in Jerusalem, whose view is that only God can reestablish a Jewish state in Israel, and that a Jewish state established by human beings is a violation of God's will and so should be combatted. They see their mission as that of "guardians of the city," defending it from encroachment by secularity. As I read the ever-growing collection of papers authored or coauthored by David Freedman on the use of statistical procedures in modeling, I cannot help but dub him the "neturei karta," the "guardian of the city" of statistics.

How can one object to what he is trying to do? His quest, after all, seems quite reasonable. He tilts with models that are used in public policy deliberations and decisions. And he only concerns himself with the issue of whether the assumptions underlying the model are credible. Someone has to be the "guardian of the city!" Freedman is without peer in both thoroughness and clarity of analysis.

The problem, though, with Freedman's quest is in many ways analogous to that of the neturei karta. If they are successful, then the State of Israel will cease to exist. And if Freedman successfully uncovers models based on invalid assumptions, the decision maker is left to make decisions using only his intuition, for decisions must be made, with or without statistical help. All Freedman has done is saved statisticians from "aiding and abetting" and/or being accessories to a decision which in any event will be made, even if based merely on intuition and judgment. Is that worse or better than the scenario in which the statistician at least shows the decision maker the direction in which a decision should go, given the available data, in a (possibly) fictitious world built upon a bed of (possibly erroneous) assumptions? My contention is that even such deductions are useful grist for the decision maker's mill. Indeed, even if the assumptions are valid but the model is incomplete, or is just plain wrong, insights can be obtained from working the model through to its implied conclusions. (One can even gain insight from implications of purely mathematical models with no statistical component.)

Yes, assumptions should be checked for validity, and procedures should be checked for robustness. And no, statisticians are not merely people who "draw a straight line from an unwarranted assumption to a foregone conclusion using a procedure optimal according to a criterion invented by the statistician." But perhaps a bit of the latter can be condoned in statistical practice, especially if the alternative is that of letting the policy decision maker "go it alone." The statistician, after all, has more than a science to offer. He has a developed skill to offer as well, namely an ability to get the "feel" of data even when the data do not conform to any textbook model or set of assumptions.

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Comment

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1. INTRODUCTION

I must state at the outset that I like the paper and would only have relatively unimportant technical "quibbles" to raise in *disagreement.* Instead, I will concentrate on some broader implications of the paper's findings. Another introductory comment is prompted by the paper's style, but applies to much of the written material on the topic of census adjustment. I would have preferred if the paper had more of a "sanitized" version of the authors' testimony, i.e., free of the debating style of courtrooms. The issues involved are both significant and complex, and it is all the more important that we should be able to debate our differences in a manner that makes it easier for our professional colleagues to understand our point of view, even if they disagree with it.

The paper clearly and, I believe conclusively, makes a case against a *specific* approach to adjustment. Yet its value goes well beyond its argument against a particular methodology. This is an important paper the careful reading of which imparts at the same time

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