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Comparative Ethnographic Research on Mobile Populations

FINAL REPORT

This evaluation study reports the results of research and analysis undertaken by the U.S. Census Bureau. It is part of a broad program, the Census 2000 Testing, Experimentation, and Evaluation (TXE) Program, designed to assess Census 2000 and to inform 2010 Census planning. Findings from the Census 2000 TXE Program reports are integrated into topic reports that provide context and background for broader interpretation of results.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides results from four commissioned ethnographic studies conducted by social scientists with extensive knowledge of specific subpopulations that are typically residentially mobile. Each researcher had previously conducted research within his/her population of interest and was known, in most cases, as a trusted individual by the community he/she studied.

These four ethnographic studies took place before, during and after Census 2000 in order to evaluate the lifestyles of the groups and to observe residential mobility activities during these time periods. All researchers used a combination of observation and unstructured interviews in their field works.

The four transient populations examined in the ethnographic studies are: urban gang members, Irish Travelers in Mississippi and Georgia, seasonal residents or "snowbirds" in Arizona, and American Indians residing in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Across these four distinct populations, many common barriers to enumeration were found. Many of these barriers have been studied and documented in previous ethnographic studies of hard-to-enumerate populations (see de la Puente, 1993).

The barriers to enumeration identified in the current study include:

- **Residential mobility**. Residents may be hard to contact (i.e. not reached by traditional enumeration methods – in person or by mail), or they may have difficulty providing a specific place of usual residence. Most individuals in the study who were aware of the census residence rules, as presented on the census form, did not find them helpful in reporting a usual residence.

- **Distrust and/or fear.** There are two related reasons why there is reluctance to provide the Census Bureau with personal information. The first is applicable to persons who engage in illegal or unconventional activities. This can range from the violation of a civil or criminal law to involvement in living arrangements that violate either public or private housing rules. Underlying this phenomenon is the fear that information provided to the Census Bureau is not kept confidential by the agency and that divulging such information may result in some penalty or prosecution if it fell into the wrong hands. The second and related reason for the reluctance to provide personal information in the census is a broader sense of distrust in government coupled with the unwillingness to provide personal information to an entity whose intentions are questioned. This observation has also been documented in other related research (see Gerber, 2001).

- **Irregular and complex household arrangements.** In some cases, violation of housing rules and distrust in government may prevent honest responses. In others, it is unclear to respondents whom to classify as a household member when some of those living in the house are transients.

- **Disinterest**. In some cases the Census Bureau's extensive outreach effort did not resonate for some mobile groups. Either they were not exposed to the campaign or they chose not to listen to it or believe the claims made in it. It is believed that this segment of the population is also unresponsive to mass marketing strategies. Consequently, some members of these communities do not understand why the census is necessary nor do they understand the process.

Some of the key recommendation made by the ethnographers who conducted the fieldwork are listed below. Additional recommendations are discussed in the report.

- **Enlist support from community organizations.** A feature of Census 2000 that all ethnographers found appealing and valuable was the use of community organizations to promote census awareness and encourage census participation. Therefore, continued and increased use of community-based organizations is high on the list of recommendations for 2010 Census.

- **Direct outreach programs to specific transient groups.** Specific recommendations included the use of ethnic art and advertisements on local radio and television programs that target certain populations. Advertise places that hard-to-enumerate individuals are likely to frequent on a regular basis, including supermarkets and Laundromats (to target low income women).

- **Clarify residence rules for transients.** Make instructions for inclusion in household explicit. For instance, residence rules state "People without a usual residence, however, will be counted where they are staying on Census Day" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). This should be made clear to those populations likely to house transient people and to those who claim no permanent residence (e.g. full-time Snowbirds).

- **Enumerate in non-traditional sites.** The continued and extended use of non-traditional enumeration sites is encouraged. Such sites may include: Hotels and motels where people reside; RV sites – commercial and undeveloped; Community centers; Outdoor sleeping locations (i.e. parks); Prisons and jails; Substance abuse treatment centers; Soup kitchens and shelters; Community based organizations (e.g. American Indian social service organizations).

- **Make sure that all undeveloped and public land campsites are designated for enumeration.** In the report on Snowbirds, Mings expressed concern that some of the campsites in his study were not visited by enumerators. Mings recommends that more attention be paid to public land campsites since his data indicate that some individuals live in these areas year round and have no other residence.

Selected References:

de la Puente, M. “Why are people missed or erroneously included by the Census: A summary of findings from ethnographic coverage reports”. Paper presented at the 1993 Research Conference on Undercounted Ethnic Populations, Richmond, VA, May 5-7, 1993.

Gerber, E.R. "The Privacy Context of Survey Response: An Ethnographic Account." In Doyle, Lane, Theeuwes, and Zayatz (eds) Confidentiality, Disclosure, and Data Access: Theory and Practical Applications for Statistical Agencies,. North-Holland: New York, 2001, pp. 371-394.

U.S. Census Bureau. Plans and Rules for Taking the Census: Residence Rules. Available at, http://www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/resid_rules.html, retrieved, Aug. 27, 2003.

1. BACKGROUND

Americans are considered among the most mobile people of the world's industrialized nations. In recent years, about 17 percent have been moving at least once each year (Hansen, 1995). Based on the estimated size of the United States population, close to 50 million Americans may have changed residence at least once, and many may have moved far more often, during the census year. The number of moves ranges from continuous nomadism to a single change of residential location.

There are many reasons why mobility is so prominent in the United States. Some Americans have unstable living conditions due to economic factors (i.e. unemployment, low income, high rent). These individuals are continuously on the move taking temporary refuge with friends, family or in shelters. In some communities this is common practice. When a family falls down on its luck, its neighbors will take the family members in until the time comes when they can afford to get into a place of their own or until they move on to stay with someone else. In these communities it is not unusual to find multiple families in one household, sometimes with as many as five or six people per bedroom. During the census, individuals living in these complex households can be erroneously enumerated. If forms are completed at all in these households, they often only include a subset of the individuals that are actually staying at the residence.

Other Americans choose a life of mobility, traveling for business or pleasure. Some of these people choose to live in recreational vehicles (RVs) to travel the country. Some spend a large amount of time visiting family and friends across the nation. For example, spiritual activities and duties take some American Indians across the country many times within the year. Some of these individuals may be en route during the census enumeration period, may not receive census forms and might not be enumerated. Others may have a difficult time listing a place of permanent residence. This could lead to erroneous enumerations or even omission if the task is deemed too difficult.

From the perspective of the transients, enumeration procedures have not been adequately tailored to their circumstances. The chief obstacle of this has been the lack of accurate current information about the characteristics and behaviors of the known mobile groups that is necessary to apply successful enumeration methods. Mobile groups share in common the lack of awareness of the purposes of the census, deep distrust of the government and its information gathering strategies, and a lifestyle that very easily allows them to slip through the census operations.

This report summarizes findings and insights from ethnographic studies of four types of mobile populations. These are: urban gang members, Irish Travelers in Mississippi and Georgia, seasonal residents or "snowbirds" in Arizona, and American Indians residing in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The overall aim of this report is to increase our understanding of why such mobile groups are difficult to enumerate in a census. Based on the insight provided by the ethnographers who conducted the field work, this report provides suggestions for how to best tailor census enumeration methods to highly mobile population groups.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research methods used in this report are qualitative and not quantitative. While qualitative methods are used in the social sciences for a variety of research objectives (Gubrium and Holstein,2002), the qualitative data collection techniques used in this report (e.g., ethnographic interviews, unobtrusive observation, and participant observation) were used for the purpose of obtaining insight or an understanding of why some transient populations are difficult to census. Thus, the methods used to obtain the information presented in this report cannot be used to quantify census coverage or gauge, with any degree of certainty, the magnitude of a given event or phenomenon. The value of the information presented in this report lies in the insight that can be gained and not in the extent to which the information can be generalized to a larger population.

2.1 Choice of mobile populations

The four groups were chosen primarily for their excessive mobility. However, each group also has other characteristics that make the members hard to enumerate using traditional methods.

Gang members often do not have a place of their own. They frequently stay with a variety of different people including friends, family and other gang members. They also have a strong aversion to the government that makes gaining their cooperation with the census very difficult.

Irish Travelers are historically nomadic people that have more recently settled, to some extent, into permanent communities. Their amount of itinerancy and their level of secrecy have made them traditionally a difficult to enumerate group. This group was selected because its members tend to have aliases. This coupled with their tendency to change their living location on a regular basis makes them particularly challenging to census. Moreover, much like gang members, Irish Travelers are typically engaged in unconventional activities thus increasing their suspicion of non community members and institutions such as government.

Arizona Snowbirds are seasonal residents in the Sunbelt who are known for their mobility. Typically, they travel and camp during the winter months in the southwestern United States. Most have a permanent place of residence that they return to during the summer, but some do travel year-round in RVs. Seasonal residents were selected because historically this group has presented census takers with challenges. Not only do their multiple residences present a challenge but establishing residency status between living locations according to census residence rules can also be problematic.

American Indians living in the urban San Francisco Bay area are also a highly mobile population. The households are often fluid in composition and many suffer, at least temporarily, from homelessness. Other members of the community choose to live a mobile life either for work or pleasure. This group is highlighted because very little is known about the residence patterns of urban American Indians mainly because, unlike their counterparts on Indian reservations, urban American Indians tend not to be geographically concentrated.

2.2. Methods

Four ethnographic studies by social scientists who each had extensive knowledge of a specific subpopulation were commissioned for this study. Each researcher had previously conducted research within his/her population of interest and was known, in most cases, as a trusted individual by the community. This is important because many of these groups of transient people are notoriously untrusting of outsiders, so the aid of researchers that are known and trusted within the community is crucial to obtain the true attitudes of the group members.

In most cases, the ethnographers were involved in the study site for a period of months surrounding enumeration. This allowed the observation of the day-to-day lives of the community members and also the opportunity to examine the extent of the mobility of the residents.

This ethnographic fieldwork took place before, during and after Census 2000 in order to evaluate the lifestyles of the groups and to observe residential mobility activities during these time periods. All researchers used a combination of observation and unstructured interviews in their field works. Each ethnographer created his or her own protocol for interviewing which varied depending on the nature of the population.

Dr. Mark Fleisher researched gang members in two urban sites. Gang members pose several problems to enumeration. They are highly mobile and have a strong aversion to the government.[1] Fleisher conducted extensive community-based participation-observation along with a set of semi-structured interviews with a total of 59 male gang members and 17 female members of the gang social network.

Dr. Maribeth Andereck conducted an ethnographic study of Irish Travelers in Mississippi and Georgia. Irish Travelers are historically nomadic people that have more recently settled, to some extent, into permanent communities. Their amount of itinerancy and their level of secrecy have made them a difficult to enumerate group. At the Mississippi site, there were approximately 260 trailers of Irish Traveler families that were observed. With the cooperation of school officials and her trust from the Traveler families due to her past research within the community, Andereck was able to conduct extensive personal interviews with 49 families. In Georgia, with the aid of a research assistant that was a member of the Traveler community, the census data from 333 families was traced from 1970 to 2000.

Dr. Robert Mings investigated a population of Arizona Snowbirds. These are seasonal residents in the Sunbelt who are known for their mobility. His research included observations and structured interviews with 32 Snowbirds on five undeveloped public lands that were used as RV sites in Arizona.

[1] In fact, Fleisher noted that he was not able to directly discuss census participation with many of his informants because of their aversion to the government and those who act on its behalf. Any inquiries that were too detailed had the potential to raise suspicion of him in the community, an act that would have ended his study prematurely.

Dr. Susan Lobo researched American Indians living in the urban San Francisco Bay area. During her study, she interviewed 27 highly mobile Indian people and observed many members of the large Indian community. In the text of her study, she presents 12 case studies that illuminate specific problems found in trying to enumerate this population.

The general goals of each of these researchers were to outline patterns of and causes for residential mobility among these groups, to observe these transient groups during the conduct of Census 2000, and to provide recommendations for improving the enumeration of transient populations in the 2010 Census.

3. FINDINGS

The results of these studies are organized and presented according to barriers to census enumeration. These are: residential mobility, distrust and/or fear, irregular and complex household arrangements, and disinterest. This section discusses barriers to enumeration and Census Bureau efforts for Census 2000.

3.1 Barriers to census enumeration

Across these four distinct populations, many common barriers to enumeration were found. Many of these barriers have been studied and documented in previous ethnographic studies of hard-to-enumerate populations (see de la Puente, 1993). However, this prior ethnographic research conducted in conjunction with the 1990 Census did not focus on the specific mobile groups discussed in this report.

The fact that similar barriers to enumeration have been identified by both the 1990 studies and the current research is both reassuring and daunting. Its encouraging that similar processes vis-a-vis census taking appear to be present across a variety of hard-to-enumerate populations because addressing a given barrier to enumeration will likely have an impact across population groups. It is somewhat disappointing from the standpoint that measures taken to address the barriers identified in the 1990 Census appear to have not fully addressed the circumstances encountered in Census 2000 by the four mobile populations that are the focus of this report.

3.1.1 Residential mobility

Snowbirds are particularly mobile, perhaps the most of any of the groups. In fact, approximately 20 percent do not have a permanent residence. While on the road, Snowbirds may stay in RVs, luxury resorts, hotels, motels, rental apartments or townhouses, mobile home parks, or with relatives and/or friends. Dr. Mings' (2001) ethnographic study focused on those who travel in RVs, which are sometimes parked in commercial RV resorts, family-owned & operated campgrounds or undeveloped public lands. While mail may be available to those camping in resorts or even in small campgrounds, it is generally unavailable on public lands. Some Snowbirds do not get mail at all and others get it in an untimely fashion (when they return home, or through a friend or family member that they visit occasionally). This could cause immense problems in the receipt of census forms.

Many Snowbirds enjoy traveling around the southwest, not simply staying in one site for an extended period. In fact, there is a 14-day stay limit on most public grounds, which enforces the mobility of these individuals. Not only does the lack of mail cause problems with the receipt of forms, but the mobility also causes a problem with listing a place of usual residence. While the majority of Snowbirds do maintain a permanent address, they may spend more than half the year traveling away from this address. To exacerbate the condition, those who do maintain a home further north are often en route between late March and May. This means that on census day they may be 1) incommunicado and/or 2) residing in a place that they do not consider their permanent residence. Thus the inability to contact these individuals and their reported confusion concerning the residence rules can pose difficulties in enumeration.

Like the Snowbirds, urban American Indians often travel for pleasure. According to Dr. Lobo (2001) many families enjoy participating in the pow-wow circuit during the summer. Throughout the year, they make visits to their reservation and/or travel for spiritual work. However, not all moves are for pleasure. The high cost of rent and poor living conditions in the urban communities where they reside force continuous movement to find a safer and/or cheaper place to live. In some cases, Indian people observed by Dr. Lobo ended up living on the streets, in shelters or in institutions (e.g. prisons, health facilities, substance abuse treatment programs).

Homelessness is a problem according to Lobo. Many of the transient families that Lobo interviewed were homeless and lived either temporarily, or permanently, on the streets, in parks or in parked cars. Others frequented transient quarters such as hotels, motels, shelters and soup kitchens.

Children in the community are often mobile as well, and not necessarily in connection with their parents. Some stay with other family members, in foster care or are "adopted out" of the tribe if social services deem their living conditions unfit.

The combination of conditions listed above can make the enumeration of American Indians who live under these conditions in the San Francisco Bay Area especially difficult to achieve. During the census some members could be traveling and therefore not receive census forms. Others may be without a permanent residence. Children may or may not be living with their parents and this could be either a temporary or permanent living arrangement. Given these living situations the concept of "usual residence" is not clear for many of these people. Thus, the same problems that were listed for the Snowbirds apply; some families cannot be reached during this time due to travel while other families stand the chance of being erroneously enumerated due to misunderstanding of the residence rules.

Fleisher (2001) noted that gang members most often stay with their mothers (youths) or girlfriends (adults).[2] In fact only about one quarter of those interviewed reported renting property and only 10 percent owned property. The remaining 65 percent stayed with various different

[2] Fleisher believes that reporting of young male gang members (by their family or girlfriend's family that they live with) is more likely than the reporting of older male members because the older members severed ties with family and actively avoid authorities.

people in various different places. Only 61 percent of the sample of gang members was legally employed. This can have a negative impact on one's ability to buy or rent property. Although gang members often report staying with girlfriends or family, in many cases, they do not stay at any one place for the majority of the month. Instead, they choose to stay in different "spots" throughout the month. Reasons for their mobility extend from criminal activity (i.e. desire to not be found) to having a desire to live with many different women.

Gang members cite the following reasons for changing residences: unemployment; criminal behavior; domestic violence/problems; and boredom (either with the relationship or with the living conditions). This mobility makes it difficult to report a place of usual residence when it may change from day to day or week to week.

Andereck (2001) reports good news on issues of mobility from the study of the Irish Travelers. She states, "The issue of mobility patterns for itinerant populations such as Irish Travelers should not be as a serious concern for the Census Bureau as may have been in the past." Particularly for the Travelers in Mississippi, traveling is no longer very prominent. Those who do travel are usually the fathers of the households, while the mother and children stay home during the school year. During the month of April, when the census is conducted, there is usually someone residing in the household. There should be little confusion about the residency of those who do travel, because their travel is not extended, usually lasting only a few days at a time.

3.1.2 Distrust and/or fear

However, as a group, the Travelers do still have an aversion to outsiders in general. Though their willingness to comply with the government has increased, they still do not trust or welcome outsiders into their homes. Andereck (2001) notes that "A follow-up by a census fieldworker would not be successful with the Mississippi Travelers due to the suspicion of government employees." She stresses promoting compliance with the mail-in forms through the schools and church, which are trusted by members of this group.[3]

Like the Travelers, the American Indians that Lobo (2001) interviewed were often distrustful of the government and non-Indians. Some of the homeless people she interviewed would not accept food or shelter from non-Indian organizations, even if in need. These are the people most likely to simply refuse to comply with census procedures, regardless of the method of solicitation. More optimistically, Lobo comments that *most* Indian people are not this distrustful. Other reasons for lack of compliance with the census are based on practicality rather than principle. For instance, complex and irregular household arrangements often violate housing regulations that limit the number of residents per household. Fear of eviction may keep them from answering honestly.

[3] Another, less critical barrier to Traveler enumeration is the frequent use of nicknames in the community. Many Travelers may have the exact same legal name and prefer to use nicknames within their group of trusted individuals. This emphasizes barrier between insiders and outsiders and makes verification difficult in these already hard-to-enumerate communities.

Gang members are also known to fear the government. Gang members are often criminals, who are accustomed to hiding from officials. Given the police presence in their neighborhoods, they often view outsiders as possible undercover officers or informants. Census field representatives would likely not be trusted enough to engage in polite conversation, much less to be trusted with confidential information.

According to Fleisher anonymity is a way of life among gang members. In fact, members refer to each other with code names and often do not know the legal names of their acquaintances, or even friends. This protects them from being forced to give up information on someone in case of arrest. The code of anonymity stretches to the female members of the society. They respect the need for anonymity and are reluctant to give up any information that they might know about their family or friends. Even giving out someone's legal name may be seen as a violation of this code of secrecy. Compliance with the census would directly violate it. For this reason, the females with whom gang members reside may not be willing to provide the names of all the residents that should be included on her form.

The females that do rent housing in these gang communities may be reluctant to report the actual residents in her household because her living arrangements may be against housing management rules. In low income housing the amount of rent one pays depends on the reported income of all those residing in the house. Sometimes, one or more members of the household are not reported to management so that their income is not included. Because some apartments do not allow felons to reside, they may be excluded from the list of household members as well. For these various reasons (i.e. anonymity, criminal past, illegal living conditions), a gang member may report an inaccurate address (e.g. mother or grandmother's address) if he reports an address at all. In many cases, income reports are also inaccurate because they fail to include illegally earned income. All of these factors may contribute to inaccurate reports of census data. Reports may be in line with the information given to the housing management, but contrary to reality.

On a more encouraging note, according to Mings, Snowbirds display explicit lack of fear or distrust in the government or outsiders. If they can be contacted and if questions about what is meant by "usual residence" are answered, they would be most likely to participate.

3.1.3 Irregular and complex household arrangements

Lobo (2001) observed that American Indians living in urban communities often have households with a fluid composition. Extended family or tribal community members may stay for a few nights, or indefinitely, when they have no place else to go. Certain "key" households in the community are known for taking in those who need a place to stay. Oftentimes, these are the homes of female members of the community who serve maternal roles by providing shelter and food to family and friends of the Indian community. These house guests, however long their stay, are not likely to be enumerated as household members. Even among relatives residing in the same household, not everyone is enumerated consistently. According to Lobo, reasons for this remain unclear; possibly, respondents are unsure whom to list as a usual resident. Alternatively, respondents may be listing only a subset of the residents for ease of completing the questionnaire or for ulterior motives that have been discussed previously (i.e. violations of housing authority rules).

*3.1.4 Disinteres*t

Another key reason for not participating in the census is disinterest in the government in general, and in Census Bureau efforts more specifically. For example, many of the Travelers in Mississippi that were studied, claimed not to have completed the Census 2000 forms; the ethnographer cited disinterest as the primary cause. Many of those who did complete the forms gave incomplete information. Andereck (2001) stated, "The Travelers interviewed felt they had performed their duty in identifying the household and a few of the members."

Fleisher (2001) also noted that gang members have an explicit disinterest in the Census Bureau activities because they do not see any personal benefit from participating. Many of the young gang members that were interviewed did not know what type of agency the Census Bureau is, even after the Census 2000 campaign. They connected the Census Bureau with negative attitudes towards police, housing authorities and the IRS. Many gang members, or the women they live with, use the welfare system; however, they do not connect participation in the census with the gain of welfare support. If they receive no direct benefit from completing the forms, they are likely not to do so. Disinterest intermingled with ignorance of the goals of the census will most certainly lead to failure to comply.

3.2 Census Bureau efforts for Census 2000

Placing the ethnographers in the midst of their target community during the Census 2000 operation provided us with an insiders' view of the outreach programs that were aimed at targeting the transient population. Ethnographers reported outreach programs that were evident in the community, and, of equal interest, programs that seemed to be missing.

The ethnographers who conducted the fieldwork did report some good news. For example, Andereck (2001) reported an optimistic outlook towards future data collection:

> The information requested on the census forms is not threatening to the Travelers and is adequate for gaining the information sought. The style of writing is not confusing to the Travelers and the dates for the census correspond with the settled period in the Traveler seasonal schedule. (p. 11)

Thus, if the problem of disinterest can be resolved within the Traveler population, they are likely to comply.

According to the ethnographers, the involvement of community organizations in the efforts of the Census Bureau was particularly effective for these populations. Specifically, the urban American Indian population and the Traveler population benefitted from local community residents promoting the census.

Based on her systematic observations Lobo reported that among the American Indian population, enumeration in soup kitchens and transitional housing was successful in some cases. However,

Lobo contends that the enumeration of these facilities could have been more successful and she elaborates and provides detailed suggestions in her report (Lobo 2001).

The ethnographers also pointed to areas where improvements are needed. For instance, according to Fleisher (2001) the gang members in this study were not reached by the census. That is, most were not aware of the messages put forth in the census outreach and promotion efforts, most did not see the value of participating in the census, and, according to Fleisher most were not enumerated in Census 2000.

Fleisher (2001) cites "gaps [that] exist between the dominant community and the minority community" as the major problem (p.29).

> Few residents knew anything about Census 2000. In short, the minority community does not have a metaphorical ear placed at the edge of the dominant community listening for opportune times to move ahead. Community isolation is an effect of poverty and an effect of the dominant community not reaching into the minority community in a sustained proactive manner, offering material benefits. (Fleisher, 2001, p. 29)

Most members of the gang community do not read newspapers or watch news on television. Other means of advertising must be used to reach them.

Similarly, the younger generation of Georgia Travelers was not reached, according to Andereck (2001). Based on Andereck's research it is apparent that the Census Bureau's outreach and promotion strategies did not increase census awareness or the desire to participate in Census 2000 among the Georgia Travelers she studied.

Not providing full and complete information on the census form was also a problem, according to Andereck. In her interviews Andereck noted that, among the Georgia Travelers who reported participating in Census 2000, many stated that not all items on the form were completed. Andereck (2001) indicated that this might be because they felt that giving some information on their households satisfied their duty.

3.3 Summary of findings

The findings from the ethnographic studies of the four transient groups (urban gangs, Irish Travelers, snowbirds, and urban American Indians) combined, has provided information on how previously documented barriers to enumeration were manifested among these groups during Census 2000.

Briefly, these include:

- **Residential mobility**. Residents may be hard to contact (i.e. not reached by traditional enumeration methods – in person or by mail), or they may have difficulty providing a specific place of usual residence. Most individuals in the study who were aware of the census residence rules did not find them helpful in reporting a usual residence.

- **Distrust and/or fear.** There are two related reasons for why there is reluctance to provide the Census Bureau with personal information. The first is applicable to persons who engage in illegal or unconventional activities. This can range from the violation of a civil or criminal law to involvement in living arrangements that violate either public or private housing rules. Underlying this phenomenon is the fear that information provided to the Census Bureau is not kept confidential by the agency and that divulging such information may result in some penalty or prosecution if it fell into the wrong hands. The second and related reason for the reluctance to provide personal information in the census is a broader sense of distrust in government coupled with the unwillingness to provide personal information to an entity whose intentions are questioned. This observation has been documented in other related research (see Gerber, 2001).

- **Irregular and complex household arrangements.** In some cases, violation of housing rules and distrust in government may prevent honest responses. In others, it is unclear to respondents whom to classify as a household member when some of those living in the house are transients.

- **Disinterest**. In some cases the Census Bureau's extensive outreach effort did not resonate for some mobile groups. Either they were not exposed to the campaign or they chose not to listen to it or believe the claims made in it. It is believed that this segment of the population is also unresponsive to mass marketing strategies. Consequently, some members of these communities do not understand why the census is necessary nor do they understand the process.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations from the ethnographers are summarized in this section. When evaluating these recommendations it is important to understand that these recommendations are based on the fieldwork (i.e., unstructured in-depth interviews, unobtrusive observation, and participant observation) conducted by the ethnographers. Additionally, the ethnographers did not necessarily know or understand all the routine and special operations that were mounted as part of Census 2000. For these reasons some recommendations may include suggestions for activities that the Census Bureau did actually employ during the conduct of Census 2000 while other suggestions may not be feasible in a census environment.

Nonetheless, the recommendations are presented here because we believe that they provide a valuable perspective. This is the perspective of trained ethnographers who conducted systematic observations for a period of time surrounding Census 2000 of specific types of transient groups for which little is known with respect to the extent of their awareness and participation in Census 2000. The fact that these ethnographers were not aware of some of the Census 2000 outreach programs, despite being immersed in the target community during Census 2000, indicates that the outreach programs might not have been as effective as we had hoped. We can learn from this to better prepare for the 2010 Census.

4.1 Local level – Community involvement

- **Enlist support from community organizations.** A feature of Census 2000 that all ethnographers found appealing and valuable was the use of community organizations to promote census awareness and encourage census participation. Therefore, continued and increased use of community-based organizations is high on the list of recommendations for 2010 Census. Specific community organizations mentioned by the ethnographers include: churches, schools, and American Indian and tribal organizations.

- **Hire enumerators from the target population.** All of the ethnographers recommended enlisting the aid of members of groups that are difficult to enumerate. If members of the community could be hired as enumerators, some of the issues of distrust would be alleviated.[4]

- **Gain the aid of local non-government leaders.** Along the same lines, enlisting aid of key community members (e.g. the clergy, community activists, and school officials) to promote census awareness and participation would be very beneficial. For example, in urban Indian communities there are key households, which often house highly respected members of the community and serve as meeting places. These households could provide instrumental connections to the community and offer a way to gain the trust of the people.

4.2 Outreach Programs

- **Direct outreach programs to specific transient groups.** Develop and use outreach programs that target hard-to-enumerate groups. Specific recommendations included the use of ethnic art and advertisements on local radio and television programs that target certain populations.

- **Publish census success stories.**

    - Provide examples of schools or churches that promoted census participation and added their own incentives. These articles/commercials would be aimed at encouraging other organizations to actively participate.

    - Publicize governmental efforts in the community that resulted from use of census data (e.g. remodeling of government supported housing) and public involvement of the Census Bureau in community events.

- **Promote long-term community involvement.** High-visibility involvement in the community with local agencies may promote trust and a feeling of social support.

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[4] Fleisher did note that while it would not be wise to enlist gang members (who are often criminals) to work for the Census, members of the community of the same race and socioeconomic class might be more likely to be trusted than white, middle class males.

- **Inform, inform, inform.** Emphasize importance of listing all household members and the importance of having every American counted, even those with no permanent residence. Provide explicit instructions for those who do not have a usual residence.

4.3 Procedures for 2010 Census

- **Emphasize confidentiality.** Highlight that information provided to the Census Bureau is confidential by law. This point needs to be emphasized for members of the community that feel as though they have something to hide (i.e. from the IRS or from their housing management).

- **Clarify residence rules for transients.** Make instructions for inclusion in household explicit. For instance, residence rules state "People without a usual residence, however, will be counted where they are staying on Census Day" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). This should be made clear to those populations likely to house transient people and to those who claim no permanent residence (e.g. full-time Snowbirds).

- **Enumerate in non-traditional sites.** The continued and extended use of non-traditional enumeration sites is encouraged. Such sites may include: Hotels and motels where people reside; RV sites – commercial and undeveloped; Community centers; Outdoor sleeping locations (i.e. parks); Prisons and jails; Substance abuse treatment centers; Soup kitchens and shelters; Community based organizations (e.g. American Indian social service organizations).[5]

- **Distribute materials from a variety of locations.** Distribution of materials should be increased to include more sites. Places mentioned in the previous recommendation could be used to distribute materials for those members of the community who frequent the sites, but may be absent on the day of enumeration. Mings noted that for Snowbirds, "Personal effort on the part of commercial campground management to deliver census materials to individuals and offer support for prompt compliance likely will have a strong positive impact on results" (p.23).[6]

- **Broaden outreach locations.** Advertise places that hard-to-enumerate individuals are likely to frequent on a regular basis. These include supermarkets and Laundromats (to target low income women).

- **Educate children about the census.** By informing children of the process at schools, two goals can be met. Children can inform their parents (i.e. information can be sent home with them) and they will be better informed about the process and more likely to comply when they become adults. This is particularly important in low-income school districts where non-response is high.

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[5] Although people do not reside at some of these places, transients often frequent them. Particularly in these venues, enumerators should inquire as to whether the person has been enumerated elsewhere.

[6] Again, emphasis should be placed on completing the census once and only once.

- **Advocate year-round community support.** Continuous outreach during off-census years is recommended. Having a member of the community who works part time for the Census Bureau continually conveying the message of the importance of involvement in Census Bureau activities would build trust within the community. This person should emphasize the benefits that come from participation in the census. A person matching the background of the hard-to-enumerate population would be ideal.

- **Be flexible in the timing of enumeration interviews.** Be sensitive to time of day when members of the community are most likely to be home and receptive to visitors. Enumerate campsites in the evening, when campers are most likely to be home. Generally, late in the evening is when female members of the gang community would be home and most likely to comply.

- **Make sure that all undeveloped and public land campsites are designated for enumeration.** In his report Mings (2001) expressed concern that some of the campsites in his study were not visited by enumerators. While this concern is debatable, Mings recommends that more attention be paid to public land campsites since his data indicate that some individuals live in these areas year round and have no other residence.

4.4 Other recommendations

- **Be sensitive to cultural differences.** In communities that are particularly sensitive to strangers (i.e. Mississippi Travelers) avoid sending enumerators unless they are members of the community. Sending "suspicious" individuals could cause more harm than good bringing issues of confidentiality into question.

- **Verify count later in the year.** Re-count hard-to-enumerate populations in the winter of a census year. This would increase the likelihood of capturing those who were traveling during April and couldn't be contacted.

- **Match data to records.** To verify enumeration of hard-to-enumerate populations, match data with records from church or school.[7]

5. RECOMMENDED RESEARCH PRIOR TO THE 2010 CENSUS

Some of the observations noted in the ethnographic reports should be researched further prior to recommendation for 2010 Census procedures.

[7] This would only be applicable when community member are formally associated with these groups. This technique would not be applicable to gang members or Snowbirds who are often not members of formally recognized groups.

5.1 Female heads-of-households

One common theme through this set of reports was that females tend to be the heads-of-households among transient populations. In the Traveler community, for example, females most often filled out census forms and provided more complete data than males (Andereck, 2001). In the gang community, females are usually those with permanent residences. Regarding females who reported a permanent residence, Fleisher made the following statement:

> No woman reported ever seeing census forms. No woman said she had ever completed census forms or recalled having had a census enumerator interview her. Most women said they would complete census forms, however. (p.54)

Finally, in the urban American Indian population, females are often those who own the key households (i.e. places where the community gathers, or households that take in those who need a place to stay).

Research questions: If so, does the census campaign specifically target females? What strategies are most effective for targeting females?

5.2 Residence rules for transients

Another issue for which research is needed before the conduct of 2010 Census concerns residence rules and the extent to which these rules are appropriately understood and applied by respondents, particularly respondents with unconventional living arrangements (e.g., transient populations).

Is the following rule clear to respondents: "People without a usual residence, however, will be counted where they are staying on Census Day" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002)? It may not be obvious to the head of the household that someone should be included on their form who only stays there a few nights a month. However, if that person has no usual residence ("stays in different spots" throughout the year), they are to be included where they stayed the night of April 1st of the Census year.

Research questions: Are the residence rules presented clearly? Do respondents understand how transients are to be enumerated? Are respondents comfortable listing transients along with usual residence? Is there an alternative method to listing them that may cause less confusion?

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