

**Being British, Being Woman, But Never Both:
Examining The 1911 Census Boycott & British Citizenship**

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Introduction:

Be Fair, Be Just, *Be British*. These were the words underscoring a pamphlet instructing fellow constituents to ask Members of Parliament to vote for women's suffrage. ("What is a Vote?" 159). The early 1900's marked a turbulent era for the UK — a period of socio-economic and political baggage at the hands of unfulfilled political promises from prior governing bodies. And, a growing movement toward gender equality. From chaining themselves to government buildings to bombing buildings ("The Suffragettes") suffragettes were, and had been, fighting for their right to vote stopping at the cost of nothing. Historically, the concept of "Britishness" and obtaining a British citizenship of sorts, has been underpinned by civic nationalism, a collective understanding of values that makes constituents have a state-recognized identity. However, in a time period where political agendas sharply contrasted constituent realities, and women were classified under the same categorical identity as criminals and paupers ("Parliament & Reform," 193), what exactly did British Citizenship entail for women in the early 20th century?

This paper seeks to examine the disconcerted nature of British citizenship through the lens of the 1911 Census Boycott — suffragettes who evaded, resisted or complied with census requirements as a result of their continued disenfranchisement by the government and sexist linings to this new census. Protests on the 1911 Census sheets expose an opposition to a performative liberal government which proclaimed citizenship as a progressive moral duty, when in practice it demanded two critical conditions of women: acceptance of repressive governance and honorment of male-centric agency. These census sheets, though illustrating conscientiousness, equally reveal women's radical move toward reforming civic nationalism.

This paper will address these points in the following manner. First, an examination on progressive moral duty using the two pillars underpinning citizenship as posited by a Liberal Government — these being constituents acting for a welfare state and voting in the interests of future British generations. Then, each pillar will be contrasted with an analysis of the archival material to show the gendered implications of these requirements for women. Finally, the paper will shift to address how the mass widespread publicity of the battle of the census paved the way for British women to take the reins and build a new template for civic nationalism via radical identity reformation.

Puppets to a Performative Welfare State

The newly elected government during this time, was keen on emphasizing to constituents the impact of their role in laying the foundations of welfarism. The concept of the welfare state was introduced as an ideal for reformative action which sought to eliminate poverty and improve the economic state (Thane 2024). Inevitably, this facet was appealing to constituents in the working class — an opportunity for change championed by a Labour party amid generations of falsity. Yet, what the government conveniently fails to mention is that for women, reformation of rights comes at the cost of their own. Kate Gillie, a suffragette from Malvern Worcestershire, unveils the intensity of this repressive system in her census sheets where she addresses government inaction toward Black Friday, a march on Parliament where police brutally attacked, arrested and sexually harassed protesting women after they were explicitly allowed to peacefully resist (Hernon 2006). In her discontent, she writes, “From a red-hot suffragette since Black Friday, and while hot since Churchill’s refusal to inquire into the actions of the police on that day,” (Cox).

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.

The contents of the Schedules will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family	AGE and SEX	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE	PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Person aged ten years and upwards	DATEPLACE of birth	NATIONALITY
<p><i>1. Write the name of every Person, whether Member of Family, Visitor, Boarder, or Servant, who (1) passed the night of Sunday April 2nd, 1911, in the dwelling and was alive at midnight, or (2) arrived in this dwelling on the morning of Monday April 3rd, and having been enumerated elsewhere. (No one else must be included.)</i></p> <p><i>2. For each Person, give the Examples on back of Schedule.</i></p>						
<p><i>3. Write the name of the Person, whether Male or Female, who (1) passed the night of Sunday April 2nd, 1911, in the dwelling and was alive at midnight, or (2) arrived in this dwelling on the morning of Monday April 3rd, and having been enumerated elsewhere. (No one else must be included.)</i></p> <p><i>4. For each Person, give the Examples on back of Schedule.</i></p>						
<p><i>5. Write the name of the Person, whether Male or Female, who (1) passed the night of Sunday April 2nd, 1911, in the dwelling and was alive at midnight, or (2) arrived in this dwelling on the morning of Monday April 3rd, and having been enumerated elsewhere. (No one else must be included.)</i></p> <p><i>6. For each Person, give the Examples on back of Schedule.</i></p>						
<p><i>7. Write the name of the Person, whether Male or Female, who (1) passed the night of Sunday April 2nd, 1911, in the dwelling and was alive at midnight, or (2) arrived in this dwelling on the morning of Monday April 3rd, and having been enumerated elsewhere. (No one else must be included.)</i></p> <p><i>8. For each Person, give the Examples on back of Schedule.</i></p>						
<p><i>9. Write the name of the Person, whether Male or Female, who (1) passed the night of Sunday April 2nd, 1911, in the dwelling and was alive at midnight, or (2) arrived in this dwelling on the morning of Monday April 3rd, and having been enumerated elsewhere. (No one else must be included.)</i></p> <p><i>10. For each Person, give the Examples on back of Schedule.</i></p>						
<p><i>11. Write the name of the Person, whether Male or Female, who (1) passed the night of Sunday April 2nd, 1911, in the dwelling and was alive at midnight, or (2) arrived in this dwelling on the morning of Monday April 3rd, and having been enumerated elsewhere. (No one else must be included.)</i></p> <p><i>12. For each Person, give the Examples on back of Schedule.</i></p>						
<p><i>13. Write the name of the Person, whether Male or Female, who (1) passed the night of Sunday April 2nd, 1911, in the dwelling and was alive at midnight, or (2) arrived in this dwelling on the morning of Monday April 3rd, and having been enumerated elsewhere. (No one else must be included.)</i></p> <p><i>14. For each Person, give the Examples on back of Schedule.</i></p>						
<p><i>15. Write the name of the Person, whether Male or Female, who (1) passed the night of Sunday April 2nd, 1911, in the dwelling and was alive at midnight, or (2) arrived in this dwelling on the morning of Monday April 3rd, and having been enumerated elsewhere. (No one else must be included.)</i></p> <p><i>16. For each Person, give the Examples on back of Schedule.</i></p>						

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of the Head of Family or other person in charge, or in absence of this dwelling.)

Write below the Number of House in this Street, Town, Parish, or District.

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature _____

Printed Address _____

Here, it is more than evident of the hypocrisy that is at play between the proclamation of a state who acts in the social well being of its constituents, and the physical treatment of constituents by these exact political institutions. Gillie's direct call out to Churchill, showcases how the government is allergic to taking responsibility, and in the name of saving their welfaric face, has opted to ignore and jeopardize its constituents. Citizenship was in no means to be an active member of a state that funded, or cared, for its constituents. Instead, it was a ploy to ensure women subserviently complied with whatever the state may ask them to do.

Critics of the boycott during this time period publicized and entrenched their arguments in associating "socialness" with the health of the "welfare" state." In an appeal written to *The Times*, the unknown opposition marked vaguely under the name Registrar comments that the protest was "injurious" to the state, specifically elaborating that "[The Census] is the operation taking stock of the people and is entirely non-political," ("Letter to the Editor"). In an ill-tasting attempt to equate protest with antisociality, what this critic does instead is reveal how the government takes "stock" of its people in the same dehumanizing way animals are taken stock of. The claim that the census is "non-political" may seem unproblematic at first glance, but in

actuality, it exactly points to how the government has a knack for juggling with numbers (Liddington 113) to create appealing legislation that weaponizes off of the terms of morality that only the state can dictate or access. How easy it must be, then, for constituents to blame their neighbors and individuals with different experiences than their own, as it is to seek conclusion and resolve from the higher institutions directly at blame. When welfarism is pitted against suffragism, the government is clear in seeking a kind of identity where the two are unable to exist — where state demands and women's demands are not to intertwine. After all, puppets can not perform unless someone, or something, pulls the strings for them.

The Future as, and is, Male Agency

British citizenship, in its masked semblance of moral duty, did not just focus on the present state of the British empire, but on its implications for the future. To be progressive meant to ensure the safety and benefits of future generations — and, what better way to exert state control than by leaning into the arguments of private and public spheres that had already been initiated through the Victorian era. Indeed, the 1911 Census stood out in its structure for two critical reasons. First, it was the first form to be filled out by the “head” of every household, typically a male (“The Discovery Service”). And second, it was the first census inquiring about intimate details of women's lives including the duration of marriages as well as the children born to said marriage, dead or alive (“Women Count Neither,” 110). This very ideal, however, takes a slippery slope when the Edwardian period called for women's direct correlation to domesticity and the incorrect presupposition of biological tendencies leading to said domesticity. In an article published in *The Times* two months prior to the boycott, suffragettes are seen bringing attention to this very idea of citizenship, domesticity and womanhood. Analyzing a description

of what is referred to as the suffragette manifesto, the unknown author writes, “By giving them details upon which future legislations will be absent, we make ourselves consenting parties to the present political status of womanhood in this country,” (“Suffragists and the Census”). The reference to “womanhood” here is powerful. From one angle, it reaches the uncomfortable experience of how women were unjustly thought the “birthers” of a new generation, weaponizing biological features as an excuse for the government to place women in a particular political sphere. From another angle, it captures citizenship for women as a social and political experience founded in dependency. An agenda of agency relinquishment to a patriarchal system that profited off of using women *for* the future, but not *as part of* the future.

Referencing the “head of household” requirement mentioned above, this very concept puts male centered agency at the center of the private sphere as a way for the political to dip its hand at a more manipulative level. Particularly, preserving the “domestic” sphere in creating intrafamilial tensions. The Census sheet from the Maund family depicts these familial tensions between the head of the household, a man, and the women present in the home.

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

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Number of Schedules
(To be filled up by the Enumerator and returned.) **4**

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family	AGE Sex (Indicate sex and age)	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE	PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards	RESIDENCE of every person	NATIONALITY of every person	INFIRMITY
Edward Arthur Maund	Head	60	Married	Company Director	260	English	
Edith Maund	Wife	38	Married		260	English	
Gifford Paul G. Maund	Son	17	Single	Bank Clerk	501	English	
Paula Emily Maund	Daughter	15	Single			English	
Angela Maund	Son	14	Single			English	
Annie Brown	Servant	29	Single	Cook (domestic)		English	
May Price	Servant	34	Single	General servant		English	

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.)

I declare that this Schedule is truly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature: *E. A. Maund*

Printed Address: *5, Edith Road, West Kensington, W.*

Edward Maund, who writes in red ink, rewrites his wife Eleonara's name overtop of where she had crossed it out. Writing in this same red at the bottom, he condemns his wife as "[a] silly suffragette to defeat the object of the census, to which [he] as head of the household [objects]," (Iglikowski-Broad). It comes as no shock that husbands acted in opposition to their wives "rebellion" to the state. Women's suffrage was often understood as a political endeavor that ultimately undermined familial harmonies as male households were set to represent women themselves (Marin 16). In a state that openly valued and positioned men at the center, creating strict binaries on public and privatized sectors, a rebellion to the state became personal. An equivalent to rebelling to the heads of households themselves.

It must be noted, however, that not all men were complicit in perpetuating these intrahousehold tensions. Israel Zangwell, the household head of his family, contested on his census sheet the following statement, "The rest of the household is not entered as we feel that until women have the political rights of citizens, they should not perform the duties of citizens," (Morton).

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NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family	AGE last birthday	SEX	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE	PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of person aged 15 years and upwards	EDUCATION	PLACE OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY	INFLUENCE
William G. G. G. G.	Head	44	M	Married	Domestic servant		London, England	English	
Eleonara G. G. G.	Wife	40	F	Married	Domestic servant		London, England	English	
Edith G. G. G.	Daughter	14	F	Single			London, England	English	
Marjorie G. G. G.	Daughter	12	F	Single			London, England	English	
<p>The rest of the household is not entered as we feel that until women have the political rights of citizens, they should not perform the duties of citizens.</p> <p>Wm G. G. G.</p>									

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.)

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature: *William G. G. G.*

Postal Address: *11, G. G. G. G.*

Zangwell's statement is compelling in that it places a barrier between state intentions and personal family rhetoric. The attempt to stop the state from placing men at the center is commendable, nevertheless, Zangwell still demonstrates the influence of the state's push for male agency at the forefront of citizenship in his statement. True, the imbalances of duties that correlate to citizenship as "political rights," is recognized — where, political rights can be understood as an individual's ability to participate in the civil and political life of the society and state without fear of discrimination or repression ("CSCE"). However, there is still something to say in that the words are not written by the women themselves. The argument may be that the likelihood of seriousness would be taken with Zangwell more than the suffragettes. However, to not include women's votes on these sheets, as protests, only verifies what the government has been saying all along. That women's voices are not voices to be considered part of the constituent body. Representation of the self can not be done by another — especially by individuals whose experience of being is endorsed by the very government disendorsing the representee. Zangwell's narrative still highlights that male agency must stand at the forefront to resuscitate female agency and that it is impossible to divorce the political from the personal.

Widespread Movements Dictate Widespread Change

Citizenship was, without contestment, a two faced political demon crossing into the personal. But, propaganda and media pushed forward a mass mobilization to reshape the terms of citizenship for suffragettes and women across the UK. While the extant scholarship commends suffragettes who marched up to Westminster parliamentary doors to marches on Trafalgar Square (Liddington 131), the span of the movement was not limited to the heart of London. The Mapping Women's Suffrage Organization has recorded suffragette census narratives spanning as

north as Newcastle Upon Tynes and as south as Folkestone (“Mapping Women’s Suffrage”). This geographical dispersion was one that British publications like *The Vote* were vocal and played a crucial role in allowing women to hear voices with similar experiences, and offering an oxygen of publicity (“Using Newspapers as a Source When Researching Suffrage History”). *The Vote* had an entire section dedicated for branches across the UK, to speak on their intended acts toward suffragism with local protests occurring at the regional and national level, and even placing the address public spaces where other women were meeting in the name of seeking enfranchisement. Helen McLachlan, a representative for the Edinburgh Branch writes in one of these volumes that, ‘Woman was the natural breaker-down of law and convention (...) meanwhile remember (...) above all, the Census Boycott,’ (“Branch Notes” 276). McLachlan is clever in her wording, first introducing women as the noun “woman,” — an etymological representation of being an active member of the political, under the shared identity of “woman.” All the while, she feeds off of this biological rhetoric of the “natural” that women and men alike were still being influenced by during this time period as discussed in the aforementioned section. After describing a series of events happening in the area, she places priority and attention to the Census at the end of her statement. Here, a clear example of how the regional feeds the national and vice versa, spinning a hurricane of radicalism that breaches London borders and cultivates new parameters for the British identity. Indeed, the UK Parliament notes that only two years after the census boycott, over 50,000 women joined just one of the dozens of suffrage groups that spanned the region (“1897 Founding of the NUWSS Gallery”). When there is asuch a large group mobilizing for the same incentive, it puts pressure on the government to acknowledge this collective as issues don;t arise at such a large scale on pure coincidence. Regardless of whether suffragettes resisted, evaded or forcibly cooperated with the census, it was this expansive call to

disrupt the machinery of the state that dynamized the “i” in this new kind of citizenship for women.

Conclusion

In sum, the 1911 Census boycott uncovers the real intentions of the government's call to citizenship — one presented as being a progressive moral duty — by serving a glimpse into the gendered implications and competing political agendas between suffragettes and the Liberal Government. In an attempt to play to the ears of a frustrated working class, citizenship was offered and set up as a members only club whose acceptance was only granted to women through subservient acceptance of repressive tendencies — all at the cost of pitting suffragists and welfarism against one another. From a narrower scope, the government continues with its plot of citizenship in esteeming the future generations. However, it firmly plants its feet into the privatized sectors of life that are continued through the imagined, but impactful, spheres of the domestic versus the public. From the structure of the census to the uncomfortable effects it had within families, the protests on the census sheets point to how male agency shined in the spotlight while women were left to give up their own. Despite the barriers to understanding what citizenship entailed and if women would ever get closer to its bleak eligibility, the long awaited fight broadcasted through newspapers allowed for women to connect with one another through their same disenfranchised experience. The UK revels in having civic nationalism underpinning this concept of “Britishness.” But, in using the same government tactics employed against them, suffragettes spun moral duty on its head and angled it as a choice to fellow women and male allies. It became a selection between voting for the potential of a state, or, the retribution against the improbability of justice that was a government consciously disenfranchising women. This

was what citizenship became for women. It no longer became about pillars or progressiveness for a corruptive state. Rather, it became a nationwide cat and mouse creating a kind of citizenship that sought fairness, justice and the concept of “Britishness” to not be separate entities, but to co-exist under one identity.

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