturalized and consequential principles of division—this is one of Bourdieu's major insights (1999:40). What happens, however, when a state attempts to *erase* an entire category of individuals—to eliminate them, both socially and politically, through various modes of extermination? Further, what if one of the ways in which a state tries to enact this kind of categorical engineering is through the destruction of practices of classification and categorization themselves? And finally, how do people make themselves count—symbolically and physically—in the eyes of the state and the world, after attempts to remove them have ended?

Such questions are at the heart of Diane M. Nelson's intriguing new book, *Who Counts?*

The Mathematics of Life and Death after Genocide. In it, Nelson employs participant observations and interviews across multiple field sites to explore how diverse attempts at counting—which she cleverly notes means both to number/calculate and "to have value, to matter"—have influenced Guatemalans' lives in the after-math (another clever play on words) of the Guatemalan Civil War and Genocide (pp. 39, 55, 84). From 1960 to 1996, leftist guerrilla groups fought government military forces for greater equality and inclusion of Maya and Ladino culture in Guatemalan national life. During this conflict, the Guatemalan government murdered over 200,000 Maya civilians, who were accused of supporting these guerrilla activists. It is important to note that the U.S. government frequently supported the Guatemalan presidency, police, and military.

The average sociologist will find much to appreciate and learn from in *Who Counts?* In particular, Parts I and II are useful for those interested in how civilians respond to state projects that make them count in peculiar ways, as well as state projects that aim to make civilians count *less*—or to reduce them to zero, which is the intention of genocide. These sections detail how the methods that humans use to count (quantitatively and qualitatively) are products of battles that have been fought over classification and categorization throughout history.

For example, Nelson explains how current efforts to rescue the Mayan numeral system from extinction are part of a struggle to revalue traditional forms of counting that were denigrated as invalid by colonizers, imperial capitalists, and the genocidal state. These efforts to revive Mayan math are about more than saving a specific number system: they are about saving a worldview that is central to how this population defines itself. Mayan numerals are laden with meaning and symbolism; and, lest we think that western numerals are somehow neutral, all we need to do is imagine how we social scientists might react if an occupying force suddenly required us to learn an entirely new system of mathematics and classified our current one as meaningless and us as *less than* because of it. The result would be deep disorientation, not just for our work but for every aspect of our lives. And so Nelson's point hits hard: counting is political, and numbers are never neutral.

Elsewhere in Parts I and II, Nelson analyzes Mayan struggles to obtain indemnification from the state through quantifiable proof that genocide, indeed, occurred. This process is entangled with the Janus-faced nature of counting as well. In order to obtain reparations for genocide, Nelson explains that two distinct forms of algebra—from the arab word *al-jabr*, meaning to reunite broken parts, or bone-setting—are required (p. 64). The first, which she describes in grisly detail from observations of forensic anthropologists at three ossuaries in Guatemala and a short story about the National Police Archive and its evidence, entails the literal reunion of broken bones to "aggregate" bodies that were "disaggregated" during the genocide (pp. 69, 78, 85). This allows some bodies to count as having been humans murdered by the state so that their families can receive reparations.

The second form of algebra needed to draw the political and therefore qualitative conclusion that genocide of Maya occurred in Guatemala hinges on generating sufficient quantitative evidence through complicated counting strategies such as multiple-systems estimation (p. 82). Here, Nelson correctly notes that there is debate in international human rights circles over whether a threshold must be crossed for a particular episode of mass violence to count as genocide, even though the legal definition of genocide hinges on *intention* to destroy a category of humans in whole or in part, not the actual accomplishment of this goal. Thus the challenge of qualifying quantities of violence—of bringing broken parts/bones together so they have specific political meanings—is central to post-conflict reparations at the micro-level of the victimized individual and the macro-level of the Maya "group" (a group, it must be noted, that came into existence from a panoply of indigenous identification categories partly as a result of state violence itself).

Unfortunately, where Nelson's analysis of counting and classifying practices in post-genocide Guatemala gets murky is in the latter half of her book. Here, she tells the stories

of two pyramid schemes (Part III) and briefly describes accounting strategies of Mayan activists who have mobilized against the perilous and destructive removal of gold and nickel from Guatemalan mountaintops (Part IV). (Nelson also toys with the word "accounting" to mean both to create a financial or medical record and to portray an experience of events.) The intention of these sections is to further demonstrate who counts in both senses of the term after a genocide, but it is unclear from the evidence precisely how the quantitative counting involved in pyramid schemes and anti-mining activism is mediated by the impact of violence to cause an alternation in qualitative significance.

For example, in Chapter Four (Part III), Nelson describes how the counting projects involved in Omnilife and *El Millonario*'s Ponzi require(d) complex processes of mathematical and social numeration to succeed, including the conversion of social into financial capital. She tells the story of a close friend's work for Omnilife and even attends two modules of the five-piece Omnilife training course. Nelson's attention to detail provides a rich and riveting narrative, but her argument that participation in pyramid schemes like this one have transformed the social and political futures of Maya post-genocide reads more like assertions than analyses with testable explanations.

Similarly, in Chapters Six and Seven (Part IV), Nelson argues that Mayan anti-mining movements demonstrate how Maya after the genocide count and try to make themselves count. One of the more interesting parts of this section is Nelson's description of Mayan efforts at documenting the health issues caused by mining, a struggle since "some numbers are better funded than others" (p. 210). By this, Nelson means that local Mayan doctors and health centers contend with the Guatemalan state and scientists hired by Goldcorp, a Canadian mining company that works in Guatemala, to have their interpretations of the consequences of mining count as valid. Here, too, Nelson's descriptions are thoughtful and compelling. However, her strong assertions about how anti-mining counting battles relate back to post-war reconstructions of math and meaning beg for theoretical exegesis.

In sum, *Who Counts?* succeeds in unsettling the reader's relation to numbers. However, how counting and classifying are complicated in the after-math of genocide is clearer in the first half of the book than in the latter. Despite this critique, the overall contribution of Nelson's book is significant: in the same way social scientists have increasingly come to focus on how states count their populations and then make them count in peculiar ways, Nelson calls attention to the after-math of state attempts to reduce a population to zero—to categorically eliminate them, in both senses of the term.

Furthermore, the extent to which Nelson acknowledges how her positionality influences her epistemology throughout the text is impressive. More than a simple description of the potential relationship between her social status and her research, Nelson's reflexive moments contribute to the analysis insofar as she questions her own assumptions about categories and relationships. In turn, she highlights the subjective nature of counting and categories, demonstrating for the reader what are oftentimes challenging ideas.

Last but not least, Nelson's clever wordplay is a thought-provoking technique for discombobulating readers' assumptions about how numbers work. It will be hard to view math as apolitical and objective after reading *Who Counts?*

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