

**ETHNOGRAPHIC EVALUATION OF THE
1990 DECENNIAL CENSUS REPORT SERIES**

REPORT #9

**THE CAMBODIAN COMMUNITY OF LONG BEACH:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF FACTORS LEADING TO CENSUS
UNDERCOUNT**

Final Report for Joint Statistical Agreement 89-31

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INTRODUCTION

This is the final report on the research done for the Joint Statistical Agreement between the Census Bureau and the United Cambodian Community entitled, "Behavioral Causes of Undercounts: Cambodians in Long Beach." The purpose of this study was to document and explain a suspected undercount among Cambodian refugees. To do this we studied a sample two block area within a concentration of Cambodian refugees and compared results of our Alternative Enumeration (AE) with the 1990 census enumeration of the same two block section. Our site was located in Long Beach, California. As the home of the largest Cambodian population outside of Southeast Asia, Long Beach was the obvious choice for this study. In addition, the site met other criteria: the Cambodians were concentrated in an urban area; most of them arrived in Long Beach since the last census; the average level of formal education was low; a large percentage of the adult refugees had little fluency in English.

- The specific two block area selected for in-depth study, hereafter called "the neighborhood," is typical of other neighborhoods in the Cambodian area. Although multiethnic, more than half of the population of this two block area consists of Cambodian refugees. In addition to Cambodians, Hispanics and Anglos along with a small percentage of people of other ethnic backgrounds live in the neighborhood. Although the primary focus of our study is the Cambodian population, we studied all the households in the neighborhood and will discuss our findings concerning the Hispanic and Anglo residents as well as the Cambodian ones. Through the course of this research, we found a number of conditions which we believed would lead to Census undercount, such as: low fluency in English, high residential mobility, mistrust of outsiders, complex residence and household composition, and underground economic activities. These factors will be examined in this report along with suggestions for better censusing in future censuses. Specifically, this report presents: (1) a brief historical and sociocultural context of the neighborhood; (2) an ethnographic profile of the neighborhood and its sociocultural context; (3) a discussion of the methodology of the project; (4) an analysis of the undercount; and (5) finally, a conclusion in which we summarize major findings and discuss ways in which the census bureau might improve future censuses with this or similar communities.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIOCULTURAL BACKGROUND

Cambodian refugees began arriving in the United States after the fall of the U.S. backed Cambodian government to the communist Khmer Rouge in 1975. These refugees tended to be people who had ties with the U.S. or who were caught by events while outside of their country. A second and much larger wave of Cambodian refugees began arriving in the U.S. after the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge by the Vietnamese in 1979. Appendix 1, Table 1, presents statistics describing the numbers of Cambodians entering the United States from 1975 through 1989. Although the Khmer Rouge regime concentrated their purges on the urban, the educated and the wealthy (including business people), Cambodians of all regions and social backgrounds suffered greatly from starvation and indiscriminate executions.

History of the Long Beach Cambodian Community

Even prior to 1975, a small number of Cambodians lived in the Long Beach area. In the late 1950s, an exchange program between the United States and Cambodia sent Cambodian students to California State University, Long Beach. The presence of established Cambodians in Long Beach attracted many of the 1975 refugees to Long Beach. This first set of refugees, a generally well educated group, began at once to set up self-help organizations to aid the new arrivals, for example, the United Cambodian Community, a mutual aid association, was funded and organized by community members in 1977 (personal communication, Vora Kanthoul 1991).

Cambodian refugees arriving in the 1980s were generally separated into small family groups and sent to communities all over the United States (Zaharlick and Brainard 1987), but many of them through secondary migration joined relatives and friends in Long Beach (Mortland and Legerwood 1987:300). Others simply moved to Long Beach because of the presence of a Khmer speaking community and the associated services, including Buddhist temples, businesses, and social agencies serving the Cambodian population. Although some urban, educated Cambodians survived the Khmer Rouge years and managed to escape Cambodia and reach the United States, the majority of these latter refugees were rural farmers with four years or less formal education prior to becoming refugees.

Most of the Cambodian refugees in Long Beach, California, live in a concentrated urban enclave, bordering the downtown business district. The residential areas are composed of low to middle income housing including detached single family houses, apartments, and converted units. A large percentage of the housing units are rentals. Blacks, Hispanics, and Anglos also live in the area, although the exact percentage of each group varies on different blocks. Cambodians who become successful in business and the professions generally move out of this area into other Long Beach areas or into the surrounding communities.

The section of the community where our study took place has been in transition for a number of years. Although entirely Anglo in the 1940 census, by the 1960s the population began to change with growing numbers of Hispanic and Black residents. The newer residents were generally poorer than the previously established group, moving generally into newly built apartment buildings. Throughout the 1970s, a major, community-based, Hispanic social service agency had its main office in the area. Cambodians moving into the area in the 1980s have replaced many of the previous residents and businesses. They have moved into both apartments and single family houses. In addition, one of the Cambodian social service agencies has recently completed the construction of a large Southeast Asian style building for its agency at the previous site of the Hispanic social service agency.

Cambodian Businesses

A dynamic Cambodian business community exists in Long Beach. On the main thoroughfares through the community, property values have risen with the new business interest. There are approximately 300 businesses in the Cambodian business community. Most of them cater to Cambodian and other Southeast Asian

customers. These businesses include grocery stores, restaurants, auto repair shops, video stores, accounting firms, retail clothing stores, and jewelry stores. Most of the "donut" shops in Long Beach and the surrounding communities are owned and managed by Cambodians (26 in Long Beach alone). Although Cambodian business appears to be steadily increasing, it is important to note that other ethnic groups also have businesses in the Cambodian area. Vietnamese and Chinese, as well as members of the Hispanic community and Black community, also own businesses in the area.

Gangs and Crime

Gangs, including Cambodian and Latino ones, are present in the area and play an important role. Cambodian gangs specialize in extortion of Cambodian businesses and in burglaries of Cambodian homes and businesses. They also burglarize houses where people are known to have money and jewelry in the house. According to discussions with the Long Beach police, all Cambodian restaurants and a large number of other businesses have to deal with extortion attempts by the Cambodian gangs. In the Cambodian Yellow Pages 1991, the business association paid for an advertisement in Cambodian and English explaining that extortion is a crime and that they should trust the police and report extortion attempts. Presently, many businesses simply pay what the gangs demand. A recent fire which destroyed a Cambodian restaurant has been blamed on gang retribution since the restaurant did not heed the gang's demands. In addition to burglary and extortion, gang related killings are not uncommon. Indeed, since April 1990 the local press has been covering a gang "war" between Latino and Cambodian gang members. During the course of our summer field work a number of gang related killings took place in Long Beach, most of them in or near the area of concentrated Cambodian population.

THE RESEARCH SITE

The two block neighborhood examined in this study is at a slightly higher socioeconomic level than many other blocks in the Cambodian area of Long Beach. However, in most ways it is fairly typical of other neighborhoods in the area. Within a block or two of the neighborhood, there is a Cambodian restaurant, a Cambodian market, a Cambodian jewelry store, video store, and more. In the same general area is a fast food restaurant and a Mexican restaurant. In the neighborhood itself, the children playing in front yards, alleys, and apartment courtyards are Cambodian and Hispanic. Many of the Anglo residents are elderly and remain in their homes and apartments and thus are rarely seen. In contrast, Cambodian and Hispanic adults are often seen in groups sitting on doorsteps, walking to market, or standing on the sidewalk or front yard. The languages most commonly heard spoken by both the children and the adults are Khmer, Spanish, and Lao. Although the adults remain in separate ethnic groups, we observed preteen boys of different ethnic backgrounds playing together in the alley. In these cases, the boys used the lingua franca, English.

Unfortunately, there is also crime, gang violence, and drugs. During our AE a Cambodian house across the street (on the next census block) was burglarized by Cambodian gang members. They sent a young Cambodian boy to knock on the door and when someone opened the door to the child, the gang members forced

their way in and robbed the family at gun point. It should come as no surprise that the next day people were more fearful about opening their doors to us. Shortly before our fieldwork started a young man (not Cambodian) washing his car in the neighborhood was shot and killed in a drive-by-shooting. Also shortly before our study one of the intersections in the neighborhood had been used by nonresidents to perform drug deals for a period of time.

Ethnic Diversity and Household Structure

The figures we use in this section are from our AE which took place in June and July 1990 and will not coincide exactly with the census figures. During this time period 88 households lived on two adjacent census blocks. With respect to race, ethnicity, and national origin, the population is diverse: Cambodian (61 percent), Hispanic (28 percent), Anglo (8 percent), Black (2 percent), Native American (0.3 percent), and ambiguous (1 percent). Of the 88 households, 40 identified as Cambodian, 19 as Hispanic, 24 as White, and one as Black. In addition, there were three households where the members were of mixed ethnicity and one vacant housing unit.

Our analysis revealed five basic household types: single person, two person, nuclear family, extended family (four variants), and unrelated adults. Disaggregation of the demographic data on Cambodian, Hispanic, and Anglo households demonstrated that residence patterns varied considerably between groups, with some patterns characteristic of particular groups. In the following sections, we analyze the household composition of the three major ethnic groups found in the neighborhood.

Cambodians

Cambodian refugees and their U.S. born children comprised 61 percent of the neighborhood's population and 46 percent of its households at the time of the Alternative Enumeration. Residents of all of these households identified as Cambodian, but ethnicity and socioeconomic status (in both Cambodian and American terms) varied within this group. Using self-identification by the primary respondent as the source of ethnicity, 33 of the Cambodian households (83 percent) identified as Khmer, five (13 percent) as Lao, and two as Chinese (5 percent). We observed status distinctions as well as behavioral differences based on place of origin and economic resources.

At the present level of analysis, we discerned no significant differences between the Cambodian ethnic groups with respect to residence patterns. Rather, life cycle stages in conjunction with the combined economic resources of the members appear to be the primary factors in household composition. Twenty-eight of the Cambodian households (70 percent) consisted of nuclear families. Of these households, all but five included two parents. Two were female-headed and three were comprised of a father and adult children. Preference for nuclear family households during the childbearing years is consistent with traditional norms, especially among the Khmer (Ebihara 1971; Kalab 1968).

All of the remaining households consisted of extended families.¹ More than half of these were comprised of three generations of kin, one quarter were groups of collateral relatives, one was a combination, and one was comprised of a grandmother and grandchildren. Half of the extended family households were headed by women, accounting for more than 80 percent of all female-headed households among Cambodians in the neighborhood. Most of the women who headed households were past child bearing age. Cambodian households typically included preferences for elders to live with adult children and uxorilocal residence after marriage (Ebihara 1971, 1974; Kalab 1968). Groups of collateral kin formed households to maximize economic resources whereas unrelated nuclear family households might share a house or apartment, but remain autonomous (Ebihara 1971).

The Cambodian population in our study area was relatively young. Slightly more than half (51%) of those enumerated were under the age of eighteen. All but a few minors lived in nuclear households. Many of the adults arrived in the United States during the "Second Wave" of refugee resettlement making the pattern of high birth rate in the first years after resettlement consistent with the emerging literature on Southeast Asian refugees (Rumbaut and Weeks 1986; Zaharlick and Brainard 1987:345). Ten percent of the Cambodian households included boarders, typically college students, to supplement their incomes.

Hispanics

Like the Cambodians, the Hispanic population in this neighborhood was culturally and socioeconomically diverse. Hispanic residents included Chicanos, Mexicans, Guatemalans, Salvadorans, and Peruvians. With the exception of some Mexicans, nearly all of the foreign-born Hispanics arrived since the 1980 census; many within the last two years.²

In addition to their cultural diversity, Hispanic households in the neighborhood fell into three categories with respect to length of members' residence. Many households move between categories over time. Prevalence in the neighborhood at the time of the AE is in descending order: 1) intergenerational households with both foreign and U.S. born residents; 2) all recent immigrants with few or no children and no elders; 3) intergenerational households, all residents U.S. born (including two households with Hispanic and non-Hispanic members).

Cambodians and Hispanics were interspersed throughout the neighborhood. However, residence patterns among Hispanics were markedly different from those of their Southeast Asian neighbors. Hispanics accounted for 28 percent of the population and 22 percent of the households in the AE. Basic household types were also more varied among Hispanics than among Cambodians. We found 10 nuclear families, 5 extended families (intergenerational and collateral), 3 groups of unrelated adults, and one couple. Two households were comprised of single men. One third of the Hispanic population was under the age of eighteen. Only one person was over 60 years old.

Twenty percent of all the households in the neighborhood had unrelated adults in addition to the basic household members. Hispanic households with

unrelated adults accounted for 69% of all such arrangements. Half of the Hispanic households also included one or more unrelated adults. Our observations suggest that, in general, nonrelatives had a prior social tie, such as fictive kinship or place of origin, to at least one other member of their households. The prevalence of co-residence among unrelated adults with or without children appears largely attributable to economic factors, namely low wages, unstable employment, and few wage earners per family. For example, 37 percent of all Hispanic households with unrelated adults were also female-headed. All female-headed households consist of mothers and minors and all except one also had nonrelative adult residents.

Anglos

Household and individual mobility within the neighborhood and to other areas was an important feature of residence patterns among both Cambodians and Hispanics. In contrast, "Anglos" (English speaking people of White race) in this neighborhood were nearly all long-term residents, comprising 27 percent of the households, but only 8 percent of the population. Many of those individuals lived here or nearby for forty years or more. A few were living in the homes in which they had been raised. In marked contrast to Cambodian and Hispanic patterns, all but three of the Anglo households consisted of individuals and couples. More than half of the population were elderly. One third of the households consisted of elderly widows living alone. None of the Anglo households included unrelated adults, although two occasionally provided temporary housing to casual employees in separate units.

Language Use in the Neighborhood Cambodian

In the Cambodian households, English was rarely heard. Only one of the Cambodian households appeared to use English frequently among themselves. Even in that household we heard the husband speak to his wife in Khmer. In two other households, both parents were comfortable in English, although the language of the home was Khmer. Khmer or Lao was the home language of four Cambodian households in which one of the parents spoke English fairly fluently. We observed adult children in eight of the remaining households who spoke English of varying degrees of fluency. All the preschool children we observed spoke only Khmer or Lao. Khmer was the language spoken in the great majority of the households. Lao was spoken in five and Khmer plus Chinese in two. The families that were ethnic Lao spoke Lao at home, but the parents also spoke Cambodian and the school age or older children also spoke English.

Hispanic

Spanish was clearly the language of preference in all of the Hispanic households in which we were able to observe interaction between family members, except for those in which all residents were born in the United States. Adult mastery of English appears related both to the length of time in the U.S. and the age of entry. Adults who had immigrated later in life tended to be either less comfortable with English or monolingual Spanish speakers, while those who arrived as children or young adults tended to be bilingual as are their school age and older children.

METHODOLOGY

Site Selection

In February 1990, the two principal investigators, Pamela Bunte and Rebecca Joseph, with the help of one of the Cambodian research assistants selected a block for the AE research. This block was approximately 80 percent Cambodian and 20 percent Black with at least 100 households. This block seemed ideal because one of the principal investigators already knew a number of the families and many of the children, having helped in several classrooms in the local elementary school. Unfortunately, we were informed that our selection (actually one corner of the block) touched a block where a Post Enumeration Survey (PES) was scheduled; thus, disallowing our selection. Because of the positioning of this PES as well as another PES in the middle of the most concentrated Cambodian area, we were severely constrained in our selection.

The second block that we picked turned out to be unsuitable because of a very high incidence of gang violence and because we were worried that the Cambodian population might be less than 50 percent. In these two blocks, Cambodians seemed to have a much lower level of census awareness than in the block which we eventually chose. Cambodians we spoke to on the streets did not seem to be very conscious of the census. One Cambodian resident even noted that the census forms delivered to his apartment complex were used by the children for paper airplanes.

Our third and final selection was one which we had previously examined and decided not to use because the number of Cambodian households appeared to be less than 50 percent and because the socioeconomic level of the block appeared higher than the area in general and thus less likely to be undercounted. However, we reexamined the block and decided that with a second block added to it, we would probably have a population with over 50 percent Cambodian. In any event, with the constraints imposed by the Census Bureau along with our desire to stay out of unacceptably high crime areas, we felt we had no choice but these blocks.

Our AE took place from June 11, 1990 to July 24, 1990. We spent a week and a half observing the neighborhood. We mainly walked around the blocks and alley but we also spoke to people who were outside and explained what we were going to be doing. During this period we also checked various public records, including reverse telephone books, the County Assessor records, and City planning documents. We also called up a real estate agent who was selling a house on the block to get the asking price and to inquire about the present tenant.

After this initial observation period we spent several hours a day in the neighborhood observing, interviewing, and visiting. Our visits took place at different times of the day, on weekdays and weekends. We always explained verbally the purpose of the research; however, we also gave them a letter from us explaining about the research and our identity. We also informed them of their rights (for example, that they did not have to tell us anything or even talk to us). We provided copies of the letter in Cambodian, Spanish, and English. This research was greatly facilitated by two bilingual Cambodian

research assistants, Sophea Kan and Malay Nou, and one bilingual Hispanic research assistant, Janier Najera. The research assistants worked with us in two person teams. Joseph's team collected information on the Hispanic households and most of the Anglo households, Bunte's team collected the data on the Cambodian households and two Anglo households. By the end of July, we had directly talked to or observed residents of almost all the households and we had data on all households.

Obtaining this data was not always simple. Although the elderly Anglo residents appeared the most afraid and the most reluctant to speak to strangers, some Cambodians and Hispanics also appeared afraid. One Hispanic woman admitted that she had first thought we were burglars and one Cambodian woman actually ran from us each time she saw us. We eventually got the information on her household from a neighbor.

Many Cambodian residents were open and friendly, inviting us into the house and offering refreshments. Others agreed to speak with us only because a relative or sometimes a neighbor assured them that it was all right. In these cases the interview generally took place on the doorstep or in a neighbor's apartment. Knocking on a door of a house was generally not successful. We could see that people were home, but they would not come to the door. We eventually succeeded in speaking to almost all of these households but only because we either found someone outside and began a conversation with them or because a relative or neighbor on the block introduced us.

We visited most Cambodian households two or more times and generally spoke Cambodian with the household members. However, we spoke English with school age children and in a small number of our conversations with adults code switching between Cambodian and English occurred. In only one Cambodian household was our entire interaction in English.

Our general approach among the Hispanic residents was to explain our purpose in Spanish and continue the interview in Spanish unless the person answering our questions switched to English. In the few instances where we were fairly certain that the respondent was a native English speaker, the interview was conducted in English. We visited more than half of the Hispanic households two or more times.

We returned several times to observe in the late summer and early fall to see what changes if any had taken place in the neighborhood and to interview residents of two households we had been unable to talk to in July.

Resolution Fieldwork

The final period of fieldwork took place after the Census Bureau sent the matched data (the data from the Census and the AE) in December 1990. From January 10th to January 15th, Bunte and one of the Cambodian research assistants returned to the neighborhood to resolve the discrepancies in the matched data in the Cambodian households. Reinterviewing cleared up the remaining inconsistencies.

In addition to the research assistants mentioned above who helped in the fieldwork portion of the project, an additional research assistant, Selma Morley, helped do the final resolution coding. She is a graduate student in anthropology at California State University, Long Beach.

Research Hypotheses

The research study tested the following hypotheses:

- a. Cambodian adults' limited knowledge of English, high rates of illiteracy in any language, especially among the Khmer ethnic group, reliance on young people and informal translators, and tendency to answer affirmatively to direct questions will affect the census count and the quality of census data. Cambodian respondents may be either unable to describe or reluctant to discuss unusual household arrangements. Unusual household arrangements are found in Cambodian households headed by women and in households that include persons whose membership in the household and whose "usual residence" is ambiguous, especially unaccompanied minors or undocumented relatives who have overstayed tourist visas.
- b. Resistance to censusing will prevent a complete count because Cambodians perceive themselves to be "overdocumented"; that is, because the refugees have supplied information to many governmental and social agencies, they may ignore the census. Some resistance to follow-up enumerators may be registered because of Cambodians' fear of government agents in general that dates to their experiences in Southeast Asia.

Since our research emphasized observation with formal interviewing kept to a minimum, these hypotheses were tested primarily by qualitative means; that is, we observed all the cases available to us and noted any comments on the topic provided by the residents. We also tried to lead informal conversations in appropriate directions. Depending on the context, some notes were taken while we were speaking with the household residents. These notes were then added to after we left the household, either in the car or in a small local restaurant. We were able to test some hypotheses more quantitatively. For example, see below discussions on the relevance of size of household to the ability to use mailed returns.

ANALYSIS

In the two block neighborhood, a preliminary comparison of the census forms with the AE research brings out problems with the Census Bureau's count of both the Cambodians and Hispanics. Data keyed from the census forms recovered from the two blocks identify as Cambodian only 186 of the 229 Cambodians who were living on these blocks in April 1990. An additional 26 individuals who are Cambodian were counted by the census but not identified as Cambodian. Obvious problems in the censusing of Cambodian households include missing households, missing individuals, and households which although counted are not listed as Cambodian. In addition, the census listed one household twice and also listed a small number of individuals who were not resident in April 1990.

The number 186 represents the total correctly censused deducting these latter miscounts.

The census also missed Hispanic households and individuals. The extreme mobility of some or all the residents of a few of the Hispanic households has made a precise determination of the number missed in the census difficult. Factors that account for most of the problems in both the Cambodian and Hispanic households, include limited English (and other language related factors), mistrust of strangers and government, residence and household composition and mobility.

There was no undercount in the Anglo households. In fact, the census had a slightly more accurate count. This we feel was due to the tendency of the Anglo residents to send in mailed returns. The discrepancies occur with the households that we could not directly interview or, in one case, where the resident appeared to be on drugs when we interviewed him. The Anglo residents, as a group, were generally more difficult to contact and interview than the others possibly because many of them perceived themselves as "besieged" by the other ethnic groups in the neighborhood.

Barriers to censusing among the Cambodian residents Language

Many of the miscounts with the Cambodian data are the result of communication problems. This is the case both for mailed returns and for enumerator assisted returns.

Two aspects of the forms themselves were problematic both for the person filling out a mailed return and for the enumerator: (1) the ethnic identity question and (2) the "small" number of spaces for household members on the primary form. There are two major problems with the race question. First, on the 1990 form Cambodian is not among its Asian race identities although, Cambodian is mentioned as an example of "other Asian or Pacific Islander (API) in the instructions. Three households did not understand that they could specify an identity that was not on the prepared list of Asian races. Thus, two Cambodian households picked Asian Indian and one picked Chinese. Of the two Cambodian households that listed Asian Indian on their mailed in return, one was Khmer and the other Lao. The household that picked Chinese was indeed Chinese Cambodian, but our interaction with them indicated that they identified as Cambodian. This household was censused by an enumerator in English who also mixed up the ages and relationships of the residents and missed another household at the same address. The second problem was that two households apparently misunderstood the intent of the race question and listed children born in this country as "USA" or "U.S. citizen" rather than Cambodian as "Other API", with Cambodian written in. (See illustration below)

rather than the living room. When residents invited us into the house, they only invited us into the living room area which often held no evidence of literacy one way or the other. One notable exception was one household where the adults were teaching the children to read and write in Khmer. They were using a chalkboard set up in the living room with the alphabet and simple words on it. Even though we could not measure literacy precisely, our perception was that in most Khmer households at least one adult was literate in Khmer. In addition, many Khmer residents told us that they wanted their children to have the opportunity to learn to read and write in Khmer.

The ethnicity and bilingual ability of census enumerators in this Cambodian neighborhood was also important for census accuracy. We were told by a number of residents that enumerators who only spoke English generally came first to their residences and after they could not communicate with anyone, Cambodian speaking enumerators visited them. Although we can not determine precisely how many households were censused by English-only enumerators,³ the households where the reporting of residents and their relationships with each other were the most confused were ones censused by enumerators, suggesting language and cultural problems in these cases.

The ethnicity and gender of the Cambodian household members also proved to be important in certain circumstances. There seemed to be little difference between Khmer men and Khmer women with regard to their willingness to speak with us and give us household information. We obtained information easily from most of the Khmer women we spoke with whether men were present or not. However, we experienced difficulties interviewing or even speaking with Lao women. In the majority of the Lao households in the neighborhood, the women would not speak with us whether men were present or not. Only one Lao woman freely spoke with us and gave us household information. She was an older woman who had watched us talk to neighbors for several days and had also begun to exchange greetings with us. In the other four Lao households, only one other woman ever spoke with us and she only did so in the company of a male Lao neighbor who told her it was all right to give us the information. This was after she had refused to speak with us several times. The information on the other Cambodian Lao households we obtained from male Lao residents. Our observations on the ethnic Lao households are very close to Ryneanson and Gosebrink's (1990) conclusions on Lao gender roles and their effects on censusing. However, in our study Khmer women did not display the reticence to speak with strangers about household matters that we (and Ryneanson and Gosebrink 1990) found among Lao women. Nevertheless, we expect that there would have been more censusing difficulty with Khmer women if there had not been a woman on the interview team. Although we were unable to test it, we also suspect that a Lao speaking interviewer on the team might have assuaged some of the Lao women's fears.

Mistrust of Strangers and Government

Due to the frequency of crime in the neighborhood, many of the residents are afraid to talk to strangers or open their doors to them. As we noted above, this fear of strangers certainly made our research more difficult and must have affected the census enumerators as well. The three Cambodian households which were the most difficult for us to access were poorly censused, that is,

people were missing and relationships were mixed up. The mistrust that these households felt for strangers might help to explain the problems census enumerators had. Indirectly, the missing of an entire Cambodian household was probably related to this fear. This latter household was in a converted building in a fenced, gated, and padlocked backyard. We noticed this potential household from the alley and were able to obtain household data from two different neighbors. However, if we had not asked specifically about the household, no one would ever have mentioned it.

We had expected that Cambodians might have some resistance to the census process because of fear of being counted by the government or because of perceiving themselves as over documented. However, this did not appear to be the case. Not only did no one complain in our presence about the Federal census effort, three Cambodian residents from different households complained to us that they had not been censused (a belief that incidentally in all three cases turned out to be untrue).

Although apparently very few people objected to the census per se, a number of people were clearly worried about the uses census data would be put to. Our experience in this neighborhood, as well as our general experience in the Cambodian community, made us aware that people would not always feel that they could be straightforward about actual living arrangements. For example, only half of the boarders in Cambodian households that we knew about were reported by the residents themselves. The others were mentioned in discussion with other relatives or neighbors. Similarly, the stated or "legal" household composition of Cambodian households in the urban enclave area is frequently different than the actual composition. Because of a number of legal constraints, including, welfare rules and person limits in housing units and requirements, legal addresses are frequently different than people's actual dwelling places. Individuals who actually live at a certain address, but who have a different legal address are admonished by family members to tell no one--not even friends--that they do not, in fact, live at the legal address. We were informed (but were not in a position to verify) of one case where an individual was not counted either at his legal address in one of the residences in the neighborhood (since he was not living there) or at the place where he was actually living outside of our two block area (because no one would say he was living there). This problem has led to a situation where neighbors or relatives will generally not venture opinions on household composition for fear of saying the wrong thing. Although we were able to discover a small number of these extra people (who were not censused), undoubtedly there were others whom we missed.

Informal economic activities are very common in both the Cambodian and Hispanic households and may have been a reason why some people were hesitant about inviting us in. Economic activities we observed in Cambodian households included preparation of desserts to be sold to Cambodian restaurants, sewing or tailoring, renting wedding outfits, and preparation of wedding videos. The households that did invite us in while such activities were taking place were generally ones where we knew a household member or where we had already developed friendly relations. In addition, since we were not asking specific questions about economic activity we may have been less threatening than census enumerators.

Residence and Household Composition

Our research suggests that certain aspects of the residence and household composition in the neighborhood significantly affected census enumeration. The factors which affected the 1990 Census include household and individual mobility, boarders and other unrelated adults living in households, discrepancies between legal and actual residence, nonstandard housing, and more than one household living at the same address.

The Cambodian population is characterized by relatively high rates of mobility. During the short period between April 1st and the end of July, 13 percent of the Cambodian households had changed residences. The direction of mobility during the study period was into the neighborhood. On April 1, 1990 there were 36 Cambodian households, while there were 40 by the end of July. Three of the four new households moved from outside the neighborhood. The exception was one Cambodian household which moved out of a crowded apartment into the next door unit, replacing an Hispanic household. One of the new Cambodian households moved into a previously vacant unit. Another moved into a four-plex, replacing an Anglo household. One moved into a house rented by in-laws.

In addition, we observed that Cambodian households who moved out after the study period had all been replaced by Cambodian households by January 1991.

We explained above that boarders as well as other residents may be missed in the census enumeration because of fear about how the information will be used. Another reason that they might be missed is that boarders and other unrelated adults also complicate household composition and are apt to go unreported for that reason as well.

Another residency pattern that apparently caused problems for census enumerators is the relatively high rate (17%) of Cambodian households sharing a residence address with an unrelated or more distantly related household. In every case, one or both of the households sharing an address were censused incorrectly: the census missed housing units and individuals and mixed up relationships in their count of these households.

Barriers to Censusing among the Hispanic population

With respect to the list of hypotheses about Hispanics discussed at the 1989 Ethnographic Census Evaluation Conference in New Orleans, the following appear to be true in this neighborhood.

- a. Monolingual speakers of Spanish and persons illiterate in any language are more likely to be missed than literate English speakers, including bilinguals.
- b. Some households will supply false information or deliberately omit some persons due to fear of outsiders. The census will miss persons within households based on respondents' partial reports.
- c. The population's mobility and impermanence of household arrangements will affect census coverage and its evaluation. Irregular housing and non-standard household arrangements will contribute to undercounts.

Language

Since many households had few if any adults fluent in English, language was clearly a potential problem area and may very well have been a factor in some of the miscounts. Without a bilingual enumerator it would not have been possible to interview the residents of many of the households. Some households reported receiving census forms printed in Spanish and English. Mailed in returns from Hispanic households in the study neighborhood tended to be more accurate than reports by census follow-up enumerators. However, mailing in the completed census form was uncommon and also largely coincided with household type. Nearly all of the mailed returns came from well-established intergenerational Hispanic households with children born in the U.S. of school age or older.

Fear of outsiders

"Outsiders" appear to be a broadly defined category among Hispanic residents in this neighborhood. It clearly included people who live outside of these two blocks and were not relatives or close friends, such as census enumerators and ourselves. Fear of outsiders associated with government may also have been tied to extensive involvement in the informal or underground economy (including, but not by any means limited to drug sales), immigration status, and/or misuse of public assistance programs. Everyone is afraid of the potential for gang violence. Purse snatching and burglaries are also common here. Our observations suggest that the "outsider" category extended to most non-Hispanic residents as well as Spanish-speaking neighbors from different cultural backgrounds.

Overall, collecting data from the Hispanic residents was difficult in that many of the individuals we encountered were reluctant to specify who lived with them, especially in the households with recent immigrants or "visitors." Our concern about the reliability of the data we were collecting was reinforced by occasional voices from the interior of the house or apartment shouting (in Spanish) things like, "Why are you telling them there are eight of us? There are twelve," and "Shut up and tell them to get out of here!" One man told us that although there were currently six people living in his apartment, the number of residents varied from four to eight.

Household Composition and Mobility

Like the Cambodian population, Hispanics in the neighborhood were characterized by high rates of mobility. Sixteen percent of the Hispanic households moved between April 1st and July 31st. In addition, roughly three quarters of the Hispanic households had one or more residents enter or leave the household during that period. We were also told by residents of some households that household members often moved back and forth between one residence and a nearby one or that household membership was variable. While interhousehold, neighborhood, regional, and international mobility among individuals and families appears very high for Hispanic residents as a group, patterns of mobility are directly related to length of residence in the United States with mobility decreasing with increasing length of stay in the United States.

Within the overall pattern of high mobility, we identified three distinct sub-patterns of individual and household movement that often coincided with the household types outlined above. Households consisting of foreign-born adults with few or no children and no elders reflect the highest individual mobility rates and may disintegrate entirely or experience complete replacement of their members over a period of several months to a year. For this reason, they pose the greatest challenge to accurate census enumeration. Inter-generational households with some foreign and some U.S. born members are both more likely to move as households and to mail in census forms. Household mobility appears to decrease with the core members' length of residence in the United States. However, most of these households also include "visitors," who are not reported to the Census Bureau.

A comparison of AE and data from 1990 Census forms indicate underenumeration of young women identified as visitors or recent immigrants. Individuals identified as "visitors" were slightly more likely to be female than male. In one household, no women were reported to us or to the census enumerator, though there appeared to be at least three women living there during several visits. Another household reported one woman, while two others appeared to be staying there at least temporarily.⁴

Irregular and Non-Standard Housing Arrangements

The two households which were completely missed had, as predicted by the Census Bureau's undercount researchers, irregular or non-standard housing arrangements. One household was living in a warehouse and the other, in a converted garage.

CONCLUSION

The Census Bureau experienced difficulty censusing the Cambodian residents of the neighborhood in various ways. Some of these difficulties such as those relating to language and those relating to residence and household composition were ones included in our original hypotheses. As expected we found that Cambodian adults' limited knowledge of English and associated illiteracy in English along with reliance on young people and informal translators affected the quality and accuracy of the census count. Unusual and complicated household arrangements were also found to contribute to census miscounting. Although we did not find resistance to censusing based on a perception of being overdocumented nor on a fear of government agents in general, we did find that fear of local crime and fear of how information might be used were fairly widespread and contributed to censusing difficulties.

Some of the problems experienced by the Census Bureau in enumerating Cambodians were also apparent in censusing Hispanics in this neighborhood. Difficulties relating to language (such as adults' limited knowledge of English and reliance on children as translators) and the pervasive fear of victimization were common to both groups. Substantial problems traceable to residence and household composition emerged through comparison of census and AE data for Cambodians and Hispanics. However, the specific difficulties arising from residence/household composition are clearly population specific and derive directly from cultural norms interwoven with the circumstances

through which individuals and households come to live in the neighborhood. For example, we found a large number of Hispanic households with "visitors" from Mexico who were not censused, but no households in which some individuals were missed because of more than one household residing at a single address. Fear of government agents and outsiders, in general, is a strong deterrent to accurate reporting among Hispanics in this neighborhood, though not among Cambodians.

Methodological Solutions

Cambodian--Many of the language difficulties could be solved fairly simply. In particular, two modifications in the mailed forms might improve both return rates and accuracy. First, Cambodian should be added to the Asian list. Second, a modification of the form to allow more individuals to be listed should be made.

Although we did not see any census material lying around, posters or brochures, for example, the people we spoke to seemed to be aware of the census.⁵ Some of them knew census enumerators, while others were concerned that they might be missed. There also seemed to be a willingness to fill out and mail in the census forms. Although those households with more than seven residents experienced difficulties as we discussed above, 57 percent of the remaining Cambodian households turned in mailed returns.

For those households that do not turn in mailed returns, Cambodian bilingual enumerators are extremely important. Even when a resident speaks some English, a non-Cambodian is going to have a difficult time understanding the complex household arrangements found in these communities.

The difficulties related to the mistrust of strangers and the government have fewer simple solutions. Short of eliminating crime in the local area, residents will be afraid of strangers. We found that timing our visits for when people were generally outside was helpful. This strategy appeared to work in this neighborhood. However, we nearly selected a neighborhood with a higher crime rate and, in that neighborhood, since people were rarely seen outside their dwellings, this strategy would have been useless.

We found it also helpful to employ a team approach. As noted above, our teams for the Cambodian portion consisted of one Cambodian and one non-Cambodian. In this neighborhood, having a non-Cambodian on the team was actually a plus, because it generally eliminated the possibility that we might be gang members. Since many of the residents we spoke with were women, having a woman on the team appeared less threatening, as well.

Perhaps even more difficult to address was the mistrust people felt concerning how the government would use the census data. While emphasizing the confidentiality of the data in our research did appear sometimes to convince people to talk to us, it never made someone who was not going to tell us about a boarder decide to do so. The only people who told us about boarders in their own households were people who had also told the census. Others never admitted that non-family members lived with them even when we had been introduced by relatives or respected neighbors and even when we appeared to

have a friendly relationship and they had invited us into their home. In one case, we had met and spoken with the boarder himself and had also been told about him by a non-resident daughter. However, when we later mentioned him to the household head she told us that he had never lived there. These fears seem to be deeply ingrained and would be very difficult to change.

With regard to residence and household composition, the problem of household and individual mobility is difficult to address. Although sending enumerators to the area soon after April 1st, in April or May if possible, would help accuracy.

To deal with complicated housing the best solution continues to be to use Cambodian bilingual enumerators. Also, although the Cambodian Lao adults who we met all spoke Khmer as well as Lao, providing enumerators who speak both Khmer and Lao would probably be useful particularly in areas where there are large numbers of Cambodian Lao.

Hispanic--In the opinion of Hispanic residents, census forms printed in Spanish as well as English would increase the recipients' comprehension, thereby improving the likelihood that the forms will be returned by mail. We found that mailed reports omitted fewer household members than did enumerator interviews. At the same time, all of the mailed forms came from established intergenerational households in which most adult members are bilingual and have participated in the census at least once before.

For households that do not return completed forms, bilingual enumerators are essential since many households have no adults who speak English well and others prefer using Spanish in unfamiliar situations, such as responding to a stranger's request for household information. Women, who should work in pairs during daylight hours, are preferable to men, who generally will be suspected of criminal motives. In general, early morning and early evening (before dark), when many residents are in the neighborhood is the best time for census enumeration, both in terms of gaining access to individual households and for personal safety. Unlike the Cambodians, none of the Hispanic residents knew an enumerator personally. Given the fear of outsiders, training and use of neighborhood enumerators would be highly desirable. We suspect that many Spanish-speaking residents would be most comfortable talking to an enumerator of the same nationality/cultural background.

There is no easy solution to the problem of extraordinarily high individual mobility among recent immigrants who are also often the most fearful of government-related questioning. Our research shows that as individuals become more settled in the United States, they also tend to respond more accurately to the census. "Visitors" are an exception. We suspect that the idea of the visitor as someone outside of the household who is not reported to the census is a culturally derived category as much as an adaptive and protective strategy. Our data on underreporting of visitors in the households which otherwise appear to be the most reliable respondents indicate that it is unlikely that any attempt by the Census Bureau to persuade Hispanic residents that "visitors" are actually household members will be very successful.

NOTES

1. Two of the five Lao households are comprised of extended families. The sample is too small to determine whether this is due to a different cultural pattern or to different life cycle stages. The make-up of these households closely resembles that of the Khmer households.

2. The immigration status of foreign-born and especially new residents is unclear. We did not directly ask anyone in the neighborhood about their immigration status, although in some cases we could determine when and how individuals arrived at their current addresses. Only one woman spontaneously volunteered that she was living and working in the United States without documentation. Another couple with a U.S. born child reported recently becoming naturalized citizens. Even if we had directly asked people about their immigration status and felt reasonably assured that we were receiving factual responses, the issue would be complicated by the fact that many people maintain residences in both Long Beach and Mexico, in particular, or travel frequently back and forth. A significant number of foreign-born residents in the more established Hispanic households described themselves or were described as "visitors," though the amount of time they had been in the United States varied from a few days to several years.

3. Since residents who filled out forms or spoke to census enumerators apparently did not always communicate this to other household members, we were frequently told that the household had not been censused even though the "B" file proves that they were. Another possibility, of course, is that the households were censused after we spoke with them.

4. One possible explanation for not reporting young, childless women is that some residents may feel uncomfortable about publicly identifying unrelated men and women sharing close living quarters, an arrangement we observed in all of the households consisting primarily or entirely of newly immigrated adults. Another explanation derives from one case of a recent immigrant employed as a live-in domestic who spends weekends with friends who live in the neighborhood. She explained that she was missed because she is not considered to be a full household member by her employer and is only a visitor at her friend's house. While recent immigrants and people classified as visitors are more likely to be missed by the census than other Hispanic residents, regardless of gender, further investigation into residence and employment patterns of larger sample of young women in these groups would likely yield valuable insights into an apparent problem of gender-skewed underenumeration.

5. Although census awareness appeared high among Cambodians on these two blocks, census awareness was not in evidence at the two other sites we surveyed.

Table 1 Number of Cambodian Refugees by Year of Arrival (Fiscal years 1975-1989).

<u>Years</u>	<u># of Arrival</u>
1975	4,600
1976	1,100
1977	300
1978	1,300
1979	6,000
1980	16,000
1981	27,100
1982	20,234
1983	13,114
1984	19,851
1985	19,097
1986	9,789
1987	1,539
1988	2,805
1989	1,916

SOURCE: Refugee Reports 1989:10 in Rynearson and Gosebrink 1990.

June 15, 1990

Dear Neighbor,

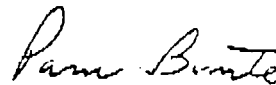
We are professors at California State University, Long Beach. This summer we are working on a study related to the 1990 Census. For the next two months we will be meeting people in the neighborhood and asking some questions. We are hoping to find out more about the community in order to determine the accuracy of the census. We hope you will help us.

Your participation is voluntary and you do not have to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable. All information is confidential and your identity will be protected.

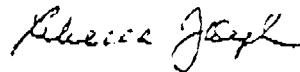
There are three students working with us. Their names are: Malay Nou, Sophea Kan, and Javier Najera.

If you have questions, please contact us at 985-5171.

Sincerely,



Dr. Pamela Bunte
Associate Professor



Dr. Rebecca Joseph
Assistant Professor

ឡុងប៊ិច ថ្ងៃទី ១៥ ខែ មិថុនា ឆ្នាំ ១៩៩០

ចំពោះញាតិមិត្តជិតខាង

យើងខ្ញុំជាសាស្ត្រាចារ្យនៅ សកលវិទ្យាល័យក្រុងឡុងប៊ិច ។ ក្នុងរយៈពេលពីរខែនៅរដូវក្តៅនេះ យើងខ្ញុំនឹងមកសួរបងប្អូននូវសំណួរខ្លះៗ ដើម្បីជាការសិក្សា និងជាការស្រាវជ្រាវដែល ទាក់ទងជាមួយ នឹង 1990 Census ។ គោលបំណងរបស់យើងខ្ញុំគឺ ចង់ដឹងថាក្រុម Census នេះបានធ្វើការមត់មត់ ត្រឹមត្រូវឬទេ ?

ចំពោះចំណើយដែលបងប្អូនឆ្លើយប្រាប់យើងខ្ញុំៗ និងទុកជាការសម្ងាត់ ហើយចំពោះសំណួរណាដែល មិនសមនឹងឆ្លើយ បងប្អូនអាចមានសិទ្ធិពេញច្បាប់មិនឆ្លើយបាន ។ យើងខ្ញុំសង្ឃឹមថា បងប្អូនញាតិមិត្ត ជិតខាង និងជួយជ្រុំជ្រែងជាមិនខាន ។

យើងខ្ញុំមាននិសិត្យបីនាក់ធ្វើការជាមួយ គឺ ម៉ាលីយ៉ា នូ , សុភា កាន់ , និង ហារីវ៉ា ណាហ៍វា ។ បើសិនបងប្អូនមានចំណល់ ឆ្ងល់ចង់សួរសំណួរ ឬមួយចង់បានព័ត៌មាន ច្បាស់សូមអញ្ជើញទូរស័ព្ទ តាមលេខ (២១៣) ៥៥៥ - ៥១៧១ ។ យើងខ្ញុំ សូមអរគុណទុកជាមុន !!!

ហត្ថលេខា

Janet Beute

ជាមេឡា ប៊ុនតេ

សហការី សាស្ត្រាចារ្យ

Robert Joseph

រេប៊េកា ចូសេប

សហការីរង សាស្ត្រាចារ្យ

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DISCLAIMER FOR ETHNOGRAPHIC EVALUATION OF THE 1990 DECENNIAL CENSUS REPORT SERIES, REPORTS # 1- 24 (EV -01 THROUGH EV -29)

Disclaimer: This is the final report for one of the 29 independent Joint Statistical Agreement projects which conducted an ethnographic evaluation of the behavioral causes of undercount. All 29 studies followed common methodological guidelines. This report is based on an analysis of the results of a match between the author(s)' Alternative Enumeration to data from the 1990 Decennial Census forms for the same site. Each ethnographic site contained about 100 housing units. Information was compiled from census forms that were recovered through October 10, 1990. The data on which this report is based should be considered preliminary for several reasons: Between October 10, 1990 and December 31, 1990, additional census forms MAY have been added to or deleted from the official enumeration of the site as a result of coverage improvement operations, local review, or other late census operations. Differences between October 10, 1990 and final census results as reported on the Unedited Detail File were incorporated in later analyses of data from this site. The consistency of the authors' coding of data has not been fully verified. Hypothesis tests and other analyses are original to the author. Therefore, the quantitative results contained in this final JSA report may differ from later reports issued by Census Bureau Staff referring to the same site.

The exact location of the study area and the names of persons and addresses enumerated by the independent researchers and in the 1990 Decennial Census are Census confidential and cannot be revealed until the year 2062. The researchers who participated in this study were Special Sworn Employees (SSE) or staff of the Census Bureau.

To request copies of this report, contact Statistical Research Division, Room 3133-4, Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20033.